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# Crises of self and other: Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands and European Union

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*University of Iowa*

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CRISES OF SELF AND OTHER: RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MIGRANTS IN THE  
NETHERLANDS AND EUROPEAN UNION

by  
Gudrun Alyce Willett

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Doctor of  
Philosophy degree in Anthropology  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

December 2007

Thesis Supervisors: Professor Florence E. Babb  
Associate Professor Rudolf Collaredo-Mansfeld

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnographic analysis of Russian-speaking migrants in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in the context of European Union incorporation of Eastern European states, internal E.U. integration, and increasing surveillance of the E.U. outer borders. I investigate how these processes are causing Europeans to redeploy ideas of Eastern Europe as a cultural and political “other.” European Union integration of individual countries’ economies, governance, and national identities has not been a straightforward process. European Union and individual states reinvent their national identities by defending their geographic, cultural, social, and economic borders against Eastern and Southern “others.” However, the discourses and policies relating to Eastern Europeans and other migrants result in adverse social and economic conditions for them in The Netherlands.

My analysis is based on a total of fourteen months of ethnographic research with Russian-speaking artists, architects, sex-workers, street sellers, homeless people, businessmen, and scientists from the former-Soviet States in the Netherlands from 2001 to 2003. I found that most of these individuals faced some social exclusion in the Netherlands based on their identity as “Eastern Europeans,” “migrants,” and “newcomers.” Dutch society has long been known as one of the most “tolerant” in Europe with its emphasis on human rights, support of development projects around the globe, generous social benefits for its population, and pragmatic attitude toward drug use and prostitution. However, the combination of the European Union’s eastern expansion, post-September 11 fears of Islamic terrorism, history of East/West relationships, and recent growth of migration to the Netherlands have all tested Dutch tolerance.

Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands exist in a liminal position; they may at times be marginalized because of stereotypes about them but they may also be “tolerated” when they follow Dutch cultural practices and do not become an economic burden to the

Dutch state. Contrary to Dutch and European stereotypes, migrants are not necessarily poverty-stricken and many choose to migrate to the Netherlands because of personal connections or an interest in Dutch society. Ultimately, Russian-speakers' experiences of belonging (and not belonging) highlight the constructed nature of such notions as "Europe," "Western," "Dutch," and "cultural integration."

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Graduate College  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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## INTRODUCTION: CREATING EAST-WEST DIVISIONS IN EUROPE

This dissertation is an analysis of the interconnected lives of Russian-speakers on the streets of Amsterdam in the context of European Union incorporation of Eastern European states, internal E.U. integration, and increasing surveillance of the E.U. outer borders. I investigate how these processes are causing Europeans to redeploy ideas of Eastern Europe as a cultural and political “other” to a European “self” even more than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Ultimately, I show how this continual construction of difference manifests itself in Russian-speaking migrants’ daily lives in the Netherlands.

In this dissertation, I propose that a negative preoccupation with Eastern Europeans serves to reinforce “Eastern Europe” as a space of utter alterity in the face of Western European attempts to create a supranational idea of “self.” European Union integration of individual countries’ economies, governance, and national identities is not an easy process, especially as nationalism in most of these countries has grown in the last few years and globalization of economies around the world weakens state power. The European Union and individual states can reassert their power by defending their geographic, cultural, social, and economic borders. However, the discourses and policies relating to Eastern Europeans only exemplify and reify this East/West division, resulting in adverse social and economic conditions for many Russian-speaking migrants in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

My conclusions are based on a total of fourteen months of ethnographic research with Russian-speaking artists, architects, sex-workers, street sellers, homeless people, businessmen, and scientists from the former-Soviet States in the Netherlands from 2001-2003. I found that most of these individuals – no matter whether they were long-term,

legal residents of the Netherlands or illegal<sup>1</sup> visitors to the country – faced discrimination and social exclusion in the Netherlands based upon their identity as “Eastern Europeans,” “migrants,” and “newcomers” in this particular place and time. They were not the most maligned group of migrants in the Netherlands but they were also not accepted as full members of Dutch society. Dutch society has long been known as one of the most “tolerant” in Europe with its emphasis on human rights, support of development projects around the globe, generous social benefits for its population, and tolerant attitude toward drug use and prostitution. However, the combination of the European Union’s eastern expansion, post September 11 fears of Islamic terrorism, history of East/West relationships, and recent growth of migration to the Netherlands have all tested Dutch tolerance. Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands occupy an ambivalent space; they must be defended against because of their potential for mass (poor) migration into the Netherlands but they are also “tolerated” in the Netherlands when they do not challenge Dutch “culture” and social order.

### Why the Netherlands?

The research for this project began as a critique of continuing exoticism of Eastern Europeans but was focused upon the lives of one specific group of migrants – Russian-speaking sex-workers<sup>2</sup> in the Netherlands. I planned to investigate the ways that

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to migrants as “illegal” when they do not have the proper documents to reside or work in the Netherlands because this term reflects their position in relation to the state and popular views about them. Such organizations as the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and European Union prefer the terms “irregular” or “undocumented” because these terms may seem less stigmatizing than “illegal.” However, I feel that “irregular” and “undocumented” are simply a superficial gloss for continuing views of migrants as law-breakers (and thus, “illegal”) when they do not apply to the appropriate bureaucratic channels in order to work and live abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this dissertation I primarily use the term “sex-worker” to refer to people who perform sexual acts with clients for immediate remuneration (financial or pharmaceutical) because “prostitute” is attached to much more negative connotations in English. However, at times I will use, “prostitute,” when referring to the work of Dutch feminist organizations, prostitution rights, health organizations, and governmental bodies because they use this term.

popular and scholarly writing has concentrated only upon Eastern European female sex-workers as sexual victims in Western Europe, without attention to their individual migration strategies and experiences (see Barry 1995; Hughes 2000). Based on the material collected during my pilot project in the summer of 2001, I hypothesized that in fact many Russian-speaking sex-workers in the Netherlands were more financially solvent and better integrated into Dutch society than their male, non-sex-working counterparts who were also semi-illegally employed in the informal economy but were making far less money and were less integrated. In my pilot study, I met several men who lived semi-legally by selling art to tourists and through hustling hotel rooms for backpackers, as well as possibly selling drugs. They appeared quite free of responsibility and enjoyed socializing with their friends almost every night of the week. Yet, they never accumulated much money, did not speak Dutch, and were not very hopeful about their futures in the Netherlands or elsewhere. The female sex-workers I met supported children and parents in their home countries or abroad, spoke Dutch, acquired Dutch boyfriends, and seemed more engaged in the society around them. I believed this difference in responsibilities might have motivated them in choosing sex-work as a profession since it was much more lucrative than other migrant work options and gave them more opportunities for meeting local people and networking. These ideas about gender divisions in work, responsibility, and purpose in migrating would become much more complicated upon my return to the Netherlands the following year.

I could have chosen any European Union state to conduct this study of Russian-speaking migrants and sex-workers, but Amsterdam provided an ideal research environment since it has been internationally famous for its tolerant attitude toward sex, drugs, and social welfare. In particular, the Dutch government is well known in Europe and abroad for its activism on the part of trafficked women and human rights, promoting E.U. laws protecting victims of trafficking and prosecuting organized crime syndicates. Dutch organizations have also been at the forefront of promoting sex-worker rights as

well as the rights of migrant sex-workers, through European and international organizations such as TAMPEP, EUROPAP, and GAATW. In 1999, a twenty year battle for prostitutes' rights resulted in the industry's official recognition and legalization. During my first trip to the Netherlands in 2001, sex-workers were beginning to win legal battles against discrimination in their daily lives, for example gaining the right to open bank accounts. Dutch acceptance of and attempts at "integrating" migrants were also considered fairly humanitarian compared to the more extreme anti-immigration measures taken by many other European countries since the 1970s (Lucassen and Penninx 1997: 149). For instance, an ambitious "minorities policy" was created in the late 1980s to combat high unemployment and discrimination against several migrant populations through streamlined processes for gaining Dutch citizenship, intercultural and native cultural education programs, reallocation of state rental apartments, and initiatives to pressure companies to set aside jobs for legal immigrants (ibid.: 149-162).

In the recent past, Dutch governmental and nongovernmental organizations categorized female Eastern European trafficking victims as particular migrants worthy of aid and support. With the creation of the B9 Visa, they were given the right to stay in the country and have access to social services and protective housing for the duration of a court case against their traffickers if they stood witness against them. Eastern European sex-workers, like all sex-workers in the Netherlands, had been "tolerated" in acceptable sex-work zones even before the official legalization of prostitution. Yet, when I arrived for my fieldwork in August of 2002, female Eastern European sex-workers were being driven underground through a state-wide plan of sting operations and deportations, without the required police inquiries into their individual "trafficked" statuses. This made them more vulnerable to exploitation, as they returned to the Netherlands more deeply indebted to human smugglers or traffickers and were forced to find less visible and less safe venues for their work.

Non-governmental organizations that had championed these women's causes in the form of prostitutes' and migrants' rights on the global, European, and national stages could not substantially help the women as they cut back on their services due to a lack of funds and government pressure. Rather than totally relinquishing aid to migrant sex-workers who still made up the bulk of the sex-workers in the Netherlands, several organizations came to use the European Union's and United Nations' Eastern European "sex trafficking victim" discourses to justify continued funding. This meant that most organizations categorized migrant sex-workers as either unwanted illegal migrants who supposedly lowered the rates for the few legal Dutch sex-workers or as victims of trafficking who had a "crime" committed against them and should be returned to the "safety" of their home.

Because of these changes in the situation of sex-workers, Eastern Europeans, and most groups of migrants in the Netherlands and European Union, my research topic necessarily broadened. The popular media, scholarly, and governmental concentration upon the body of the Eastern European "trafficking victim" became emblematic to me of the larger processes all former Soviet migrants were facing during the time of my research. European Union enlargement, integration, exclusion, and persistent ideas about an Eastern European "other" in contrast to a Western European "self" are all changing the ways that people (migrants and non-migrants) are defining themselves in Europe right now. To focus only on Eastern European sex-workers would simply reinscribe stereotypes of Eastern European migrants as consisting of exploited female sex-workers and sadistic male Mafioso; constructing them as a problem population for Western Europeans to decry in the media, create policies about, and define themselves against. By including more groups of Russian-speaking migrants in my research pool, I found that their lives did not in any way conform to these stereotypes or to Dutch and European worries about Eastern Europeans' imminent invasion of Western European economies and social welfare programs. However, they were neither completely victimized by, nor

altogether free from, the intensification of anti-immigrant policies and negative images of Eastern Europeans during this dynamic moment in European Union and Dutch history.

### Research Population and Collection

During the year I was in the Netherlands, I employed a variety of methods in investigating the lives of Russian-speaking migrants. In order to understand Dutch and European discourses and policies relating to Eastern European migrants and particularly migrant sex-workers, I conducted taped interviews with Amsterdam government officials, police from a downtown Amsterdam precinct and a precinct encompassing the Amsterdam *Tipplezone* (street-walking prostitution zone), and business-owners around the Red Light District. With the help of the prostitute's union ("De Rode Draad" or "Red Thread"), de Graaf foundation (national Dutch think tank on sex-work issues), and the University of Amsterdam, I collected Dutch newspaper articles and scholarly writing about Eastern European sex-workers and Eastern Europeans in general. I also conducted interviews with members of non-governmental organizations working with sex-workers in the Netherlands and Europe in order to understand their views about the political and social situation for sex-workers: TAMPEP (European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers), EUROPAP (European Network for HIV-STD Prevention in Prostitution), De Graaf Foundation, Red Thread, AMOC (Amsterdam city organization which aided migrant drug users), and local health and social-work agencies. Finally, I attended an E.U. Commission conference on the Trafficking of Women in Europe (The Hague, The Netherlands) and the 2002 European HIV/AIDS conference (Vilnius, Lithuania).

To find actual, and not simply representations of, Russian-speaking sex-workers, I attempted to work with two Dutch and European prostitution organizations. I aided them with English-language editing and preparation for presentations at the larger conferences, and carried out fieldwork in brothels. Yet, I found that like the police, organizations had

their own interests in controlling access to female Eastern European sex-workers and the discourse produced about them; funding for their organizations and even individual reputations as “insider-experts” depended upon control. My activities with the organizations were then circumscribed within this context and that of the police crackdowns on sex-workers. Nonetheless, these research experiences with the organizations contribute to an understanding of how Eastern European “otherness” was created in the Netherlands and in the European Union through the idea of the “trafficking victim” or female Eastern European sex-worker at the time of my research.

As a contrast to the highly scrutinized situation of sex-workers, I sought out documented and undocumented Russian-speaking men and women of varying professions in the center of Amsterdam to see how their experiences compared to the Russian-speaking sex-workers. I met male and female Russian-speaking street sellers, artists, businessmen, construction workers, thieves and hustlers on one particular square where they congregated in Amsterdam (Rembrandtplein), through the nearby Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian-migrant community websites. In the winter, I also volunteered once a week at a Catholic café for the homeless in the Red Light district where I mainly encountered young Polish, Lithuanian, Moroccan, Turkish, and Iraqi migrants.

The people I came into contact with in these venues consisted of a wide range of younger migrants in the city center. Through an initial acquaintance made with a Russian hotel maid the year before, I was able to meet increasing numbers of the seasonal Russian-speaking street sellers in Amsterdam who in turn introduced me to their longer-term Russian-speaking friends and acquaintances. The conclusions I drew from the semi-structured interviews (28 in-depth, many others less structured), participant observation in street selling, church activities, and socializing represent a partial view of the interconnected lives of Russian-speakers in the Netherlands and Europe.



Formal interviewing techniques and tape-recording did not endear me to the migrants I met who might have been living and working illegally<sup>3</sup> in the Netherlands and who may have still harbored Cold War suspicions of Americans. There was even a rumor among certain migrants that I was a CIA agent out to investigate street crime in Amsterdam or to expose illegal migrants to the Dutch authorities. Several other migrants, who had some experience with Dutch or Russian scientific study, worried that I would treat them like “lab rats.” Intermittent suspicion of my interest and presence among them meant that I early on chose not to carry a tape recorder when I was participating in street-level research. Instead, I recorded my notes upon returning home. This meant that I grew to know people much more intimately and they came to understand my project more deeply through our informal conversations, than otherwise might have been the case. Later, when I sought out participants in more formal taped interviews, I had better luck than I might have, although only 50% agreed. More affluent, established, and older migrants were open to interviews as they were not as worried about their migration status and often saw me as an American who could pass on their views about the world to other Americans (e.g. worries about global economic inequality, social philosophies, etc.).

One of my most surprising findings in coming to know Russian-speaking people on the streets and in the church was that many of them were highly educated. Of the street sellers, two watercolor artists, a tattoo artist, a caricaturist, and several of the street musicians had earned graduate degrees in architecture, economics, and music while most others in the tourist trade had at least some college training. The more established migrants I contacted, some through the help of these street sellers, were similarly well-

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<sup>3</sup> My experience coincides with Siegel’s when she says that “in Russian-speaking circles it is considered impolite to ask about one’s status” and “Russian-speakers would rather lie than jeopardize themselves” (2002: 88). Thus, I never broached the topic of individual migrants’ legal status or even employment unless they first referred to it.

educated. There was a filmmaker, a self-employed artist/writer, a social worker, several architects, physicists, construction workers, a medical student, and even two female sex-workers who had earned college degrees. In addition, I overheard more Russian spoken at the public library and in the computer cafes than in the average café or department store. Inevitably, conversations with even the most bedraggled of street thieves seemed to turn to politics or discussions of the Russian “soul.”

It was clear that there was no official “Little Moscow” in the city or elsewhere in the Netherlands. Two Russian-Dutch anthropologists, in particular, have discussed this Eastern European lack of community in contrast to the established communities of other migrants like the Chinese, Moroccans, and Turks who have their own grocery stores, churches, and residential areas (Kopnina 2001, 2005, 2006; Siegel 2002). Moreover, many Russian-speakers would initially tell me that they were not good research contacts since they did not have any relation to other Russian-speakers or only knew a select few and avoided the rest. Yet, I was often surprised to find that people I had met in entirely different contexts who seemed to be socially and economically distant from each other might recognize one another on the street and seem surprised that each knew me as well. This is especially remarkable as the situation for some former-Soviets changed when the Baltics were accepted into the future European Union and migrants from these countries no longer required visas to enter the Netherlands. However, many migrants from the Baltics still remained close to their fellow former-Soviets and in practice were possibly more severely targeted by the police than other groups of former-Soviets. Many Dutch people feared that migrants from the E.U. accession states would soon be invading the European Union in droves. Although not as openly discriminated against as Muslim migrants (e.g. Turks and Moroccans), illegality and stereotypes of Eastern Europe caused Russian-speakers enormous difficulties in finding work, housing, and friends. These problems were often alleviated through connections made with other Russian-speaking migrants and foreigners or, more rarely, through Dutch sponsors.

Dutch voices will be heard less frequently than Russian in this study. While I could communicate with most Dutch people in English (see Hines 2004), I was less successful in gaining their trust and cooperation than I would have if I had spoken Dutch. Like all migrants who lack Dutch language skills, I was considered to be a temporary interloper or guest rather than a serious inhabitant. Locals often interpret migrant communities' lack of Dutch language and cultural skills as a sign of disrespect. A few Dutch people wondered about whether the Dutch language would disappear in the future with further migration and E.U. integration and expansion processes. Nevertheless, my ability to live in the Netherlands for a year without speaking the "native tongue" is a sign of Dutch cosmopolitanism. The Netherlands' widespread multilingualism exemplifies its population's interest in foreign travel, international media, foreign scholarship, and cross-cultural communication.

This dissertation is foremost a study of the social circumstances and economic possibilities of former-Soviets in a very small (but influential) city in a small (but wealthy) European nation. I argue that East/West European divisions in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, continue to exist in the face of European Union expansion, or even because of it. Although no "floods" of Eastern Europeans appeared in Western Europe after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, they are still feared and expected to arrive any day now (see Thränhardt 1996).

#### A History of Eastern European "Otherness"

Analyses of Eastern Europe are not in the main concerned with its otherness since that, I think, is assumed from the start. The region is, in fact, the sine qua non of otherness and was defined as such since the two halves of the continent diverged in the long sixteenth century during the formation of the so-called modern world system (Kideckel 1998: 135).

Ideas about Eastern Europeans as "other" in Western Europe and the United States – from "barbaric" to a faded, less modern version of Western Europe – are fairly well-established but yet always based upon contemporary political economic

relationships of the times in which they appear. The increasing presence of negative constructions of Eastern Europeanness is not surprising in the continuing context of East/West division-making and difference.

Historian Larry Wolff argues that Western European constructions of a threatening or pitiful Eastern European “other” extend back centuries in Eastern/Western European relations and conceptualizations of each other (Wolff 1994; see also Kideckel 1998). Wolff writes that “Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century provided Western Europe with its first model of underdevelopment” by judging the regions’ “backwardness” in opposition to Western “progress” (ibid.: 9). In his book on the invention of the idea of “Eastern Europe,” Wolff states that differences between Eastern and Western Europe are “in part a matter of economic disparity, the wealth of Western Europe facing the poverty of Eastern Europe, but such disparity is inevitably clothed in the complex windings of cultural prejudice” (1994: 3). In Western European thought, Eastern Europe has stood for a space of bad “manners” (e.g. too much hand-kissing in Catherine the Great’s court), outrageous animal/plant beings, sexual lewdness (see also Costlow et. al. 1993), and general “incomprehensibility” and chaos (Wolff 1994: 10-13). As with Edward Said’s conceptualization of “orientalism” (1978), differences between “Eastern European” regions were ignored in the effort to define differences between it as a complete entity in opposition to Western Europe (Wolff 1994: 356). The instability of Eastern Europe’s definition over the years, as its boundaries were constantly redefined anywhere from east of the Don to east of the Urals, contributed to its conceptualization as not quite as “other” as the “Orient” (ibid.: 357-358). However, Wolff argues that “the invention of Eastern Europe was a subtly self-promoting and sometimes self-congratulatory event in intellectual history whereby Western Europe identified itself and affirmed its own precedence” (1994: 360). Although not completely “oriental” in degree of strangeness, Eastern Europe was still continually used as a foil against which Western Europe could define its superiority.

Religion scholar, Milica Bakic-Hayden takes the idea of “orientalist” understandings of Eastern Europe farther than Wolff in seeing a continuum of “orientalness” in how specific countries and areas in Eastern Europe have been perceived as treated based upon more or less “civilization” (1995). She argues that scholars and anthropologists since World War II have played a role in creating these divisions through highly generalized and exoticized descriptions of “culture” and personality. Bakic-Hayden says that national character studies like those of Mead and Gorer in the 1940s and 1950s influenced today’s dominant world-views such that “eastern Europe has been commonly associated with ‘backwardness,’ the Balkans with ‘violence,’ India with ‘idealism’ or ‘mysticism’ while the west has identified itself consistently with the ‘civilized world’” (ibid.: 917). In this view, there is even a “nesting of orientalisms” where “Asia is more ‘East’ or ‘other’ than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe itself, this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans there perceived as most ‘eastern’; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies” (ibid.: 918). This nesting of orientalisms was not only an idea held by Western Europeans but also Eastern Europeans over the last century as represented in Soviet and now Russian Federation state treatment of people in more “Eastern” areas as exploitable, in need of civilizing, or having “traditional” cultures.

A recent example of such “orientalist” approaches to Eastern Europe can be found in historian Philip Longworth’s “The Making of Eastern Europe,” in which he finds differences between “Eastern” and “Western” Europe and continuities in mentality, governance, and economics in Eastern Europe going back to 324AD (1994). He argues that to understand why Communism failed and post-Soviet economies and politics are still in crisis, people need to see how “ancient patterns have been re-emerging (post-Soviet), suggesting that the Communist period was but another disappointing interlude in a long, sad history” (Longworth 1994: 295). For instance, he blames contemporary economic and political problems on serfdom which influenced “the modern tendencies

towards a disorderliness tempered by servility and even anarchy” (Longworth 1994: 298). He says that “the effects of serf-owning are reflected, arguably, in the ready contempt shown for those who hold a different view, the common failure to comprehend pluralistic structures, and the tendency to confuse self-respect with the domination of others” (ibid.). In Longworth’s view, younger generations of Eastern Europeans have been unable to break such cycles because eighteenth century Romanticism affected Eastern Europeans (and the Irish and Basques) more intensely than other Europeans so that they have harbored a “preference for grandiose and dramatic political conceptions, the passionate espousal of unrealistic aims, the cult of the righteous victim, even forms of dissent that ‘border on insanity’” (Longworth 1994: 296).

Although Longworth agrees with other scholars that geographical and cultural differences have always existed in what is considered “Eastern Europe,” he claims that “nevertheless Eastern Europe is an entity, albeit rather a loose one, on account of the powerful Slavic and Byzantine influences upon it, its distinctive social structures, and because of its consistent lateness of development, politically and culturally as well as economically” (1994: 301). He does say that the “West” is also not homogenous either – constitutionally or economically – but this does not obviate the fact that his whole book is based upon an ahistorical view of a generalized Eastern European “culture” as unchanging through time (although affected by certain key historical events and experiences) and an assumption of “Western” European superiority (ibid.: 302). His introduction to “the people” of Eastern Europe shows a visitor encountering “strangeness” as he sees people who have not been “programmed” by the past Communist system to treat visitors hospitably, who are badly dressed, live in depressing identical apartments, and who even “look as if they belong to the nineteenth-century countryside rather than to a modern town” (ibid.: 4). In Longworth’s view, then, Eastern Europe “is not the Third World, but it is certainly not the Western world either. And the

impression that Eastern Europe constitutes a world apart is reinforced once he begins to penetrate the outer crust of first appearances” (ibid.).

While Longworth is not a Dutch scholar, it is not unreasonable to use his understanding of Eastern Europe and Kideckel, Wolff’s, and Bakic-Hayden’s critiques of such views to describe the dominant historical understandings of Eastern Europe in the Netherlands and Europe more broadly. There are certainly some books written in Dutch about Russia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, but English language scholarship is an integral part of the scholarly and popular literature in the Netherlands and the European Union overall.<sup>4</sup> An example of the importance of English literature on the former Soviet Union – and Dutch people’s interest in Eastern Europe in general – can be seen in the main Russian bookstore in Amsterdam. The bookstore is divided into two rooms with the front room offering predominantly English language scholarship on Russia and a smaller room upstairs devoted to Russian language fiction, poetry, and magazines. Having heard little about this store from Russian-speaking acquaintances in Amsterdam, I asked the clerk (in English) if many Russian-speakers came into the store. She answered that actually more Dutch people frequent it than Russians since Russian-speakers refuse to pay such high prices for books (because of taxes on imported books) that they could obtain more cheaply from friends or family in Russia or other parts of the former-Soviet Union. This bookstore also represents a Dutch fascination with “Russianness” as exotica, which can be seen in coffeeshops with Russian names and popular images of Russian-brides, Russian mafia, and sex-workers in local media.

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<sup>4</sup> Students in grade schools learn Dutch, English, and a third language. There are always English sections of Dutch book stores, college courses are taught in English, and dissertations are even required to be written or translated into English. Most educated people in and around the major cities speak English as well as French, Spanish, or German.

### What Does “Eastern Europe” Signify Now?

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, many economists and political scientists in Western Europe and the United States predicted that the countries of the Eastern Bloc would follow their same path of “development” as capitalism and democracy were instituted (Berdahl 2000; Pine and Bridger 1998; Verdery 1991). Anthropologist David Kideckel describes European and American ex-patriots’ eagerness to witness and take part in this “transition” in former socialist countries (1998). He says that, “to a great extent, even as the region began to be opened to more comprehensive international relations, its ‘otherness’ was reinforced in Western eyes by the romantic picture of the transition first painted in the media” (Kideckel 1998: 140).

The “transition” of course has not occurred as expected (see Verdery 1991 for early predictions of this) for a number of reasons: 1) incompatible economic infrastructures prior to the late 1980s; 2) political upheavals; 3) ethnic strife; 4) attitudes toward economics/politics (particularly “Western”); and 5) the problems of applying such an evolutionary-functional model of change to actual populations (Berdahl 2000; Pine and Bridger 1998). Not least of these countries’ problems in “developing” like Western Europe is the differential treatment they have received from Europe and the United States. For instance, Poland and Hungary were offered loans and business joint ventures by Western Europe in the 1970s to restructure their economies (Pine and Bridger 1998: 5-6). At the same time, Romania and Bulgaria were considered less like Europe culturally and economically and were excluded from such aid (ibid.). In the 1990s, Eastern European and former Soviet countries’ relationships to the European Union have resulted in differences between them in “actual standards of living, quality of life, and levels of economic development in the more and the less ‘European’ countries” (ibid.: 6).

Anthropologist Frances Pine (1998: 108) and others (e.g. Chomsky 1999; Hobsbawm 1994) have described the economic relationship between Western and Eastern Europe as similar to those of the dependency and underdevelopment of



“West”/“Third World” relations.<sup>5</sup> Development professional and scholar Marta Bruno provides an example of this relationship in her work in several non-governmental organizations conducting development projects in Russia (1998). She argues that the United States is expecting Russia to conform to an ideal of democracy and free market system (non-existent) which shows that the “West” is “enforcing...the same ideology it openly promoted during the cold war” (1998: 174). Development programs often simply reinforce the economic and political systems they are designed to remake because U.S. organizations have lacked an understanding of the Russian labor situation and of Russians’ continued suspicions of the “West.” In addition, Bruno critiques assumptions of Russians in these projects as “helpless victims” of culture, rather than as highly creative agents. She describes the Russian participants as having

accepted the ‘given’ of international aid and cooperation projects (whether wanted or not) and are weaving them into the complex system of patronage, social relations and survival strategies which are taking shape in post-socialist Russian reality (1998: 171).

However, “Western” organizations continue to ignore their own projects’ lack of efficacy because Russia still poses a threat to U.S. interests as the least capitalist, most socialist, and most dangerous in terms of weaponry of the former socialist countries. Many authors in recent years are connecting policies and discourses relating to Eastern Europeans as “other” to the older histories of unequal relations between Eastern and Western Europe.

Because of their different histories, cultural milieus, languages, and economic development, some scholars argue that the terms “Eastern Europe” and “Western

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<sup>5</sup> However, Pine rejects any stronger argument about Eastern Europe and “Third World” economics since there are such vast differences in specific economic, political, and cultural systems in Eastern Europe. Particular survival strategies representative of “developing” economies – such migration and petty-trading – may exist due to conditions in that area since the nineteenth century rather than simply as a result of post-socialist “transition” (1998: 122).

Europe” should now be erased and that scholarship should focus on very particular countries and regions. However, I will follow several scholars who treat formerly-Soviet and socialist people as a group for analysis based upon a consideration of the effects of socialism and now European marginality (Grant 1995; Pine and Bridger 1998; Verdery 1995b). In an essay on how socialism “worked” and fell apart, Verdery writes that even though there are differences among formerly socialist states in their types of economies, politics, and cultures at various points in history, the elements of an ideal socialist system that they supported still influence their experiences of incorporation into the global capitalist system (1995b). Bruno argues even more strongly for a connection between these past experiences of time, labor, and accumulation (as opposed to selling) and today’s lack of “transition” in Russia as she shows how many Russians have kept the old soviet economic system of power relations alive with development money (1998). As in the past, she witnessed managers retaining unneeded employees, bureaucrats reconsolidating power through redistribution of development money, and scholars living solely off of participation, and monopoly of, development projects.

Russian studies scholar Daniel Orlovsky states that although it is important for scholars to pay attention to the multiple new national identities emerging after the fall of the Soviet Union,

we should not forget the twin questions of new Russian national identity or identities and the historical but fertile and far-reaching matter (all too quickly dismissed as ridiculous, as something that never existed) of how to analyze the Soviet identity (including the process of nativization, or korenizatsiia) that denizens of the postcommunist order are too quick to deny (1995: 10).

Anthropologists such as Bruce Grant (1995) and Nancy Ries (1997) describe how the Nivkhi of Sakhalin Island and Moscovites have both experienced the same sorts of loss during the economic and political insecurities of the early 1990s and even spoke about it in similar “lamentations” or remembrances of the past. Frances Pine and Sue Bridger similarly note continuity across post-socialist societies as they compare women’s

unemployment in Moscow and in Poland (1998). They say that “it became clear to us that many of the women we were talking to in Poland and Russia were experiencing the same sorts of pressures, and were responding to the new economic orders in markedly similar ways” (ibid.: 2).

As scholars continue to refer to groups of people as “post-socialist” or “post-Soviet,” in conjunction with local, ethnic, and other types of identities, they do not necessarily contribute to destructive discourses of disparate “Easts” and “Wests” as might be expected by the use of these general terms. For instance, anthropologist, Aiwa Ong argues that the

naïve view of culture as an organic whole and the notion of cultural relativism have influenced public views of non-Western cultures as enduring communitarian systems radically different from Western ones, long after anthropologists themselves have given up such static notions (ibid.: 49).

Although she says that “anthropologists no longer think of culture as a self-reproducing system but rather as contingent and disparate sets of values that are organized, manipulated, and deployed in a power context,” Ong states that too often anthropologists focus on “culture from below” in non-Western places and ignore state power in people’s lives (2001: 50). In Western European and U.S. research on the former Soviet Union, this has certainly not been the case; governmental influences were almost always sought out in the hopes of finding communism’s or socialism’s affects on people’s lives. Yet, there is a possibility of anthropologists re-primitivizing their Eastern European subjects as governments and civil societies are described as falling into chaos and new ethnic groups are being “discovered.” By continuing to see similarities between groups of people in the former Soviet Union, as well as their differences, anthropologists of the region will hopefully not fall into this trap of exoticism and “othering.”

In this dissertation, I refer to “Russian-speakers” and “former-Soviets” whose experiences and networks overlapped. However, I pay attention to these migrants’ other identities and notions about them such as their ethnic, religious, and class affiliations

when these identifications surface as more significant in particular contexts. I also use the terms, “Western Europe” and “Eastern Europe,” to highlight continuing understandings of such divisions between people as well as the effects that these discourses have on actual individuals’ lives. Yet, I hope that this dissertation ultimately challenges the naturalization of all of these group divisions through humanizing accounts of migrants’ lived experience.

### Neocolonialist Constructions of Eastern Europeans

Fears that dominated, “less-developed,” or “underdeveloped” people may retaliate against those who have dominated them can result in sexual and racial discourses and discipline. Longworth’s reference to “penetrating” superficial Eastern European appearances to show the “real” Eastern Europe underneath appeals to the same sorts of language of power and control used in the colonial project as well as in general orientalist literature. Anthropologist Matti Bunzl argues that such attitudes toward Eastern Europe become embodied in actual sexual relations between Western and Eastern Europeans. While following Austrian sex-tourists to Prague, he watched as middle-aged men romanticized and “conquered” the bodies of “Eastern European boys” (2000). Although the Austrian tourists gave the Czech men gifts, lodging, meals, and money after sexual relations, the Austrians did not consider the “boys” to be prostitutes. Instead, they saw the Czechs as “distinctly passionate and sexual,” and “selfless” in their acquiescence to Austrian men’s sexual experiments (ibid.: 84-85). In exoticizing Czech bodies, the Austrians reaffirmed their own normative sexual practices and contributed to larger “processes of neocolonial power differentials” (ibid.: 90).

In the Netherlands, similar tropes of Eastern European sexual availability and submission may influence Dutch men to seek out Russian female partners in such venues as the Russian female/Dutch male personal ads in *RUS: Visa* magazine.<sup>6</sup> However,

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<sup>6</sup> This is a free Russian-language circular in the Netherlands.

whether these men in actuality “conquered” Russian women in the course of their acquaintances and possible marriages, is open to speculation.<sup>7</sup> Russian women I talked to who had married Dutch men did not feel exploited by their relationships to Dutchmen, per se. Yet, Bunzl may be correct in seeing today’s relationship between Eastern and Western Europe as representing neocolonial processes and thus invoking sexual images and sexual control.

Anthropologist Ann Stoler writes that in the colonial experience, the colonizer often consolidated power and differentiated itself from the colonized by highlighting different sexual or gender beliefs and practices between itself and the colonized group (1997a, 1997b, 1991). For instance, this separation was constructed through the years in English and Dutch colonies as “white” women were at first not allowed into the colonies and then later imported to keep miscegenation and racial boundary crossing from occurring (1997a). Stoler writes that

the linkage between sexual control and racial tensions is both obvious and elusive at the same time. While sexual fear may at base be a racial anxiety, we are still left to understand why it is through sexuality that such anxieties are expressed. If...sexuality is the most salient marker of Otherness, organically representing racial difference, then we should not be surprised that colonial agents and colonized subjects expressed their contests – and vulnerabilities – in these terms (Stoler 1997a: 375).

In the creation of difference in the colonies, sexualization and racialization go hand in hand.

Today in the Netherlands, this sexualized difference between Eastern and Western Europeans can be seen in popular culture images of Eastern European women as sexy “gold diggers” or sexual victims of trafficking. Eastern European men, on the other hand, are represented as brutal mafia killers and sexual deviants. A British movie playing

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<sup>7</sup> Bunzl states that he was unable to ascertain how Czechs conceived of their sexuality in relations with sex-tourists from Austria. He wonders whether they felt exploited, saw their activities as resisting “hegemonic sociosexual regimes,” or experienced a mixture of exploitation and rebellion (2000: 90).

in the Netherlands' large cineplexes in 2002 entitled "Birthday Girl" (2001) exemplifies both stereotypes. A meek and awkward Englishman (Ben Chaplin) finds a Russian bride (Nicole Kidman) via the Internet. After many exchanges of letters, she agrees to marry him. When she arrives, the Russian bride is not what he expects. She speaks no English even though her letters to him were entirely in English. She immediately wants to have sex with him, to which he eventually agrees. When not attempting to seduce him, she sits around his home knitting. The Englishman overcomes his initial disappointment in their apparent lack of intellectual compatibility and he allows her to stay. Then, on her birthday, two of her Russian male "friends" arrive at his house to visit for a few days. The men perpetuate all of the stereotypes of wild Russians in Europe and the United States: they break into song without a moment's notice, drink unhealthy amounts of vodka, swim naked in the pond, and prove their hypermasculinity by killing rabbits and grilling them in the forest. When the Englishman begins to notice that one of the men is acting overly affectionate with his wife, he asks the men to leave, but they take out knives and threaten to kill the girl if the Englishman does not find a few thousand dollars for them. So, he steals money from the bank where he works and then finds that his Russian bride is really in league with the Russian conmen. Thus ensues a wild chase or two, much violence instigated by the Russian men against the woman and the Englishman, and in the end, both the Englishman and the Russian woman are disillusioned about each other and the world but escape to Russia together.

In the course of the movie, the Russian woman revolves between the extremes of conniving temptress and sexual victim: she tricks the Englishman into believing she loves him for his money and then she becomes a victim of abuse as you see one of the Russian men, who is supposedly her boyfriend, sexually exploiting and controlling her. Fulfilling the neo-colonial story line, the much less "masculine" (or less brutish) Englishman wins out against the Russians through his superior wits and even his own violent actions. Although apparently hyper-masculine, the Russian men are ultimately

feminized as they are seen as less skilled, less civilized (e.g. their treatment of the woman), and less daring than the Englishman.

Racialization of Eastern Europeans is again reinforced in the media image of the violent Russian Mafioso. News media and law enforcement in the Netherlands, Europe, and the United States have perpetuated worries about Russian crime syndicates invading the rest of the world since the fall of the Soviet Union (see Finckenauer 2001). Dina Siegel, a Russian-Israeli anthropologist at the Vrije University of the Netherlands argues that the preponderance of Russian Mafia stories in Dutch and international media, Dutch government funded studies, political rhetoric, and Mafia bosses' own promotion have created a "moral panic" in which Mafia crime is amplified and associated with all Russian-speaking migrants (Siegel 2002: 8-11). Siegel states that

the facts as presented by those who have access to information, including the police, relevant officials and journalists, have created the 'reality'. Their data does not convey information about specific issues, but rather about the abstract 'general' situation. As a result, a 'general' image of the Russian Mafia is created and its presence and activity in the Netherlands is defined as a 'public problem', which demands a quick solution (ibid.: 11).

Siegel finds very little scientific data to support the reality of a violent Russian crime syndicate operating in the Netherlands during her extensive ethnographic research with the Russian-speaking migrant population in 1999. While Dutch officials believed that "Russians in the Netherlands are involved in such criminal activities as smuggling humans, car theft and smuggling to Eastern Europe, women trade and prostitution, smuggling drugs, (and) illegal financial operations," Russian-speaking migrants told Siegel that the Russian mafia was only involved in "sophisticated financial operations" in the Netherlands (ibid.: 181). In conversations with actual members of Russian Mafia, Siegel learned that they preferred to keep the Netherlands a "Mafia-free" place; "to come here either for their families or for refuge from other criminals" (ibid.: 183, 180). Siegel concluded that the few, well-publicized mafia contract killings in the Netherlands during the 1990s were probably conducted by professional hit men hired from abroad, not

Russian immigrants. Siegel argues that Dutch characterizations of Russian-speaking migrants as “Mafiosi, prostitutes and criminals” significantly affects their ability to integrate into Dutch society and succeed in the Dutch labor market (ibid.: 180).

One of Siegel’s most striking examples of the negative influence of stereotypes is summed up in the life of a woman named Anna who was constantly attempting to find employment and acceptance in the Netherlands (ibid.: 95). Unfortunately, employers assumed she was sexually loose and strangers avoided her or offered her escort jobs because they believed she must be a sex-worker with connections to the Russian mafia if she was an attractive Russian woman in the Netherlands. Anna would tell people that she was Polish in the hope of avoiding such characterizations but Dutch people placed all Eastern Europeans in these categories.

These stereotypes of gender difference, violence, Russian Mafia, temptress Russian brides, and trafficked prostitutes represent the inequality in structural positions between Eastern and Western Europe. Ethnic studies scholar, Yen Le Espiritu, has written about very similar stereotypes of Asians in the United States, which have been used to buttress racial ideas of difference and dominance (1997). She says that

Asian men have been constructed as hypermasculine, in the image of the ‘Yellow Peril,’ but also as effeminate, in the image of the ‘model minority,’ and Asian women have been depicted as superfeminine, in the image of the ‘China Doll,’ but also as castrating, in the image of the ‘Dragon Lady’ (Mullings 1994: 279-280; Okihiro 1995) (Espiritu 1997: 88).

Espiritu describes how Asian Americans are defined by a gendered ethnicity. They form a “masculine threat” at the same time that they embody marginalization in their feminine attributes (ibid). Citing Kim (1990), Espiritu says that “although an apparent disjunction, both the feminization and masculinization of Asian men and women exist to define and confirm the white man’s superiority” (ibid). Anthropologist Nicole Constable argues that such stereotypes of Asian women and men “fuel arguments for stronger policing of U.S. borders, adding further justification to keep certain immigrants out” of the United States



in her ethnography of correspondence marriages between Asian women and white American men (Constable 2003: 93).

In the same way, stereotypes of Eastern European men and women as both hyper-masculinized and hyper-feminized serve to create them as unacceptable for Western European citizenship and inclusion, especially when Dutch gender relations are always characterized as egalitarian and “modern.” One example of this characterization of Dutch society can be found in an article about changing gender roles and native Dutch migration patterns in the Netherlands (Smits et. al. 2003: 611). The authors state that in 1996, “the number of two-earner couples was much higher and the Netherlands had become a much more modern society” (ibid.). This labeling of people and societies as “modern” and “traditional” based upon gender relations is clearly reminiscent of colonial relationships and perceptions of difference which still affect ideas about a Dutch “self” and “other” today.

Saskia Sassen describes how, throughout history, “racialization of immigrant populations is a common condition” such that even those who seem phenotypically or culturally similar are considered to be biologically different (1999: xv). Sassen illustrates this with the case of Polish migrants in post WWI Germany who were not even the majority population of migrants in the country but were still regarded as overwhelming, invasive, and unwanted. Their particular rejection was due in part to Germany’s insecure political control over areas of the former Poland (ibid.).

In Europe in the present day, Eleonore Kofman, Annie Phizaklea, Parvati Raghuram, and Rosemary Sales make a similar argument about the racialization of Eastern Europeans due to “public perceptions, particularly of their dependence on the welfare state” (2000: 9). Race in Europe is based not only on skin color but also on nationality, ethnicity, and “culture” (Pheonix 1995: 110). Because of the increased migration to Europe and changes in national and social identities, psychologist Ann Pheonix writes that there is now an even more complex hierarchy among “white” people

in Europe today (ibid.). In the past, full privileges of “whiteness” were not given to the Irish, Jews, and Gypsies and now there are even more groups of questionable “race” in Western Europe from parts of the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia (ibid.).

In the Netherlands, in particular, “white” Dutch people often deny “race” exists as a category of differentiation or proclaim that “racism” has been overcome by the Dutch. Yet, race and gender scholar Philomena Essed describes the “strong defensive tone of Dutch non-racism” which “shows more understanding and tolerance for racial prejudice and discrimination than for individuals who pinpoint the act, who name the problem, and who object to racism in everyday life” (1995: 49). For instance, she says that, “institutions involved with refugee care tend to patronize refugee women, whom they consider pitiful, traditional and backward” (Essed 1995: 49). Racial differentiation – the assumption of utter difference between groups of people – is then based upon ideas of cultural and religious attributes as well as skin-color in the Netherlands. To name and acknowledge this, however, would counteract Dutch pride in their identity as a “tolerant” nation which allows gay marriage, prostitution, drug use, and in the past, less restrictive migration laws.

### Attitudes Toward Migrants in the Netherlands and European Union

During my research period, the Netherlands’ political environment became increasingly conservative and anti-immigrant in the name of curbing “trafficking in women,” organized crime, and illegal immigration in general. In the 1970s oil crisis and recession, the Netherlands began restricting new migration except in the case of family reunification and some labor importation. However, only in recent years has there been a popular backlash against migrants in the form of restrictive migration laws, increased enforcement of these laws, more stringent Dutch cultural and language tests for migrants, and anti-immigrant language in popular media. For instance, Dutch police now keep

surveillance over “foreigners” in the Netherlands through a central computer database and the Dutch media often links crime to illegal immigrants’ presence in the country (van der Leun 2003: 18).

However, in the recent past, migrants were seen in a much more ambivalent light. Sociologist Joanne van der Leun describes the Dutch government and population as awarding amnesties to “semi-integrated ‘white illegals’” while at times denying illegal migrants medical care (2003: 9). This ambivalence is epitomized in the Dutch term, *allochtoon*, which means “newcomer.” The term represents Dutch institutional and popular attempts at erasing racism through a race-free label for migrants as well as the creation of a category of people who are eligible to receive affirmative action benefits in schools, taxes, and the work place. Essed states that *allochtoon* was first used by Dutch policy makers in the 1980s in an effort to refer to non-natives in the Netherlands in a politically correct way because oppositional groups in the period were forming ethnic alliances around “black” identities (“Southern”) to combat racism. In Essed’s view, *allochtoon* “strips all political presuppositions from discourses on minority-minority relations from associations or implications having to do with power relations” (ibid.: 49). Racism and poverty are ignored by the term, as *allochtonen* are supposedly all non-native people in the Netherlands. However, Essed does not see it applied to other Europeans or to Americans but rather toward people assumed to be Muslim (ibid.). Yet, in my own research in the Netherlands, I found that many different migrant groups were starting to rally around *allochtoon* as a positive alternative political and social identity. For instance, the identity was proclaimed on T-shirts (see <http://www.mindwhatyouwear.com/allochtoon.html>) and featured in one very popular song by Moroccan-Dutch hip hop artist, Raymzter, in 2002 (see Daruvalla 2003). In addition, I realized that *allochtonen* could be Eastern Europeans, as well as people from the “South,” people with dark skin, or Muslims.

At an Easter celebration with a Dutch family in the countryside, I learned that a friend's boyfriend, Jeroen, was *allochtoon* even though he spoke only Dutch and English and did not see himself as anything but culturally Dutch. His father was an Armenian man who had lived part of his life in Turkey. Yet, Jeroen's mother was Dutch and because his parents had separated when he was young, Jeroen had only been raised among his Dutch relatives. In school and in such venues as this small family party, Jeroen's identity as *allochtoon* meant that people often treated him differently than one would expect, considering his Dutch cultural fluency. Jeroen and several members of my friend's family told me that Jeroen's children's children would be *allochtonen* even if each generation married Dutch partners. As an example of the different treatment *allochtonen* receive in Dutch society, the family mentioned Pim Fortuyn's proposed separate "black" schools which had popular support before the controversial political leader was killed only days after he was predicted to win the 2002 presidential election.

However, both Jeroen and his girlfriend's aunt argued that reverse racism is more prevalent in the Netherlands than direct racism. They described the weight system in schools whereby students receive preferential treatment from teachers based upon how many points they have. Dutch children receive one point, *allochtonen* receive 1.9, and children with separated parents receive more points. Jeroen was playfully scolded for receiving double preferential treatment for having both "problems" and his girlfriend's aunt told me he was lazy because of it. In addition, they said that taxes used to be less onerous for *allochtonen*. At the end of the discussion, Jeroen and other members of the family claimed that there was actually no "real" discrimination toward *allochtonen* and they denied that people even tried to expose individuals' non-"Dutch" lineage, unless she was applying for employment in such places as the police force, which have ethnic and gender quotas.

Two of the most prominent Dutch scholars of migration, Jan Lucassen and Rinus Penninx, describe the previously liberal Dutch policy toward migrants as "inherently

contradictory” in that “it tries to remove disadvantage and to make distinction between groups redundant, but for the policy to be implemented it must itself initially make distinctions” (1994: 160-161). This is a problem, in their view, since it has a “stigmatizing effect” (ibid.). Many Dutch people, like the family described above, resent the special treatment given to *allochtonen*, while the *allochtonen* are never quite able to feel a legitimate part of Dutch society. In the early 2000s, many people were becoming cynical about such ineffective liberal policies as the school point system which has not been able to improve migrants’ performance in school or heal ethnic divisions (see Lindo 1995).

The Netherlands’ recent turn away from liberal attitudes toward migration can also be linked to processes taking place in the European Union. As the European Union integrates, allowing for greater freedom of movement for E.U. citizens and the centralization of legal and economic decision-making, individual European nations’ identities and sovereignty become increasingly unstable. This is especially the case when combined with increasing fears of “surplus” immigration and worsening economies. In the Netherlands, for instance, prices for most consumer goods drastically increased with the introduction of the Euro currency in 2002 and people immediately felt greater anxiety over their incomes, spending, and access to quality government social services. Throughout Europe, migrants are often blamed for such social, political, and economic problems and in turn find themselves isolated in these countries.

The Netherlands has felt pressure from other E.U. nations to conform to their stricter migration regulations and attitudes. For instance, the Netherlands’ laws are starting to resemble France’s in the equation of crime with illegal migration, greater law enforcement of illegal migration (albeit perhaps still less aggressively than the French), and special targeting of groups considered more or less “assimilable.” In the last twenty years, France (like the Netherlands) radically switched from being the only European country encouraging immigration to fostering extreme nationalist political parties and

creating anti-immigration laws (van Amersfoort 1998). Political scientist Christine Barats-Malbreil sees a growing suspicion of non-E.U. migrants (“third country nationals”) in French law which has manifested in stronger politicization of migration and stigmatization of these groups (1999: 86). This suspicion fuels the creation of laws “based on the postulate of fraud (requirements for housing certificates, administrative procedures concerning marriage between a French citizen and a foreign national, etc.)” (ibid). Legal aliens and citizens alike can then incur criminal offences for giving direct or indirect aid to illegal aliens in France. Barats-Malbreil says that “initially conceived to fight the trafficking of illegal workers, the article (Article 21 of the ordinance of November 2, 1945, modified December 27, 1994) is now used to harass humanitarian associations and prosecute legal aliens for ‘helping’ spouses who find themselves in illegal situations” (ibid: 87; parentheses in original). Barats-Malbreil follows Patrick Weil (1996) in postulating that E.U. migrants are then seen as European and “assimilable” and third country nationals<sup>8</sup> are by definition not “European” and thus “non-assimilable” (ibid: 88). While the Netherlands has not yet begun to prosecute humanitarian associations who help illegal migrants, homeless shelters and migration organizations I encountered were certainly fearful of losing their state funding if they were seen aiding such individuals. It would be ironic if a country such as the Netherlands, which hosts the European Court of Human Rights, would begin to treat migrants as the worst of criminals.

Illegality is a serious issue now more than ever as few unskilled and semi-skilled migrants are granted work permits (Amersfoort and Penninx 1998: 56) even though there is continuing demand in many sectors of the Dutch economy for these workers, such as in the flower industry. Dutch anthropologist Jan Rath argues that the reason for more

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<sup>8</sup> The term “third country national” is used by European scholars and policy-makers to refer to citizens of non-E.U. states.

restrictive and discriminatory policies toward migrants is that certain groups of migrants “such as Turks and Moroccans, but not American, German, British or Japanese migrants who generally occupy higher class positions,” are labeled “ethnic minorities” and are “not considered to be fully-fledged members of the ‘Dutch imagined community’” (1993: 222). Their inability or disinterest in conforming to middle class, Dutch lifestyles make them unwelcome “guests.” Rath observes that instead of seeing ethnic-belonging as a fact of life, the Dutch understand any type of ethnic identification as a sign of “non-conformity and thus undesirability” (ibid.). Although both temporary and permanent immigration have long played an important part in Dutch history (Lucassen and Penninx 1997; Sassen 1999), the nation has avoided defining itself as a country with a substantial immigrant population and has not acknowledged the impact immigration has had on its social and economic spheres (van Amersfoort 1998: 1). A small and densely populated country like the Netherlands would be understandably defensive about its cultural and lingual boundaries since: 1) its native Dutch population is decreasing (Hines 2004: 158); 2) its migrant population is growing due to migrants’ larger family sizes and through family reunification; 3) it fears overwhelming waves of migration from the new Eastern European Union members; and 4) it must cede some of its traditional state power over to the European Union governing body.

#### Ambivalent Views of Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands

Like migrants overall, Eastern Europeans have been positively and negatively imagined in the Dutch public arena. Many Dutch people I talked to were confused as to why I was studying Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands as opposed to in Paris or New York. Reasons ranged from the assertion that there were no Russians in the Netherlands to the idea that Russians were from a Third World country and would not be as culturally interesting (e.g. in the arts or sciences) as the Dutch. A couple of immediate responses to my research topic were to assume that I must be studying the Russian mafia

or prostitutes if I was studying Russians abroad. However, there were two public events of Russian culture which showed a great ambivalence toward Russians.

One of several outings I went on with a group of Russian-speaking friends was to an art exhibit at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam's Dam Square. The exhibit featured the art and furnishings of the famous Russian Stroganoff family of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They had been closely connected to the Russian Tsars as well as to Dutch nobility, and collected Dutch art. The exhibit was curated by both Dutch and Russian art historians and included a good deal of historical material on the family, the Tsars, and Russian-Dutch cultural exchanges during that period. Posters for the exhibit had been pasted all over town for weeks before it opened and when we arrived, we were disappointed to see that there were large numbers of visitors and that tickets to enter were expensive. As a somewhat boisterous group (especially my friend Vanya, a rather large southern Russian), we were followed by guards into the gift shop and they generally kept an eye on us the entire way through the exhibit. I translated the English descriptions into Russian a number of times for the group since only two of the men knew English and none of us could read Dutch very well. At the end of the exhibit, one of the men asked me to ask the museum employees why the exhibit descriptions were not written in Russian as well as Dutch and English. They told me that it would have been too expensive and that the plaques might as well have been in Spanish if they were going to be in yet another language, since there were more Spanish-speaking tourists walking through than Russian. This did not please my friend but a Russian guard recognized the language we were speaking in and calmed my friend down by describing how much he enjoyed working in the museum and recounted the building's history for us as a diversion.

Overall, however, the exhibit seemed to offer a positive view of Russian history and life. Russia was represented as a place of beauty, wealth, and power, which was not entirely different from other European countries at that period in relation to its "high



culture.” The elite collected Dutch art, wore French fashion, and spoke French as well as Russian in their daily lives. A video playing in one of the main rooms showed an interview with a contemporary descendent of the Stroganoffs in Paris who reminisced about her family’s history in French-accented English.

Yet, another event, which was not as easily describable as positive contained within it just the same lack of concern over Russian language and representation as the Stroganoff exhibit. A couple of months before the Stroganoff exhibit, Amnesty International advertised its “To Russia with Love” concert and presentations all over the city. Because the ads foregrounded the “girl punk band” which would be playing at a popular concert venue, most Russian-speakers at the “concert” had no idea that the event was actually a fundraiser for Amnesty’s fight against a myriad of contemporary social ills in the Russian Federation. Although the two hours of presentations preceding the concert were in Dutch and some English, the small group of Russian-speakers (with some Dutch and English ability) interpreted the images of beaten women, emaciated prisoners, and down-trodden Chechens as offensive and overly negative. All were highly surprised at the nature of the event and upset by the fact that they were being represented in such hysterical terms and not even being addressed in their own language while being duped into attending it by the advertisements for the Russian band. The accompanying art exhibit on the plight of the Chechens elicited further anger and disappointment from the acquaintance who had invited me to the concert. He argued that none of the Chechen atrocities against Russians were portrayed.

The concert itself was a surprise. Our group was stunned by the Russian girl-punk, folk band’s lack of skill. It seemed to me that they had been chosen based upon their representation of Dutch ideas about female power and/or style (wild short hair and masculine clothes) with Russian language lyrics thrown in for just a whiff of the exotic. We watched the entire concert and bemusedly noticed the Dutch families were laughing at their own efforts to dance to the music. Later, I asked members at the Amnesty

International Amsterdam headquarters why there was no integration of the Russian language into their presentations (if there was English, after all) and informed them about the group of Russian migrants I was with who were offended by this lack of consideration. They said that they would keep this in mind the next time they held such an event and were very generous in giving me all of the materials they had on their Russian campaign.

These two events then show a very ambivalent view of Russia: a rich, “European” cultural history in contrast to a poor, violent, despotic (“Eastern?”) present. People enjoyed contemporary Russian music as exotic (within bounds) but also pitied and vilified much in Russia today. There is also an assumption that Russian-speakers are not a part of Dutch society or even a part of the tourist market (not true by any means) which the Russian-speakers found quite disturbing.

For Eastern European migrants in general – whether architects or sex-workers, female or male – assumptions and discourses about them as Eastern European hold some power over their lives in the Netherlands. Eastern Europeans do not suffer outright social hatred as do other groups of migrants who are religiously and culturally targeted as different from the Dutch (e.g. Muslim migrants such as Moroccans, see Nelissen and Buijs 2000: 178, 192). Yet, perhaps because they are less easily distinguishable phenotypically or religiously, the E.U. members and the Dutch in particular use trafficking and mafia images in order to define them as “other” in matters of migration, work, and crime. Eastern Europeans have difficulty entering the Netherlands, finding legal jobs, and obtaining housing no matter how “educated” they are due to popular worries about Eastern Europeans’ mafia connections. Without a long established migrant community to provide support, Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands (whether sex-working or not) are often wary of each other, in awe of being in a “Western” country, and worried about standing out as foreign. This is only reinforced as Eastern Europeans watch the stigmatization of non-“assimilated” migrants such as Turks and Moroccans.

Although some migrants are creating fulfilling lives for themselves in the Netherlands by gaining citizenship through marriage to a Dutch spouse, learning Dutch, utilizing Dutch social services, and having a relatively high Dutch standard of living, this does not necessarily mean full integration into Dutch social life. Not all of the Russian-speaking migrants are willing or even able to become “Dutch” if they believe they will only be living temporarily in the country. Younger migrants often flock to Amsterdam as drug tourists and job seekers – joining personal enjoyment and adventure with better economic possibilities. Even if they achieve more exciting and marginally more affluent lifestyles, I saw many migrants grow bitter and disillusioned as they realized the limits of their engagement with Dutch social life and found solace in rebellious street identities. The situation for academics and higher status migrants is different to the extent that they are accepted in their professions as having specialized knowledge and thus “good” reason to be in the country. But even those whom I met, who had lived in the Netherlands for several years, socialized among themselves or with other foreigners as opposed to with Dutch people in their same professions.

Finally, those migrants supposedly protected in the Netherlands as refugees and as trafficking victims are still not accepted as full citizens in the Netherlands. They can fall into mires of Dutch bureaucracy and social welfare, their families can be dispersed over the country, individuals are denied work permits for years, and some are even deported. The result is that former-Soviets still find themselves associating with one another in Western Europe, even though nationalist struggles at home would pressure them to do otherwise.

Again, the fact that migrants can carve out a community of their own in the Netherlands and do enjoy some economic, political, and social privileges that they may lack in their home countries speaks to Dutch cosmopolitanism and tolerance. Nevertheless, Russian-speakers’ and other migrants’ disconnection from the Dutch polity illustrates the limitations of this Dutch tolerance (see Hines 2004).

### Institutional Power and Individual Russian-Speakers

European Union and Dutch policies manifest themselves in migrants' lives based on their "belonging" (or not) to the "new" Europe. The "nation- state" still matters as conditions for migrants vary greatly depending upon the entrenched national laws regarding residency and work visas and social treatment of migrants in each state. But even more than in the past, these conditions depend upon the ever-changing relations among E.U. members and non-members.

In his review of anthropology of Europe, Wilson describes bottom-up studies of the European Union as less theoretically and ethnographically interesting than top-down studies conducted within actual E.U. governing bodies. He says that

since local communities seldom have a clearly defined notion of the 'Europe' of the EU, and often even less idea of how their communities are part of the total society that the EU represents, their role in the EU often appears to be reactive rather than proactive (Wilson 1998: 153).

This type of research is problematic, he believes, because it does not lead to any changes in actual E.U. policymaking practices. I will argue, however, that it is exactly in these everyday practices that governmentality matters the most since this is where dominant discourses, policy, and power play themselves out. Wilson himself says that

the EU has had an important effect on a wide range of social and cultural identities in Europe, forcing many groups of people to reconstruct their notions of nation, state, and sovereignty, and to renegotiate the many symbolic markers to the boundaries between groups that the EU, as a postmodern structure, has transformed (Wilson 1998: 154).

At a very basic level, the European Union causes people in the Netherlands to take notice of it as an increasingly important governmental body as they use Euro currency to buy groceries, see signs advertising European Commission-funded projects (Rotterdam was a "European Center of Culture" in 2001), watch an E.U. headline news channel on cable television, and track developments in the European Court of Human Rights in The Hague.

Although this dissertation is about the discourses and policies that legitimize power over Russian-speaking migrants in Western Europe, it is also an ethnography of the ways that migrants refuse or circumvent this power in their daily lives. While acknowledging difficulties in their lives based upon their “foreignness,” and status as Eastern Europeans, the migrants I came to know also refused to comply with any sort of “victimhood” as migrants, former Soviets, women, sex-workers, street artists, thieves, or any other lower-paid and exploited group. They were not always proud of the work that they did in the Netherlands or their decision to migrate, but neither did they feel entirely powerless to make the choice to leave or find other types of work and social contacts.

### Organization

This dissertation is divided into six chapters which will reflect Russian-speaking migrants’ multiplicity of experiences in the Netherlands. Overall, I attempt to balance discussions of Dutch and European conceptualizations and treatment of Russian-speakers with illustrations of Russian-speaking migrants’ own quests for social and economic fulfillment. In this first chapter, I have briefly discussed the history of European and Dutch conceptualizations of Eastern Europeans and Russian-speakers, migration policies, and understandings of race and ethnicity. In chapter two, I challenge “Western European” assumptions about the causes and consequences of migration with the analysis of actual migration patterns of former Soviets into Western Europe. I argue that while there has not been a huge migration of Eastern Europeans into the Netherlands since the fall of the Soviet Union, they have a significant presence in the Netherlands. Many scholars and lay people might overlook them as an insignificant or non-“problem” population since they are “white” and seem to blend in (e.g. Vermeulen and Penninx 2000) or, alternatively, focus upon their criminal and sexual threat to the country. I describe the lives of five different migrants to the Netherlands whose experiences contradict stereotypes of them. I then show how these migrants fit into general patterns

of migration from Eastern Europe into Western Europe. describes in greater depth current and historical discourses about Eastern Europeanness. .

Chapter three provides a glimpse into several migrants' experiences returning home to Lithuania and Latvia. In this chapter, I argue that these migrants cannot be seen as the prototypical "desperate" economic migrants assumed in much popular migration literature and in policies created in response to Eastern European migration into Western Europe. I recount the wedding celebrations of two street artists, visits to the home of a college student who had returned to school after working illegally in a restaurant in Amsterdam for the summer, and the situation of a former sex-worker's family in Latvia. Throughout descriptions of these experiences, I show how migration is not considered inevitable to families and friends of the migrants and that in fact many of them tried to convince their loved ones not to return to Western Europe.

In the fourth chapter, I demonstrate how today's governmental and nongovernmental attention to migrant sex-workers (which focuses on their sexuality and "traditional" cultures) exemplifies and helps construct "Eastern Europe" as both "other" and "self" to the Dutch and European national identities. The story of one former sex-worker and the organizations she works with to aid migrants and sex-workers in the Netherlands illustrates the insidious nature of Eastern European stereotypes in the Netherlands. Non-governmental organizations, Amsterdam officials, journalists, and even this Latvian sex-work activist utilize the language of "trafficking" in order to gain support for their political efforts on behalf of Eastern Europeans and sex-workers. However, they further marginalize them with trafficking discourse's disempowering images of sexual victims and cruel Mafioso. Even organization members who disputed such views of migrant sex-work and Eastern Europeans could still imagine Eastern European women as conniving gold diggers, who ruthlessly sought routes out of poverty. All of these images were dehumanizing and counterproductive to their aims. In turn, Russian-speaking migrants of both genders in the Netherlands were affected by such

negative assumptions about them and attention to the “trafficking in women” phenomenon.

The fifth chapter revisits the Amsterdam scene to give another example of the important role Russian-speaking migrants, especially illegal migrants, play in the city’s economy. Amsterdam’s tourist attractions drew many migrants to the Netherlands in the first place. They came to participate in Amsterdam’s rich artistic and musical culture, to enjoy its “tolerant” society (i.e. legal drugs, legal prostitution, and openness to alternative lifestyles) and to make money by working in the seasonal tourism industry. However, the tourist image of “tolerance” and partying which seduced and employed so many of these young migrants could also be exploitative and unhealthy. I discuss the illegal sex-work scene which I encountered at the end of my research as well as the situation of a street musician and several street artists who suffered from drug addictions and depression after the parties were over.

In the sixth chapter, I show how relationships among migrants work to their benefit even as they isolate them more from Dutch society. Increasing migration controls are causing migrants to leave the Netherlands or to remain longer in the Netherlands than they had at first planned because of the difficulty in obtaining re-entry visas to the country. Those remaining in the Netherlands are then finding social and economic support among themselves. I describe the burgeoning Russian cultural community in the Netherlands and the ways that migrants help each other in engaging in as well as circumventing Dutch society. Russian pirate radio, Russian-language websites, “Russian” discos, Russian theatrical and art festivals, and stores are only some of the new cultural expressions surfacing at this time. However, I argue that these Russian cultural expressions must be seen as a result of the negative environment of Dutch anti-immigrant policies and attitudes.

I conclude with a review of the social, political, and economic consequences for negative (and allegedly positive) discourses and policies about Eastern Europe in the

Netherlands and European Union. I argue that while these discourses are constantly renewed and put forth, E.U. expansion into Eastern Europe is not eradicating divisions between the two Europes and is in fact reinforcing them. Assumptions of difference influence migrants' lived experience, no matter their legal, educational, or economic status in the Netherlands. More humane and effective policy-making would be better served by paying attention to the complexity of migration patterns from the East and by avoiding the scapegoating of migrant groups for political gain.



## CHAPTER TWO: COMPLICATING THE IMAGES OF MIGRATION FROM THE EAST

Tourists, café waiters, street vendors, performers, artists, the mentally ill, beggars, and petty thieves all chaotically mingled with each other one sunny summer evening on Rembrandtplein. The tourists having coffee or beer in the café terraces on the perimeter of the square watched with amusement as the Bulgarian and French clowns played tricks on people with naughty balloon shapes. Other tourists strolled idly up to the street sellers squatting on the cobblestones to peruse their watercolor city scenes in psychedelic shades of pink and green, bright tulip oranges and yellows, or delft blue. The more drunk or adventurous tourists asked a blonde girl in faded, ripped jeans and tank top to draw fake tattoos of dragons or flowers on their bodies. Still others gaped at the quick, silly caricatures that a tall young man in glasses made for them to take home as souvenirs of their crazy experience in Amsterdam. Often, when someone paid the blonde girl or asked whether she could draw a unique tattoo on someone's chest, she would confer with the caricature artist who would speak for her with the tourists in oddly accented English.

Many tourists and local Dutch alike had no idea that these two artists were seasonal migrant workers who won national contests for their architectural drawings and designed dental offices and mansions for the wealthy back home in Lithuania. Their fellow street sellers who shared stools, tea, beer, food, weed and conversation with them were equally invisible as former Soviets and people with lives beyond the street spectacle.

In the first section of this chapter, I will describe Rembrandtplein, one of the main centers of Russian-speaking migrants' networking and socializing in the Netherlands and follow this with five ethnographic sketches of some of the migrants I met there and at the nearby Russian Orthodox Church. I argue that their lives contradict many assumptions about Eastern European migration into Western Europe as victimized sex-workers and

Mafia. While legality and attitudes toward migrants limit their choices in the Netherlands, many former Soviets live in Amsterdam by choice, not because of abject poverty or criminal networks. Furthermore, they are not necessarily usurping Dutch jobs, nor are they always exploited in their labor and social relations with the Dutch.

In the final section, I show how these five individuals' experiences fit into the larger Eastern European migrations into Western Europe. Their lives and much ethnographic, demographic, and sociological research on East-West migration dispute the very basis of European anxiety over mindless "floods" of Eastern migrants invading Europe. I describe the specific patterns of these migrations: the youth of the migrants, their interest in temporary migration, their high education level, and how gender has an effect on migration even if not quite the one assumed in the trafficking in women discourse described in the previous chapter. Both women's and men's experiences in their home countries as well as abroad shape their opportunities and limitations on migrating. Men are not necessarily at an advantage over women in this endeavor, despite trafficking discourse's claims.

Finally, I argue that accounts of individual Russian-speaking migrants' lives as well as ethnographic research on their communities in the Netherlands are necessary for a fuller picture of Eastern migration into Western Europe. These accounts demonstrate that Eastern Europeans are a potential benefit to the aging Dutch and European populations more than a threat (see Essed 1995: 50; OECD 2002). European migration policy and attitudes toward migrants would be more effective and humane if they were informed by individual migrants' stories as well as general demographic statistics. Migrants' motivations and trajectories can never be assumed to be determined by single causes (i.e. poverty, ethnic strife, religious intolerance, or gender discrimination) but are formed by a complex mix of structural elements and personal experiences.

### Geography of a Community: Rembrandtplein

In Amsterdam, there are several main squares where tourists and locals alike gather to drink beer or coffee at sidewalk cafes, buy trinkets from street sellers, enjoy roving street performers, and meet friends for a night on the town. Rembrandtplein is one of the smaller squares, but no less popular for its size as the quantity of cafes, bars, clubs, coffeeshops,<sup>9</sup> restaurants, and tourists lining it attest. On some hot days, chairs from the cafes can be filled to the street with vacationers or residents soaking up the sun. Unlike the other large city squares (Dam Square, Museumplein, and Leidseplein), Rembrandtplein is not open to large gatherings or strolling since the center of it is taken over by a fenced in, grassy space. Only on especially nice days do people disregard the fence and loll about on the grass. Large trees shade one corner of the square where there are several benches. At the opposite side of the green, behind a bronze statue of Rembrandt, a few more benches are hidden by bushes on both sides. The rest of this inner part of the square is taken up by an outdoor café, tram stop shelters, public phones, a money changing booth, and a portable structure for the police and community service workers to take up residence on weekends and major football (soccer) nights. Street sellers cram into the space to the side of the inner café backed up against the fence next to the money changer and facing Reguliersbreestraat, the main street leading into square and to Rokin, Amsterdam's central avenues. Cars and trams are each only allowed on one side of the square so most people walk or ride their bikes to the square. Although small, this spot is profitable for the street sellers and performers as they call out to the slowly moving pedestrians and the large and captive audiences at café establishments.

Russian-speaking tourists, resting musicians, and other migrants gather to chat, make social or work connections, and drink tea or beer in the street seller area, on the

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<sup>9</sup> The term “coffeeshop” (or “*koffieshop*”) refers to a café which sells cannabis and cannabis products such as pre-made joints, “space” cakes, cookies, and hash milkshakes (see van Driesum and Hall 2002: 190).

outer and inner benches, and at the surrounding cafes. On warm summer evenings, Russian-speakers detour through Rembrandtplein on their way home from work, to meet up with acquaintances for even just a brief greeting. By the time I was in Amsterdam in 2002, Rembrandtplein had become an unofficial meeting place for many Russian-speaking migrants.

### The Street Scene

Migrants have adopted new migration strategies which have often undermined the efforts of restrictive immigration policies...Although power and knowledge are unequally distributed between policy makers and their targets, migrants are not simply victims and passive recipients of these policies; they also have the capacity to mobilize resources and create or broaden their own spaces of control (Koser and Lutz 1998: 4).

During my pilot study in 2001, I did not expect to study street artists and only began spending time with them when I found it very difficult to immediately gain the trust of the organizations aiding Eastern European sex-workers. As I mentioned in the introduction, one organization member urged me to compare the lives of male street artists with those of the female sex-workers. She suggested that I would find that these men on the street were living in the Netherlands for pleasure while the female sex-workers supported families at home with their earnings. When I returned in 2002, I realized that this was not necessarily the case and that of course men's and women's reasons, methods, and experiences in migrating could not be so easily summed up. For instance, some Eastern European women did perform on the streets or sell art with the men, and several people of both genders were supporting themselves and families at home or in other countries with their summer work in the Netherlands.

Street performing and street selling were lucrative and just marginally legal activities for migrants in the Netherlands. Eastern European, Israeli, South and Central American, and migrants from many other countries realized that they could take advantage of the tourism trade in Amsterdam, even without work permits, if they

portrayed themselves as “artisans” who were simply selling their home-made work or otherwise demonstrating their talents on the streets. The city government allowed these activities as long as the artists were not selling other people’s work, which was considered illegal trading, and if they did not become public nuisances. Police on bicycles and security cameras monitored all of the squares and, in particularly busy times of the year, the police checked street artists’ permits and the veracity of their claims to be “artists.” Before the summer, there was a rush among street artists to get the limited number of performer permits and permits for different kinds of crafts, as well as permits to work on specific squares in the city. Several told me that they did not have to present their visas or passports to get the permits, so even migrants who had overstayed their visas were able to receive them. However, the police could use the fact that someone had a permit for the wrong craft or for a different square to confiscate their art or bar them from playing music in the city. This usually happened if the police felt that the number of artists was becoming unmanageable or made the street look messy.

The temporary street artists from Russia, Ukraine, and other non-E.U. countries could apply for tourist visas to the Netherlands which would allow them to reside legally there for three months. These artists usually arrived in early June and stayed through August. Migrants who were from E.U.-associated countries – such as the Baltics, Poland, and Bulgaria – did not have to apply for tourist visas but received them automatically when they arrived. They could stay for more extended periods of time as long as they left the European Union every three months to renew their visas. Migrants sometimes stayed in the city year-round if they could find other types of work in the informal economy, had saved enough money from the summer to survive during the winter, or if they had somehow found a way to live and work legally.

Migrants who socialized in the general vicinity of the street sellers ranged from drug addicts to academics. Many knew each other from the Russian Orthodox Church just down the street, from the burgeoning Russian cultural scene, from their home towns,

or simply by introducing themselves when they heard Russian being spoken on the square. Yet, this network of Russian-speaking migrants was quite segmented. Various groups within the Russian church disassociated themselves from each other and from the street sellers. For instance, one parishioner told me that he would never socialize with the street artists because they were not educated and cultured, while another parishioner advised me not to spend time with one group in the church that was too “rough.” Some of the street sellers were also confused when I started going to the church to meet people – wondering what kind of insipid people I would end up interviewing. In addition, more established migrants often separated themselves from the recent arrivals by stressing their ability to blend into Dutch society and their disinterest in socializing with Russian-speakers outside their immediate family. However, I saw many more similarities than differences between these groups’ experiences and backgrounds. I also realized that their disavowals of knowing one another and socializing across groups were often untrue.<sup>10</sup>

The stories described below come from interviews and participant observation with an array of Russian-speaking migrants in and around Rembrandtplein. They form an introduction to the Russian-speakers I met and present a contrast to the negative representations of Eastern Europeans in the first two chapters. These representations often feature in scholarly research, which attempts to predict the impact of European Union enlargement on East to West migration. For example, European economists Subrata Ghatak and Vince Daly list the following concerns about Eastern European migration into Western Europe:

(a) Who are the migrants and do they rob our jobs and lower our wages? (b) What will be the size of the flows? (c) Do immigrants live off our social security systems? (d) How do we measure the welfare of the ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ countries? (e) How well do immigrants perform in the recipient country? ... (i) To what extent is migration a gendered issue? (Ghatak and Daly 2001: 32).

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 6 will address the vagaries of Russian “community-building” and what it signifies on a larger scale about Russian-speakers’ position in the Netherlands.

These misgivings about Eastern migration combine with the racist view that Eastern Europeans are less civilized than Western Europeans to form Europeans' anti-immigration policies and attitudes today (see Lungescu 2004).

The following five migrants' stories will serve as a contrast to the dehumanizing and much too generalized economic analyses of Eastern European migration impact on Western Europe and migration policy in the European Union (see Ghatak and Daly 2001). As longtime anthropologist and migration researcher Caroline Brettell notes:

Oral history data is quite unsuitable for determining frequencies, averages, and relationships between variables. But from narrative we learn the particular as opposed to the general, and we can understand what the abstract categorizations and generalizations about migration look like on the ground, from the individual's point of view (2003: 27).

### Alexei (Alex)

Alexei, or "Alex" (he preferred Alex because it sounded less Russian), was one of the first former-Soviet artists to migrate to the Netherlands after the end of the Cold War. When I met him through a street seller, Roman, he had been in the Netherlands for seven years already, was a Dutch citizen, owned his own mural painting business, wrote freelance articles for Moscow and Dutch newspapers, and was writing a novel. Although he no longer sold paintings on Rembrandtplein or in the neighboring tourist shops as in the past, he still socialized with the street sellers and other Russian-speakers in the area after work. He was very proud of his achievements and many creative activities. Alex was a large, dark-haired man who wore old, stained sweatshirts with flashy, expensive eyewear. He always made sure people knew he was a "genius" and superior to those around him, but he also seemed quite anxious about being included in all Russian-speaking social activities. He spoke fluent English but had not perfected Dutch and mainly socialized with foreigners. Alex granted me an interview in return for some help in editing his hard-boiled English-language novel about Los Angeles. The story he gave me about his experiences in the Netherlands provides a history of Rembrandtplein as a

site for Russian-speaking networking, shows migrants' potential for obtaining economic success in the country, and also demonstrates some migrants' possible long-term problems in integrating into Dutch society.

Alex arrived in the Netherlands in the summer of 1995. He misled his family about having connections in Amsterdam and borrowed money from a rich uncle in Georgia for the trip. He had already attempted to work in Moscow for a few years but he wanted enough financial security to publish more than just the "journalistic stuff" he had produced in the past. He could get more publicity for his work in Europe and chose the Netherlands because he had heard it was an interesting place. When he told me this, Alex explained that he had not come to the Netherlands because he was a "wild person" (i.e. drug user) which he implied was the reason other tourists and migrants traveled to the city. He also resented a couple of Dutch news articles about him (in 1998 and 1999), in which the authors claimed that he migrated to the Netherlands because Amsterdam and Dutch culture formed a muse for his latent artistic talents. In time, he gave up actively fighting such assumptions about "Western" culture's superiority over "Eastern." Alex complained that "everyday if you read the newspaper you read something about people east of the (Western European) line (as) barbarians."

From the very beginning, Alex was determined to become a legal Dutch citizen. At that time, the Dutch state paid for his immigration lawyer and he applied for a residency and work permit as a self-employed artist. It took two years for him to battle his way through the process. Alex eventually educated himself on Dutch immigration laws in order to protest Dutch officials' continual denials of his petitions in court. The delays he experienced turned out to be the result of mismanaged paperwork because his first lawyer and Dutch officials assumed he was filing for refugee status. In addition, he believed that his lawyer was one of the many who tried to exploit migrants for government funds but had no real interest in migrants' cases. They "string you along and then dump you at the end of a few years," he told me. Many migrants are forced to return



home when their cases end in this way. When Alex realized his lawyer was going to let the time on his case run out so that he would have to return to Georgia, he fired him and hired another lawyer with his own funds.

Alex was eager to become legal because he “had nothing to lose,” without a family to support and knowing that he had other possibilities at home and in Russia if living in the Netherlands became unsatisfactory. As the years went by, the Dutch state was eventually forced to accept Alex’s petitions because he received so much publicity as a migrant artist in Dutch newspaper and television interviews and articles. It was easier for the Dutch government to finally approve his application, since it would have cost them much more money to conduct additional court cases for his deportation.

Alex met many street artists over the years by simply walking through Rembrandtplein, hearing Russian spoken, and introducing himself. Although he never saw much profit in street-selling and from the beginning sought commercial outlets for his art in souvenir shops, Alex lived with one of the street artists in a Calvinist hostel when he first arrived. The hostel was very cheap and Alex made connections with a wide assortment of foreigners in the city while living there.

Alex described his early years in the Netherlands as very exciting. There were two different Russian-speaking groups at that time. One was Alex’s group, which were politically radical and ambitious, while another, less adventurous group was led by a Russian, Yuri, who worked on Rembrandtplein. Alex thought that Yuri’s group saw him and his friends as “mafia-like.” Yuri’s associates were shy about being in the Netherlands and awkward about their foreigner status in Dutch society. Alex described this as “mentally hiding.” He thought that they were simply waiting for some nice Dutch person to do something for them. Alex described this group as depending upon

some master to help them out and do things for them. And, me and all of these other people I mentioned, have a very different mentality. (We) just come and fight and go forward and break a wall if necessary.

In his Russian migrant community, Yuri was considered the most successful individual because he had an English girlfriend. Alex said that he asked a member of the group if Yuri's girlfriend was beautiful and "they were all surprised that he would think about that as opposed to just the fact she was English."

Eventually, Alex and his friends moved out of the hostel. He lived one month with a friend in the home of an American woman who was older and "crazy," and then he moved in with some other Russian-speakers who began to establish themselves. At this time, he was only friends with a small number of Russian-speakers and associated with "Western" people. Alex's international social group was "left wing, seemed weird, (and was politically) radical." Through these connections, he met a "funny" Canadian agent who found him mural jobs in coffeeshops and took twenty-five percent of the profits. In the summer of 1996, he saved up enough money to start his own company with a couple of friends – a Ukrainian-American couple. Although this business relationship did not work out, he met his friend Roman through the couple, as Roman and his business partner were from the same town in Ukraine. After a year and a half, Alex also became better acquainted with the Rembrandtplein group. There was no longer very much competition among them and people gave him more respect when they saw how successful he was becoming in marketing his art.

Although Alex had the opportunity to move to the United States in 2000, a six month trial run in Los Angeles proved to him that he was much better off for the time being in the Netherlands. He received Dutch citizenship and seems happy enough. He told me that it did not matter what country he lived in as long as he could write his book, publish it in English, and have his own apartment. He does not want to return to Georgia, which is an entirely different place than the country he left seven years before, and does not have a nostalgic view of "home." He also claimed to be tired of Russian-speaking people and would rather find some other expatriate friends. He said that

in Dutch society, it is very difficult to assimilate. They are very special in that way... very uncommunicative. They are very rejective [sic] in terms of fun, family relationships and friendship. They don't want a stranger in their life. They may have business with you, they may give you money or buy something, but they don't want somebody strange in their life. So of course, instead of like wasting energy breaking this wall, Amsterdam gives opportunities to deal with other people. I wouldn't mind spending a few months hanging (out) with Spanish people or some other group of people: Chinese, or Thai or Irish instead of Russians. Right now, I had a long period of having only business relationships with Russian-speaking people.

### Vadim

The first Russian-speaker I met on the square was Vadim. A Russian maid at a small backpacker hotel where I was staying introduced me to him while he was selling tourist watercolors. Vadim's story illustrates the ways that some Russian-speaking migrants may not thrive on adversity like Alex, but may actually be overcome by years of social, economic, and legal exclusion in Dutch society.

Although shy and suspicious of me at first, Vadim was patient enough to let me test out my rusty Russian skills with him and we became friends. Being blonde, fairly thin, and generally well-dressed, tourists probably mistook Vadim as a short Dutchman if they did not speak with him. Unfortunately, he spoke very little English, let alone Dutch or any other language than Russian, so he generally depended upon a frustrating system of pointing and a few English numbers for transactions with tourists. He seemed happy to have someone to speak with in Russian, even if I was not always as fluent and sophisticated in that language as his friends and family at home.

As that first summer in the Netherlands progressed (June-July 2001), Vadim told me that he had been depressed and thought about returning to Russia and not returning to the Netherlands the next summer. I urged him to explore more of Amsterdam and the Netherlands because he, like several other street artists, rarely left the very small area of the city in which they lived and worked, even after several years of visiting the country. After numerous trips to towns around Amsterdam, to the beach, to museums, and other

tourist attractions, Vadim became a little more positive about the possibilities of living there. In fact, he overstayed his visa that next winter, perhaps because of this newfound interest in Amsterdam or maybe because of his exhaustion with the cycle of migrating back and forth to Russia. He complained to me once about the difficulties of applying for visas to the Netherlands each spring. He may also have grown somewhat comfortable with the small social network he was creating in Amsterdam. Vadim had introduced me to his friend Roman, a Ukrainian who helped Vadim sell his pictures and who lived with him the following year. Roman aided Vadim in communicating with tourists and dealing with Dutch life in general since he spoke some English.

Neither Roman nor Vadim was poverty-stricken; by selling art on the streets, they had money enough to spend on the basic necessities and even for socializing in cafes and coffeeshops when their work was done. They were not supporting families at home, although Vadim had a daughter and an ex-wife in St. Petersburg. They told me that they had not come to the Netherlands because they were forced by poverty per se, although they made much more money than they would have at home.

While enjoying an active social life with several other Russian-speakers at that time, Vadim was continually frustrated by not being able to work as a “real” artist in the Netherlands or be a part of Dutch social life, since he lacked legal work papers and Dutch or English language proficiency. He was bored by creating the same cheaply made tourist watercolors, over and over again, rather than the art which was his vocation back in Russia. Street artists like Vadim would make some initial drawings of classic Dutch and Amsterdam scenes – windmills, tulips, eighteenth-century houses, and canals – and then copy them with good photocopiers. They would then paint over the copies with watercolors in a sort of assembly line manner. Vadim told me that he had almost hoped that he would be denied his tourist visa to the Netherlands, the last time he applied for one in Russia, because the tedious work and life in Amsterdam made him so despondent. He only came the last time because he knew he could make more money with the tourist

art than with his own oil paintings at home and he had already established connections with some other St. Petersburg street artists in Amsterdam.

Yet, Vadim became morose and visited with his friends less often over the winter of 2003. He had not renewed his tourist visa in the last two years and he knew that he had very little possibility of becoming legal in the Netherlands after staying there illegally for such a long time, unless he somehow met and married a Dutch woman who spoke Russian. In the spring of 2004, he had a homicidal attack of paranoia and was sent to a Dutch jail for attacking a fellow street artist from St. Petersburg whom he accused of being in the “Ukrainian mafia.” None of his friends, including myself, had predicted this would happen and we blamed ourselves for not having noticed his withdrawal and more frequent paranoid moments.

Just the week before, Vadim told me that his Dutch landlord was again thinking of helping him put some of his “real” art in a fair and I thought he was starting to feel more positively about his future again. However, his landlord was unreliable and made money by exploiting Russian-speaking migrants in renting over-priced, illegally sublet rooms to them. Nonetheless, Vadim had no other Dutch acquaintances and few Russian-speaking friends with the legal status or interest in helping him market his work.

Like Vadim, the victim of his assault was from St. Petersburg and was over-qualified for his marginal work on the streets of Amsterdam. A former economics professor at the University of St. Petersburg who spoke good English, this street-artist always sought new ways of optimizing his profits and he did not worry about stepping on other migrants’ toes in the process. In addition, he appeared to be fairly contented and calm with his life as a street artist, unlike Vadim. It must have galled Vadim that such a formerly high status Russian as this professor could make the arduous return, summer after summer, to sell tourist art in Amsterdam and be satisfied with his life. This terrible incident may not have occurred had these street sellers held more legal rights, access to

skilled work, and social acceptance in the Netherlands as legitimate residents rather than as unwanted interlopers.<sup>11</sup>

### Roman & Ania

Roman and Ania were a Ukrainian-Lithuanian couple who met in Amsterdam during the summer of 2002. While Vadim's life changed for the worse over the period I knew him, Roman's and Ania's situation improved. Roman was similar to Vadim in his moments of despair about his future of employment in the Netherlands, but Ania and he were both more creative, like Alex, in cultivating social and economic relationships among other Russian-speakers and foreigners. Their story challenges stereotypes about Russian gender relations such as the idea that men are criminal Mafiosi and/or abusive to women.

Roman came from a small town in the western part of Ukraine, which had been part of Poland during particular periods in history. He told me that unlike the Eastern Ukraine where Russian is predominantly spoken, people in his area mostly speak Ukrainian. He explained that because of this, Russians feared and disliked these particular Ukrainians. Western Ukraine only joined the USSR in 1938 and they were consequently some of the first people to emigrate out of the former-Soviet Union when it was disbanded. Roman believed that officials in consulates recognized him as one of these Western Ukrainians and purposely made it harder for him to get a visa to Western European countries. When I first met him, he was fairly negative about being in the Netherlands and was considering returning home or moving on to Italy to be with his brother and to explore other employment possibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> The professor survived the attack and his family came from St. Petersburg to help him sell paintings the rest of the summer. However, his painting hand, which he used to ward off Vadim's knife, may never be completely functional again. He and many other street artists who witnessed the incident may have psychological wounds for quite some time.

Roman had been in the Netherlands for two years already with several trips beforehand. He was jaded about working on the street each summer and finding odd jobs such as painting shop windows in the winter. He did not believe that he could ever build up his resume or skill set for any sort of respectable future job with this kind of work. Yet, he did not want to return home to live without such relatively lucrative employment. He had seen other migrants repatriate and spend all of their foreign savings on frivolous consumer items for their families, friends and themselves. The cycle would start all over again as they ran out of cash and needed to migrate to keep up the same lifestyle.

Although he looked quite young – with curly blond hair, an ebullient demeanor, bright eyes, and short stature – he was already in his early thirties and wanted to start a family and settle down somewhere. Roman had originally come to the Netherlands because he could not get a visa to the United States to follow his girlfriend there. He had decided to stay with a friend in Amsterdam until his girlfriend sent for him. She had married an older American man whom she hoped to use for his United States citizenship, and then divorce to marry Roman. Unfortunately, her husband chose to settle in rural Oregon and, recognizing her deceit, refused to submit the papers necessary for her to receive a green card and other documents. Roman said that she knew about her rights in the United States and that she could get help in escaping him if she wanted to. However, she seemed averse to changing the situation since she was entirely supported by her husband and did not have to work. Roman grew tired of waiting and resigned himself to thinking about a life without her.

In 2001, Roman decided to remain in the Netherlands rather than buy a new passport to travel to Spain or Italy in the winter, as he had planned, because his younger brother had arrived in the Netherlands to work in the construction industry. His brother needed Roman's support in overcoming his divorce from his wife and in adjusting to life in the Netherlands (Roman's brother mainly spoke Ukrainian).

When I left in 2003, Roman was much more contented and hopeful about his future. He had started a relationship with Ania, a Russian-Lithuanian woman, the summer before and she returned to the Netherlands in the summer of 2003 to be with him and help him sell art on the streets. Ania was a college student who had come to the Netherlands in an *au pair* program in the summer of 2002. Finding the work and host family much worse than she imagined, she left after just two days and was taken in by another Russian-speaker. Unfortunately, while she was out one night, this acquaintance was sent to jail and Ania was unable to get back into his apartment where all of her luggage and money were for the next three weeks. She walked around all night and struck up a conversation with Roman the next day, telling him about her plight. He was amazed at her situation and how calm she seemed in spite of it, so, for the next weeks, he let her sleep on his couch. He then found her a job at a popular restaurant on one of the main tourist and shopping streets, where the owner gave her a room. Roman and Ania had a whirlwind relationship but at the end of the summer, she returned to Vilnius to resume her studies. By the summer of 2003, however, she missed Roman and Amsterdam so much that she put her studies in Linguistics on hold to be with him. Their plan was to work that summer and return to Lithuania again so that she could finish her education, which he insisted she should complete, and they would get married.

Both Ania and Roman spoke excellent English and a little Spanish, were always excited to talk to new people from different parts of the world while they were selling on the street, and were very savvy about saving money and trying out new business ideas. In the summer of 2003, Ania banded together with two former street sellers to create some new pictures to sell on a different square while Roman continued to diversify his stock of tourist art and perfect his selling techniques. Neither Ania nor Roman were artists themselves, but because they were good salespeople, they still made a fair amount of money by selling numerous artists' work. Roman was also creative in pretending to be a



“real” artist by acquiring half-finished pictures and keeping paint brushes on hand to rub water across them industriously when police came by.

In early 2004, I received an e-mail from Ania which said that the two were in Lithuania, had indeed been married, were soon expecting a child, and that Roman would be taking care of the baby while Ania finished her degree. Roman and Ania were still planning to return to the Netherlands to make more money during the summer.

### Ekaterina (Katya)

Although there were in truth fewer illegal or legal Russian-speaking sex-workers in the Netherlands than women from other Eastern European and Latin American countries, I was able to meet one woman who worked at the most high class brothel in all of the Netherlands. Her story suggests just how misleading much of the trafficking discourse and migration literature can be when it claims that many women who migrate are more desperate than men and work in sex-work or in other domestic labor because of they have so few choices. Although I did not meet Katya on Rembrandtplein, I found out later that she did know acquaintances of mine on that square and was a regular at the Orthodox Church down the street. She was, thus, far from isolated in Amsterdam’s Russian community because of her profession.

As with many Eastern European sex-workers, Katya did not subscribe to local feminist politics, which called for women to take pride in their identities as professional prostitutes. She did not identify herself as a sex-worker and insisted that we sit where people could not easily overhear our conversation in the hip café where we talked. In fact, her appearance resembled that of an upper class Dutch woman with very subtle makeup, expensive but tasteful jewelry, and high heels. Yet, Katya was perfectly

comfortable in telling me about how she came to the Netherlands and about her work there. She proudly stated that her story could fill a whole book.<sup>12</sup>

Katya was hardly poverty-stricken before she decided to move to the Netherlands. I was a student in Moscow while she was still living there in 1996, but we had little in common when discussing our experiences of the city. My life had consisted of endless train rides and crowded buses to class at Moscow State University and home again, while Katya drove around town in her own car, shopped at expensive clothing stores, and ate at nice restaurants. Katya explained to me that she worked as the assistant to the director of one of the largest American-Russian joint venture businesses, at that time. She said that

In Russia, my life was very good. I lived at a high level. Not total. I was never a “New Russian” but my salary was something like over a thousand dollars per month. [In addition, there were] some extras: “double accounting”...it means that I used to get a small amount of money in rubles and the rest in an envelope so they didn’t have to pay taxes on that. But that money, what I made over, I spent on travel expenses. I’ve been to over fifteen countries in five star hotels... the best places: Caribbean, Mexico, Acapulco, Thailand, India. I’ve been everywhere. I’ve seen [everything] already.

Yet, her position in the business was not very stable. She realized that once she was over thirty years old and began to look her age, she could be fired and replaced with the boss’s new mistress whenever he felt so inclined. She believed that men in her office were already starting to turn against her, even though she was always very professional.

Katya said:

I can take care of myself but sometimes they could say something which humiliated me. In Russia they do not know this thing [called] “sexual harassment.” I don’t much care... I can manage any kind of situations, but you know what I always needed was [their] respect. Then, the economic crisis of 1998 [occurred], and I decided, “Okay, I have to move on.”

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<sup>12</sup> Katya insisted we speak in English because she was now so integrated into Dutch society that she had few chances to keep up her English language proficiency.

Katya said that she was getting older and felt that it was time to start a family. She was thirty-one when she left Moscow and thirty-six when I interviewed her, but she appeared much younger. Katya said that in Russia, she had been prepared to descend from her upper class lifestyle to one of the middle class, if that was what it would take to be settled in life and have a family. She proceeded to search on the Internet for a mate and met an Englishman who was living in the Netherlands. After visiting him, she fell in love with him and felt that the fact that he was much older than her would not be a problem. This Englishman was not truly ready for a wife or partner, however. Although he was an accountant by trade, he did not realize how much of his average salary would be needed to support one more person in addition to himself. Katya said that men like him who look for brides in foreign countries often just want “a dog.” They think that their bride “will be sleeping on the pillow, and she will understand some obedience and he will give her some food.” For instance, she said that he was surprised that she required money to keep up her attractive appearance. She told him that “if you want a beautiful woman next to you, you have to pay for that!”

Katya’s problems with her husband began right from the very beginning of her arrival in the Netherlands. For instance, she realized that they did not share enough in common to have good conversations. Katya was an educated woman with “cultured” tastes and yet her husband was solely interested in English and Australian soap operas, which he watched religiously every day. She felt completely isolated in the house they lived in because it was in a smaller suburb of Amsterdam and public transportation in that area was unsatisfactory. Her husband refused to help her earn a driver’s license or buy a car so she spent her savings from Russia on these needs. The situation worsened, however, when he refused her money to buy medicine when she became sick. Katya soon stopped asking for money altogether and followed her girlfriend’s advice about employment at a sex-club called Yab Yum. When we met, she had been working there for several years. Before September 11, she made “a lot of money,” but after, the

reduction in American tourist travel to Europe and the new taxes on sex-work were taking a toll on her income. While she was still with him, Katya's husband never inquired into how she suddenly had money of her own. They divorced once she received her working and residency papers in the Netherlands.

In the past, Katya was proud to be an employee of Yab Yum. In her view, the people who worked there were professional and "classy." However, the club had recently changed owners and Katya believed that they would hire any young girl "who was walking along the street," whether illegally or legally residing in the Netherlands. More Dutch people than American were the club's new customers and they cared less about a stylish ambience, well-dressed women, and "normal conversation."

It is true that Katya chose sex-work when she was left with few possibilities for work in the Netherlands – her husband was not going to support her, she did not know Dutch very well, and she had not been prepared for such a contingency. When she started searching for the kind of professional work she had performed in Russia, Dutch employers would not hire her because she was foreign and could not chat with them in their native language (although she spoke English very well). However, she could have returned to Russia at any point and she did not seem to have many regrets about how her life had turned out by staying in the Netherlands. She was saving money to retire in a few years, to support her trips back to Russia, and to travel around the world.

Although Katya retained old acquaintances from Russia in the Netherlands, she told me that she did not like other Russian migrants and preferred her friends and family back in Russia. She returned quite often to Moscow to see her father, in particular, whom she had been supporting since before she left because his Russian government pension was inadequate. She owned the apartment he lived in and regularly sent him money. However, it was important to go there to check up on him often since he refused to buy necessities for himself unless she was there to help him. The rest of her family was all over the world. Katya's mother had died many years ago and her father's second wife –

his first wife's cousin – had also died of the same type of cancer as his first wife. Katya cared a great deal for her father's other daughter from that marriage who still lived in Moscow.

Katya's immediate plans involved another vacation to Acapulco and a return to Russia. In the future, she hoped to meet a man who would match her intelligence and take care of her the way she felt she deserved, but she was not waiting for this to happen. She had had several boyfriends over the years – German, Dutch, and Russian – but none of them were serious enough for her to give up sex-work and the expensive lifestyle to which she was accustomed. At the end of our interview, Katya paid for our drinks because she said that she felt sorry for me as a poor student while she could easily afford such small luxuries.

#### Migrant “Flows”: Eastern European Migration into (and out of) Western Europe

Katya, Roman, Ania, Alex and Vadim are all very different people: only Vadim and Katya are from the same country, Katya lives a much more affluent lifestyle than the others, they are of different genders, they have very different personalities and interests, and they left their countries of origin for quite diverse reasons. However, there are still several similarities among the four: 1) other than Ania, who was 21 at the time, they were in their thirties and had grown up in the Soviet Union and shared its cultural history; 2) they all had earned at least some college education; 3) they purposely chose to migrate to the Netherlands over other countries for more than just economic reasons; 4) and they were linked to each other by social and economic networks. This section will elaborate upon these commonalities and differences among Russian-speaking migrants traveling to Western Europe and the Netherlands. A review of the sparse literature on Eastern European migration into the West supports my argument that as a group, Russian-

speakers do not closely resemble the stereotypes about them or ultimately form a threat to European states' economies and societies even with E.U. expansion.<sup>13</sup>

Based upon official Russian Federation statistics and interviews with Russian migration officials and scholars, sociologist Cristiano Codagnone argues that “the political and symbolic importance assumed by post-Soviet migration both in the West and in Russia tends to outweigh its numerical significance” (1998: 39). While Western European countries have been expecting “floods” of Eastern European migrants since the end of the Cold War, more people have migrated between the former socialist states than have emigrated from them to Western Europe (ibid.). This situation is similar to representations of twentieth century Italian emigration since European and American histories often ignored the numerically greater numbers of Italian migrants traveling to other parts of Europe than to the United States, generally because such governments as Germany and France considered these migrants as only “guest workers” (Sassen 1999: 74). Predictions of potential invasions of Eastern European migrants with European Union expansion show how “the force of representation, no matter what the facts” drives worries and policies about migration (ibid.). In both cases, people have moved in patterns from particular regions to particular places abroad based upon the ease of travel, jobs, personal connections, individual histories, and governmental welcome, rather than simply “flowing” from a poor area to a richer one.

The following sections will address the patterns in Russian-speaking migration that have been alluded to in the individual stories described above: migration within the former-Soviet Union as opposed to out of it, ethnic migration, migrants' high education

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<sup>13</sup> In the following discussion, I do not want to give the impression that Russian-speakers are a special population which has been misunderstood by Dutch and other states in the European Union. Numerous other ethnic groups in Europe are equally or even more overtly discriminated against and negatively represented. However, I argue that it is necessary to acknowledge Russian-speaking migrants' lives at this moment due to the changes occurring in the European Union such as its eastward expansion and conscious constructions of a new “European” identity.

and skill levels, the temporary nature of migration, migrants' relative youth, and the gendered differences in Eastern European migrant experience. All of these elements of the current migration patterns of Russian-speakers into Western Europe indicate that they can pose very little threat to E.U. or the Dutch economies and societies.

#### Migration within the Russian Federation and the former Soviet States

Russian demographer, Igor Ushkalov argues that emigration from Russia could be influenced by the large number of migrants entering Russia (2000). Russia's migration policy is to accept all people of Russian heritage who want to return to Russia, and 5 million had already been admitted from the former republics by 1998 (ibid.: 167). He says that up to 50% of the remaining 24 million Russian nationals could return to Russia from such former Soviet states "as Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia, where armed conflict, extreme nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism have made them unattractive" (ibid; see also Axmann 1998: 592; Pilkington 1998ab). In addition, legal migrants from Ukraine, Turkey, and China are often recruited to work in the Siberian oil industry and construction in the Moscow region. They are joined by an estimated million illegal migrants from China and Vietnam who are engaging in small business and trade activities in Russia. Ushkalov argues that "their activity causes significant damage to the national economy of Russia as they are practically excluded from the taxation process. The ration [sic] of illegal to legal immigrants in Russia is estimated at 52:48" (ibid.). Finally, many migrants in Russia today are "transit migrants" who are "registered refugees, migrants who have yet to achieve refugee status and migrants seeking to move on to another country" (ibid.: 168; see also Iglicka and Sword 1999). A number of them are refugees from crises in Asia and Africa and came to Russia first because it was easy to enter, but intend to move on to other parts of Europe and Scandinavia. Although Ushkalov states that many of these migrants are highly skilled and could fill the predicted gap in Russia's

shrinking working age population, he still argues that the increasing numbers of transit migrants will negatively impact the “economic and cultural security” of Russia if they remain in the country. He specifically worries about the Chinese whom he sees as desperate and poised to take Russian land.

Large emigration flows from Russia and the former Soviet Union are recent phenomena. During the Soviet period, migration from one’s home city, let alone from the country itself, was highly restricted due to a system of internal passports and strong government control. Doors to migration opened, however, during *glasnost* (Gorbachev’s period of increasing “openness” to public critique during the late 1980s) and after the fall of the Soviet Union when freedom of movement became a right in the Russian Federation constitution. Yet, contrary to Ushkalov’s (2000) worries, socioeconomic crises all over the former-Soviet Union, overpopulation in rural Central Asia, and increasing immigration to Russia have not caused large emigration flows (Codagnone 1998: 42-43, 56).

#### “Ethnic” Migrations Out of the Former Soviet Union

The largest and earliest emigrant groups to the United States, Israel, France, and Germany consisted of different ethnicities which were granted visas even before the breakup of the Union. Migrants of Jewish and German descent left Russia, Ukraine, and other former-Soviet republics as early as the 1970s and increasingly in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Codagnone 1998: 42; Siegal 1998; Ushkalov 2000: 165). In addition, many Ukrainians and Belarussians in Russia returned to their “historical native lands” (Ushkalov 2000: 165). These flows have now “stabilized” as equal numbers of migrants are entering Russia from these countries as are leaving Russia (*ibid.*: 166; see also Krassinets and Tiuriukanova 2001: 6).

Sociologist Cristiano Codagnone argues that anti-Semitism and ethnic strife are only secondary reasons for why ethnic migrants are leaving the former Soviet Union



(1998). He states that the “advantages which derive from entitlement to citizenship in the destination countries” influence people to use their ethnicity in order to migrate (ibid.: 42). For instance, he says that Russians of German descent were quite integrated into Russian and Soviet society so it would be difficult to justify their migration because of any “anti-German” discrimination (ibid.: 57). Ushkalov also believes that minority ethnicity will not, in and of itself, make people migrate. Even though there is quite a bit of discrimination against them, fewer people of Russian descent in the Baltics have returned to Russia than from other parts of the former Soviet Union since the Baltic economies are stronger than Russian economy (2000).

In the Netherlands, I expected to meet many more migrants such as Ania who are of “Russian”<sup>14</sup> ethnicity or Jewish heritage because of the post-colonial backlash and ever increasing anti-Semitism in most of the former-Soviet republics. Yet, I visited Ania’s family briefly in Vilnius, Lithuania and her apartment was much larger and better furnished than the other Lithuanians I visited, even though it was in a poor “Russian” ghetto far outside of the city center.

### Brain Drain

One possible way to characterize the population of former-Soviet migrants is by their high educational and skill level. Eastern European scholars and policy makers are concerned about losing such talented and creative minds. For instance, Ushkalov argues that migrants leaving Russia for contract work abroad represent a higher proportion of educated and skilled people than that of the working population remaining in Russia (2000: 165). Fellow Russian scholar Irina Malakha states that “the education level of

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<sup>14</sup> In the Baltics, the term “Russian” is often used to refer to anyone who is not of the national ethnicity and has been socialized “in the Russian cultural sphere and environment, including those of mixed parenthood, and for whom ‘Russian’ may be used as a shorthand version of their *cultural* socialisation and mother tongue” (Demuth 2000: 236; emphasis in original). This means that while Ania’s mother and much of her family were from areas at one time considered “Poland,” she considered herself and others referred to her as “Russian.”

these emigrants is ten times higher than the average for Russia as a whole” (2000: 172). The European and Dutch immigration literature tends to ignore the many scientists, scholars, and artists who make up the westward migration, perhaps owing to the notion that they are not a “problem population” or are considered purely temporary (see for example Lucassen and Penninx 1997; van der Leun 2003). Yet, of the 250,000 people who leave each year for contract work in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe, only about fifty percent of them return to Russia after they have finished their business contracts (Ushkalov 2000: 165).

In her article on the Russian “brain drain,” Malakha primarily focuses on the situation of scientists leaving universities and research institutes for better jobs abroad. She says that their incentive to leave is based not only upon professional interest in international projects but also an under-valuation of the work of scientists and other research and development specialists in Russia today (*ibid.*: 174). In 1997, Russia spent only 1.2 percent of its gross national product on research and development as compared to the United States, Switzerland, Germany, and Japan where over 2.8 percent was spent (*ibid.*). Salaries for scientists have also decreased in relation to other types of labor. For instance, “professors’ wages were reduced from 219 percent of the average wage in industry in 1987 to 62 percent in 1993” (*ibid.*: 175). Malakha states that “scientists have become one of the poorest groups in Russia,” even in some of Russia’s premier cities like St. Petersburg, which is “among three areas with the lowest wage level in science” (*ibid.*: 176).

One of the reasons for scientists’ lower wages is that higher education in the Soviet period was open to most of the population and many redundancies in scientific fields and industries resulted (*ibid.*). With few possibilities for professional and economic development in Russia, scientists have taken advantage of the “welcoming immigration policy of many countries towards highly skilled personnel” (*ibid.*: 177). Yet, not all of these skilled migrants have found work in their areas of expertise.

Malakha says that “the risk of failing to get an appropriate job or to be made redundant during an economic downturn was greater among highly qualified scientific and academic persons than among other groups of emigrants” (ibid.: 179-180). Many migrants are then turning to temporary migration.

Malakha believes that those migrants who leave Russia for temporary labor opportunities are even more skilled than those migrating permanently (ibid.: 180). She states that “some 56 percent of external labour migrants have university and unfinished university education (against 18 percent on average in Russia) and 41 percent have vocational education (against 33 percent)” (ibid.). However, Malakha agrees with Ushkalov that many of these migrants may remain abroad rather than return home, since Russia’s long term economic conditions do not seem very positive for them (ibid.).

Many of those emigrating permanently for ethnic reasons are also highly educated and skilled (Malakha 2000: 178). In addition, about 25,000 students and managers also leave Russia to study or retrain abroad – mainly in the United States. Although more students and managers return than do the labor migrants, Ushkalov bemoans the fact that the departure of these migrants “lowers the quality and quantity of labour potential of the country” (Ushkalov 2000: 176). Malakha argues that overall, emigration flows are making Russia less “developed” as income, life expectancy, and adult literacy are affected by the lack of talented and skilled people (Malakha 2000: 172).

A talented writer and artist such as Alex, who has gained such a range of international experience, would no doubt be an asset to any country. Yet, he was certainly not welcomed with open arms by the Dutch government or society in the way Malakha described. I met many Russian-speaking architects, artists, musicians, and physicists in Amsterdam, but only the physicists seemed to have been invited to work in the Netherlands while the others either acquired legal permits through alternative methods, such as marriage and family reunification visas, or worked in the informal or illegal economy. For instance, Vadim’s good friend Pyoter was a classical composer in

Russia who finally admitted to me one day in Amsterdam that he was working as an underpaid masseuse in expensive tourist hotels. As in Roman's case, Pyoter's wife left him to marry a Finnish man and Pyoter decided to try his luck in the Netherlands, but with perhaps less successful results than Roman.

However, even though Pyoter was not always financially solvent or very proud of his work, he, Alex, Vadim, and Roman did not give up their interest in art, politics, philosophy, or classic Russian literature while living in the Netherlands. Their political and philosophical debates, in cafes and coffeeshops could last for hours. And this was not rare among the Russian-speakers I met. Russian thieves or classical musicians would often ask me to defend the United States' invasion of Iraq and quiz me on Russian literature.

#### Temporary Labor Migration

While Malakha (2000) and Ushkalov (2000) see Russia as negatively impacted by the emigration of its most skilled and talented people, Russian demographers, Eugene Krassinets and Elena Tiuriukanova, stress the temporary nature of most migration out of Russia (2001). From a 1997 survey of 500 employees of different scientific institutes in Moscow, Krassinets and Tiuriukanova found that only two percent of the specialists would consider permanent emigration from Russia (*ibid.*: 15). They believe that part of this was due to the fact that many of the specialists had poor English skills and did not know what employment possibilities they could get abroad (*ibid.*: 13). Because of the language barrier, many migrants would have to take lower-prestige and lower-skilled jobs while abroad, which Krassinets and Tiuriukanova say will result in "a loss of intellectual resources not only for Russia but for humanity as a whole" (*ibid.*). Yet, like Malakha (2000) and Ushkalov (2000), Krassinets and Tiuriukanova found that "more than half the scientists and professors consider their families to be poverty-stricken and say that their salaries are low in comparison to the average salary in Russian society" (*ibid.*). Thus,

they conclude that “practically all of (the specialists) are actively looking for information on the possibility of working abroad,” even if not all of them end up leaving or finding the work that they originally sought (ibid.: 14). Their survey 1997 of 600 Moscovites of all different professions only confirmed these findings, with just a slightly lower interest among non-academics in emigrating temporarily. Yet, Krassinets and Tiuriukanova were still surprised at the low level of interest in migrating, overall, among both groups. They write:

Even though we assume the real number of labour migrants to be much higher than official figures indicate, it is still not as high as we would expect, taking into account the recently opened possibilities to migrate and the dramatic gap in earnings and living standards between Russia and the West (Krassinets and Tiuriukanova 2001: 15).

Krassinets and Tiuriukanova blame anti-immigrant policies abroad, Russia’s own lack of migration infrastructure, and some negative cultural views about migration for limiting migration flows (ibid.: 8, 10). For instance, nearly half of their respondents were “*negatively* oriented towards migration” in that they were definitely not thinking about leaving (ibid.: 10; emphasis in original).

However, Krassinets and Tiuriukanova see a future increase in migration stemming from changing attitudes toward migration in the Russian population. In the Soviet past, migrants were negatively associated with the communist or intellectual elite while today, many of those surveyed thought that

labour migrants represent the active, energetic and dynamic part of the working population, because in view of the dramatic paucity of institutions engaged in facilitating migration and labour movement in Russia, such characteristics are needed to negotiate all institutional traps and snags prospective migrants will encounter (2000: 10-11).

Codagnone describes Russia’s labor migrations as not necessarily new but “newly relevant” in the numbers of people moving today and greater attention to emigration from Russia, rather than immigration to Russia (1998: 39). In the same way, Sassen analyzes a long history of temporary migrations between regions and states in Europe which have

often been ignored by historians, in favor of the more dramatic permanent migrations of people due to religious persecution or wars, even though they also had significant effects upon states (1999). For instance, she says that temporary migrations “importantly shaped the economic and social life of the nineteenth century, as did rural industry” (ibid.: 9). In the post-WWII period in Europe, temporary migrants and “guest workers” from Southern Europe were encouraged to work in Northern European countries and much of the consequent economic boom is due to their labor. Brettell notes that,

this intra-European population movement was born in the economic advantages (primarily to the countries of northern Europe) of a foreign labor force that could satisfy demands for cheap labor, increased production, and the desire for expanding profits without further augmentation of salaries or alterations in working conditions (2003: 57; parentheses in original).

Even though rarely acknowledged, today’s smaller migrations from the East similarly fulfill these advantages for western European economies. Yet, Krassinets and Tiuriukanova do not necessarily see Eastern Europeans as exploited as a result of this phenomenon but rather argue that temporary migration for Russians is at least better than permanent migration, and in the long run may benefit Russian society by not allowing Russia’s “national intellectual potential” to disappear (2000: 15).

Of the five Russian-speakers discussed above, only one – Katya – had originally planned to make her home in the Netherlands when she migrated. Yet, even she had changed that plan after she realized the possibility of living transnationally between Russia and the Netherlands. I only met a few Russian-speakers in my time in the Netherlands who had embraced the idea of becoming “Dutch” and who did not plan to eventually return to Russia. This situation seems similar to what Brettell describes among Portuguese migrants in France (2003). Because Paris is relatively close to Portugal, Portuguese migrants continue to identify themselves with their home villages and plan to return home when they have saved enough money rather than establishing new social spheres for themselves abroad (ibid.: 122-123). In the former-Soviet migrant

situation, people from the Baltics, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus can easily travel back and forth between home and the Netherlands and keep in close contact with their families. They are only a short plane ride (45 min. to St. Petersburg), cheap bus ride (70 Euros roundtrip to Kaunas, Lithuania), or even cheaper but riskier private van ride (50 Euros) home. Communication via phone or cell phone can be very inexpensive through internet companies and phone cards and only a couple of individuals I met in the Netherlands lacked a cell phone. Internet cafes are available in most Amsterdam neighborhoods, and in other Dutch cities public libraries provided free Internet access for limited periods of time. My trip to Lithuania and Latvia showed me that cell phones and Internet access are certainly available to many people in the Baltics, if only in the form of older, used cell phones and fewer Internet cafes.

However, even though many migrants may still plan to return home after years abroad, they do not always follow through with this because “social aspirations continue to rise. New needs have been created, and these in turn create still further needs” (Brettell 2003: 70). For instance, Katya did not see how she could keep up her lifestyle back in Russia in the same sort of work she had done before she left, even though she clearly would have preferred being with her family and friends in Moscow. Roman and Ania also told me that they would prefer to move back to Lithuania and to stop working in temporary street selling, but after their baby was born they decided to return to Amsterdam once more to replenish their savings. Many other people I knew were in a perpetual state of flux as to whether they would stay in the Netherlands one more year or summer because they were torn between family, professional, and monetary concerns. Only those migrants who had steady legal jobs for years and who had moved many family members to the Netherlands seemed to think less about returning. Brettell describes Portuguese migrants’ constant postponement of their intended return home as “a way of dealing with the insecure environment abroad, where the position of the migrant is very much at the mercy of fluctuations in the international economic system”

(2003: 71). In the same way, Eastern European migrants keep the option of “home” open for a time when they can no longer make a living abroad or when they become tired of being a “foreigner” in the Netherlands.

### Relative Youth of Migrants

From her study of scientists at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Malakha concluded that “more than 60 percent of those going abroad for temporary work are younger than 40 years of age” (2000: 180). In addition, Krassinets and Tiuriukanova found that “working people under 20 or over 30 years of age are more strongly oriented towards migration than the intermediate group of 20-30 year olds” (2001: 10). Many of the migrants I met in the Netherlands were in their twenties and thirties – both in the neighborhood Russian Orthodox Church and on the streets. However, there were large differences in perspectives between those in their early twenties and those in their thirties.

Younger migrants such as Ania, who were from the associated states and did not need visas to enter the European Union or who were simply on holiday from school, often had leisure as opposed to work on their minds when they spent time in Amsterdam. I met several young Latvians who briefly hung around on Rembrandtplein trying to chat with the other Russian-speakers there. However, they could barely converse due to a combination of the drugs they were taking and fewer years of Russian language education they may have had at their young age. In discussions with tourist shop workers around the Red Light district, “Russians”<sup>15</sup> were often mentioned among the top nationalities of tourists who visited the area. In fact, street seller friends of mine from Lithuania once hosted several architects from their home country, in the hopes that this would enlarge their work possibilities when they returned, and their first tourist

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<sup>15</sup> Russian-speakers often complained that Dutch people did not seem to care about the national and ethnic differences among various Eastern European groups so that they were all described as “Russian,” whether from the Baltics or Central Asia.



destinations with the visitors were coffeeshops and the Red Light district. Several of the young Polish boys I met in a soup kitchen for the homeless in the Red Light district where I volunteered seemed to be well acquainted with drugs and Dutch entertainment possibilities.

Migrants in their thirties or above were less interested in Amsterdam's amusements and often concentrated on their careers and establishing themselves rather than solely on social concerns. However, unlike Alex who denied coming to Amsterdam for his artistic development, many Russian-speakers told me that they were drawn to the Netherlands because of its art, music, or architecture. I interviewed one artist who came to Amsterdam in the early 1990s. She followed a Dutch boyfriend whom she hoped to marry. Although the relationship did not last very long, the artist remained in the Netherlands because she was able to meet a supportive group of fellow artists. By learning Dutch and patiently educating herself about Dutch society, she created ways of circumventing the elitist art establishment to find nontraditional venues for her pieces. Her career thrived as she showed her art in public libraries and local cafes. The Georgian artist Alex also benefited from official Dutch funding for the arts with access to public-owned studio space.

### Women's and Men's Migration

In stereotypes of Eastern Europeans (i.e. trafficking discourse), Eastern European men are portrayed as dominating Eastern European women in their home countries and forcing them into exploitative conditions abroad. There is too much complexity in men's and women's relationships and constructions of their roles in society to so simply define a country as "sexist" and assume that this would then cause women to migrate. There are usually multiple causes for migration, whether or not a person's gender affords them fewer rights or poorer treatment in society. Nevertheless, this does not mean that gender constructions and roles do not shape the form migration takes. In the Netherlands, there

were certainly gender differences in women's and men's labor options and relationships to the Dutch.

I met many more men than women on Rembrandtplein, in the Russian church, and through acquaintances. Several Russian-speakers such as Vadim, Pyoter, and Roman claimed that men made up the majority of migrants and they often expressed their desperation in not being able to find female companionship among other Russian-speakers. Only one of the five Russian-speaking women who regularly sold art, fake tattoos, and other items on Rembrandtplein was single for any period of time in the three summers I visited the group. The others were all married or engaged. Many of the male street artists were also of course married, but the overall number of men was much higher than that of the women. There were about ten Russian-speaking men who regularly worked on Rembrandtplein and numerous musicians who would cycle through on their way from one square to another during the peak tourist times. Migrants who simply gathered in the area of the street sellers were also by and large male, with one or two exceptions in the evening, when a woman would come by accompanied by a boyfriend or husband. There were several men who could be found at all times of the day drinking, taking drugs or selling stolen goods in the square while about four or five regularly came by only in the evenings to hang out with their street selling friends. Others who were new to town or lived farther away came less regularly, but even they seemed to be mostly male.

Krassinets and Tiuriukanova argue that Russian women may be less inclined than men to migrate due to the greater risks for them abroad (2001). They say that this is due to "the paucity of migration legislation, the lack of reliable institutions to assist in migration and provide migrants with sufficient social guarantees, the scarcity of non-governmental organisations and other linking mechanisms between sending and receiving countries" in Europe (2001: 16). For instance, in Russia, there are few policies and laws

“aimed at stopping violence, sexual harassment, trafficking in women and other forms of human rights’ violation that occur” (ibid.).

Other authors also describe women in the post-Soviet world as at a disadvantage relative to men both socially and economically. Pine and Bridger cite a variety of causes for the high unemployment of women in Russia such as the fact that they are “most likely to be among the first victims of structural adjustment, as extensive cuts are made in light industry and the service sectors, both traditional locations of female labor” (Pine and Bridger 1998: 10). With privatization, women also benefited less than men since “men have had significantly wider access to networks and spheres of influence which have smoothed their path into the new world of the entrepreneur” (Bridger et. al. 1996: 193; Prokof’eva et. al. 2001; Rzhantsyna 2001; Toksanbaeva 2001). Even Soviet era quotas for women in government and party bodies hid a real lack of women’s actual (direct) political influence and they then were more often unable to take advantage of the sale of government industries. The pronatalist promotions of Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin, further discouraged the hiring or retaining of female workers as companies were now required to give much longer paid maternity leaves and other protections (Attwood 1996: 258-259; Ilic 1996; Kay 1997). In addition, sexual discrimination and a lack of laws or law-enforcement, such as what Katya experienced, have contributed to women’s employment difficulties along with the reductions in state-sponsored childcare and growth in female-headed households with increases in divorce and domestic abuse (see Attwood 1997; Gondolf and Shestakov 1997). Furthermore, many women’s studies scholars believe that the new images of women as housewives and sex objects in post-Soviet iconography represent a degeneration in respect for women as they are no longer seen as the strong and self-sufficient workers of the Soviet period (Attwood 1996; Bridger et. al. 1996; Buckley 1996; Stishova 1996). They describe this new image as a

response to Soviet “forced liberation ‘from above’” (Buckley 1997: 7) and the new perceived need for women to regain their lost femininity (Kay 1997).<sup>16</sup>

In more recent literature, however, women’s experiences in Russia and in other former-Soviet countries have been reevaluated and their power and vulnerability to exploitation have been discussed. Buckley argues that the picture of exploitation and economic suffering is incomplete if only women are studied, since men have also faced “unemployment, disorientation and soaring inflation,” as well as military drafts for fighting in Chechnya and former Soviet republics (Buckley 1997: 5; Pinnick 1997). She states that both men and women have, however, been creative in their survival techniques – from becoming small-scale entrepreneurs to finding research grants for work outside of the former Soviet Union (ibid.). Other authors contend that although women have taken much more of the brunt of “transition” than men, a number of women’s organizations, shelters and gender research institutes have grown (Kay 2000; Lipovskaya 1997; Rascioppi and See 1997) and women have successfully turned to migration and entrepreneurship (Pilkington 1997, 1998). Women have also not forfeited their “traditional” power in the family or accepted negative post-Soviet images and policies relating to them (Kay 1997: 94-96). In addition, literature has begun to distinguish more between women’s experiences in terms of class, region, ethnicity, religion, and education (see Buckley 1997: 5) and become less generalizing about them than in the past (e.g. Bridger et. al. 1996; du Plessix Gray 1989; Lapidus 1978).<sup>17</sup> Even migrant prostitution is seen by some as not necessarily a strategy of the most victimized. Elena Tiuriukanova of the Moscow Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population states that migrant sex

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<sup>16</sup> However, see Ashwin and Bowers (1997) and Kay (1997: 90-91) for a discussion of women’s continuing dependence on and identity associated with employment outside of the home.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, most literature tends to concentrate upon Russian and Soviet trends in society and culture rather than the vast array of new post-Soviet groupings.

work is “not just a way to get money but a strategy for life” for some Russian women (in Pickup 1998: 45). Katya and Ania’s actions are not purely economically determined, as we have seen. And certainly, all poor women in the former Soviet Union have not been forced to migrate or engage in sex-work.

Although Russian-speaking women may be at an economic or social disadvantage to men from their countries of origin, they may also be at an advantage in other ways when they migrate. The seeming lack of Russian-speaking women on the streets of Amsterdam does not necessarily mean that there are fewer Russian-speaking women in the Netherlands but perhaps that they are employed in less visible labor or better integrated into Dutch society. For instance, Katya’s work in a sex club brought her into contact with more Dutch and American social networks than Russian ones. She did attend the Russian Orthodox Church occasionally and was acquainted with one woman who worked on Rembrandtplein, but she kept a low profile in both venues, because of her exhaustion from a strenuous nightlong work schedule and concerns about people knowing what she did for a living. Ania, as well, may never have become a regular on Rembrandtplein if she had not quit her *au pair* job. I met a Moldovan woman through an acquaintance at the church who had worked as an *au pair* for a family in the Dutch countryside near the German border. She came to love the family she had been placed with but she told me she was quite lonely and exhausted when she worked for them due to a round-the-clock work schedule and discomfort in living in someone else’s home (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). Another woman I met at the church said that when she first came to the Netherlands, she had been a domestic worker in individual Dutch families’ homes, where she never came into contact with other Russian-speakers. Both of these women, however, had more contact with Dutch families and found ways of becoming legal and settled in the Netherlands. One married a Russian-Dutchman while the other’s Dutch employer helped her enroll in a Dutch technical college.

Marriage to a Dutchman or to someone with Dutch citizenship certainly seemed easier and more prevalent among women than men. I met one young Dutch woman at the Orthodox Church who was trying to convert so that she could marry her Russian-Dutch fiancé in the church. Otherwise, I met many more Russian women who had married someone with a Dutch passport successfully, on paper only, or, unhappily, like Katya. These women ran the gamut from academics to artists, who became acquainted with their husbands in Russia, on the Internet, in college, or while traveling. They could not all be described as exploited or neglected, like Katya or Roman's ex-girlfriend in Oregon, but they were not all content with their choices. Relationships always have complications but they are especially difficult when one of the couple has to adapt to an entirely new society in addition to the cultural differences and individual quirks of their new spouse (see Visson 1998). This is even more problematic when the women (or men) are dependent upon their spouse because of state restrictions on labor or residency visas, as is so often the case in the United States (Constable 2003: 186). Yet, a Dutch spouse would certainly aid in Dutch language acquisition, legal employment, social networks, and general acclimatization to the country. One Russian academic I met was in the process of divorcing her Dutch husband but was not even considering moving elsewhere since she had a good job at a well-respected university, friends, and children in Amsterdam.

On the other hand, men who were not physicists, were not contracted to work, and did not have family in the Netherlands seemed to have fewer options for becoming legal. No Dutch women advertised for a Russian husband in the Russian-Dutch monthly magazine, *RUS*, in the year I was in the Netherlands, while Dutchmen's and Russian women's ads filled the classified section. Also, some of the Russian men I knew felt that their low and unstable incomes combined with their foreignness to make them less than attractive to Dutch and even Russian-speaking women. Pyoter and Vadim often complained of this and one time asked me to invite as many American women as possible

to a party they were going to attend, to at least give them a chance of talking to someone single and female. In addition, stereotypes of Russians – such as those in the movie, “Birthday Girl,” described earlier – characterized Russian men as brutes and Russian women as vulnerable beauties who deserved to be saved from their male counterparts. I met one young Dutchman who had spent some time in Moscow and had consequently dated only Russian women in the Netherlands because he believed that they were more feminine and interesting than Dutch women. Others, like Vadim’s elderly landlord, admitted to their former-Soviet wife that they simply wanted a woman who would do their domestic work in return for room, board, and eventual citizenship. Vadim claimed that his landlord was open with both of his Ukrainian wives about what would be involved in their relationships even though the first one left him after just a few years to return home again.

### Conclusion

The literature on Dutch and European migration rarely calls attention to Eastern European migrants except as an imminent threat with EU enlargement or, as addressed in the previous chapter, as Mafiosi and sex-workers. Katya, Roman, Ania, Alex, and Vadim’s stories all contradict such worries about Eastern Europeans as a group: they are not necessarily social burdens on the individual European states, they rarely have the possibility of taking jobs which are in high demand by E.U. citizens, their gender relations are not always violent and “uncivilized,” and Eastern European women are not always desperate and vulnerable. Migration out of the former Soviet Union has not been as prevalent as feared, even with ethnic migrations and poor economic conditions in much of the former Soviet Union. Yet, continued economic growth in Europe may necessitate migrants’ labor in the coming years. Europeans are aging and their birthrates are decreasing. Eastern Europeans should be welcomed rather than feared in this context. As the above sections show, many migrants are similar to the five I described in being

young, well-educated, and frequently migrating temporarily rather than permanently. As sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo says, temporary migration provides all of the benefits and very few costs to host countries (2001). Furthermore, female migrants should not be protected and supported in these countries, due to fears of sexual exploitation because both genders face a variety of exploitative conditions and difficulties under the current European Union and Dutch migration regimes.

Migration research, which solely focuses upon numbers of people and “flows,” disregards the individual attributes of migrants and particular patterns of those migrations in progress. They incite anti-immigration rhetoric and fears about national integrity – especially effective in this moment of change in the European Union as it enlarges and integrates. Of all of the E.U. nations, only Ireland has not placed labor restrictions on the new Eastern European E.U. states and associated countries out of a fear that “a huge inflow of migrants who would be a drain on their welfare systems” (Lungescu 2004). Again, such fears of migrant “flows” treat people as mindlessly following wealth. Only research which actually engages with individual migrants over long periods of time can re-humanize such representations. In the next chapter, I follow several migrants home to the Baltics to describe how they accomplished their actual movements (see Marcus 1995) and to understand how their families and friends who did not migrate felt about their travels (see Clifford 1997).



### CHAPTER THREE: THE ROAD TO THE BALTICS: TEMPORARY AND RETURN MIGRATION IN FOCUS

Migrations are highly selective processes; only certain people leave, and they travel on highly structured routes to their destination, rather than gravitate blindly toward any rich country they can enter (Sassen 1999: 2).

This chapter continues the argument that migrants from Eastern Europe do not form a particular “threat” to Western European nations simply because they are poorer, are situated in close proximity to these richer countries, and may be candidates for European Union membership. My research concurs with Saskia Sassen’s view that migrations do not occur for purely arbitrary reasons but are initiated or discontinued based upon the complex interplay of relationships between states and between individuals (1999). Previous chapters have described a prohibitive environment for migrants in the Netherlands and Europe in general. If migration to these countries is becoming so difficult for Eastern Europeans, why do some continue to travel to and even settle in Western Europe? What consequences has this migration had on the migrants and their families and friends? By following four Amsterdam migrants “home”<sup>18</sup> to the Baltics, I attempted to answer these questions in relation to these individuals and their families.

My observations in Lithuania and Latvia indeed contradicted Dutch and other European governments’ assumptions about migrants’ motivations; migrants’ families were not always desperately poor, were not always financially supported with foreign remittances, and often did not approve of their family members’ migration efforts. Several of the migrants, themselves, would have preferred not to migrate. In fact, they actively sought or renewed connections with their home communities in the hope that local work opportunities would eventually materialize. Ultimately, by accompanying

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<sup>18</sup> “Home” is here defined as the migrants’ places of birth and where their remaining families live. It does not necessarily coincide with each migrant’s preferred place of “belonging” – where they feel most “at home.”

these migrants home and presenting their individual experiences, this chapter continues to complicate the story of how and why and under what conditions people may or may not want to leave their home towns to live abroad and what effects this may have on them and their loved ones. As Dutch development scholar Hein de Haas says, “the neglect of the ‘other side’ of migration [sending country] hampers a proper understanding of the developmental causes and consequences of migration” (2005: 1269).

Furthermore, in order to more fully delve into migrants’ experiences of migration, I have attempted to follow historian James Clifford’s call for ethnography which does not simply treat the “field as dwelling” – where “native” informants are circumscribed by the place in which the anthropologist finds them – but defines “fieldwork as *travel encounters*” (Clifford 1997: 67, his emphasis). He says that “in the disciplinary idealization of the ‘field,’ spatial practices of moving to and from, in and out, passing through, have tended to be subsumed by those of dwelling (rapport, initiation, familiarity)” (ibid.). Instead, Clifford advises anthropologists to emulate Anna Tsing (1993) in viewing their subjects as “differently cosmopolitan, gendered individuals, not cultural types” and even challenging the boundaries of ethnographic writing by including more “accounts of fieldwork presented as stories rather than as observations and interpretations” (ibid.: 68). In other words, anthropologists should question their definition of the “field,” not take for granted their subjects’ rootedness or cosmopolitanism, and acknowledge that “the border is unstable, constantly renegotiated” between ethnography and journalism or literature (ibid.: 53). I might have understood migration as a preference of all Eastern Europeans based solely upon an intense study of the denizens of Rembrandtplein, if I had not traveled to the Baltics with some of my acquaintances. I also seek to preserve some of the messiness and complexity of my companions’ lives and my subjective experience in these travels by occasionally blurring the boundary between travel writing and ethnography in this chapter in order to further argue against distancing discourse used in migration literature and policy-making.

This chapter is loosely organized into the following themes: 1) ease of travel between the Baltics and Amsterdam; 2) the incentives and disincentives for migration from the Baltics; 3) the possibility of return migration; 4) and the importance of personal connections for migration success. Through a description of my travels in Lithuania and Latvia for Felite and Dainius' wedding and Juliana's homecoming, I attempt to construct a picture of the environment in which decisions to migrate or not to migrate are made. Caroline Brettell writes that in the case of Portugal, a "culture of migration" has come into being in which migration is strongly featured in Portuguese popular culture through history and even tied to ideas of national selfhood (2003: 3, 10). In the same way, communities in the former Soviet Union which had been closed to migration for so many years are in the process of deciding for themselves whether this new migration in the 1990s and 2000s is something to be lauded, maligned, or ignored. Many people I encountered in Latvia and Lithuania were ambivalent about the idea of migration, especially for women, in part because of growing nationalism, their nation's incipient connection to the European Union, and anti-trafficking discourses. There are certainly myriad structural conditions which affect individuals' decision to migrate, such as changing immigration laws, economic conditions, the price of transportation, and border enforcement (see van Amersfoort 1998: 20). However, this chapter will address the social environment which affects migration, including ethnic discrimination, gender constructions and inequality, nationalism, and family and community relationships.

### The Road Between the Baltics and Amsterdam

This section describes the contrast between the short geographical distance between Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the Netherlands and certain Dutch people's understandings of this distance as quite vast. In my preparations for the trip and on the bus to Kaunas, itself, several Dutch people expressed understandings of the Baltics as wild and "Eastern" even with the states' imminent inclusion in the European Union in

2004. Meanwhile, my Lithuanian friends, Dainius and Felite, were very comfortable in making this trip between the locations.

In my first encounter with Dutch ideas about Eastern “otherness,” I went outside of the Amsterdam center in the hopes of finding a cheap, less tourist-priced camera and ended up in a small shop where the salesman was friendly. I told him why I needed the camera and he immediately said that I should go to Volgograd, Russia as well as to Lithuania and Latvia. He had been there in the army and thought that it was very exciting and exotic. But then, he reconsidered the wisdom of my visiting the city because he said it was “problematic” and too near Chechnya to be safe. However, he told me that I should not be scared of going to Lithuania because it was “safe enough there now.” At the time, I found this statement about Lithuania incongruous since Lithuania is probably farther away than Amsterdam is from Grozny, Chechnya. Yet, his comments revealed a continued association of danger with areas considered part of “Eastern Europe” or the former Soviet Union.

When I visited a travel agency in the center of Amsterdam to obtain some health insurance for the trip, the travel agents I encountered were even less knowledgeable about the Baltics and more confused about how to define “Europe” than the camera salesman. The store was situated between very high-end clothing boutiques and expensive restaurants. Yet, even with the hip, well-traveled and international clients the shop must attract, the two women I talked with had no idea where the Baltics were until I remembered the word, Letland, used by another travel agent when I was getting my student travel I.D. This made sense to them and one started filling out the form for travel insurance until she had to ask the other agent if “Letland” was in Europe. The older one said that it was and the younger one looked skeptical but wrote this in, nonetheless. At some point, I stopped the agent who was writing up my insurance and asked about Lithuania, thinking that maybe Letland just referred to Latvia. She and her colleague had no idea about a country next to “Letland” whose name also started with an “L.” The

older woman said something about “Estland” and, guessing that this meant Estonia, I said that this country was the only one of the three Baltic countries I was not visiting. Still looking confused, they watched as I drew a map with the three countries and the younger travel agent decided that in Dutch, all three countries were referred to as “Letland.” I later learned from a friend who spoke Dutch that this was not the case and that each country had its own name and Letland only referred to Latvia. Even with the agents’ epiphany, however, they had to fill in the forms by hand because their computer system had no destination of “Letland.” As I was leaving, I asked the younger agent if she might have any travel guidebooks for “Letland” stashed away somewhere and she said “no” in a very emphatic way. Her company might send someone to Slovenia, but not to “Letland,” she said.

These two examples of the camera salesman and the travel agents’ lack of geographical knowledge and fears about danger in the Baltics are particularly poignant because these are tourism professionals in a country known for its development projects and for its citizens’ love of world travel. Dutch people are well known for the number of languages they speak and “exotic” countries they have visited on vacation. As described in Bakic-Hayden’s “nesting orientalisms” (1995), the Baltics may be considered different enough from “Western Europe” to be considered “other,” but it may not be understood as exotic enough to draw many Dutch tourists (e.g. South Africa, Guatemala, and Indonesia).

When my friend Felite and I embarked on our journey to her home in Kaunas, Lithuania, the difference between the Netherlands and the Baltic countries was again reified in conversations with a Dutch passenger. He was on his way to visit his girlfriend and her family in Vilnius, Lithuania. This conversation took place in the bus, a space that is neither Dutch, nor Lithuanian, but includes members of these countries. The bus interior is what James Clifford describes as a “contact zone” (Clifford 1997: 7). He says that,

cultural action, the making and remaking of identities, takes place in the contact zones, along the policed and transgressive intercultural frontiers of nations, peoples, locales. Stasis and purity are asserted – creatively and violently – *against* historical forces of movement and contamination (ibid.; emphasis in original).

My encounter with the only Dutchman on this bus to the Baltics showed me how even a young man who had traveled to Vilnius several times could consider Lithuanians to be more different from himself than a U.S. citizen, for instance. We had not been on the bus more than a half hour before Rhinehout latched onto the Lithuanian fake tattoo artist, Felite, and me because he realized I could speak English and might be a good receptacle for his views on Lithuania. He was bored by the incomprehensible (to him) Russian movies and he appeared to be a very sociable person. Rhinehout told us about meeting his girlfriend in Rotterdam during college. She had earned a Master's degree in International and European Business from the University of Rotterdam while he had received a degree in hospitality and business. They continued their relationship over the last few years by short visits back and forth to Lithuania and the Netherlands and he was still amazed by the differences between the cities. For instance, he described the Soviet-style housing complexes. They stood in unending rows of concrete apartments, stacked one on top of another and lacking such domestic comforts as good washing machines. He spoke almost no Lithuanian but his girlfriend spoke English and translated for him while with her family. He was now beginning to feel comfortable with the family, even if Lithuania was still not as “developed” as his home country.

Rhinehout, himself, was from a small town near the German border in the Netherlands, but he denied that his town could be described as less “metropolitan” than the larger Dutch cities. He argued that the Netherlands was too small and over-populated for any area to be entirely “undeveloped” or isolated, per se. Rhinehout decided that this was due to the fact that his country was being overrun by too many of the “wrong kind of migrants, like Turks and Moroccans.” Instead, he argued that only more “European” and educated migrants like his girlfriend should be accepted by the Dutch.

While not necessarily agreeing with him, Felite explained to Rhinehout her own difficult migration situation. She did not speak English or Dutch well enough to get even a temporary legal job as an architect in the Netherlands and she said that she might have to work in a restaurant or something else illegal until she was able to master these languages. Becoming legal was essential to her as she did not see a future for herself, her fiancé Dainius, and any children they might have in the Netherlands without social benefits and legal protection.

Rhinehout sympathized with Felite's situation and then returned to his defense of his girlfriend as a perfect candidate for legal residency in the Netherlands. He told us that his girlfriend had been runner-up for Miss Lithuania and was beautiful, talented and from a well-off Lithuanian family. In fact, he stated that Dutch and "Western" women were nothing compared to Eastern European women like his girlfriend since they could not match Eastern European women in beauty and femininity. However, as an aside, he told me that I should not worry about this since I was too thin and young-looking to be a "typical American woman." Felite laughingly agreed with him about Eastern European female beauty but I soon became tired of the turn in the conversation. After a while, Felite, too, stopped talking and began to doze off from the strain of speaking so much English. Rhinehout, however, stayed awake. He was one of the few passengers buying drinks and food from the attendant, which he at first tried to share with us. We accepted a beer in the beginning of the trip but he continued drinking throughout and probably slept very little that night.

As described in the introduction, Rhinehout used gender to define difference between Eastern Europe and Western Europe. In his view, women in Eastern Europe were more feminine and more attractive than Western European women. Rhinehout's girlfriend was a "desirable" migrant because she was well-educated and "civilized" (although she lacked a washing machine). In complimenting his girlfriend and women like Felite in this way, Rhinehout made generalizations of "otherness" which still showed

an understanding of vast difference between the two countries. Nonetheless, we arrived in Lithuania after a mere ten-hour drive.

Disincentives and Incentives for Travel Abroad in Kaunas,  
Lithuania

Here, I describe Lithuanian attitudes toward travel abroad as seen through the venue of Felite's and Dainius' wedding. Attitudes toward foreigners affect people's interest in traveling abroad. If a community is extremely xenophobic, in all likelihood migration would be frowned upon. Felite's family' and friends' attitudes about foreigners were revealed in their acceptance of me in their homes and among her wedding party. There was a mix of attitudes toward foreigners and foreign countries. Few people harbored a glamorized view of the "West" which popular migration and trafficking literature assume. More often than not, attitudes toward migration were negative because of the lack of status-appropriate employment abroad and the distance from family members. Money could be an incentive to migrate but migrants' ideas about "self" were still tied to how people thought of them at home. Felite's and Dainius' work on Amsterdam's streets was rarely discussed and not often admired.

Respect for the Foreigner, but not for the Migrant

Felite's parents were overjoyed to have their daughter and me with them. Although Felite's parents were always very busy, we spent a bit of time in the early morning or late evening of many of the days chatting about our lives. Both parents were over the age of forty, remembered the Cold War, and could speak Russian quite well. In addition to the exotic experience of meeting me, a person from a country that was at odds for so long with the Soviet Union, the couple was excited to see someone who might have lived in close proximity to their son and his family in Chicago. They had not seen their son for two years and had yet to meet their new granddaughter because Felite's brother is residing illegally in the United States. He could lose his hotel cleaning



business and home if he traveled abroad. In turn, Felite's parents could not visit him because they had been repeatedly denied tourist visas to the United States. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service did not seem to make any accommodation toward Felite's brother's and her parents' cases even though Felite's grandfather on her mother's side had been a U.S. citizen until he died. Felite's grandfather had been born in the United States to Lithuanian parents but, unfortunately for Felite's family, he had returned to Lithuania after his father died when he was thirteen years old. This meant that he did not spend enough time in the United States to warrant the possibility of U.S. citizenship for Felite's mother.

Felite's mother told me the second morning I was in Kaunas that she did not receive any foreign remittances from her son or daughter. She said that although she and her husband were not rich, they had enough money to travel a little bit and to do some remodeling on their own. They worked hard in their jobs and on their small farm, cultivating vegetables and making wine for sale. She spoke with pride about what a good teacher she is – how she has learned to be an actor in order to keep students' attention and get them excited about math, English, and geography. Even if her son or her daughter became legal residents in the United States or somewhere in Europe, she would never live anywhere else, she told me. Felite's mother thought that life was probably better for her son and his family in Chicago since he never finished his education in Lithuania and would have little chance of finding a job there. He had evidently always been a rebellious and adventurous soul. She also acknowledged that he was probably treated better than non-“white” immigrants in the United States, but the fact that he was there illegally meant that he would forever live in fear of being deported and she did not feel the need to share this with him.

She also wanted me to know that she disapproved of Felite's and Dainius' work abroad – that they were wasting their educations working on the street in Amsterdam while they could be in Lithuania working as architects and living with their families. She

and her husband had worked very hard to ensure Felite received an excellent education: they paid for college so that she would not have to work as well as study and they strictly controlled her social life while she lived with them so that it would not impede her bright future. She was forbidden from visiting discos, bars, late-night parties, and to have many friends over at her house. Felite listened to them and followed these rules, unlike her brother, and was at the top of her university class.

In addition to worrying about the waste of all of their effort to educate Felite if she migrated for lower-skilled work, Felite's mother rejected what she saw as Felite's materialism. Felite not only chastised her parents on their quick, cheap attempts at remodeling but also in their lack of domestic comforts such as a serviceable teapot, more modern "European" or "Scandinavian" furniture, and good cosmetics for her mother. Yet, Felite's parents resisted buying these things and even sometimes "lost" or "broke" Felite's gifts (Felite thought that her parents might have purposely gotten rid of some of her gifts because they could not easily adjust to change). Felite's mother and her husband were comfortable living with the bare necessities and growing much of their own food.

One reason for this lack of materialism was that Felite's family's apartment had been seriously burglarized that year, so it also made sense for them not to become too attached to material goods or to want to accumulate more of them if they would just be stolen again. However, all over the former Soviet Union, the first rush to consume Western European and American products has turned into a rejection of such materialism as people have become suspicious of these goods and the overly wealthy businessmen who bring them to their stores (Humphrey 2002: 55). Longtime ethnographer of the Soviet Union and Russia, Caroline Humphrey describes many Muscovites as "forgoing Western consumer goods for the sake of more down-to-earth values: plots of land, dachas,<sup>19</sup> or, if they have country relatives to look after them, cows, chickens, and pigs"

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<sup>19</sup> A "dacha" is a Russian summer home which usually contains a plot of land for growing vegetables or fruit.

(ibid.). It is both a survival strategy against sudden spikes in inflation as well as a rejection of more materialistic global values for extended families to produce their own food (ibid.: 56, 63).

During my time in Kaunas, I saw Felite's parents laboring arduously for their small income. Because they were so busy running from one end of the city to another during the day to teach as well as finishing some of their household projects, they were unable to help Felite and Dainius with their wedding festivities. Felite's father even spent the week of her wedding at a hospital due to a stress-related condition they never translated for me in Russian. Felite and her mother were concerned about him but said that he just needed to rest. He left the hospital only for the wedding and returned again that night. I heard later that he recovered and was back at work on their farm the next week. Felite's father had been employed most of his adult life as an engineer in one of Kaunas' factories which became obsolete after the break-up, as happened all over the former Soviet Union. He was one of the 40,000 workers in Kaunas laid off in the early 1990s but he was lucky enough to find a job teaching math and mechanics. When I met him, he was probably in his middle to late fifties and was much more sedate than his ten-year younger, and quite spritely, wife. Yet, he did not seem altogether disheartened by the extreme changes in his life as with many other middle-aged people I had met in Russia a few years earlier. As I said my goodbyes to him and his wife two weeks later, Felite's mother teared up a bit and gave me a fancy Lithuanian ceramic cup and Felite's father told me to visit again as soon as I could.

Felite's parents clearly loved their children and wanted what was best for them. Yet, even though they worked extremely hard to survive in Lithuania, they did not see migration as a preferable option for their children. Xenophobia was not the cause of their unease with migration but quite the contrary. Felite's parents feared that their children were not fully utilizing their education, contributing to Lithuanian society, and participating in extended family relationships while living abroad. They would rather

have had their children limit their material consumption and work in respectable jobs in Lithuania than live in such places as Chicago, Amsterdam, or London. They did not consider themselves poverty-stricken, even if their children disagreed, and they were proud of their work and self-sufficiency. Neither of their children was necessarily satisfied with his or her labor abroad at that time but they persisted in living outside of Lithuania.

#### Disinterest in the Foreigner and the Migrant

In this next example, I illustrate how younger Lithuanians have less interest in migrating to the supposedly glamorous “West” than popular European media reports about Eastern European migration might suggest. As the former section illustrated, older Lithuanians like Felite’s parents were fascinated with me and my visit because of the former-Soviet Union’s relationship to the United States during the Cold War. For instance, when Felite’s parents heard that I would be staying with them during the wedding, they decided to completely renovate their small apartment in the two weeks before we arrived in Lithuania (including plastering walls and buying new sinks, appliances, and furniture). However, unlike these members of the older generations, younger Lithuanians have seen copious amounts of foreign media, traveled abroad, and have little memory of Cold War propaganda. In turn, not all young people have an ambition to migrate even when faced with economic difficulties. The particular woman in the following example was young, unmarried, and unemployed. If trafficking literature is to be believed, she would have been a perfect candidate for trafficking abroad. Yet, she seemed completely unfazed in meeting me and hearing about Felite’s exciting experiences abroad. I found her attitude replicated among several other younger Lithuanians.

Felite’s neighbor friend came over for a chat the day after we arrived. We talked in a mixture of Russian and English, but most of the time, the two women preferred their

native Lithuanian. I gathered that Felite's friend had graduated from a technical college in environmental engineering but had yet to find a job. She was very thin, elegantly dressed in a light blue pants suit, and seemed to me fairly unemotional and detached even though she had not seen Felite in many months and probably had never met an American before. Of course Felite's friend was present in order to see Felite, rather than myself, but the experience of meeting her seemed so utterly different from meeting Felite's parents and other Russian-speakers in the Netherlands. I was accustomed to being questioned about myself in Amsterdam and having people (Dutch and former-Soviet) surprised that an American (stereotyped as "uncultured" and ethnocentric) spoke Russian and was interested in migration from Eastern Europe. Felite's friend asked none of these questions and barely acknowledged my existence in the room.

Lithuania, like other former Soviet states, reveals vast generational differences in attitudes about the world and about themselves. As Caroline Humphrey says, "the extreme compression of historical changes into a few years has polarized the population; this has occurred most notably by generation, separating those people whose attitudes were formed by the Soviet regime from those who came to adulthood after the advent of Gorbachev in the mid-1980s" (2002: 41). Part of the reason for young Lithuanians' disinterest in me as a foreigner could be clearly linked to a growing lack of Russian-language skills among young people not educated under the height of Soviet power. Lithuanian nationalism and language preservation grew during the late nineteenth century, remained strong during the Soviet period, and has flourished since its independence in 1990 (Krickus 1993). People younger than thirty years of age were more likely to have learned some English rather than Russian in school, although they still might have memories of watching Russian cartoons as young children. This meant that they were familiar with American and European popular culture and that I did not represent anything very strange to them. Many young people were also not necessarily intrigued with the idea of Felite's and Dainius' migration and friendships with people

from other countries since many of their friends and families had been migrating back and forth for years.

However, Felite's friend and several of her other younger friends and family who knew some English or Russian were still a little wary or uninterested in me due in part to their overriding concerns about their own problems and unstable fates. In other words, they might not have had the energy to be curious. As with this first friend of Felite's that I met, many of her friends and some of Dainius' were unemployed, working in service jobs rather than in the professions they had earned degrees for, or were struggling to work as self-employed contractors. For instance, later that first day, we encountered two of Felite's former architecture school classmates working at a furniture store and at a French soap shop.

Young people in Lithuania did have some economic success. Dainius was three years older than Felite and several of his friends had established themselves as architects in Lithuania by participating in the demolition of old Soviet structures and rebuilding in the cities. At least four of his friends earned enough money to buy cars and take road trips to Amsterdam to visit Dainius and one friend owned his own consulting business which he ran from his home. Yet, it was significant that only one of their many friends had the time, energy, and working car available to help us during the week of wedding preparations.

These young people were then quite preoccupied with building lives for themselves in Lithuania and did not hold many illusions about exciting prospects outside of the country. They were familiar with European and American popular culture and with the experiences of family members and friends who lived abroad. There were enough employment possibilities to remain at home and they had not learned enough English (or Russian) to tempt them to move abroad.

## Nationalism and Xenophobia

Lithuania's new nationalism and growing xenophobia could also explain some young people's disinterest in foreigners or travel. Dainius described Lithuanians as naturally reserved compared to other former Soviets, blaming this on their strong Catholic heritage and the cold northern environment. The difference in interest in foreigners between the generations could be due to the fact that young people have more experience with media and travel (either their own travel or their friends' and families') and/or that they are consumed by their own problems in carving out spaces for themselves in Lithuanian society. Yet, as a foreigner, I was not always welcomed in Lithuania. One of the most striking instances of this occurred when Dainius pushed my head down in the car while we stopped outside of his mother's apartment before his wedding because he had once been assaulted by a group of youths because they had seen him talking to a German girl outside of a bar. Dainius and Felite told me that people in Kaunas were particularly nationalistic and defensive about their Lithuanian heritage since Kaunas was one of the most politically rebellious towns in one of the most rebellious states in the former-Soviet Union (see also ECGL 2002: 44-46). Lithuania led the break up of the Soviet Union and most Lithuanians still bitterly recall the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Hitler, after which Stalin forcibly annexed the Baltic States (Krickus 1993: 166). Although Dainius claimed that Soviet leaders after the 1960s had still allowed Lithuania to use the Lithuanian language in an official capacity, most media employed Russian. Felite's friend, Giedre, told me that because of their Soviet experiences, many older Lithuanians did not support their accession to the European Union. They feared being ruled by outsiders once more.

In 2002, many state and commercial attempts were being made to reconstruct and reassert a sense of Lithuanian national identity. Among the cheapest and most popular types of eating establishments in both Kaunas and Vilnius were Lithuanian folk restaurants. Most were similar to the "Bachelor's Tavern" in Kaunas, where the wait

staff wore nineteenth century peasant garb and served “traditional” food and drink such as soup made with potatoes and beets and a type of mead called “kvas” in Russian. The restaurant structures were meticulously built out of wood in older styles and often heated with wood-burning stoves. In addition, the week I visited the capital city, Vilnius, the main square in front of the city hall was filled with Lithuanian crafts, food, and refreshment booths alongside “folk” amusements for children such as rough hewn, wooden swings and rides. When I spoke in Russian in these restaurants and in parts of Vilnius and Kaunas, I did not receive overly friendly service. If my friends were not available to speak for me in Lithuanian, I would try to address a shoe saleswoman or waiter in English and then use Russian if the English language did not work. It was soon clear that most people understood Russian much better than English, but they did not smile or chat with me much in that language.

#### Lithuanian Identity and Europeanness

Not everyone I met, however, was nationalistic or defensive about their country. Felite’s friend, Giedre, told me that she blamed Lithuania’s current economic difficulties on the fact that Lithuanians wanted to cut all ties to Russia immediately. These initial breaks with Russia had resulted in mass unemployment in industries connected to Russian and other former-Soviet supply lines and markets. One such industry was the arms factory in Kaunas where Felite’s father was among the thousands laid off after the break up of the Soviet Union. Giedre believed that Lithuania might benefit again from having another super-state body such as the European Union guiding Lithuania’s economy.

Felite and Dainius’ friends and relatives also did not agree about whether Lithuania was a part of “Eastern” Europe or a part of Europe proper. Out of curiosity and to initiate conversation, I asked a very unfriendly and uncommunicative Lithuanian manicurist (in Russian) whether she had traveled much in Europe. She answered that she



had not been to Europe and that she had only toured other parts of Lithuania and Russia. In her view, then, Lithuania and Russia were still outside of “Europe.” Felite’s mother, however, told me to always use the informal Russian term for “you” with her and others in Lithuania because she exclaimed to me that, “We are European!” She rejected Russians’ use of the formal as hierarchical and authoritarian, which she saw as quite the opposite of Europeans’ and Lithuanians’ more democratic traditions.

Alita’s attitude about Lithuania’s connection to “Europe” is reflected in an official government reference book I found for English-speaking visitors, “Lithuania: An Outline” (ECGL 2002). All throughout its many informative sections on health, culture, geography, and the economy in Lithuania, the book attempts to connect Lithuania to “European culture.” For example, in the history section, the text explicitly separates Lithuania from the “oriental” traditions of Russia and Eastern Europe:

Here, in contrast to Eastern Europe, from the Middle Ages onward, the peasantry lived and worked on individual farms and not in communal villages; a civil society came into existence, as opposed to Oriental-style despotic rule; Catholicism and a Western cultural outlook prevailed instead of the Orthodox tradition. Modern Lithuania is oriented towards Central, Northern and Western Europe and enjoys good relations with all its neighbors (ECGL 2001: 77-78).

Felite’s criticism of her parents’ preference for cheaper Soviet-era goods and for their “un-modern” (i.e. nonmaterialistic) lifestyle in contrast to her more modern, “European” way of life also works within such ideas of East/West difference and power.

Both nationalistic feelings about Lithuania and ideas about its “Europeanness” can result in a lack of interest in migrating. If someone believes that Lithuania is the best country in the world and that foreigners are all inferior, they will most likely try to remain in the country. On the other hand, if someone sees Lithuania as similar to the rest of “Europe,” other European countries will not represent an exotic escape to them. Many Lithuanians who thought the latter had great hope for a more economically stable Lithuania when it officially became part of the European Union. Even if they were not

satisfied with their employment or social conditions at that time, they believed that their job possibilities would soon be improving and they wanted to wait and see what would occur before thinking about migrating. Dainius and Felite considered doing this but changed their minds when opportunities opened up for them in Amsterdam and, later, London.

#### Benefits of Migration: Wedding Consumption with Euros

The monetary benefits of migrating are of course quite real. Because Felite and Dainius tended to wear the exact same clothes each day – jeans, t-shirts, tennis shoes, and windbreakers – and worried about spending too much money in Amsterdam on nonessential expenses like restaurant meals and expensive alcohol, I assumed that they did not have much money.<sup>20</sup> It was difficult to know how much they made from their street selling since it would have been rude of me to have watched them like a hawk the entire eight to ten hours they could be sitting on the street during a day on the square. If I had openly shown interest in these semi-legal and illegal migrants' finances, I would have broken strong cultural taboos against discussing such topics as well as lost any hope of being accepted by people who were already wary of me as a legal temporary migrant, a citizen of a country viewed as the primary Soviet enemy, and a "Westerner." For instance, Dainius' work for a Russian architect in the Netherlands was a mystery since it was truly illegal – as opposed to the street selling which was only on the margin of illegal – and they rarely talked about it. I simply took their slightly ragged appearances at face-value and assumed that they were making just enough money to survive.

In Lithuania, it became obvious that this was not the case as we shopped for the most beautiful flower arrangements I had ever seen. Each of the four bridesmaids was to

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<sup>20</sup> Appearances are obviously deceiving when migrants are on the margin of legality and may not have wanted to draw Dutch official or criminal attention to themselves. I later learned that Dainius collected fairly expensive technological gadgetry which he obviously did not brag about on the street.

be given ornately wrapped African daisies and the bride's bouquet would consist of an even more elegantly tied bunch of white lilies. Dainius and Felite spent large amounts of money on different types of wedding cakes: a traditional Lithuanian wedding cake consisting of a tower of crisp swirls and a large, flat cake of alternating layers of cream and thin sponge. Felite's wedding dress was entirely designed and sewn by a downtown Kaunas seamstress and had to be altered twice. Other expenses included the wedding lingerie, Dainius' shirt and tie, the rental of a large bar patio for the reception, three visits to a tanning salon and two visits to a beauty salon for Felite, and many meals at nice restaurants and bars during pre-wedding celebrations and preparations. Even though the Euro currency went farther in Lithuania than in the Netherlands at the time, Dainius told me that he still spent about 2000 Euros on the wedding, altogether. Considering that Felite charged from 5 to 15 euros for her fake tattoos and Dainius charged about 15 euros for his caricatures on Rembrandtplein, the two must have sold many of these or worked more for the Russian architect under-the-table than I had realized. I also later learned that Felite still owned an apartment in Kaunas, given to her by her parents, which she rented out for a small sum.

#### Economic Incentives for Women to Migrate from Lithuania

As described in chapter two and three, there can be discrimination against women in employment and other spheres of life in many former-Soviet countries, just as in parts of Western Europe and the United States. While literature which states this is tempered by other writing which suggests that women may obtain power in society through family, community, or political roles and relationships, it can still be difficult for some women to find work in Lithuania. Employers are loath to hire women who are of child-bearing age for fear that their family would take priority over their work. Because of this difficulty, women in particular may be more inclined to migrate. I reflected on this gender inequality with Felite while we visited Dainius' and Felite's university in Kaunas.

A few days before the wedding, Dainius and Felite took me to the Kaunas Technical College where they had met each other and attended school for six years. Dainius needed some letters of recommendation and copies of his and Felite's degrees for their portfolios, which they could use to obtain legal, professional employment in Amsterdam. The university building was similar to governmental structures I had visited in Russia –concrete behemoths in different shades of grey. Felite and I sat outside on the wide concrete steps for a half hour while Dainius talked with some professors. Although several clusters of students chatted and ate their lunches on the pavement, there were few women other than ourselves. I asked Felite if there had been many female students when she was attending the school and she said that there definitely had been some, whom I would meet later in the week, but that these days it was harder for women to get work as architects. When she graduated, she applied for many jobs but was rejected because people assumed that since she was a young woman, she would get married, would want to have a baby soon, and would not take her work seriously. She would thus be a bad investment for the company.

Although Felite was getting married and wanted children, she was also completely dedicated to her work and had entered into several arguments on Rembrandtplein in Amsterdam with Roman and others who believed that women should not work when they had children. She held out hope that when enough time had elapsed since the fall of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian society would become less sexist and grant women equal rights in society. In the immediate future, however, she thought that it would be fun to just return to Amsterdam and “party” with her musician and street friends, learn English, and eventually obtain some sort of service job there. Dainius continually pushed Felite to speak more English with me so that she would learn faster but I always thought Felite resisted this because her heart was actually set on remaining in Lithuania.

Dainius did obtain employment in Lithuania after the wedding which he “shared” with Felite in the winter of 2002-2003. Felite was not officially an employee of the architectural firm but she performed half of his work so that his projects could be finished by their deadlines. Via e-mail, they told me that they worked ten hour days, seven days a week, while subletting a rundown apartment in Vilnius. Felite quit after just a couple of weeks, went home to her parents, and was paid to remodel and design homes for some of her wealthy relatives. This work engendered more work so that when Dainius wanted to return to the Netherlands the next summer (2003), it was Felite who was now feverishly laboring on several architectural projects for clients in Lithuania when she was not drawing fake tattoos on Rembrandtplein.

Many of Felite’s female friends whom I met at her bachelorette party also had difficulty finding employment after college in Lithuania. Several were unemployed, worked in factories, or avoided discussing the subject with me. Yet, her best friend and maid-of-honor canceled her own plans to look for work in Amsterdam that autumn when she finally found a good job in Lithuania. Inequalities between the genders can then certainly affect women’s motivations to migrate. However, as Felite’s and Dainius’ experiences show, discrimination against women does not preclude their ability to ever find satisfactory employment.

### Gender Relations as a Major Incentive for Migration?

In this section, I describe some of the complexities in gender relations in Lithuania and question the use of a generalized notion of gender inequality as a reason in itself for migration. References to “patriarchal structures in their homeland” (Phizacklea 2001: 169) as the reason for women’s movement, overlooks the interplay of power between women and men in relationships. It also implies that the women’s home countries necessarily contain more inequality between the genders than those to which they are traveling. As I argued in the introductory chapter, one way to designate certain

countries as less “civilized” or “modern” is by citing greater gender discrimination and male dominance in these countries.

In the midst of wedding preparations and post wedding clean up, Felite, her mother and I spent some time in the kitchen talking about what married life was like in Lithuania. I was interested to know their views because I had for many years read so much about and experienced some of the inequalities and benefits of being a woman in Russia, and I wondered if Lithuania was similar. I jokingly told them about how my mother had advised me that when I got married, I would have to teach my new husband to share household chores equally because in our U.S. society, men often did not learn to take responsibility for such things as food preparation or laundry. My mother said that she had “taught” my dad to at least appreciate the domestic work she performed, if not do some of these chores himself. Felite and her mother were astonished to hear my mother’s views. Both told me that it was the woman’s job to prepare food, for instance. However, Felite then shocked her own mother by repeating an old Lithuanian saying about how men who were well cared for by their wives would never leave them. Felite’s mother countered that indeed her husband should be thankful of the work she did for him and to not even think about leaving, whether or not he was completely satisfied with the particular meals she served or the way she cleaned the floor each day. She said that her husband had learned not to complain if he did not like something she prepared, but to just pretend that he was no longer hungry. Dainius, on the other hand, was already in the habit of harshly complaining when Felite’s cooking did not reach his standards of excellence or when she was not keeping their tiny apartment in Amsterdam clean enough. Although Felite was not a woman to meekly bow to criticism, she did believe Dainius had a right to be annoyed if something was not to his liking. In a conversation about youth culture, Felite’s father told me one day that if men and women were not different by definition (in appearance and in social roles), then there was no God (meaning that gender differentiation is essential to God’s plan). Felite believed this, to a certain extent.

Such ideas about gender differences were thrown into greater focus during the wedding festivities. Although Felite's and Dainius' friends had little time to help us out with their wedding preparations, they did plan a bachelor and bachelorette party for each before the wedding. In Amsterdam, Dainius had asked me about what people in the United States do before they got married – wondering if it was similar to the insane “hen” and bachelor parties which British brides and grooms held so often in Amsterdam. Huge groups of British youth would run through Rembrandtplein with crazy hats on, inflatable genitalia, and other costumes and gimmickry. They were fairly disruptive in the bars around the square and I sometimes tried to duck down an alley or cross the street if I encountered such a group of young British men in the Red Light District. They tended to treat any female in the area disrespectfully, even as early as 10 a.m. in the morning. But, I could not answer Dainius definitively about whether “American” traditions were similar since I had never attended any such parties. I simply mentioned that I thought they sometimes included strippers. However, I told him that I disagreed with the premise that you would need one last evening of “fun” before you “settled down” into marriage and maturity. Dainius did not agree with me and it turned out that his friends did not either because during his evening out with them in Lithuania, they “kidnapped” him and “made” him get an “erotic massage,” which he unthinkingly related to Felite and me the day before the wedding. He was very sheepish and apologized over and over to the stressed out Felite. She was not surprised by his admission, but she also was not pleased. Thankfully, they had been together long enough that this did not permanently damage their relationship and it did not cast any shadow over the wedding celebrations the next day.

Felite's bachelorette party, on the other hand, had less of Dainius' wild abandon and was in fact fairly serious at points. Her friends picked us up a couple of nights before the wedding and brought us to a new Russian “peasant” restaurant. Yet, before Felite could enter the restaurant, they made her go into the bathroom to put on an outfit they had

brought for her. It was a shapeless black dress such as an aged Russian grandmother would wear. They then handed her a plastic bucket written all over with good wishes from her friends but filled with a large, green cabbage. She was told that the bucket and cabbage represented her future work as a wife and that she needed to get used to it. She laughed all of this off and with good humor we drank a couple of bottles of vodka and ate hearty soup, cheese, and bread.

Most of her friends seemed to have a fairly good time. The women teased me about talking too much to the only male present, a friend of Felite's from her architecture program, considering I was one of the few attached women at the table. As the evening wore on, however, Felite's maid-of-honor confided in me that she and her friends were unhappy that Felite was getting married. She told me that Felite's life would "now be over" and that her husband would beat her like all married Lithuanian women are beaten. I was shocked by this statement, especially since I could not even imagine the artistic and kind (although at times insensitive) Dainius acting in such a way. No one else ever made reference to the prevalence of domestic abuse in Lithuania, so I later wondered whether Felite's friend was jealous or bitter that she was not getting married and traveling around Europe like Felite. Felite later told me that this friend actively disliked men and she blamed her joblessness on general sexism in Lithuanian society. However, the evening ended well and Felite was happy that her friends had gathered together in her honor.

One of the reasons why Felite's wedding parties were so important to her was that she felt a bit distant from her friends and family even after just a summer away from them and wanted to put on a good show for them. When we walked around the streets, Felite pointed out how different she looked from the women around us. With her slightly ragged jeans and tennis shoes, she stood out in the crowds of heavily made up women in high heels, whom she described as looking "like they were all going somewhere special," but were really just shopping. She blamed this attention to dress on their poverty, saying that poor people often try to look their best because they do not want to show their



economic situation, whereas richer people care less about how they look. She preferred the much more affluent Amsterdam, where she thought people were more relaxed and unconcerned about what someone else was wearing. Again, Felite's experience of Amsterdam was mainly limited to the tourist areas of the city.

However, Felite contradicted her claims of being more "European" and unselfconscious about her appearance when she told me that she hoped to surprise everyone at her wedding by showing them how beautiful she could look when she made an effort. Her self-esteem was clearly still tied to her Lithuanian friends' and family members' views about her. We spent most of our time before the wedding sending her dress back to the seamstress for more adjustments, finding lingerie which would not show through the thin white tulle, getting our nails done, trying out hairstyles and make-up, finding the right kind of stockings, and going to an expensive gym where Felite could get increasingly more tan during the week. At one point, I went with Dainius to find a shirt and tie for his suit and we entered just one store where Dainius grabbed a very cheap, plain white shirt which came with its own Velcro-attached bow tie.

At the city hall, where we waited in line for Dainius and Felite to be married by the judge, even more elaborately enrobed brides and bridal parties surrounded us. One woman's hair was layered in fantastic fat curls around her head with flowers and a huge flowing dress. When I passed closer by her, I saw that her teeth were not very good and that several of her bridesmaids' dresses were ill-fitting. Although less spectacularly dressed, Dainius's and Felite's wedding group was a bit healthier looking and perhaps more middle class than some of the other wedding parties in the hall. In the crowd of friends and family waiting for the couple outside of the city hall, several of their female and male friends could be seen wearing jeans or even slightly bohemian attire.

As these observations from Felite's and Dainius' wedding show, gender relations were obviously not equal or necessarily perfectly complementary for these two in Lithuania. Felite, her mother, and her friends all commented on men's and women's

roles in Lithuania and hoped that some aspects of discrimination against women in the workplace would change, but they did not reject all ideas of what made women and men different in their society. They were not utterly “dominated” by the men in their lives and in fact Felite’s mother seemed to have much more power in making family decisions than her husband; it was obvious that they respected each other. Dainius and Felite, on the other hand, were still discovering what kind of relationship they wanted and what sorts of roles they would play in it. Dainius made many of their decisions such as where they would live every few months and Felite performed much of the domestic, “women’s” work. Yet, Felite also demanded respect for her professional as well as her domestic capabilities. I agree with sociologist Annie Phizacklea’s statement that “gender roles, ideologies and practices are an integral part of all social structures and face-to-face encounters and impact upon all aspects of transnational population movements” (Phizacklea 2001: 169). However, a monolithic notion of power in gender relations cannot be used to explain all women’s migration from Eastern Europe into Western Europe.

#### Ambivalent Views of Migration

During the final parts of Dainius’ and Felite’s wedding festivities, I was better able to engage in discussions about migration with many of the guests as they asked me about my work and why I was in Lithuania in the first place. I again realized, however, that Felite’s and Dainius’ friends and families did not necessarily support their work abroad. People generally seemed to understand that the couple was selling their art on the streets as well as attempting to obtain temporary architectural work, but they acted a bit embarrassed when talking about the couple’s employment status as if it was shameful. Anthropologist Caroline Humphrey argues that many people who were adults in the Soviet period were inculcated with the belief that “speculation” or trading was immoral and that “production/labor” was all that mattered (2002: 44). By selling art on the streets

rather than working in offices, Dainius and Felite appeared similar to the former black market speculators of the Soviet period.

And yet, migration was not completely abhorred by the wedding guests and family members. Two of the main guests of honor at the private wedding dinner were a Lithuanian-English couple of very proper, upper-middle class standing. Dainius's very far removed "cousin," Indria, had married an Englishman many years previously and had played host to Dainius and other relatives in London since that time. Dainius invited the couple to his wedding to thank them for their support when he was in England several years before, selling caricatures on the street, cutting trees, and simply "finding himself."

With a perfect, middle-class English accent (as far as I could distinguish), Dainius' cousin explained to me the problems she had encountered in England because of stereotypes about Eastern European women. She said that she always felt the most excluded while talking to other mothers at her children's schools because they assumed that if she was Lithuanian, she must be less educated and less "cultured." Because of this treatment, she tried to make her Lithuanian friends and family as welcome as she could in England. After many years of such aid, her husband, Derek, was no longer in accord with this outlook and had recently insisted they move to Oxbridge so that fewer Lithuanians would visit them and stay for long periods of time.

Derek had never learned Lithuanian or even Russian fluently, but he had cut down his hours, working for an insurance company, in order to go back to school to obtain a Ph.D. in European and Lithuanian history. He had just begun his research on (the area of) Germany's relationship to Lithuania in the Middle Ages. At one point during the wedding celebrations, he asked Felite's mother if she would introduce him to Lithuanian history scholars for his research. She told him this might be possible but later confided in me that history scholars in the universities would never talk to her because she was only a low-status primary school teacher. In addition, she believed that his project had already been researched quite sufficiently by Lithuanian scholars who could read the original

texts and histories, unlike Derek. However, she and the rest of the family felt so indebted to this pair that they tried to make them as happy as possible during their stay.

One of the most friendly couples at the larger reception was a Lithuanian woman, Yurga, and her Georgian husband, Daniel. They met while earning Master's degrees in architecture at a Swedish university where they also met Dainius. All three had received scholarships to attend the school but their money had not been distributed to them in the first weeks after they arrived, so they had bonded with one another through their shared Russian language, Soviet culture, and temporary poverty. They told me that at one point, they were so hungry that they attempted to catch fish in a nearby river for their dinners. All three had survived, earned their degrees, and Yurga and Daniel had been married soon afterward. Neither Daniel, nor Yurga, knew where they would live in the future. At that time, they had good jobs in Vilnius – especially Daniel who worked in a bank, but he still did not feel at home in Lithuania. He had learned some Lithuanian, but he and his wife spoke Russian to each other. He did not feel accepted in Lithuanian society because of his different ethnicity and he missed his own family, whom he had not been able to see in many years. Both considered moving to Western Europe as a good compromise if they were able to obtain work visas when Lithuania joined the European Union. This couple's experiences exemplify the difficulties in straddling ethnic and national difference in Europe today. The two had not been able to visit Daniel's family because his status as a citizen of Lithuania was still being processed and he would need a visa to visit Georgia, since it was not one of the E.U. accession states. They could also not depend upon receiving visas to live and work elsewhere in the European Union, even with Lithuania's imminent inclusion in the Union.

In contrast, Dainius and Felite's friends Yolita and Algis, who had helped us the most before the wedding, were ethnically Lithuanian and content to remain in the country. It took them almost the full two weeks that I was in Lithuania to finally warm up to me as we toured a Medieval castle near the priest's home where Dainius and Felite

would have their final Catholic ceremony. They told me that they owned a large apartment in Kaunas and were watching over another one because Yolita's mother, aunts, and grandmother were living and working in Ohio. Yolita said that she could not imagine working in the service industry in the United States like some of her relatives (e.g., as a house cleaner) because she would miss her friends and family in Lithuania too much. She said that she was far too educated as a nurse and tied to her home to be satisfied with such a life abroad. Algis said that no matter how difficult conditions became in his country, he could not simply move somewhere else. He loved it too much.

Overall, the wedding celebrations showed the increased economic and social options that migrants have when they can throw large, elaborate parties for their friends and families. However, this did not mean that all of the attendees supported the bride's and groom's foreign work or that the bride and groom were now so changed by migration that they no longer cared about these people's opinions. For instance, Felite worried about being a beautiful enough bride to satisfy a high social standing at home, the pair made sure to visit a priest so that they would be seen as morally upright citizens even though Dainius was not Catholic, and they held a separate wedding dinner to demonstrate their appreciation to people who had helped them in their lives at home as well as abroad. Felite and Dainius clearly continued to define themselves in relation to people in Lithuania rather than to those they had met abroad. The couple's younger friends were also ambivalent about migration abroad and about their prospects as Lithuania became a part of the European Union.

### The European Union and Migration from Vilnius, Lithuania

Lithuanians' views about migrating are not created in a vacuum. Even before accession to the European Union, European organizations such as the International Organization of Migration (IOM) had operated anti-trafficking campaigns in Lithuania

and the first of probably many European Union Commission conferences was held in Lithuania's capitol city, Vilnius while I was there in 2002. I saw the relationship between these outside forces and individuals' experiences through one of my main Latvian contacts in the Netherlands who participated in the E.U. HIV/AIDS conference and two of my Lithuanian friends who were influenced by the anti-trafficking campaign. In discussing these examples, I will illustrate how such "Western" European discourses on trafficking, sexuality, gender, and constructions of "East"/"West" difference, which I discussed in the previous chapters, directly affect Lithuanians and their decisions to migrate abroad. European governmental bodies and organizations seemed overly concerned with the issue of migrant sex-work from Eastern Europe as opposed to overall migration trends.

A few days after the wedding, Felite and I embarked on our two hour trip to Vilnius where we would hopefully meet up with our friend Ania from Rembrandtplein and I would stay on with another friend from Amsterdam to attend the European HIV/AIDS conference in that city. As we came nearer to Vilnius, we saw a series of large billboards advertising products, restaurants, and hotels. In their midst was a strange and depressing ad: it showed a woman in a dark blue dress standing with her head and arms hanging down in front of her so that you could not see her face. Strings fell from her hands and head which were then gathered up on a cross of wood behind her, as with a marionette. The writing in both Lithuanian and Russian warned women entering the city not to think about migrating elsewhere because they could end up in "sexual slavery" (IOM 2003). I would later find the exact same pictures in poster form hanging in upscale bars and café bathrooms. Upon closer analysis, I found that the International Organization of Migration had teamed up with a local woman's organization, Sida, to put these posters in place as part of their particular anti-trafficking campaign in Lithuania and Eastern Europe.

Evidently, the IOM's efforts to scare Lithuanian women into not migrating had worked with at least Felite because once we met up with Ania in the city center, Felite interrupted our tourist excursions through the beautiful medieval arches, castles, and churches to confront Ania with her past risky migration behavior. In the historic eighteenth century area of the city, we had been sitting at a pleasant café and chatting about the last few weeks since we had seen Ania in Amsterdam. Ania expressed her deep regret in returning to her university in Vilnius and leaving Roman, our other friends, and the fun city of Amsterdam behind her. She said that she wanted to return as soon as she could get enough money for a bus ticket.

As described in the previous chapter, Ania had traveled to the Netherlands to become an *au pair* for the summer, with no back-up plan if anything went wrong. When bad luck did befall her and she was left on the street with nothing but the clothes she was wearing, she trusted in a stranger's kindness – Roman – to help her out of the situation. Felite was disturbed that these experiences had obviously not made Ania more wary about traveling by herself. She told Ania that she needed to be more careful about trusting people and walking around the city at night, worrying that she could get kidnapped and put into prostitution if she was not wary.

Ania denied the need for such concern. She had been reading a great deal of philosophy that summer and had interpreted her good luck in finding Roman as fate or God's plan. Felite vehemently disagreed, saying that even if you were always a "good, believing" person, you could still die in a car crash if you were not careful. Felite had, herself, always kept an eye out for what kinds of people were around her while she was working in the streets of Amsterdam and knew that if anything happened, she had allies and her fiancé within easy reach. Ania did not see any reason to constantly worry whether something such as an accident, rape, or worse would happen to her. Although I did not suggest that Ania give up the idea of migrating, as Felite seemed to be doing, I tried to emphasize the need for caution based on my own experiences with semi-strangers

in foreign cities. However, Ania was too caught up with her happy memories of Amsterdam and her unhappiness at being home to listen to Felite's worries and my cautionary tales. Ania did in fact return to Amsterdam soon after this meeting and she had no difficulties during her journey or reuniting with Roman upon arrival.

The IOM posters were not always effective in curbing migration not only because they contradicted individuals' own successful (or lucky) migration experiences but also because they faced a great amount of competition among the other posters covering the University of Vilnius' hallways and student cafés. When I accompanied Ania to her English linguistics class at the university, I noticed that most of the posters on the walls at the entrance of the building advertised *au pair* jobs in Western Europe and the United States, in English, Russian, and Lithuanian. Ania told me that one of the reasons why no one knew what was going on with this particular class was because most of the students had missed their first week of classes while finishing up their work abroad for the summer.

As with the anti-trafficking posters, the European Union's conference on HIV/AIDS<sup>21</sup> probably did not change the average Lithuanian's views about the health risks in migrating, but it may have influenced some of the Lithuanian organizations who were invited to work against trafficking in women from Eastern Europe. Anti-Slavery International (UK) and TAMPEP (Netherlands and European Union) were just two of the many organizations and governmental delegations giving papers. However, the conference sessions I attended which featured sex-worker organization and academic reports provided very little new information on the movements of people, HIV, and the lives of sex-workers. It seemed more of an advertising venue for the various European

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<sup>21</sup> The conference, "European Approach to HIV/AIDS and Related Issues: Research, Policy, Prevention and Care," was funded by the European Commission and World Health Organization. Its goal was to gather together scholars, policy-makers, and nongovernmental organizations from around Europe to collaborate on solutions to the spread of HIV/AIDS (Lithuanian AIDS Center: 2001).



non-governmental organizations vying for E.U. funding. Furthermore, many of these organizations took for granted the idea that East-West migrant sex-work necessarily caused an increase in drug use and the spread of HIV.

For example, the Bulgarian-Dutch organization, “Abena,” briefly discussed the migration of Bulgarian women to the European Union to work as sex-workers and described their efforts to provide women with “anti-trafficking consultations” and HIV education. They were attempting to combat trafficking in women and the spread of HIV by coordinating the Bulgarian medical establishment with law enforcement, as well lobbying for Bulgarian state regulation of sex-work. The organization observed that prostitutes in Bulgaria were highly stigmatized, as in most ex-communist countries, but they further stigmatized them by advocating for state regulation of sex-workers’ migration, work, and health. A Bulgarian scholar from the National Center of Public Health in Sophia gave a paper which was similarly concerned with sex-workers contracting HIV, but this time in relation to gay men in Bulgaria’s capital city. He described the HIV situation as particularly problematic among gay men because Eastern Europe had undergone a “sexual revolution” at the end of the Cold War without any accompanying knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases. A paper given by TAMPEP/Netherlands about its work with migrant sex-workers in the Netherlands described the “enormous flows” of migrant sex-workers entering Western Europe from Eastern Europe, in particular. This paper, however, stated the importance of holistic, international approaches toward combating trafficking and HIV in Europe and promoted the legalization of sex-work in Europe as opposed to state regulation. A Belgian organization also pointed out that sex-workers generally take more precautions against STDs in their (often part-time) employment than in their personal relationships.

While many of these organizations were attempting to aid stigmatized populations such as sex-workers, gay men, and migrants, they nonetheless focused the medical/governmental gaze upon these groups in an effort to fight the spread of HIV

rather than the general population. Similar to turn of the twentieth century “white slavery” discourse, migrant sex-workers and gay men can then be seen as vectors of disease, immorality, and chaos (see Doezema 2000; Guy 2000; Irwin 1996). Even though the Belgian and Dutch organizations were much more liberal and nuanced in their understandings of sex-work and the spread of HIV (not necessarily a connection between), they nonetheless focused their attention upon Eastern European sex-workers even though migrants from many other parts of the world practice sex-work in their countries.

The actions of the conference’s participants, as well as their papers, created vast divides between the “East” and “West.” For instance, at a party for the conference participants, Juliana from Red Thread and I met up with several Dutch sex-work activists and health specialists, one of whom immediately latched onto us because he was already homesick after just three days away from Netherlands. He and his Dutch compatriots were aghast at the lack of modern amenities and cleanliness in Vilnius, as well as the population’s general unfriendliness toward foreigners. These Dutch scholars and organization leaders were staying at one of the most luxurious hotels I have ever seen (even in relation to hotels in San Francisco, New York, or Chicago) with marble floors, expensive amber jewelry for sale in the lobby, and all of the amenities (i.e. hairdryers and televisions) that could be wished for in the rooms. The city had no more garbage on its streets than San Francisco’s downtown and store cashiers and restaurant waiters in Vilnius were not overtly rude to me in our short encounters. The assumption of “Eastern” difference, dirt, and danger must have influenced these participants’ views of the city just as it caused them to worry so much about Eastern European migrant sex-workers rather than other methods of spreading HIV.

This conference and the days I spent in Vilnius showed me the utter concentration of European organizations and governments on the issue of migrant sex-work as opposed to migration over all. Single women who migrate, like Ania, were told by billboards and

posters that they would inevitably fall into the hands of sex traffickers or, at the least be seen as a sex-worker if they went abroad. On the other hand, Ania felt more positive pressure at her university to migrate as she passed by advertisements for all types of employment abroad and talked to other students about their summer work in foreign locales. Ania was certainly not drawn to travel due to poverty, but neither was she interested in continuing to live in her family's Russian slum on the outskirts of Vilnius all of her life. Having befriended many foreigners, traveled to Amsterdam once, and met the "man of her dreams," Ania was not going to be satisfied remaining a secondary citizen (non-Lithuanian ethnic) the rest of her life and she eventually migrated again. Many of the organizations participating in the HIV conference overlooked personal or ethnic factors in individuals' decisions to migrate while focusing solely on economic or gender differences between Eastern and Western Europe as motivating factors.

#### Ethnic Incentives for Migrating: "Russians" in Lithuania

Although Ania, Felite, and Dainius were friends in Amsterdam and continued to stay in touch in Lithuania, they came from very different worlds. Russian ethnicity in post-Soviet Lithuania has changed from a useful commodity to a social and economic liability. Ania's family was not poorer than Felite's and certainly not Dainius's and yet their home was located in a far-off Russian section of town which was much more decrepit and isolated than her friends' neighborhoods in Kaunas. The following description of Ania's home, family, friends, and experience at school show this noticeable difference between herself and the larger population. Such feelings of difference – let alone discrimination or lack of economic options – may be one element of many which influence such people as Ania to migrate.

Ania and I had missed the last bus to her neighborhood one night and she called her taxi-driver cousin to pick us up in the center of town to drive us to her family's apartment. He dropped us off outside of a huge, Soviet-style apartment complex but

would not take any money for his half-hour detour. Ania brought me through the large, strangely unlocked, main door of one of the buildings and up several flights of deteriorating concrete stairs to her apartment. On one landing, an older woman stuck her head out of her door to stare at us suspiciously. Upon entering Ania's family's apartment, however, I found that the outside presentation of poverty and degeneration was deceiving. Her apartment was much larger and better furnished than any of the other Lithuanian apartments I had been in. Ania's mother greeted Ania in Polish at the door and then switched to Russian to ask what she had been up to and who I was. After brief introductions in which Ania's mother expressed her deep surprise in finding an American on her doorstep, she left us alone to have a snack and get settled for the evening. Ania told me that even though her mother was ethnically Polish, they mostly spoke Russian and Ania considered herself "Russian."

Ania then called a neighbor friend over to chat with us before we went to bed. We sat on the balcony outside of Ania's room where they could smoke some of the marijuana Ania had smuggled from the Netherlands. Ania's friend also needed sympathetic listeners and possibly some sort of drug to ease her tension. Like Ania, she was ethnically "Russian," had attended the same "Russian" schools as Ania, and was a college student. Unlike Ania, she also had to work full time at a nearby factory most nights to support her parents who were unemployed and ill. She did not see any solution to this untenable situation except to eventually finish school and get a better job elsewhere. She could not even think about migrating, like Ania, since she had too many responsibilities at home to take care of. We tried to comfort her as best we could. In a while, she sleepily said goodbye and we went off to bed. For the first time in Lithuania, I was given my own room to sleep in and a real bed, even if it was in the main living room. Ania handed me the T.V. remote control and told me that her family had a satellite dish so that I could watch Russian, English, or Lithuanian language channels. I slept very well there.

The next day, Ania and I rose late and she made us a huge quantity of Russian cheese pancakes. Her mother said goodbye to us as she ran out the door to go to work and I never met her father since he had already left the apartment. Ania never really clarified for me her parents' professions. She did explain that much of the vegetables and other food they had in the house came from a grandmother who lived on a farm just five minutes away by car. After breakfast, we realized we had whiled the morning away and that if we did not get ready soon, Ania would be late for her main class for the day. She asked me if I would like to attend the class with her, since it was in English and I could tell her how it compared to college courses in the United States.

In the daytime, the area outside of Ania's apartment was grim. Unlike the other apartments I had seen in Kaunas which were old but at least well-kept up, here there was trash littering the ground, stray dogs, and cheap booths set up randomly selling clothes and alcohol. A large number of people milled around the bus area, speaking only Russian. At ten in the morning, there were also groups of young men wearing cheap leather jackets and track suits, drinking beer. Ania waived at a couple of people but tried to get us outside of the crowd and onto a bus as soon as possible. It was clear that people recognized me as a foreigner and that she wanted to distance herself from those around her as much as possible.

The drive into the center of the city during the day was also quite different from the night before. When we left the complex, we had to drive fifteen minutes through countryside and a scattering of ancient-looking farm houses to get to the edge of the city proper. Ania's area of the city was obviously quite isolated from the non-Russian districts.

We left the bus near her school and ran into the university buildings in the heart of the city only to realize that Ania's teacher was late. The only other Russian student in the class told us that she thought maybe the class time had been changed. None of the other students chatted with Ania, or myself, while we waited for a half an hour in the hallway.

The instructor finally arrived and Ania appeared to be one of the more accomplished students in the room.<sup>22</sup>

This class was the only engagement Ania had for the day, so she was free to take me on a short shopping tour of the city to buy souvenirs for my family and to help me find Juliana at the HIV conference. All day we took pictures, bought a gift for Roman from a Russian street seller, and talked about Ania's series of foreign friends that she had met at an Irish bar in the city. Even after years of researching Russians in the United States, Russia, and the Netherlands, I could never have identified Russian-ethnic Lithuanians as effortlessly as Ania during our day together. Clearly, ethnicity mattered to her and to others even if Ania, herself, was from a well-off family and had the opportunity of attending one of Lithuania's premier universities. I interpreted Ania's fascination with foreigners and foreign countries as a reflection of the difference she felt as a Russian-Pole in Lithuania. Migration offered her the possibility of escaping minority status in Lithuania and of creating a new life for herself outside of her family's influence. It would also allow her to reunite with Roman, whom she had continued to call and send frequent text messages to after she returned to Vilnius.

Even Juliana felt the strain of representing the wrong ethnicity in Lithuania. When I rejoined her at Vilnius' best hotel, she told me that as an ethnic Latvian, she was still unwelcome because she believed that her risqué designer clothes and Russian language skills gave Lithuanians the impression that she was Russian. Most Lithuanians could not speak English, Dutch, or Latvian so she was forced to depend upon her Russian for communication. Because Juliana was so good at speaking the language, due to a former Chechen husband and years of consorting with Russian-speakers in the

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<sup>22</sup> Several of the students did not seem to understand much English and the nervous instructor barely taught anything that day because she was too concerned with gaining all of the students' agreement about whether they should change the time and day of the class. Ania was one of the only students who would answer her. The others appeared tired and bored.

Netherlands, taxi drivers and restaurant waiters must have mistaken her for a rich Russian woman, or “New Russian.” The two elements of wealth and Russian ethnicity often connote mafia connections or immoral business practices, even among former-Soviets themselves. Whatever the reason, taxis overcharged her and dropped her at the wrong locations and restaurant staff refused to serve her. By the time we met, Juliana had decided not to visit Vilnius again.

### Return Migration Quandaries

Many states like the United States, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom return migrants to their “rightful” homes when they migrate illegally, are “trafficked,” or have not fully “integrated” into their host societies. Migrants such as Dainius, who live outside of their countries for only short periods of time and who continue to cultivate social and economic connections at home, may prefer to eventually return to their countries of origin. However, migrants such as Juliana, who left Latvia seven years before and had not been back more than once since they have less chance of keeping in contact with people they left behind. Juliana’s experiences during our trip to Latvia after the E.U. conference confirmed for her the impossibility of return. This section will illustrate the ways that long-term migration can change migrants’ loyalties, worldviews, and ideas of self so that return may no longer be an option.

After a six hour bus ride from Vilnius, Juliana and I arrived in Riga, Latvia at three in the morning. Thankfully, Juliana’s mother was waiting for us with a taxi ready to take us to her apartment in a small town, Ogre, a half hour outside of Riga. She had told Juliana earlier that there was plenty of room for us at her new apartment, since the family that owned it was living in another town. She had moved away from her abusive husband, Juliana’s father, just a few months before, gotten a job, a new boyfriend, and was finally putting her life back together. Unfortunately, her plans at showing off this new independence were spoiled by the fact that the family who owned her apartment had

just moved back into one of its two rooms. Juliana immediately asked the driver to stop the car and return us to Riga where we could find hotel rooms. Her mother burst out crying in disappointment and sadness. She offered to sleep on a cot in the kitchen and Juliana angrily agreed that we could spend one night with her, but that was all. When we got to the apartment, I immediately fell asleep where they put me.

The next morning, I found Juliana and her mother smiling and happily eating breakfast in the tiny kitchen with the woman who owned the apartment and her three daughters. Juliana and her mother had evidently stayed up all night talking about their lives and their relationship and were finally at peace with each other after years of being apart. Juliana had not been in Latvia for four years and had not lived there permanently for ten years. Because of her father's violence and abuse, she had not wanted to visit them, although she had talked to her mother regularly on the phone. Now, she and her mother appeared ready to build a much closer relationship. Juliana finally told her mother that she worked for an organization which helped sex-workers obtain legal rights and rewarding lives. She had expected her mother to disapprove of this, since prostitution is stigmatized in Latvia, as elsewhere, but her mother immediately saw the connection between the organization's work and the fight for women's rights in general and was very much in favor of Juliana's work. This meant a great deal to Juliana after so many years of hiding her own sex-work activities. In addition to these revelations, it turned out that Juliana knew her mother's landlady quite well from high school and we all got along so well that she decided we could stay there another two nights before returning to Amsterdam.

After breakfast, Juliana and her mother decided that we should make a trip to the cemetery. One of the reasons that Juliana was finally convinced to visit her mother again was that she had been having recurring nightmares about friends who had died before and after she left Latvia. She felt that if she paid homage to them at their graves, she could finally put them behind her.



It was a bright but very cold day. I put on every warm piece of clothing I had and Juliana's mother bought a bottle of herbal liquor to drink toasts to the dead and keep us warm. We walked through the tiny town of Ogre, almost devoid of people and sprinkled with beautiful nineteenth-century art-nouveau buildings, and out into the forest and along the Daugava River. Most people in the area, like Juliana's younger brother, worked in forestry, in a small number of factories, or commuted a half hour to Riga. The land we walked through appeared only marginally developed and I might have even missed the cemetery if I had not had Latvian guides. Trees were purposely allowed to grow between the graves and each grave had its own flower garden and bench for contemplation. Juliana explained to me that Russians and Latvians were not as segregated in Latvia as they were in Lithuania and showed me that the only differences between their graves and the Latvians' were a different type of cross and different flower symbols, since Latvians are Lutheran and Russians are Orthodox. Otherwise, the graves were all mixed up with each other and you could not tell someone's ethnicity by even their last name because many people had intermarried over the years. One of Juliana's own grandfathers had been Russian, but she and the rest of her family still considered themselves ethnically Lithuanian.

As we slowly meandered through the graves, Juliana and her mother started to talk about all of her young friends who had died early and violent deaths. For example, we paid a good deal of respect to the grave of a twenty-four year old man. He had been Juliana's and her brother's best friend and had died recently in 2000 while Juliana was in the Netherlands. Juliana's mother told us that his death was a tragedy not only because he was a wonderful man who had died very young and left a daughter and wife behind, but also because everyone believed his death could have been prevented. She said that the police in this part of Latvia were so corrupt that they embezzled the funds they were supposed to use to buy gear for their job. When their friend was in a car accident and the car caught on fire, the police at the scene did not have a single fire extinguisher to save

him. In silence, we three shared a drink for the poor man. Then, Juliana's mother lit a cigarette for herself and a second one to put on the grave. She told us later that if you light the kind of cigarette that this friend liked and laid it on his grave, it would burn up all of the way to the end as if he was smoking it, himself. We did not stay to see if this occurred.

We arrived back at the apartment to have dinner with the landlady's family and Juliana's brother. After a bit more drinking, Juliana and her mother decided that they wanted to get their hair cut. Their friend called a Russian hair stylist who made house calls and when she arrived, even more drinking ensued. I was amazed that no one even made reference to the fact that the woman was Russian except to switch more strongly from Latvian to Russian when she came in the room. The three women and Juliana's brother had a raucous time that evening and I escaped to the other room to play with the landlady's three daughters. The two youngest had difficulty understanding that I could not speak Latvian (and consequently continued to yell it in my ear), but we found ways of communicating with paper and hand signals. The hair stylist finally left, after losing her shears somewhere in the house on her way out.

The next day, Juliana took me to Riga to show me the university where she had studied law before leaving Latvia for Russia and later the Netherlands. The city was beautiful with a range of medieval to nineteenth century architecture. I found people spoke much more English as well as Russian in the cafés we visited. Unfortunately, however, Riga and Ogre were not as welcoming to Juliana as she had hoped. Taxi drivers, cell phone salesmen, and café attendants did not seem to know what to make of Juliana with her designer clothing and slightly superior attitude. Even though Juliana was speaking Latvian with them, several people asked her where she was from as though she was a foreigner. She realized that her brain was still working in Dutch and that she spoke Latvian more slowly with them than she had before as she purposely concentrated on translating her thoughts into Latvian words.

When we returned by train to Ogre, we had dinner with one of Juliana's close friends from the past and again Juliana felt a sense of dislocation. Her friend had built up her own furniture business and was raising a child on her own, which Juliana should have been able to relate to since she was a self-made woman with her own son in the Netherlands. However, she could not come to grips with what she viewed as her friend's superficial concerns about her weight, and lack of interest in larger social and political issues.

Juliana truly had made a life for herself among Dutch people in the Netherlands, unlike my Lithuanian friends who knew not a single Dutch person and only consorted with other Russian-speakers and foreigners such as myself. The rest of our stay in Latvia was full of similar disappointments for her as she continually compared her "beautiful life" in a suburb of Amsterdam to that of her friends and family in Ogre. The situation at the apartment also became increasingly uncomfortable and depressing as the days went by. The father of the family in the next room moved back in to hang out and drink with the group, and Juliana's brother broke up with his girlfriend and ended up sleeping and sitting around drunk in the kitchen for the next two days, as well. In addition, Juliana's mother had just started a new job at a nearby factory, working nights cleaning industrial cloth. She got no sleep while we were visiting and I stopped being able to understand her when she spoke to me since she would continually confuse Russian and Latvian words. Juliana was quite depressed when we left, but promised she would visit her mother and brother more often in the future. She told me, however, that there was no way she could ever live in Latvia again.

The Latvian portion of my trip illustrates that poverty and violence can be a reason for migration for some people, although this same poverty can also limit migration possibilities. For instance, Juliana's brother attempted to migrate to the Netherlands several times but he did not have Juliana's, Ania's, Felite's, or Dainius' education, contacts, cultural capital, language skills, or perseverance to succeed in living abroad.

My experiences then support Dutch development scholar Hein de Haas' critique of the idea that "that poverty and misery are the root causes of labour migration" (2005: 1271). If poverty alone was the determining factor, all of Juliana's family would have migrated. De Haas notes that,

Rather than absolute poverty, a certain level of socioeconomic development, combined with relative deprivation in the form of global inequality of development opportunities, seems to be the most important cause of migration. To a large extent this can also explain why leading emigration countries (e.g. Mexico, Morocco, Turkey, the Philippines) typically do not belong to the group of least developed countries (ibid.).

Juliana's return to Latvia also highlights the very negative personal consequences of migration. Juliana carried a good deal of guilt around with her for not remaining in Ogre to help her family and friends, especially those who were now deceased. In addition, she had lost the ability to relate to many people who had been so important to her in the past. Finally, Juliana felt bereft at realizing that she could no longer be considered a "real" Latvian. The night Juliana stayed up talking with her mother's landlady, she offered to serve as a Godmother to one of the landlady's daughters, which I saw as an attempt to reconnect with her old life in Latvia. However, she forgot this plan as she became more and more frantic to return to her comfortable existence in the Netherlands. Yet, no matter how good Juliana's Dutch was and how many Dutch friends she had, she was never going to be considered a "real" Dutchwoman as people (even in the organizations she worked in) still saw her as "Eastern" and culturally different. Long-term migration for Juliana meant being caught between two national identities and attachments.

### Connections and Migration Success

Here I describe the experiences of two Estonian sailors I met on the bus ride back from Latvia who lacked adequate connections to other Russian-speakers or Dutch people to facilitate their move to Amsterdam. Without the right connections, migrants cannot

find cheap housing or employment and migration no longer makes sense. This final section then illustrates how poorer migrants cannot simply “flow” into richer countries but require such basic necessities as visas, jobs, affordable housing, and even a degree of courage for migration to make sense.

As on the bus ride to Kaunas, my nearest passengers found me to be an interesting anomaly, somehow knowing that I was not from the Baltics. This time, there were two Estonian sailors, one of Russian ethnicity, who introduced themselves to me. They told me that they were attempting to change their careers and find work in the Netherlands. Both asked me a myriad of questions in Russian about the country and still seemed excited about their adventure, even though they had been on the bus six hours longer than me. They shared some vodka they had smuggled onto the bus and told me about the friends and family they were leaving behind. They felt that the ten years they spent working on ships was enough time in such a lonely and strenuous job and that migration to Western Europe would substantially increase their economic options. The Russian-Estonian man’s mother was making good money working as a house cleaner in Ireland. What clinched their decision, however, was that in their travels, they had met a Russian migrant from the Netherlands who gave them a glowing story of their possibilities in Amsterdam and offered to help them once they arrived. As we drove along, the sailors continued to receive well wishes on their cell phones from their friends in Estonia.

However, this bus ride into “Western Europe” did not go as smoothly as the one to the Baltics. That night, at the Polish-German border, our passports were taken for a much longer time and the two sailors were individually questioned since they had a separate type of merchant-marine passport which confused the border staff. Then, as we were driving through Germany the next morning, our bus was randomly pulled to the side of the highway by the German police. They took all of our passports again and then targeted the two young men for full searches of their luggage while the rest of us women and older men stood around watching. They found nothing of interest and eventually let

us back on the bus to go on our way but the Estonians were very disgruntled at being singled out so regularly because of their gender, age, nationality, and type of passport (merchant marine).

The Estonians' trip became even more stressful when we neared the Netherlands and they called their Russian-Dutch contact's phone number. It no longer worked. They realized that after such a long trip, they had nowhere to go and very little money without the support of this man who had promised them so much. I wrote down my phone number and some places where they could find other Russian-speakers if they still could not find their contact. When the bus finally arrived, they worriedly said goodbye to me and wandered off into the city.

The next day, the two Estonians' situation had not improved. They called me in desperation to meet them somewhere in the city and to introduce them to anyone I knew who might advise them about finding work since the prices for food and lodging were even higher than they imagined and they needed to find work immediately. They had not been able to sleep while staying in their cheap hotel because of the dirt and bed bugs and they could not find any of the places I had told them about. I met them on Rembrandtplein and offered to get them a coffee or something to eat but they insisted we immediately find someone to help them. I finally found Roman selling art on one of the larger tourist squares and he looked at the two suspiciously and then back at me. When they asked him if he knew where they could find work and lodging, he told them that the summer tourist work in Amsterdam was almost over and that they would have to try another city such as Rotterdam, which had a large industrial economy which was big enough to hide illegal immigrants who spoke no Dutch and only some English. They did not like this idea of going to yet one more city and starting over again with no contacts or real knowledge about the country. Both were still shocked by the lack of resonance between the Amsterdam they were finally seeing and what they had been told by their contact. Two days later, I received a phone call from the sailors as they were leaving on

the bus back to Estonia. They had given up on the idea of migrating and told me that I had been the only person they met who treated them with any kindness or even humanity. They offered to host me the next time I was in Estonia.

The Estonians' story shows that not all would-be migrants have the cultural capital and perseverance to make the right contacts which will eventually help them create lives abroad. It also shows how competitive migrants can be among themselves. Roman did not help the two because at that time of year, jobs were becoming scarce in Amsterdam and he was not willing to take a risk in sharing information. He had helped Ania that summer because he had enough business at that time to be generous and probably did not see her as a threat. In the autumn, Roman did not have the luxury or interest to help two lost Estonian men. Even if the Estonians' contact had in fact met them in Amsterdam, it was also not a foregone conclusion that they would have succeeded in creating lives for themselves in the city. I heard rumors of fake, Russian-run temporary work agencies hiring out former-Soviet migrants and then pocketing their earnings. Illegal migrants had very little legal recourse in such situations.

### Conclusion

Virtually everywhere one looks, the processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things (Clifford 1997: 3).

Migration between the Baltics and the Netherlands is not nearly as established as migration routes to the United States or Germany. The number of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian migrants in the Netherlands is nowhere near as large as the numbers of former Dutch colonials, Moroccans, and Turks in the country, even if transportation by bus between Brussels and Talinn is readily available. Many Dutch people have no idea what or where the Baltics are, while perhaps a few people in the Baltics (e.g., the Estonian sailors) may still believe that Western Europe is a utopia of wealth and fashion,

as seen in movies, magazines, and television. Those who migrate and stay for long periods of time are often very brave, desperate, or have good enough connections or personal reasons to justify it. However, in the Netherlands, I witnessed many more swift movements of people back and forth between their countries of origin and of migration based upon personal circumstances or fluctuating economic and political situations. As the Estonian sailors' experiences illustrate, it takes just a bit of bad luck for some migrants to return home. For others, like the Russian-Lithuanian college student, love and leaving a Russian slum take precedence over school and family, so that migrating becomes essential to her future happiness. Juliana's experience then shows the difficulty of returning home even when her family's situation is marginally better than it was before she left, as her mother had escaped from her abusive marriage. Even with this improvement, Juliana had changed too much in the process of living abroad to be able to relate to her friends and family back home. In addition, some of her family's problems which she had hoped had disappeared, such as alcoholism and general poverty, still existed upon return.

These travels from the Netherlands to Lithuania and Latvia and back again provide a complex picture of the processes, motivations, and repercussions of East-West migration for these individuals. Lithuanians' and Latvians' stories contradict the assumption that people in Eastern Europe will immediately invade Western Europe if and when barriers to migration are loosened. In general, people in the Baltics do not see Western European countries as superior to their own and would not leave their homelands to live abroad if there were other alternatives. Those who do leave to work abroad may plan to return home eventually, while others may find return impossible. European efforts to discourage migration through warnings about trafficking are also not effective when particular migrants trust in their personal connections in foreign countries and know others who have migrated successfully. Finally, these stories indicate the flawed basis of migration policies and scholarship which link people's motivations with



single causes such as poverty, gender discrimination, or ethnic strife. A combination of these elements may influence individuals to migrate, but many other factors, both personal and structural, must come into play for them to follow through with their migration plans.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMBODYING EASTERN EUROPEAN  
OTHERNESS: TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN DISCOURSE AND  
MIGRANT SEX-WORK IN THE NETHERLANDS

At the Dutch prostitute union “Red Thread,” Juliana told a group of U.S. college students that she had become a victim of “trafficking” into the Netherlands from Latvia by answering an ad for a job as an *au pair*. She was a law student at the time and wanted to make some extra money to support her studies, so she accepted the seemingly legitimate position. When she arrived in the Netherlands, she was beaten and forced to work in a brothel. Upon being sold from one pimp to another, she found an opportunity to escape and contacted the police. Amazingly, she agreed to stand witness in a court case against her traffickers with the possibility that the traffickers might retaliate against her or her family for this action. She received a temporary residency visa for trafficking victims (B9) from the Dutch government for the duration of the court case. However, Juliana had no idea that this decision would mean that she would be consigned to a shelter for several months with nothing to do but learn Dutch and take classes for career “retraining” in service industry jobs even though she lacked a work visa for the Netherlands. Juliana said that being treated as a sick victim rather than as an able-bodied person hurt her self-esteem. She became depressed. With the help of a friend, she left the government shelter and started working clandestinely in sex-work again in window brothels,<sup>23</sup> clubs, and private houses. Making money and feeling attractive gave her a new lease on life. After two more years of sex-work, she had retired from it and was now attempting to help other women feel empowered and gain control over their lives as sex-workers and as migrants in the Netherlands. She said that she saw the Netherlands as her

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<sup>23</sup> Window brothels are found in most of the Dutch Red Light districts. Women advertise themselves by standing behind windows or glass doorways which overlook the street.

home. A fellow organization member made sure the group understood that Juliana spoke Dutch perfectly, with almost no accent.

While I later found Juliana's history to be much more complex and shrouded in strategic half-truths, it is significant that the organization wanted her to tell this particular story to show that "trafficking victims" should be treated with respect and not just pity, and that sex-workers are not always "forced" but may actually enjoy their jobs.<sup>24</sup> In the questions following her presentation, Juliana also reinforced these messages by describing a friend who had chosen prostitution over modeling because there was less stress on achieving an ideal beauty type in prostitution because men sought out sex-workers of all shapes and ages. She also denied that drugs were very much a part of the sex-work scene by saying that there were more narcotics in dance clubs than around sex-workers' places of business and that she had never taken them.

A year later, Juliana was still employed in sex-work rights organizations but was more conversant in English and had earned a position of greater responsibility in one organization. She was attempting to construct and direct a project to help Eastern European sex-workers and she was working with a lawyer on a court case to argue for the right of female sex-workers from E.U.-associated countries to obtain working permits in Alkmaar, the Netherlands. In addition, she had reenrolled in law school and was helping plan several sex-work conferences and events.

In November of 2002, Juliana was asked to present a paper on the situation of Eastern European sex-workers at an E.U. conference on trafficking, held in the state congressional halls of the Netherlands in Den Haag. She was very nervous about this and asked me to help her translate her paper from Russian into presentable English for the multinational audience (European Union officials, E.U. associated officials, and even two

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<sup>24</sup> Her presentation was certainly choreographed since she was aided by another member who translated for her from Dutch to English and because the director of the union later told me that it was her job to speak to groups about her experiences.

former Soviet state representatives) and to accompany her to the conference to provide any language aid she might need while there. Just before we left for the conference, Juliana checked the schedule she had been sent to see when she would be speaking. She found her name at the very end of the meeting with the title below it: “Trafficking Victim.” To be trotted out in front of E.U. officials as the token “trafficking victim” made her quite irate and hurt. After several years’ worth of work on the topic with many different organizations, she thought that she would be speaking as an expert on Eastern European women’s and sex-workers’ issues rather than about her past. She no longer identified herself as a “victim” and in fact did not want people to know about this part of her life anymore. She had dyed her previously blond hair to brown again and purposely dressed more conservatively because she told me she wanted to be taken more seriously. At the conference, Juliana combated this identification of “victim” in her speech by stressing the need to allow migrant women to work in sex-work and by talking knowledgeably with many of the members in several different languages about sex-worker rights after her speech. However, even after Juliana’s and other organizations’ critiques of the idea that migrant sex-workers were de facto victims of trafficking and that the solution to trafficking should be criminalization of prostitution and female migration, several members even approached me to tell me that the work I was doing with Juliana’s organization was admirable because someone really needed to help these “poor” girls.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, Juliana, herself, later realized how useful the idea of “trafficking” and “trafficking victim” could be in gaining the attention and money from these policy-makers. As the months went by, her language would often be sprinkled with these terms and I soon lost any real idea of what she was referring to with the term “trafficking.” One day, she excitedly told me that she had met a Dutch trafficking victim who had been

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<sup>25</sup> Some members, such as those from Romania, view prostitutes as a culturally stigmatized group. For them to feel pity for sex-workers is perhaps better than the alternative of social censure and criminalization as in the United States.

forced into prostitution by her father and whom she was now trying to help. Perhaps the collapsing of the term from the very specific referent of naïve migrant woman forced into sex-work abroad by the mafia to that of any woman forced into sex-work was her point, after all. Yet, perhaps understandably, Juliana was also changing her views to fit the new identity she was trying on in her search for ways of gaining higher economic and social status as an Eastern European migrant. By the end of my research period, she was moving away again from the anti-trafficking language and her Eastern European sex-work projects to capitalize on her many language skills and imminent law degree in order to work within the Eastern European migrant community.

Juliana's story illustrates the ways that "trafficking" discourse and practices can shape Eastern European women's lives. Juliana was forced into sex-work in the Netherlands, escaped from her traffickers, found herself in a demeaning situation in a Dutch shelter because of her trafficked status, rejected this status by returning voluntarily to sex-work and promoting sex-worker rights, but then later used "trafficking" discourse in her own sex-work advocacy. When Juliana believed that she had overcome her history of trafficking, she realized at the European Commission conference that her identity as a trafficking victim was useful to organizations in their effort to obtain publicity and funding. Instead of fighting this discourse, she decided to employ it herself in particular situations. However, Juliana eventually felt limited in her victim/advocate role in these organizations and changed professional fields to study and practice migration law within the migrant community she had previously rejected in favor of her new Dutch identity.

Juliana's experiences begin to illustrate the ways that Eastern European "otherness" is embodied in the Netherlands through discourse and control over Eastern European sex-workers and their male Eastern European (mafia) traffickers. Although I have already critiqued the stereotype of Eastern European migrants as Mafiosi and prostitutes, it is still important to see how language about sex-workers and "trafficking in women" become embedded in organizations' and governmental approaches to aiding sex-

workers or managing migration. Although Juliana was indeed a victim of trafficking who was aided by the Dutch government, she was treated in a patronizing manner in a state-run shelter based upon erroneous ideas about Eastern European women (e.g. unskilled or uneducated) and not given full legal rights to remain and work in the Netherlands. Dutch attention to Eastern European sex-workers, as opposed to other groups of illegal migrant sex-workers in the Netherlands, illustrates the general Dutch ambivalence toward Eastern Europeans. Women are assumed to be under the thrall of male Mafioso traffickers and are rounded up by the police in order to “save” them from such work. However, the crackdowns on *tipplezone* sex-workers at the beginning of my research period are evidence that not all Eastern European women are informed about the possibility of the temporary B9 visas (if trafficked) but can simply be sent home.

The focus on women’s sexual exploitation in the form of trafficking discourse and practice serves to distinguish Eastern and Western Europeans based upon historically-based ideas of alterity such as their “traditional” gender relations. Whether implicitly or explicitly, women’s assumed desperation to migrate and vulnerability to trafficking is blamed upon their culture, in which men are said to dominate women. Eastern European women need to be saved from Eastern European men<sup>26</sup> who are portrayed as the mafia traffickers, pimps, and power structure at home. Although there are certainly exceptions to these representations – even in trafficking discourse – the most prevalent negative representations of Eastern European women and men in discussions about “trafficking” serve to further marginalize Eastern Europeans in the European Union as a whole. These negative representations of Eastern Europeans in anti-trafficking actions and discourse may simply be residual Cold War fears of an insidious and immoral enemy in the East. Yet, it seems particularly significant that there is such attention to trafficking in Eastern European women in newspapers, women’s organizations, governmental bodies, and

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<sup>26</sup> See similar representations of “brown men” in colonial India in Spivak (1985).

journals at the moment when the European Union and individual countries within it are redefining their national and supranational identities. Ultimately, these discourses and practices affect even Eastern European migrants who have no relationship with sex-work or crime in the Netherlands.

In the first part of this chapter, I describe the more dominant Dutch and European anti-trafficking discourse and approaches that are part of a larger project of constructing and reinforcing European and Dutch national identities. In the second half, I will illustrate more of the complexity of actual uses and denials of “trafficking discourse” and attitudes toward Eastern Europeans and migrants among sex-work organizations and governmental bodies. These examples show how Dutch organizations and government officials strategically repudiate or invoke images of helpless trafficking victims, scheming Eastern European women, and “traditional” Eastern European societies depending upon their views about migrant rights in the Netherlands. Juliana’s story exemplifies Eastern European women’s own ability to defy simple categorizations (passive vs. ultra-aggressive Eastern European women) in denying her victimhood but also utilizing trafficking language for personal gain.

### Rhetoric, Migration, and Nation-building

Migration, itself, has only been a politically fraught topic in Europe and the United States since the intense nation-building projects and globalizing economy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In her pathbreaking book, *Guests and Aliens*, Saskia Sassen describes the long history of migration in and out of Europe and shows how migrants become stigmatized and maligned mainly in periods of low economic growth (1999: 99). However, Sassen argues that today’s migrations are just a part of the contemporary economic globalization processes. She describes European countries and the United States as supporting processes of de-nationalizing trade but actively

combating population movements since they are afraid of losing power over national identities (ibid.: xvii).

It has never been an easy project for politicians to define national borders around individuals in a particular geographic area (see Anderson 1991) and it is clearly more difficult today in an age of swift movement and communication over long distances. Certain populations then come to be considered insiders or outsiders based upon historic political-economic relations, media representations, and government policies. In describing the consequences of California's now infamous anti-immigration bill, Proposition 187, which attempted to bar the children of illegal migrants from public-funded education and healthcare, rhetoricians Kent Ono and John Sloop say that discourse about it in newspapers and on the Internet

shifts borders, changing what they mean publicly, influencing public policy, altering the ways borders affect people, and circumscribing political responses to such legislation... rhetoric at times even determines where, and what, the border is (2002: 5).

In the same way, the discourse and policies relating to Eastern European sex-workers can be understood as shaping the border between Eastern and Western Europe in people's minds and in practice at this very particular moment of E.U. expansion and integration.

#### Trafficking Discourse and Fears

The term, "trafficking," has been used to refer to a variety of practices: from a general sexual exploitation of women in the world today (Hughes 2000; Raymond 1998) to coerced migration and forced labor (Salt 2000). It is most widely employed in reference to the enslavement of women and children for the purposes of prostitution through either purchase of them from family members or by deceiving them with misleading job ads for work abroad. Media all over the world finds great prurient excitement in describing the ways that this "new slavery" has taken hold of women from countless poorer nations (e.g. Binder 2003; Cockburn 2003; Simpson 2000; Weiss 2002). Governmental bodies such as the European Union, United Nations, and Dutch



government have persisted in funding organizations which aid trafficking victims even as aid for other migrants has lessened (e.g. U.N website: [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking\\_human\\_beings.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_human_beings.html)).

Yet, it is very difficult to obtain reliable data on trafficking. Sources invariably conflict in their predictions of how large a problem trafficking is due to the inherent difficulty of researching an illegal activity such as “trafficking” (Doezema 1998; Hughes 1999; IOM 2001; Murray 1998; Salt 2000). Human geographer John Salt observes that “most data used in the trafficking and human smuggling literature refer to illegal migrants, with built-in assumptions that the estimated numbers are a surrogate for trafficked or smuggled migrants” (2000: 39). Trafficking discourse can be compared to Said’s *Orientalism* in that it is becoming a “system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom” (1978: 6) through popular and scholarly authors’ iterative citations of particular texts. Authors who are cited the most on a topic become its “authorities” and their work then shapes future understandings of the topic over time (Said 1978: 23; also Kuhn 1996). In the trafficking phenomenon, a very influential activist and women’s studies scholar Donna Hughes often cites the following newspaper article (see Hughes 2000):

The international bazaar for women is hardly new, of course. Asians have been its basic commodity for decades. But economic hopelessness in the Slavic world has opened what experts call the most lucrative market of all to criminal gangs that have flourished since the fall of Communism: Eastern European women with little to sustain them but their dreams. Pimps, law-enforcement officials and relief groups all agree that Ukrainian and Russian women are now the most valuable in the trade (Specter 1998).

*New York Times* journalist, Michael Specter, does not explain why these women are more popular but it is presumed that they are in high demand because they are “white” and more “like” their clients in Western Europe or more exotic to clients elsewhere. However, without questioning Specter’s sources or assumptions, Hughes uses this passage to explain why she focuses on the situation of Ukrainian women in her

article, “The ‘Natasha’ Trade” (2000) and her organization’s projects in the Ukraine (www.catwinternational.org). In turn, Hughes has become an “expert” on trafficking in women even though the material for her work mainly comes from such news sources as Specter’s article and from websites. Hughes testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee of East Asian and Pacific Affairs on “Trafficking of Women and Children in East Asia and Beyond: A Review of U.S. Policy” (Hughes 2003). In addition, the intergovernmental body, International Organization of Migration (IOM) employed her as an independent consultant to conduct research on trafficking from the Russian Federation (2002). Views about “trafficking” then become very real when governmental bodies attach credence to their authors.

Nonetheless, even if we were to subscribe to Hughes, Specter’s and others’ understanding of large-scale exploitation of women in the sex business, trafficking as a type of crime cannot easily be defined or fought against in the generalized manner in which the organizations and governments often propose. Anthropologists, other social scientists, and historians have shown how sex-work and even sexuality cannot be assumed to exist in the same way across societies and across time. For example, Michelle Renaud (1997), Claire E. Sterk (1999), Julia O’Connell Davidson (1996), Alain Corbin (1990) show the impossibility of generalizing about all sex-workers’ experiences within communities as well as between them and Richard H. Parker and John H. Gagnon (1995) and Carole S. Vance (1984, 1999) elucidate the problems of separating culture from sexuality. They demonstrate that people’s experiences of exploitation, agency, and power are less visible or even ignored when categories such as “prostitute” and “sexuality” are invoked and assumed to represent natural (unchanging, non-cultural) behaviors and meanings.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dina Siegel and Yucel Yesilgoz provide an excellent example of an in-depth study of Russian sex-workers in Turkey who did not conform to dominant European and U.S. portrayals of “young girls trapped in nets of violent criminal organizations” (2001: 1-2). They describe in

The question to ask, then, is why trafficking in Eastern European women to the United States and Europe is so compelling that scholars, activists, law makers, and journalists are alarmed about it without conclusive evidence of its wide-spread existence. Several scholars have compared contemporary generalizations of trafficking, sexuality, sex-work, and migrant sex-work to turn of the twentieth century discourse on prostitution and migration (Bindman 1997; Doezema 2000; Soderland and Grant 1998). Significantly, both of these times include large migration flows, economic growth in Europe and the United States, and increasing global exchanges. In these contexts, academics, popular media, and policy makers have used the image of the prostitute variously to argue against economic inequality among nations, gender inequality, sexual inequality, the spread of venereal disease and HIV/AIDS, and uncontrolled migration.

Historian Eileen Scully argues that the “white slave” panics were related to the construction of a national (or former colonial) “self” in relation to (colonial and post-colonial) “others” at the turn of the twentieth century (2001). “White slaves,” who were only 1% of the prostitutes in the colonies considered “white” at that time, had the most elite, white clients and yet anti-white slave activists claimed that these women were only working under duress (Scully 2001: 87). Historian Donna Guy writes that “for many Europeans, it was inconceivable that their female compatriots would willingly submit to sexual commerce with foreign, racially varied men” (2000: 74). Fears about miscegenation combined with concern about colonial respectability in the eyes of the colonized, causing many waves of deportations of “white” prostitutes and even simply unmarried female migrants who risked becoming or being seen as prostitutes while in Dutch and English colonies (Scully 2001; Stoler 1997b).

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great detail Russian women’s and Turkish men’s stereotypes and treatment of one another, which cannot be summed up as completely exploitative in either direction.

Guy describes an example of this connection between national pride and anti-white slavery efforts in the form of one German activist's travels to Brazil and Argentina in 1906 to ascertain the extent of white slavery in these countries. According to Guy, this Major Wagener only asked after German prostitutes when he arrived in each port city and was "relieved" that the prostitutes he was guided to were most often Eastern European (Polish, Russian, and Hungarian), although "he objected to their being labeled 'Germans'" (2000: 25).

Whether today's fears are founded on actual widespread exploitation or as in the "white slavery" scare, simply a way to protect female migrants and national identities, trafficking discourse still perpetuates a questionable trope of women as sexual "victims." As in Juliana's case, this view does not always benefit the women and may not even fully describe their situation (e.g. Juliana's later sex-work without a pimp). Gender studies scholar Lori L. Hiese argues that "focusing the 'bio-medical gaze' on violence risks reinforcing images of women as 'victim,' an impression that can undermine women's own sense of self efficacy" (Heise 1995: 109-110). Scholars must then be conscious of their own victimizing power in their research on women and violence against them.

Like Juliana, certain Eastern European women employed in sex-work abroad may prosper or be exploited at different periods in their lives. Yet, to describe them all as de facto victims of "trafficking" or even simply "victims" of sex-work in general, only obfuscates the situation. Women's working and living conditions differ in very real ways based upon their legality in the Netherlands, how they arrived in the Netherlands (e.g. existence of debt bondage), where they are working, and for whom. Often the language about trafficking is dramatized and exploited for multiple uses. Citing Chandra Mohanty (1991), Nicole Constable similarly describes the relationship between women's organizations and the issue of "mail order brides" (2003: 86). She says that

representing Third World women as victims of patriarchal familial structures, religion, and development, creates the impression of Asia as a breeding ground for women who, blind to their own

oppression, must be rescued by enlightened feminists. As Mohanty has written, this amounts to ‘discursive colonization,’ in which the singular Third World woman becomes the fuel and fodder for constructions of more liberated and enlightened western feminists” (Constable 2003: 86).

In the same way, Eastern European trafficking victims serve to justify certain Western European feminist politics and power as they gain publicity and money for their nongovernmental projects.

For governments, support of anti-trafficking efforts also distracts attention from the underlying causes of migrant exploitation such as the ever increasing European Union and Dutch migration restrictions. Human smuggling and abuse of migrants’ human rights in labor only exist because there are very few legal ways to live and work in the Netherlands for many third-country nationals. However, even with such legal and social restrictions on migration, many undocumented Eastern European migrants (female and male) are still able to travel to the Netherlands and make a living without the aid of “traffickers” and without necessarily engaging in sex-work. Because of government restrictions, they also remain more vulnerable to exploitation.

In her essay, “(Un)Popular Strangers and Crises (Un)Bounded: Discourses of Sex-Trafficking, the European Political Community and the Panicked State of the Modern State,” Jacqueline Berman analyzes the ways that gender and race are configured through images of “sex-trafficking” victims from Eastern Europe in Europe and the effects this has on international relations and sovereignty (2003). She argues that highlighting trafficking allows states to strengthen their boundaries and take control over migration in the context of the European Union’s attempts to break down these same boundaries. She says that

in European integration processes and in debates over immigration, the complex circumstances of trafficking and other forms of gendered migration function as a metonym for crime and an opportunity to intensify border control in the name of protecting citizens and women (Berman 2003: 39).

While many groups of migrants have become the scapegoats for social and economic problems in the European Union today, Berman states that it is Eastern European migrant sex-workers who are the most “popular’ figures of strangeness” in that they provide a very striking model of what Europe sees itself as not (ibid.: 39).<sup>28</sup> Berman describes women’s whiteness and sexuality as the reason why European countries feel they need to “protect” the women, but ultimately reject them from inclusion in their national identity. She believes that as sex-workers – whether “trafficked” or not – they are identified with immorality and an uncontrollable sexuality, which is opposed to European national ideas of self (ibid: 61).

Berman’s theory about the utility of trafficking discourse does seem to apply to the Dutch situation in which there are certainly worries about invasions of Eastern “others” and challenges to its national identity with integration of the European Union. In the Netherlands, Eastern European women’s assumed unequal gender relations also serve to define them as “other” to an imagined European “self.” Although sex-work is not socially lauded by any means, there is still more support for sex-workers’ rights in the Netherlands than in many other parts of the world. In my discussions with Dutch people about my research, it seemed that gender relations were a greater concern to them since they believed Eastern European women were more submissive to men and more feminine in relation to their more brutish male counterparts (as in the role of Mafia human trafficker).

Also, while Berman sees the women’s “whiteness” and invisibility as resulting in their surveillance and removal, I have already described the history of Eastern and Western relations which influence Western Europeans’ ambivalence toward Eastern European migrants and even cause their racialization as something other than “white.”

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<sup>28</sup> Eastern European women have been the focus of numerous International Organization of Migration (IOM) studies, anti-trafficking projects in Western Europe and international conferences on trafficking in women.

As in the “white slavery” phenomenon, “whiteness” was dependent on the national interests of the particular reformers and had political ramifications. In the case of the Netherlands, if “whiteness” and a lack of citizenship was all that mattered for sex-workers to be targeted by the police, American sex-workers working in the Netherlands would have similarly been ejected. Also, to deny that there are groups which are even more marginalized in Europe and in the Netherlands (Muslims, for example) does an injustice to those groups, victimizes people who do not see themselves as such, and ignores the liminal space in which Eastern Europe has often found itself in Western European imagination. Finally, it is also necessary to see beyond “discourse” to actual practices which serve to define some people as “belonging” to a place or dominant group and others who only sometimes are considered a part of this group. Analysis such as Berman’s which is based upon discourse on trafficking of women and Eastern Europe may serve more to reaffirm the stereotypes than to dispute them if discourse does not fully match people’s lived realities.<sup>29</sup>

#### Trafficking Discourse in Action

When I arrived in the Netherlands to conduct my dissertation research, I was funded by Dutch and American sources<sup>30</sup> and yet I had great difficulty obtaining a residency permit because Dutch migration law has no category for independent researchers. Instead, the Alien police repeatedly inquired whether I was starting a business in Amsterdam. When I sought advice on this predicament from a Dutch director of a research institute, he told me that the immigration officials asked this question because Eastern European women had previously entered into the country with that

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<sup>29</sup> See Constable (2003) for a discussion of the limits of discourse analysis in relation to mail-order bride research.

<sup>30</sup> These were the Netherlands-America Institute Fulbright Fellowship and Wenner-Gren Dissertation Research Fellowship.

particular visa when planning to become sex-workers. He implied that I could have been mistaken for an Eastern European sex-worker and for this reason, was given little aid in obtaining my residency papers.<sup>31</sup>

While the Netherlands is in fact known for its tolerant drug and prostitution scenes, the political, economic, and social environment is swiftly becoming more overtly conservative (Visser, personal communication; see also Oosterhuis 1999: 72). This upper class Dutch director's mention of "Eastern European prostitutes" as a problem group for the Alien police is indicative of the everyday association of Eastern Europeans with prostitution and increasing Dutch concern about illegal migration overall. Although my own difficulty in obtaining a residency permit may not have been due to any real misunderstanding that I was an Eastern European sex-worker, the organization director was correct in believing that the migration officials would be actively seeking illegal and unwanted Eastern European prostitutes.

Unlike the United States, in the Netherlands sex-work is now legal and on its way to being at least marginally tolerated as a "real" job. There have been some inroads in gaining rights for sex-workers to open bank accounts and to apply for social benefits (see Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation report). However, there is still much more room for improvement, as the prostitute union, De Rode Draad ("Red Thread"), has constant trouble compelling local officials and tax police to apply the same standards to sex-work as to other industries and not to treat sex-workers as vectors of moral and physical disease.

Yet, just as the Dutch government had finally legalized prostitution and sex-workers were gaining more rights, popular views and government policies were becoming quite negative in relation to migrant sex-workers and migrants in general. Jan

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<sup>31</sup> The director was not making some sort of joke related to my initial research interest in Eastern European sex-workers, and indeed was embarrassed that he had forgotten my project when I reminded him about it.



Visser, the director of the Dutch prostitute union, observed that anti-immigration sentiment was becoming more openly and frequently voiced due to the former presidential candidate, Pim Fortuyn's, rise in popularity and his sudden demise before the 2002 election (personal communication). An outrageously "campy" gay man, Fortuyn ran on a platform of anti-immigration and conservative economics, which was popular among voters as a clear break from the past. Fortuyn's party gained 26 of the 150 Dutch parliament seats even without him at its helm (BBC News 6/21/2002), and people who had never been in government before were now given responsibilities beyond their experience (Visser, personal communication). Several BBC News articles following Fortuyn's rise in popularity quote him as saying that the Netherlands was a "full" country, and those (migrants) who were here should be forced to accept Dutch culture and values" (6/21/2002, see also Horsley 2002). Although his party soon fell apart, other parties took up his anti-immigrant position because of its apparent popularity (BBC News 10/16/02a, BBC News 10/16/02b, Coughlan 2003).

This social conservatism combined with prostitution's new legality resulted in a situation in which the police were fully sanctioned to eradicate illegal workers from the sex-work industry in the name of keeping the prices for sexual services higher and protecting foreign women from being "exploited." In the recent past, the police generally turned a blind eye to all sex-workers (see Kilvington et. al. 2001: 81 and Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation report) – including Eastern European, Antillian, or Dutch – since the job was illegal for all women and men and it was deemed too expensive and inhumane to prosecute them. Today, sex-work is the only Dutch industry which does not allow third-country nationals to apply for work visas. The law states that only migrant women who can prove that they are self-employed (not exploited by a "pimp") can obtain work permits in the Netherlands. However, in practice, this has not been possible for many women because they cannot afford to wait at home while they wade through the lengthy

and obstructionist bureaucracy for their visa. For instance, officials might deny a woman's visa because her business plan was not "professional" enough.

These restrictions and the increased law enforcement of illegal foreign sex-workers have disproportionately affected Eastern European women. Male sex-workers – even Eastern European migrants who work illegally – are not targeted by the police unless they are making a "public nuisance" of themselves as drug addicts or thieves (Eberhart at AMOC, personal communication). Also, non-E.U. sex-workers of other nationalities have more legal means for working in the Netherlands, often in much more comfortable private or window brothels or in other industries. For instance, members of several different sex-worker organizations and a Dutch policeman told me that Latin American transgendered people who are in the middle of their sex change operations are allowed to work in any type of sex-work in the Netherlands so they tended to draw out their operations for years at a time. Also, women from Latin American and African nations seemed more successful in gaining Dutch citizenship, work, and residency papers because they had the support of larger, more established migrant communities than the Eastern European groups (Prostitute Information Center, personal communication).

However, because most brothel owners know that they will lose their brothel license if they are found to be hiring illegal Eastern European women, Eastern European women could only work either in remote countryside brothels or in the less comfortable street-walking zones. The crackdowns described below occurred in these street-walking zones around the Netherlands.

### *Tipplezone Crackdowns*

On a cold night in September, one of the Netherlands' major newspapers described Eastern European sex-workers being rounded up "like a herd of sheep" at the Amsterdam "*tipplezone*" – the legal site for streetwalkers to conduct business on the outskirts of the city (Pen 2002). The news reporters were warned early of this raid and

were already waiting with cameras and lights outside of the chain-link fence surrounding the zone before the police arrived. As cameras flashed, the police locked the gates. Unable to escape to even the sex-worker “living room” where they normally congregated for snacks and rest, the women waited in 5 degree Celsius weather for an hour until the police brought out a portable structure for checking passports and processing undocumented sex-workers for deportation. Between seventy and eighty women were arrested and put on planes back to Romania, Bulgaria and elsewhere in Eastern Europe (ibid.). This mass police action was just one of the first and most publicized efforts made by the police, city, and national government to eradicate Eastern European sex-workers from the Netherlands due to fears of Eastern European crime and violence. Officials claimed they were trying to stop the traffic in women from Eastern Europe for the sex-trade as well as the violence and mafia crime surrounding traffickers’ activities. These actions, the mayor stated, were to have a “radiation affect” on criminals to show that they were not welcome (ibid).

The government official in charge of the Amsterdam *tipplezone* was very open with me about how and why they had conducted the mass round-ups of Eastern European sex-workers in these zones. While he had no problem with sex-work – since it has long existed and been lucrative for the city government and economy – he believed that the crime and the existence of so many illegal Eastern Europeans in the zone demanded government intervention. He told me that police in the city had not only cracked down on Eastern European sex-workers but also on illegal Eastern European men who were believed to have been behind much petty thievery in the center of the city. I had heard nothing about this in the news media or through Eastern European acquaintances working on the street. Either the journalists had not been invited to watch these police actions, as in the case of the *tipplezone* crackdowns, or they were simply less interested in male thieves than female sex-workers. In any case, this official believed that the growing problem in Amsterdam was not necessarily the fact that women from Eastern Europe

could have become exploited in sex-work but rather that there were too many illegal migrants from Eastern Europe becoming public nuisances. He told me that because the European Union was enlarging to encompass ten Eastern European states in 2004, more migrants would be flooding in to cause trouble and taking over Dutch jobs. This meant that the police had to enforce migration laws much more than they had in the past. I asked him why Eastern Europeans would necessarily “flood” in if the Greeks and Portuguese did not all migrate into richer countries when they were invited to join the European Community years before. He responded by saying that this view of history was not really true and that there were in fact too many Greeks trying to find better lives in the rest of Europe.<sup>32</sup>

Members of organizations aiding migrants and sex-workers expressed mixed reactions to these crackdowns on Eastern European sex-workers. Eberhart of AMOC, an organization aiding drug addicted migrants and male migrant sex-workers, did not believe that Eastern Europeans were discriminated against more than or differently from other migrants. Being himself a German migrant to Amsterdam, Eberhart thought that all foreigners faced discrimination in the Netherlands, but especially if they were not E.U. citizens. He had read about the Russian Mafia and public concern about it in parts of Europe, but he, personally, did not believe that it posed much of a threat to Dutch society. When I asked him about the *tipplezone* crackdowns, he had very strong critiques of the government and its treatment of Eastern Europeans in this situation. He told me that the crackdowns made no sense as far as actually stopping migration or helping sex-workers. Instead, Eberhart believed that they were just meant to be a sign to the countries from which the women came that they should stop their people from migrating to the

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<sup>32</sup> See Sassen (1999) for a repudiation of the image of migrant “floods” and of the particular lack of such “floods” into the European Union from other countries given European Union membership in the past. For the specific example of Portuguese migration after E.U. accession, see Brettell (2003).

Netherlands. In addition, he thought that the police had been as rough and as brutal as possible in order to publicize the events on CNN and other world news media to show that the Dutch government was doing something about the “problem.”

Mariana of Red Thread had a slightly different opinion about the crackdowns and Eastern Europeans. She believed that there were in fact too many Eastern Europeans on the zones and that the zones were not helping the people they were meant to help – drug addicted, Dutch sex-workers. In her view, Eastern Europeans were too good looking and created too much competition for the drug-addicted workers. They were healthier than the drug addicted women, younger, and were members of “a beautiful race.” When I related to her my interview with the Amsterdam official about the *tipplezone* crackdowns, she agreed with him that in fact there would be floods of Eastern Europeans to the Netherlands after they joined the European Union and that this could cause such problems as major housing deficits. However, she disagreed with the way that migrants were exploited in the Netherlands. Even if they were not “trafficked” in the sense of being tricked into doing sex-work, they often fell into the hands of exploiters. She believed that simply rounding them up and sending them home was not the solution.

### Obscuring Understandings of Migrant Sex-Work

The government was not alone in focusing unwanted attention on the situation of Eastern European sex-workers in 2002-2003. I, myself, felt implicated in this governmentality and concentration upon the all too provocative figure of the Eastern European sex-worker. I had planned to conduct research almost solely on Russian-speaking sex-workers after reading a large amount of anti-trafficking and sex-worker activist literature about their situation. My motivation in researching Russian speaking sex-workers was to hopefully de-sexualize the scholarly and popular attention upon them and to study them as whole individuals in relation to Eastern European migrants’ (men’s

and women's, sex-workers' and non-sex-workers') experiences overall.<sup>33</sup> There were several problems with these aspirations. Most significantly, I was assuming I would find large numbers of Eastern European women in sex-work based upon research about trafficking in women, migrant sex work, and women's situation in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union. This research posits that many Eastern European women now see sex-work and the possibility of living in the "West" as glamorous (Bridger et. al. 1996; Pickup 1998; Pilkington 1996; Stishova 1996) or that they are one of the most vulnerable groups to trafficking based upon their low economic and social status in Eastern Europe (see Pine and Bridger 1998; Bridger et. al. 1996; Prokof'eva et. al. 2001; Rzhantsyna 2001; Toksanbaeva 2001).

One scholar who has critiqued such descriptions of migrant sex-workers as economically desperate is social scientist Jo Doezema (1998, 2000, 2001). She argues that representations of women in trafficking discourse are similar to those in "white slavery" discourse of the turn of the twentieth century because they attempt to show the women as "innocent" in order to be worthy of aid (unlike "real" prostitutes). Today, rather than describing them as naïve virgins (which still occurs to a certain extent), many organizations and journalists now focus upon women's limited economic choices at home and their consequent vulnerability to trafficking. For instance, Doezema argues that such representations are appealing because "who could blame a mother for 'turning to prostitution' to feed her children" (2000). Yet, this view of trafficking in women continues to vilify professional sex-workers and treats women from outside of the "developed world" as victimized and powerless. Doezema points out that if economic

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<sup>33</sup> See Constable (2003) for a critique of the over-sexualized views of women in correspondence marriages. As with trafficking literature, this writing focuses on women's supposed sexual exploitation based only upon discourse analysis of dating catalogues and websites and not on any intensive ethnographic research with the women, themselves. See Glodava and Onizuka (1994) for an example of such victimizing and totalizing language about mail-order brides.

desperation determined participation in prostitution, all poor women would then be working in sex-work (ibid.).

In the Netherlands today, Russian-speaking migrants are employed in the sex-work industry and certainly may be in varying situations of exploitation but the institutional and media concern with Eastern European sex-workers seems extraordinary compared to the many other groups making up the bulk of female sex-workers in the Netherlands (former colonial subjects, Central Americans, West Africans, etc.) as well as the groups of non-sex-working migrants of both genders facing exploitative or alienating conditions in the Netherlands in sweatshops, in fields, on the streets, and in office buildings. For instance, the director of a European-wide sex-work health organization, TAMPEP, claimed that “the majority of the women operating in E.U. countries come from CEE (Central and Eastern Europe)” (Brussa 2002: 102). Just streets away from TAMPEP’s headquarters in Amsterdam, the local Dutch health program for sex-workers (GG&GD) found that Eastern European women made up only 15% of the total sex-worker population with Dutch, African, and Latin American women dominating the industry (GG&GD 2001: 3). Only one town, out of the many I visited with different organization members, contained a majority of Eastern European sex-workers because a local lawyer was organizing a lawsuit to obtain work permits for them.

However, Eastern European trafficking victims are a much sexier topic than disgruntled Russian physicists or homeless Kurdish soccer pros. As Doezema states, “trafficking discourse” is difficult to move beyond because there are so many governments, journalists, international governing bodies and NGO’s invested in aiding trafficking victims or at least in calling attention to trafficking in women (particularly Eastern European women) as an acute global problem. Russian women, who must be saved from their less civilized culture and male counterparts, represent an ideal object to rally political action around as they help define Western European and the U.S. governments and populations as superior.

## NGOs Fighting and Reinforcing Trafficking Discourse and Eastern European Otherness

In collaborating with TAMPEP and Red Thread (De Rode Draad prostitute union) in Amsterdam, I found that the issue of trafficking in Eastern European women – the images and outrage about it – was strategically used to gain attention for programs at the same time that some individual members of the organizations questioned the underlying assumptions of trafficking discourse to restore agency and respect to sex-workers. The union's goal was to gain acceptance and rights for sex-workers in the Netherlands, which by necessity included migrant sex-workers since they made up a majority of the women in the industry. TAMPEP, on the other hand, focused solely on migrant sex-workers' health. Both organizations were financially supported by the Dutch government but TAMPEP also received European Union funding as it was part of an alliance of sex-work health organizations in Europe (EUROPAP).

Although the organizations working with Eastern European sex-workers had seen the number of non-E.U.-associated Eastern European sex-workers (i.e. Russian, Moldovan, and Ukrainian) decrease since legalization of prostitution, some members saw this as positive since they believed that professionalization of the industry would ultimately benefit more (Dutch and E.U.) women in the long term. However, as the months went by and the crackdowns on even E.U.-associated women such as the Bulgarians, Romanians, Poles, and Lithuanians increased, organizations often seemed to intensify their work on the part of “trafficked” Eastern European women.

This contradiction between images of empowered, knowledgeable sex-workers and victimized foreign women was never easily addressed in organizations' work or in representations of this work to members of the public and funding agencies. It was also revealed in organization members' ideas about Eastern European difference and similarity to Dutch and Western European women. They alternated between representing Eastern European women as: 1) pathetic victims of male violence; 2) overly ambitious



and sly illegal aliens to the Netherlands; 3) or as women deserving respect and protection of their human rights.

The two Amsterdam members of TAMPEP (the director of the entire European Union nongovernmental organization as well as the main Eastern European fieldworker) were very critical of trafficking discourse and yet they sometimes cycled between these three representations. The two members often disputed Donna Hughes' and other sex-work abolitionists' essays and presentations at conferences and in front of governmental bodies. At one point, they became embroiled in a negative correspondence exchange with Hughes and members of her organization, The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW). TAMPEP protested a letter that Hughes sent to the U.S. Congress advising them to discontinue USAID funding to an organization connected to TAMPEP which Hughes claimed promoted prostitution. TAMPEP argued that women were disproportionately affected by poverty worldwide and that they should be given the right to work and support their families abroad in sex-work as well as other industries.

In their everyday work, TAMPEP attempted to raise women's and men's self-esteem and control over their bodies and jobs in sex-work through health demonstrations and counseling in window brothels and in clubs. They believed that culturally sensitive material and fieldworkers<sup>34</sup> from the same ethnic groups would help the individual sex-workers find solutions to any problems they might have in their lives but particularly in relation to health. The organization did not automatically assume all sex-workers would have negative experiences working in the industry and would prefer to return home if they had the choice. Organization members and literature also argued that long-term fieldwork in particular brothel areas would allow for more trust and better relations with

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<sup>34</sup> "Fieldwork" is the term organizations used to describe their forays into brothel areas to give information to sex-workers and brothel owners about their health, legal rights, and legal responsibilities. At the same time, they often tried to gather information about the sex-workers and the working conditions for political advocacy, policy making, and sometimes, academic papers.

the brothel owners, pimps, and sex-workers. Finally, it is significant that like the union, they protested against common solutions to trafficking (e.g. more border control and deportations of women) with their own migrant- and labor-oriented solutions in international conferences and widely published texts (see Brussa 1998; EUROPAP/TAMPEP 1998).

However, while arguing against the victimization and facile representations of Eastern Europeans in trafficking discourse, they also reified these differences in their own treatment of women in fieldwork and perhaps in other programs they instituted. One example that particularly struck me was their insistence that the fieldworkers must be from exactly the same country as the women the fieldworker visited. This meant that when I followed a Polish fieldworker on her rounds in one major window brothel area in a small town outside of Amsterdam, we mainly visited Polish sex-workers and only a couple of Romanian and Bulgarian women, although the Polish fieldworker could speak Russian, Polish, Dutch, and English. While we strolled the area, smiling at women and attempting to catch their eye to see if they would talk to us, the fieldworker told me that all of the women we were looking at were “trafficked” and under the power of “bad” individuals. One woman who waived us off was particularly “exploited” in the fieldworker’s view because of her lack of interest in meeting us.

I could thoroughly believe that many of the women would not be working in the almost shopping mall-like warrens of windows and bedrooms if they had other economic possibilities or were not being forced by others. However, it was again confusing to me that this fieldworker could assert that the women were all “trafficked,” while she tried to combat such terms and ideas in other arenas. Also, in the several times we conducted fieldwork together, I found that this fieldworker had not been regularly conducting visits in the area for many months as she had claimed in the group’s material and in our conversations beforehand. Although she had been very energetic earlier in her career as a fieldworker for more than ten years in the same organization, she no longer knew many

of the women working in the windows. When we talked to the women, we mainly discussed safer sex methods, birth control, abortions, and the women's attempts to get legal working papers, rather than whether they felt they had control over their working and living conditions, *per se*. Considering the difficulty in talking to women who were busy attempting to attract customers, who may have felt self-conscious about being "sex-workers," and who worried about their legal status, it is understandable that these questions could not be answered during our visits. However, the fieldworker seemed to sensationalize the situation by then claiming that all of the women were "trafficked," without clear evidence of this.

Furthermore, the fieldworker's adherence to ideas about women's difference based upon nationality and "culture" was problematic in that it reified cultural difference – allowing only certain women be "helped" when a culturally appropriate volunteer was available. This concentration upon cultural difference also constructed the women as entirely different from Western European women who were not provided with culturally similar volunteers. This fieldworker even distinguished between Eastern and Western Europeans in her description of Eastern European women as migrating primarily to support their families and of Eastern European men as working abroad purely for their own enjoyment. This understanding of Eastern European women shows them as more "traditional" in their family lives and as less morally reprehensible in their choice of sex-work over other labor because of such altruistic motivations (see Doezema 2000). While I took for granted these same ideas when I first started my research in the Netherlands with Russian-speaking migrants, I soon learned that women's and men's motivations in migrating could not be divided so evenly – whether they were sex-workers or not. I have already described how several men and women I met were supporting children, spouses or parents outside of the Netherlands. Women migrated for personal gratification just as much as men, if not more. However, ideas about them as Eastern European often set them against Western Europeans in terms of gender inequality, sexuality, and even race.

While both Red Thread (Juliana's main organization) and TAMPEP work with women and transgendered people from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the world, they still share the ambivalence of the wider society about migrants' rights and unacceptable cultural difference. For example, one organization hired employees who spoke multiple languages to talk to the women but they did not generally provide services for illegally working or residing migrant sex-workers. A couple of times, I was enlisted to accompany Red Thread to conduct fieldwork in the Dutch countryside along the German border. I was given the usual information in Dutch and English on sex-workers' rights, tax advice, and safer sex, and material in Russian for some undocumented Eastern Europeans about their lack of rights in the Netherlands. The material included information on how women could identify whether they had been "trafficked" and were eligible for the marginal benefit of a temporary B9 visa if they agreed to prosecute their trafficker. Both of these messages were important, although unwelcome, because several Russian-speaking women we met had indeed been told that they carried work permits – which were falsified or were only regional police certificates with no official state recognition – or they believed that sex-work was legal for all in the Netherlands. Some had only a vague idea that they could be deported.

What was notable, however, was the Red Thread fieldworkers' contradictory views and treatment of Eastern European sex-workers and migrant sex-workers overall. After one such exhausting trip of country backroads and uncooperative brothel owners, I chatted with two organization fieldworkers in a café while we waited for the bus to take us back to the train station. I asked the two women what they would have done if we had found absolutely incontrovertible evidence of exploitative conditions in the brothels and whether they truly wanted to help migrant women who had no possibility of obtaining legal status in the Netherlands. One woman argued that the migrants really should not be there in the first place. She explained that they kept the prices for sex-work low. The other fieldworker disagreed and was more worried about making the sex-workers aware

of their legal situation as well as getting an overall view of what was going on in the brothels so that the organization could use this information to better advise the government.

Yet, this same fieldworker who defended the need to help migrant sex-workers also made some negative remarks to me about Eastern Europeans. On one of our first fieldwork trips together, she explained a fellow member's "competitive" attitude toward me in terms of the woman being Eastern European. She said that she knew a lot about Eastern Europeans since her mother was from East Germany and she spent all of her summers there while growing up. She described women in particular from Eastern Europe as having high ambitions and being ruthless because they desperately wanted to avoid the poverty of their homeland. She immediately saw this Eastern European ambition in this organization member when she met her. She did not think the member was a bad person – the opposite – but rather saw the woman as brutal to people who encroached upon her ambitions. On the other hand, this same fieldworker also believed that Eastern European women were victims of their own sexist culture. She told me that when she stays in her summer home in Croatia, she has problems socializing with Croatian women because they are not "modern" and "emancipated." The fieldworker illustrated this with the example of a former Croatian friend whose husband had forbidden her to talk to the fieldworker any longer. The fieldworker thought that the husband saw her as a bad influence on his wife. She believed that either the husband had found out about her employment at the Dutch prostitute union or he assumed that she was simply too "Western European" as a smoker and feminist to be an appropriate friend for his wife.

A Polish fieldworker<sup>35</sup> from a different organization told me that one of the reasons why Russian women are so successful in migrating to Europe and many other areas of the world today is that they strategically marry men for their money, position in a company, or nationality. She explained that she and her husband were friends with a group of architects in Greece who told her about two Russian women who had been “working their way through” their firm to marry men higher up in the company each time they divorced. She described the men as not thinking with their “heads.” The women, on the other hand, were choosing their spouses based upon their potential social and economic gain in the alliance. Although the fieldworker understood the women’s motivations in improving their lives through marriage due to Russia’s poor economic situation, she was also disgusted with the women’s heartlessness in continuing to break up marriages in order to become wealthier.

As these examples show, fieldworkers in organizations which aided sex-workers from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe sometimes employed the hyperfeminized and hyperagent stereotypes of Eastern European women: the women are seen as both victims of sexual/gender domination as well as cold and calculating social climbers. They either need to be saved and pitied, or defended against. It is understandable that even organizations are affected by these stereotypes, since representations of Russian women as victimized sex-workers or conniving spies, and Russian men as Mafiosi, suffuse the cultural space around them.

Two Dutch college students who knew about my work with Russian-speakers told me about a documentary on Russian women they had seen on television the night before we met for a drink. They said that the program described most Russian women in Moscow as working in some sort of sex-work for tourists. Young women were

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<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that she is a Dutch citizen who had lived almost twenty years in the Netherlands by this time with a Dutch husband and daughter.

interviewed saying that sex-work was a good job and the documentary showed footage of even “normal” discos providing rooms for the purpose of having sex. I asked the students whether the documentary filmmakers could have been biased in representing Moscow in this particular light. I also posited that there were some differences between Dutch female-male relationships and Russian relationships which could have been misinterpreted as “prostitution” by the Dutch film crew. For instance, Russian men are generally expected to give gifts to women in their lives (mothers, girlfriends, wives, and daughters). Romantic relationships generally include sex, as they would in Dutch relationships. The female college student agreed that this might be so, but she maintained that if men asked women to have sex with them for gifts or money in the Netherlands, they would get slapped, which she believed the men deserved. Her boyfriend ended the conversation by saying, exasperatedly, that Moscow was just a crazy place with all of the Mafia in control of it.

### Conclusion

In their analysis of discourse about Proposition 187 in California, rhetoric scholars Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop apply Homi Bhabha’s ideas about ambivalence and racism to show how the production and enactment of racism requires both love and hate to perpetuate such lasting and powerful discourses (2002). Ono and Sloop argue that in the California case, “the two sides of the ambivalence are the desire for productive laborers and a loathing of the laborer who does anything other than work specific jobs associated with facilitating the interest of efficient capital processes” (ibid.: 27). In the same way, Dutch and European media, governments, and organizations tolerate Eastern Europeans who play the correct role of victim (to their own brutality) but cannot always accept them as economic actors choosing to migrate and even settle in Europe.

Such images of hyperagent or victimized Eastern European sex-workers and mafia flooding Western Europe with European Union enlargement directly contradict

much of what I saw while working with groups of temporary and permanent Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands. The more positive ways that Eastern Europe is constructed in Western Europe (i.e. with its “high culture” in the forms of music, dance, literature, and art) contribute to some Eastern European migrants’ ability to make comfortable livings and feel fairly “at home” in the Netherlands. However, although Eastern Europeans are not so “Eastern” or “Southern” as Muslim migrants from Turkey and Morocco, these examples of trafficking discourse and policy-making show that they are still not considered “Western” enough to be welcomed with open arms. As a continuing foil to Western Europe, Eastern Europeans are constructed as an economic and cultural threat, which certainly affects Russian-speaking migrants in their daily lives in Amsterdam. Juliana, like many of the long-term Russian-speaking migrants I met, eventually turned to the Russian-speaking community in Amsterdam for economic and social acceptance. Although she spoke fluent Dutch and felt distant from her home country of Latvia (previous chapter), she eventually rejected her trafficking “victim” identity for that of migration lawyer.



## CHAPTER FIVE: MIGRANT MARGINALITY AND THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN THE NETHERLANDS

In this chapter, I argue that Russian-speaking migrants both exploit and are exploited by Amsterdam's tourist industry. The Netherlands, and especially its capital city, Amsterdam, are dependent upon migrants for creating the very self-images produced for foreign tourist consumption. Amsterdam advertises itself as a European cultural hub and entertainment capital. As might be expected, migrants come to the Netherlands for some of the same reasons as other tourists: to have a good time, to explore the world, to appreciate great art, and to enjoy a freer, more socially, culturally, and politically-open environment. They then find work in the tourist milieu by selling art or performing music on the streets, producing art for galleries in tourist areas, working in hotels, and working in brothels.

For brevity's sake, I call Amsterdam's two main tourist images, "high culture" and "high life." By "high culture," I refer to Amsterdam's wealth of fine art museums and galleries, theaters, music venues, preserved historic sites, culinary arts, and architecture. "High," as in "high art," is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "of exalted quality, character, or style; of lofty, elevated, or superior kind; high-class" (OED Online). I add "culture" to the term to include Dutch culture, art, and history, which together draw tourists to the city. The term, "high life," refers to Amsterdam's abundance of marijuana coffeeshops, bars, discos, youth music scene, and sex venues. Overall, it refers to the city's tolerance of alternative lifestyles. I use the word, "high," as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "excited with drink, intoxicated" (OED Online) and "life" to connote active engagement in the tourist experience (i.e. socializing).

Yet, these two tourist images of "high culture" and "high life" may not live up to their promises for migrants, as they might for short-term tourists. With the "high culture"

image, artists are welcomed when their art happens to be “in style.” Migrant artists generally have a more difficult time becoming as popular as local artists when established galleries do not want to take a chance on them. The artists who work on the street are closely monitored by the Dutch police to create a harmonious vision for the summer visitors (a benefit to some migrants and problem for others). Moreover, the “high life” image trumps the “high culture” in drawing migrants and tourists to Amsterdam and in creating a negative environment for migrants. Some Dutch people are not as accepting and free as advertised. Racism and ethnic and religious inequality have always existed to a certain degree in the Netherlands (i.e. colonial past) but these have been growing in recent years with a focus on immigrant populations. Drug use and prostitution are also much more dangerous for consumers than guidebooks might have us believe. Migrants were at particular risk for exploitation in these jobs and in becoming addicted to drugs due to their limited job options, lack of social integration, and lack of legal rights.

Here, I examine the lives of a wide range of migrants who were drawn to the Netherlands because of its “high culture” or “high life” atmospheres and job opportunities. I first describe in more detail what these images of the Netherlands entail and how migrants fit into their production. I then depict individual migrants’ experiences; why they came to the Netherlands and how they have taken advantage of available employment and cultural opportunities. I include observations of their working and living environments and potential exploitation. Finally, I reflect on the larger negative consequences of migrant illegality for both the migrants and the Netherlands as a whole.

While I analyze some of obstacles to successful migration to the Netherlands here, I do not wish to portray migrants’ lives as all misery and victimhood, nor represent the Netherlands in a completely negative light. As the last chapters have illustrated, people such as Felite and Dainius would not migrate if there were no positive aspects to the activity. There are very real inducements to migration to Amsterdam such as its

general cosmopolitanism, acceptance of alternative lifestyles, freedom of speech, democratic traditions, and care for social welfare. In the following chapter, I explore the ways individual migrants are able to construct alternative communities and satisfying lives for themselves, not just at home, but especially within the Netherlands.

### Images of the Netherlands

Amsterdam, as a small capital city with less than a million inhabitants is a very popular place for tourists, conferences and art exhibitions. The ‘tourist gaze’ is ubiquitous throughout the city centre (Deben and van der Vaart 2000: x).

In his review of theories about tourism and tourists, anthropologist Erve Chambers argues that there “should be an appreciation for how difficult, and perhaps impossible, it is to account for such a complex phenomenon as tourism on the basis of a single theoretical perspective” (2000: 20-21). In other words, people travel for myriad reasons and variously impact (or are impacted) by the societies they visit. Chambers cautions that the relationship between the guest and host cannot always be assumed to be unequal and skewed in the guest’s favor (2000: 21-22; see also Meisch 2002). Chambers critiques much tourism literature, in which,

the local populations that receive tourists are all too often left to play a passive role in process [sic], as the recipients of the largess provided them by tourists or as the victims of tourism (2000: 23).

In this discussion, I will take Chambers’ critique further and blur the distinction between guest/host by showing how Russian-speaking migrants often move back and forth between roles as tourists and local “hosts” to tourists. After all, tourists could be open to potential job opportunities while traveling and migrants might have chosen to work in a particular place because they are interested in availing themselves of its tourist amenities. Furthermore, a “host” in Amsterdam might refer to any number of other short-term residents, migrants, businesses, or city bureaucrats as opposed to some idealized, homogeneous population. Longtime Amsterdam scholar Jan Nijman argues that “on

Leidseplein<sup>36</sup> and other places, tourists are looking at tourists, not at Amsterdam” (2000: 43). He states that there are so many tourists in the city center that it is hard to see any “real” inhabitants of the city.<sup>37</sup> Nijman contends that this situation stems from the fact that governmental and business interests in the tourist industry have pushed local inhabitants to the periphery of the city or into the few non-tourist areas. He says that “‘ordinary life’ has been reshaped to form part of a décor of tolerance to accommodate the tourists” (ibid.: 42). Gentrification projects (Fainstein 2000: 96) as well as the proliferation of tourist-oriented businesses (dance clubs, cafés, strip clubs, and museums) complement Amsterdam’s pristine historic architecture and carefree atmosphere.

While the Netherlands benefits greatly from tourism, the type of tourism it receives is not generally that of “traditional culture” tourism – the search for “authentic,” “primitive,” “traditional” or completely “other” people and cultures.<sup>38</sup> There are a few towns right outside of Amsterdam, like Volendam, which show people carving wooden shoes, wearing “traditional” clothes, and serving up “traditional” Dutch food such as sausages and pancakes. However, the foreign tourists I met and observed in and out of Amsterdam did not seem to be as interested in this type of Dutch experience as were the local Dutch tourists. Outside of the Amsterdam area, museums of “traditional” Dutch

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<sup>36</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, Leidseplein is one of the main squares in Amsterdam which feature tourist attractions such as bars, theaters, street performers, and street sellers.

<sup>37</sup> I would argue that migrants are (and have always been) “real” inhabitants of the Netherlands (see Lucassen and Penninx 1997 for long history of migration to the Netherlands). Nijman’s understanding that there is a “real” Amsterdamer, separate from these tourists (and migrants), is indicative of a strand of exclusionary politics in Dutch academia and popular media.

<sup>38</sup> See anthropologist Lynn Meisch’s thoughtful critique of exoticizing discussions about “ethnic tourism” in tourist literature (2002). Meisch also describes Ecuadorian musicians and street sellers’ activities in the United States and Europe, particularly Spain and the Netherlands (ibid.: 154-199). These migrants sold “traditional” “Incan” clothing, music, and art abroad in the 1990s but there were fewer Otavalans in the Netherlands by the time I arrived in the early 2000s. Every so often, one could hear the pan flute in Utrecht’s Central Station or see a few musicians on a bridge near the University of Amsterdam, but the fashion for Otavalo crafts seemed to be on the wane. The majority of street performers and artists did not sell themselves or their wares as “exotic,” per se, but rather as high culture (“European”) artistic products.

culture may feature signs and guides exclusively in Dutch. For instance, an indoor and outdoor museum, the Zuiderzee Museum at Enkhuizen, draws crowds of Dutch tourists and its extensive exhibits are mostly in Dutch. When my parents traveled to the Netherlands, they only visited the Zuiderzee Museum because my father worked in the maritime industry and has always had a fascination with the creation of the Zuiderzee. Most other short-term international tourists would not visit these “folk” exhibits except for a few recreated village homes on the established tour route to Dutch tulip exhibitions in the springtime.

On the other hand, foreign tourists in Amsterdam, especially English-speakers, may even forget that the Dutch have their own language and particular ways of seeing the world if they simply remain in the heart of the city. Most signs, menus, museums, and even bookstores contain both English and Dutch-language translations. This ubiquitous use of the English language in the city center could be due to the often touted “Dutch pragmatism” where the use of a popular foreign language in tourist areas is simpler for business owners and government officials than constantly translating Dutch menus and museum signs for tourists. However, it could also be influenced by the process of European integration in the European Union over the last several decades. In his general review of tourism literature, Chambers mentions a recent goal of the European Council in designing “cultural tourism routes” for tourists in Europe, which trace “European,” as opposed to national, cultural experiences (2000: 47). English is certainly a popular language in the European Union.

As I noted above, the Netherlands’ most popular images for foreign tourist consumption are “high culture” and “high life.” These tourism categories are based upon what Chambers calls “the ways in which tourists ‘gaze’ upon the objects of their travels” (2000: 22; see also Urry 1992). They describe people’s interest (or the Dutch understanding of foreign tourists’ interest) in immersing themselves in both art and entertainment in the Netherlands. Dutch government officials, tour companies, travel

guides, and individual tourists might elaborate upon these two types of tourism and travel, but these images tended to dominate my experiences living in Amsterdam and working with Russian-speaking migrants.

Although these two images of Amsterdam and the Netherlands more broadly are different from the tourism of “traditional culture,” which represents some “un-civilized,” non-modern “culture” for tourists’ pleasure, they are just as ahistorical and limiting in what they allow tourists to experience and residents to live up to. Few tourists see the unattractive apartment blocks where poorer inhabitants live, suburban strip malls, or even the modern business complex and industrial areas on the city’s edge. The images are also deceptive in that they present themselves as “authentic” Dutch or European products: Dutch and European art and history, Dutch openness to sex, drugs, and acceptance of different ways of living. Yet, many Dutch people would deny that they smoke marijuana, visit prostitutes, or even accept all people equally. Much work by the government and businesses goes into creating these images of the Netherlands for tourist consumption. And, as in most industries which depend upon unstable consumer demand, the Dutch tourist industry employs low paid and often illegal migrants to do its work.

The “high life” image of the Netherlands often seems to surpass that of the “high culture” in attracting more visitors, employing more exploitative working conditions, and offering a more seductive but destructive environment for migrants. Even a short-term tourist whose only goals are to see the Reiksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum, will have to pass signs advertising sex-work or topless bars to and from the museums and then wade through drug dealers and pick pockets at the central train station as he enters and leaves Amsterdam.

### High Culture

It [Amsterdam] has the largest historical city centre in Europe, over forty museums, an enormous variety of music, ballet, dance, films and theatre, restaurants featuring cuisine of a wide variety of

countries, and a lively assortment of round-the-clock entertainment (Deben and van der Vaart 2000: xi).

The tourist image of high culture and art supports the restoration and preservation of old houses in Amsterdam, museums, and even new art. Around Amsterdam's museum square, there are countless smaller museums, galleries, antique shops, and street artists plying their trades. Many of the Russian-speaking migrants who come to Amsterdam are drawn there not only by the possibility of better earnings than in their home countries but also because they are artists and expect better support for their work in Amsterdam.

Migrant street artists are allowed, or even encouraged, to participate in the "high culture" aspect of the tourist industry by creating art objects. Although their art is of course not "fine" art in the sense that it is exhibited in galleries, its subject matter is the city's beautiful historic architecture, windmills, or canals. Whether or not the tourists see the art as "fine," they can take home an image of Amsterdam history and art by buying one of the street sellers' watercolors. In addition, the street artists' presentation of their work on the streets gives the city a more intense atmosphere of "high culture," as they spread their colorful paintings across the pavement in front of museums and cafés in the older parts of town. The migrants' art "looks" real in that the pieces are individually painted and the sellers present themselves as "authentic" artists with paint brushes in their pockets, bohemian clothes, and half finished work lying next to them. Many of the people who created the paintings (not necessarily the sellers) were individuals with fine art or architectural backgrounds.

However, this "look" of authenticity and artistic expression in the streets was not just a spontaneous creation by the migrants but rather a mix of their ingenuity and the Dutch government's own imagination of what should be on display in public. As described in chapter two, the police issued licenses for street sellers and musicians to keep track of the number of people "crowding" their streets and for quality control. They would hassle sellers when they were working too close together and when they did not look "authentic" enough. Only people who were themselves the original artists of the

work were allowed to sell it. If they did not look like real “artists” and were found to be selling other people’s art, they would be fined and perhaps even deported for illegally conducting business without a visa in the Netherlands.

While I was with the street artists in the summer of 2003, the rules became increasingly strict. Dainius, who produced caricatures, was expelled from Rembrandtplein at one point because he only had a permit for the sale of fake tattoos, which was his wife’s trade. Several of the artists felt pressured to get more creative with their outfits – one going so far as wearing a beret, a goatee, and carrying paintbrushes in his front shirt pocket. Yet, even if the artists had the proper license for their art on the proper square, their work could be taken from them at any point by the police if they were seen to be “crowding” the tourists or not attractive enough. Ania had a license to sell watercolors on the square facing de Waag at the edge of the Red Light District when the police decided that she was too close to the cafes and confiscated all of her paintings which they never returned. Her friends Vanya and Pyeter (who were trained artists, actors, and musicians) had painted these works in their spare time and all three lost money and time in the endeavor.

Strangely enough, foreign tourists did not seem to care who the artists were and probably assumed that they were local Dutch people. It often appeared to me that the tourists did not notice that the language the sellers were speaking was Russian, Spanish, or Latvian as opposed to the expected Dutch. Occasionally, the sellers would stop their friends from talking too loudly in Russian for fear of scaring potential customers, but tourists did not usually ask them much about their lives. Perhaps this was because the sellers were not so obviously different than the Dutch around them as far as skin and hair color. Yet, it did matter to the tourists that the sellers represent some sort of bohemian Amsterdam experience and they often asked whether the pictures were indeed originals made by that particular seller.



The pictures, even if painted by those sellers, were of course mass produced to a certain extent. Vadim told me that it would have been impossible to sell the pictures for 12 Euros or less each if they had actually been original, one-of-a-kind art. Instead, the artists resorted to photocopying several originals, which they then painted swiftly with more or less artistic craft in watercolor. One or two sellers were not the original artists and asked their producers to leave off their signatures so that the sellers could sign them with the artist's particular name just when someone bought the painting. Roman, in particular, did this because he often sold up to three different artists' work so that it would have looked suspicious if he claimed to be the artist with different signatures on his paintings.

The following street scenes illustrate the ways that some Russian-speaking street sellers contribute to Amsterdam's "high culture" image and to the tourism industry in general. This snapshot shows the ways that street sellers thoughtfully ply their trade among tourists who are more or less cognizant of their "performance" as artists. The sellers actively analyze the tourists' cultural and personal habits to form appropriate selling techniques. However, they are also dependent upon the tourists for sales and must accept certain uncomfortable moments with them for the sake of their income. Resentment of tourists' fickle appetites for art might have caused the migrants to look more critically at the tourists than otherwise would have been the case.

#### A Moment on Rembrandtplein

It was a lazy summer afternoon and I sat on one of the street sellers' collapsible stools talking to Vinus, a Lithuanian seller, and Roman. Business was slow, as usual, in the early part of the afternoon as tourists ate lunch. Only a few strolled by. We discussed Vinus's lack of fear of "Westerners," his hatred of the Dutch, and finally his anger and disgust with Russians. Roman was fairly quiet during Vinus' tirade (in the Russian language) and kept his eyes out for potential buyers. Finally, two men holding hands

walked up to see Roman's watercolors. Roman began his sales pitch to them in choppy English, describing how each picture was "original" and painted by him. One of the men interrupted him with, "Save the blah, blah, blah. How much?" He bought a picture and we talked about the fact that he was from Miami and that he was in Amsterdam with his partner after a quick trip through Europe. He told us that the pair had already been to Paris and England, but after two days in the Netherlands, he already wanted to move there. When the men left, Roman and Vinus joked about how remarkably smart and cynical these two men had been about their artwork compared with other tourists. The street sellers did not remark about the men's hand-holding – which was not an aberration in Amsterdam – but they insinuated that these men were particularly astute about art because of their sexual orientation.

The next tourist couple, an older man and a middle-aged woman, split up to buy pictures from both sellers. The woman came over to Roman and me. She guessed that I was an American like herself and asked me if it was rude to simply speak to people like Roman in English without asking if he knew the language first. I told her that Dutch people were sometimes offended if you asked this because it meant that you believed they were too uneducated to have learned English (I did not mention that Roman was not Dutch because Roman did not authorize me to do this). She was relieved and then we chatted a bit about her experiences as an American in Europe at that time. Then, she insisted upon getting Roman's signature on the picture he sold her. He signed it with the actual artist's name, which meant that I had to then call him, "Vladimir," in front of her. She asked me to help her pronounce it correctly. When she finally started to leave with her partner, she turned back and took a picture of us. I was amazed at her sudden rudeness in not asking our permission for the photo. Although Roman and Vinus said that they thought it was rude too, they said that they were accustomed to tourists just taking pictures whenever they felt like it. In fact, Roman told me that he accepted the picture-taking as part of his job when he sat on the square. Vinus was a little harsher in

his judgment of such tourists and he claimed that this couple's insensitivity showed that they were probably the descendents of Polish peasants from some "backwater" village.

This short space of time on the square encapsulates much of what I learned about the street selling and tourist scene in general. Neither tourist couple realized that the artists were not Dutch although one clearly saw the pictures as the cheap copies that they were. In between customers, Roman and Vinus actively – and sometimes derogatively in Vinus' case – discussed the tourists' ethnicities and their interactions with them. They did this in order to inform future interactions, as a way of venting frustration with their dependence upon these tourists,<sup>39</sup> and simply to pass time. I often thought that Roman, Dainius and other motivated sellers could write whole ethnographies on the habits of tourists from other countries.<sup>40</sup> They noticed differences between tourists in the times of year that they traveled (e.g. they predicted more British tourists right before their academic year commenced), what they were like while inebriated, why they came to the Netherlands, and whether they were more or less careful with their money while on holiday.

Overall, even with frequent bicycle police surveillance,<sup>41</sup> the environment in which the migrant street sellers worked could be fairly comfortable. The square contained many cafés with restrooms available for migrants' use, was located close to cheap fast food outlets, and was a part of a popular tourist and transportation route so that

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<sup>39</sup> The street sellers' critiques of tourists are similar to what anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain describes as "covert resistance" for host populations in tourism-dominated regions (1996: 14). This resistance includes "the sulking, grumbling, obstruction, gossip, ridicule, and surreptitious insults directed by the weak at the more powerful" (ibid.).

<sup>40</sup> Of course personal and ethnic bigotry would also color these observations.

<sup>41</sup> Some of the street sellers and performers on Rembrandtplein could even be viewed on local television several hours a day while a live camera filmed the square. I never found out if this camera focused on a corner of the square was meant to let commuters know how busy the tram stop was in the morning or to discourage pickpockets in the area. However, it only caught a portion of the area where people congregated on the square and I occasionally witnessed stolen merchandise being sold around the Russian-speakers.

many of their acquaintances and new Russian-speaking tourists/migrants would stop by to talk to them on their way to work or to recreational activities.

However, not all moments on the square were pleasant, and part of this was due to the illegal status of many of the migrants and the encroachment of Amsterdam's "high life" preoccupation over its "high culture" aspirations. The artists and performers created a more colorful and exciting environment for the tourists and café customers than otherwise would be the case. Yet, the combination of illegal migrants under stress and intoxicated tourists could sometimes become volatile. After one of my Russian-speaking friends (Vadim) had his breakdown and almost killed another street artist on Rembrandtplein, I realized that street life often had quite negative consequences.

Next, I describe a conversation I had with one Dutch café employee, to show how even work in the "high culture" tourism market can provide a negative environment for migrant street sellers. The cafés were dependent upon the migrant street artists to amuse their patrons and yet the workers in these cafés had very limited social interactions with the migrants. This waitress's observations provide an example of some Dutch people's conflicted or erroneous views of migrants, particularly of Russian-speakers.<sup>42</sup> It also shows Amsterdam's inability to completely control the tourist experience so that only the positive aspects of "high culture" are seen.

#### A Dutch Café Hostess on Rembrandtplein

On a calm summer morning, I went to the café directly across from the area where the Russian-speaking street artists usually stood and immediately found the twenty six year old Dutch hostess quite welcoming. I sat down at the bar and started chatting with

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<sup>42</sup> Although I am describing one Dutchwoman's views, she is not alone in her understandings about migrants and Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands (see Hines 2004: 158). It is also important to note that while she was saying several derogative things about migrants, she was also helping one Israeli friend while chatting with a Cuban. People may divulge negative views about the world that they do not necessarily mean in every context or even practice in their daily life.

her and the Cuban cook. They had been arguing about whether the hostess, Susan, was friendly enough with migrants and she was telling the cook that she had Moroccan friends. Both were speaking in English.

After some initial banter about the weather and the Cuban cook's plans to sire blonde children, I told them why I was there – that I was studying migrants' lives in the Netherlands. I asked the Dutch woman who the street sellers and performers were on Rembrandtplein. She unequivocally answered, "Yugoslavians." I asked her whether any Russians were among them and she again emphatically answered, "No." She told me that the Russians were all in the Red Light District. She said that it was a sad situation but that most of the Russian women end up as prostitutes and men as pimps. They were forced to work in massage parlors. She thought that the police were making some headway in getting them out of these situations by checking the brothels, but that there was still a lot of exploitation. The Cuban said that he knew some Russian women who were really "nice," intimating that not all Russian women worked in sex work. But the Dutch woman interjected that I should check out Rotterdam and other cities where there were more Russians because there were more criminal activities like money laundering. The bar hostess seemed to realize that what she was saying about Russians might not be considered very politically correct so she soon changed her tone to one of sympathy as she told me that she had seen a television program describing 15% of the Russian population as living below the poverty line. She commented that it seemed to be "a pretty sad life" in Russia. She said that she was happy she was Dutch.

After a short discussion about her own life and work at the bar, I turned the conversation back to migrants in the Netherlands in general. Susan described herself as a very open person; that she did not judge people by their nationality. In fact, an Israeli friend of hers came in while we were talking and sat down with us. Susan told me she was helping him find a job in the Netherlands even though he was illegal. Yet, unsolicited, she began a long harangue about how she disliked Moroccans and other

Muslims in the Netherlands. While speaking in English to her migrant friend, coworker, and myself, she complained that the Moroccans did not even try to learn the Dutch language and that their children were being hurt by the way their parents continued to raise them in Muslim traditions even in the Netherlands. She was most upset by their unequal gender relations, claiming that, “in Holland, we’re equal [men and women]. I do more in the house but that’s because I’m better at it” [than her male partner]. Finally, she told me that she felt that Muslim migrants did not have any respect for the Dutch.

When there was a lull in the conversation, I asked her about the incident in which my former friend, Vadim, tried to kill another acquaintance right on the square in the middle of a busy Saturday during the summer. She said that she had been at the café when it happened and that in fact her café’s owner had been the one who called the police. That day, the café was packed with people and she had to keep serving customers even though she was shaking and scared from seeing so much blood.

I asked her if there was a lot of violence on the square in general and she said, “Yes,” but that it was often between inebriated people. A couple of days before, there had been an altercation between an English couple who were staying at a hotel on the square. Both the man and woman were very drunk and the woman repeatedly kicked the man and screamed. Another time, a passerby (she described him as “Arabic”) started a fight with the female Spanish singer who often performed on the square. The café manager had to come out to calm down the situation.

This conversation with the café hostess again shows how the Russian-speakers on Rembrandtplein are invisible as Russian-speakers in their roles as street sellers and musicians. Susan thought that the street artists were Eastern European, but her assumptions about Russians in particular caused her to believe that the only Russian women and men living in the Netherlands were prostitutes and mafia criminals. She obviously did not socialize with the artists and the only contact that the café staff in

general had with the migrants was in times of crisis. This is surprising, considering that there are only a few feet of space between the café customers, musicians, and sellers.

Like most of the cafés on the square, this café seats more than half of its customers right on the square with only a few chairs inside of its small interior. The musicians take up a narrow space in front of the seats, bordering the bike path. On the other side of the bike path, the sellers crowd the pavement with their wares. Every day during the summer, the tourists in the cafés may change but the café staff and street artists often return year after year. Yet, they do not cross the social line drawn between the “legitimate” business of the café and the less respected and more transitory street art business.

My conversation with the café employee also revealed a very real Dutch ambivalence toward migrants. Susan was actively friendly with a Cuban and an Israeli who spoke English and shared some of her ideas about the world, but rejected Muslim migrants. In her view, they were too different or “other,” and even disrespectful of the Dutch, simply by adhering to their religious beliefs, gender relations, and customs. Because of this, she held them to a higher standard than the other two migrant visitors in relation to Dutch language and culture. Susan did not criticize the Cuban cook when he later bragged about not speaking Dutch even though he had lived in the Netherlands for more than five years.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, she did not question the gender inequalities in Dutch society (e.g. between herself and her male partner), but saw as problematic those among the Moroccans. In fact, these gender inequalities among the Moroccans were one of her main reasons for passionately rejecting their inclusion in Dutch society. Her implicit critique of the stereotypical inequalities between Russian men and women – that Russian women are victims of trafficking and men are criminals – similarly serves to distance

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<sup>43</sup> He even told us that the Dutch immigration and refugee officials gave him an especially easy Dutch language test when he applied for citizenship because he came from a Communist country (e.g. “Hello. How are you?”).

them from the taken for granted standard of Dutch and European societies. As Ann Stoller has written, gender and sex are often used to define and reinforce racial difference between groups (1997b).

Finally, Susan's discussion of violent acts on Rembrandtplein shows that even in environments like the square where artists are encouraged to ply their trade to promote the image of Dutch "high culture," tourists and migrants are often more interested in the "high life" idea of Amsterdam, with deleterious effects. Many street sellers and musicians would pack up their things when the sun went down, not because the square lacked good lighting, but because they were afraid of being harassed by the seriously inebriated tourists and locals at that time of night. Others simply stopped working so they could join the party. The tourists were often just as destructive as the illegal or semi-legal migrants, though the Dutch blamed migrants for drug and alcohol-related criminal activities. Such negative attitudes toward migrants, combined with the bureaucratic and legal problems of hiring migrants, hindered many people's prospects for obtaining good, steady jobs in the Netherlands.

#### An Artist's "High Art" Experience in Amsterdam

Even legally residing and working artists such as Alex, described in chapter two, did not have an easy time becoming accepted in the Netherlands, either socially or economically. Ellie's life in Amsterdam provides another illustration of this struggle for local recognition in the face of a closed arts community.<sup>44</sup> Ellie had come to the Netherlands twenty years before. Although she had lived in the Netherlands longer than any other Russian-speaker I met, Ellie was nonetheless still quite connected to other

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<sup>44</sup> Ellie would not let me tape record our interview because she objected to being studied as "a science experiment." Several long-term Russian-speaking residents of the Netherlands were very defensive about still being considered "migrants" and worried about being exoticized as such. She only agreed to an interview when I explained that my focus was on her experiences as an artist as well as a migrant to the Netherlands. After discussing her art for almost an hour, she opened up much more readily to my other questions.



people in the Russian community. I met her at a Russian “Queens Day” party in an affluent, Russian-owned art gallery.

As with many legally residing migrant women, Ellie’s arrival in the Netherlands began with marrying a Dutchman. In Moscow, Ellie had met several Dutch students studying at her university. She thought they were very “free,” that they did not “moralize,” and that they were more relaxed about their life and work than Russian students. She married one of them and moved with him back to the Netherlands. Unfortunately, once they arrived back home, the Dutch students were nothing like they had been in Moscow. They did not have parties or group gatherings like her friends in Moscow and there were all sorts of new rules to learn. The last year she was in Moscow, she had been friends with very unique and creative people. Suddenly, she was bereft of all unconventional and interesting companions. She left her husband and lived alone for more than a year, becoming depressed and simply watching EMTV (European Music Television) all day long. Eventually, she started drawing. She had had no education in art but suddenly it became her passion. She would go out and buy paints and other types of media to physically work out all of her feelings. Suddenly, she related, all of her problems seemed to have been solved in the process of creating art. She found “peace of mind.” Dutch people around her told her that she needed to go to school and to do something more serious with her life but she could not stand to be in the university again. No one in her immediate circle of acquaintances supported her in her artistic endeavors and she simply continued to create works on her own.

Eventually, she found places to show her art such as cafes, hair salons, small galleries, and libraries. She had not been able to break into the larger Dutch galleries, however, because she was still not been accepted as an established artist in the Netherlands. She said that Dutch people do not take risks with foreign artists. The only real way to get work into the major galleries in the Netherlands was to have a journalist’s support at the same time as a public following. She was in some ways thankful that she

did not fit into the usual patterns for commercial art, since it became too much like a business – creating art for people’s tastes rather than for the artist’s own expression. She believed that to really create art, it has to come from oneself and not from others’ direction. By showing her work in smaller venues, she also encountered a much more diverse and open group of people than the average Dutch (in her view).

Ellie remained in the Netherlands even though her income was not always very regular or plentiful because she did not believe she could sell many of her pieces in Russia. Venues such as public libraries would never have shown her work in Russia because she would have had to pay off “a million people in the bureaucracy” before she could get it on the walls. In addition, without schooling, she would never have had a chance of showing her work in Russian galleries. At the gallery where we met (at a Russian party for the Dutch queen), she told me that she could immediately tell which artists had studied in Russia because their art had the same “look.” Ellie believed that the “avant-garde has not come to Russia.” The Dutch art scene involves more “modern and pop” styles, which appealed to her. However, Eastern European artists, like one Kazakh woman from Russia whom Ellie mentioned, could be accepted in the popular Dutch art scene if they were in the right place at the right time.

As for migration and work overall, Ellie told me that it was easier for artists than for others to move abroad. For example, she said that such professionals as psychologists needed to know the language and new ways of thinking about their work when they migrated, whereas artists could almost always find work if the art still came from inside them. She said that the people who were artistically trained but who came to the Netherlands and sold paintings of Dutch houses on the street went crazy. In their daily life, they met only tourists or “weirdos” and found themselves concerned with feeding themselves rather than creating. She said that after a while doing this type of art, they would become depressed from working like robots on such art and their wives leave them. They then forgot how to do their own work as it became automatic to paint

eighteenth-century Dutch houses. They had no more energy or creativity. She said that “when you are drawing these houses, you are only thinking about what you have to buy with the money you make from them – not about higher things.” She believed that people closed themselves off from seeing other possibilities for themselves and their lives. She thought that Russians, in particular, could not work by themselves to sell art for money but needed to have more intellectual or creative reasoning to justify their work.

### High Life

...while Amsterdam has fewer problems with sex and drugs than other big cities, foreigners seem obsessed with this, and frequently criticise Dutch policy (Deben and van der Vaart 2000: xi).

Amsterdam is geared towards young adults (to the exclusion of other group [sic] of tourists...). (Nijman 2000: 43).

The more widespread and popular image of the Netherlands produced as a tourist product is that of Dutch “high life” and tolerance. This includes representations of Amsterdam and the Netherlands in general as being extremely liberal and open to drug use (marijuana in particular), prostitution, and “good times” (dancing, music, festivals). The image of wild abandon and permissiveness is perpetuated even by the most mainstream tourist agencies and the Dutch government. Guidebooks may warn you about the impropriety of smoking marijuana in the streets, buying drugs from shady street sellers, or of certain less-safe types of prostitution (see Gray and Acciano 2004: 86-87; Harris and Bird 2001: 67-71). However, drug use and prostitution are nonetheless strongly highlighted – even more than the image of Dutch high culture and art – through television ads for sex-workers, guided tours in the Red Light district,<sup>45</sup> street ads for “coffeeshops” and escort services, erotic or drug-related museums, and risqué souvenirs.

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<sup>45</sup> Amsterdam’s official tourist agency, the VVV, featured four walking tours of the Red Light district for tourists to learn about prostitution and marijuana use in the Netherlands (Amsterdam Tourist Board 2003). These tours then made up 30% of the total number of walking tours offered by the agency (fourteen tours in total).

Even films about the Netherlands for foreign visitors and migrants emphasize Dutch “tolerance” in relation to sexuality in particular. As a Fulbright scholar in the Netherlands, I was required to attend several short classes on Dutch culture at the Fulbright headquarters. One of the first meetings about the Netherlands featured a film produced by the Dutch government. The camera returned intermittently to a comedian who made jokes about how sex was so visible and openly discussed in the Netherlands compared to other parts of the world. After my research period, the Dutch government began to require migrants from outside of the European Union, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States, and Japan to watch a video about the country in which two gay men kiss each other and a woman is shown topless on a beach in order to dissuade any “intolerant” migrants from applying for residency permits as well as to test migrants’ knowledge of the country (*Australian* 2006).

Nijman calls Amsterdam’s city center a type of “theme-park” with the attraction being “drugs and sex under the pretense of normalcy” (2000: 43). He describes it in this way:

It is not a planned theme-park, of course, instead it emerged more or less spontaneously. It has no fence around it and there is no entry fee. Then again this is not necessarily because you pay per consumption. Even if there is no gate, the main exit of the central station has the appearance of one. Large numbers of new visitors gather on the square in front of the station, exchanging information on things to do before they start their adventure with a walk down the main avenue into the ‘park’ (ibid.: 42).

Although I do not have Nijman’s own experience of living in the city for most of my life, and thus no fond memories of how Amsterdam may have looked in the past, I do understand his critique of how this image, created mostly for younger foreign tourists, dominates Amsterdam’s city center. My own fieldnotes show that I was surprised by how soon the visitor is bombarded by images of sex, drugs, and wild abandon:

As you walk from the train station down Damrak and further down Rokin, you cannot miss the importance of the Red Light district to the image of Amsterdam promoted by tourist agencies, souvenir shops, and cafes/restaurants. In almost all of the tourist shops on

this track (and of course elsewhere in the Red Light district itself), there are T-shirts, magnets, postcards, mugs, etc. with images of naked/semi-naked women posing in window sills or in the throes of ecstasy with “Red Light District, Amsterdam” printed somewhere on the product.

One day, I followed the typical tourist path from the central train station to Leidseplein and tried to estimate how important sexuality and drugs are to the tourist experience. My first stop was a prominent tour agency near the train station which provides “excursions” through the city and surrounding towns. In addition to the typical tulip tours, historical tours, and museum boat tours, the agency offered several tours of the Red Light District. The walking tour started at the Prostitute Information Center in the heart of the district across from the medieval church, where a “former prostitute” would talk to the group about the area and then guide them through the rest of the district. The agent told me that mainly English-speaking tourists go on these tours but that “everyone” wanted to see the Red Light District. She also gave me her opinion that it was “stupid” to make something like prostitution illegal and that people should be able to visit the district if they so desired. She stated that it was better that people in the Netherlands allowed their sexuality to be out in the open instead of “in basements with computer screens and porn,” as in other countries.

Just a few stores down from the travel agency is a restaurant similar in style to “Hooters” in the United States, but here called, “Teazers.” Female employees at Teazers wear even less clothing than in Hooters. In addition, rather than simply serving food, the wait staff are required to dance on tables. These stretch out onto the sidewalk of the main road, Damrak, as well as back into the darker café rooms. As I walked by, I saw a group of Russian speakers chatting: a family of tourists and a Russian-speaking woman who obviously worked at “Teazers.” The restaurant employee looked tired, sloppily dressed and coiffed and perhaps even a bit high. She was shakily asking the family for a cigarette. In the window of the “café,” two girls in g-strings were “teasing” some men. Again, these activities were occurring in the middle of the day on the main street where

travelers and locals walk from the train station in order to reach any of the other important city squares and attractions. Yet, there are countless more marijuana museums, coffeeshops, and tourist shops featuring Red Light paraphernalia on the way to Museumplein or other “high culture” sights.

Even the Amsterdam Historical Museum (Amsterdam Historisch Museum) promoted a large exhibit entitled, “Love for Sale: Four Centuries of Prostitution in Amsterdam” from March 9 to September 1, 2002. It included fine art inspired by Dutch prostitution, descriptions and photos illustrating sex-workers’ lives, and described the ways that the government has tried to banish, regulate, and ignore sex-work through the ages. The exhibit evinced tourist interest in prostitution not only because it opened during Amsterdam’s main tourist season but also quite literally in its advertising leaflet which says that “today its Red Light District in the ‘Wallen’ quarter is an international tourist destination.”

#### Playing and Working in the “High Life”

This image of Amsterdam as a playground for adults was clearly one of the inducements for Russian-speaking migrants to come to the city. They could have traveled anywhere in Europe – and in fact more Russian-speakers live in Germany and France where they have long had communities and opportunities for employment and migration. However, again, migrants do not migrate simply to any richer country which will grant them a visa (or is otherwise easy to enter). Some of these migrants purposely chose to come to the Netherlands in order to “party.” For instance, many of the young Baltic people who would hang out on Rembrandtplein told me that they came to Amsterdam to have a good time rather than to find serious work during their school vacations. As mentioned before, this was easy for them since at this point in their countries’ process in joining the European Union, they did not need pre-approved visas to enter E.U. countries for stays of under three months. Other migrants, such as Ellie,

described above, simply hoped that the Netherlands would be more open, liberal-minded, friendly to foreigners, and nonconformist than their hometowns or countries.

One hairstylist from Lithuania combined both interests; seeking a freer society and parties in the Netherlands. In Lithuania, Sasha was discriminated against not only as an individual of Russian-Jewish descent but also because of his identity as a gay man. Nonetheless, he came to the Netherlands not out of desperation but because he had believed it would be more “fun” than Lithuania and other European countries. A “houseparty” with plentiful drugs, dancing, and other activities convinced him to move permanently to Amsterdam. However, when we met, he was already tired of the drugs and complained that his boss’ cocaine habit was hurting their business. He told me that this sort of lifestyle was boring to him now and that he would rather live “normally” in a place with beautiful people such as the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately, the last time I saw him, his behavior was so erratic that I believe he must have been on some sort of strong drug at the time.

#### Coffeeshops and Drug Dealers

I noticed early on in my research that some Russian-speakers and former-Soviets were involved in the drug and coffeeshop scenes as employees as well as customers. For instance, some of the first Russian speakers I met were quite active in selling both legal and illegal drugs. Zhenia, whom I became acquainted with in my pre-dissertation research of 2000, introduced me first to her boyfriend, “Slash,” a Jewish-Ukrainian man who had lived in San Francisco during his teen and young adult years. He had become too “stressed out” by his computer job in California, taken a trip to Amsterdam to relax, and decided not to return to the United States. I later learned that he and his friends were not just making money by guiding backpackers to hostels and hotel rooms as they claimed, but also selling drugs to these young tourists and arranging to send drugs to

them in the United States.<sup>46</sup> Zhenia's sister was also selling drugs, albeit semi-legal ones, in a coffeeshop which was popular with foreigners near the central train station. She had married a Dutchman to get Dutch residency and had brought over her Russian boyfriend and sister as soon as she was able.

Igor's life also provides a good example of this commingling of "high life" work and play. A Ukrainian man in his late thirties, Igor worked in La Palma,<sup>47</sup> which was the self-proclaimed largest "coffeeshop" in Amsterdam, featuring a tropical theme. He performed as a guard and part-time housekeeper in the hotel section of the large complex. Even with all of the time he spent in La Palma, working night and day shifts, Igor still socialized at La Palma's bar and was a regular at another smaller coffeeshop down the street, Siberië. I was only able to interview Igor without a joint in his hand a few times during breaks in the Orthodox Church service and one post-church jaunt to a traditional café. Interviews in Siberië were especially difficult because of the lack of ventilation in its small room and because so many people would come over to us to chat with Igor. Although there were no other Russian-speakers present in Siberië during my brief attempts at interviews there, there were certainly several Polish migrants who knew Igor. One girl in her twenties was getting Igor's help in finding a job.

La Palma, itself, was a former-Soviet migration node. Finally, after a year of research, I realized that many people of supposedly different classes consorted with each other as employees at such places as La Palma. La Palma's owner, James, employed

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<sup>46</sup> I should have guessed that Slash was involved in such activities based upon the luxurious furnishings in his and Zhenia's home, as well as Zhenia's quite erratic behavior in relation to me as I came to know her better. Mutual acquaintances such as Roman informed me that she was definitely a drug addict. I also gathered that none of this group was very well thought of by other Russian-speakers due to their hard core drug use and trade. In other words, most people I knew did not care much about marijuana and alcohol, but did not seek out friendships with people who were taking or selling potentially more destructive and illegal drugs like cocaine or heroine.

<sup>47</sup> I used a pseudonym for this coffeeshop due to the illegal nature of hiring migrant workers.



many Russian-speakers in addition to Igor, such as a young Uzbek man I met at the local homeless shelter and Vanya, a legal Russian architect from one of the Rembrandtplein groups. A year before this discovery, I had been introduced to James at my own home in Amsterdam because he had just begun dating Juliana again, the Latvian sex-work activist. Juliana may have introduced James to Vanya, who was the brother of her best friend, I later learned. However, I doubt that she was personally connected to every one of the Russian-speakers who worked at the bar since she tried to distance herself from certain Russian-speaking groups, including Vanya's friends on Rembrandtplein. In addition, the strands of contacts to Russian-speaking migrants may go further than Juliana because she claimed that James was involved in "bad dealings" and purposely sought out migrant labor for his shop. They worked for cheaper wages, did not incur state labor taxes, and perhaps they accepted sub-par working conditions such as Igor's long hours. James could not easily claim he did this because his business was a local, low-profit endeavor. La Palma is a world-renowned tourist spot with its huge multi-storied collection of bars, poolrooms, hotel, and advertisements all over town. Juliana often met such American celebrities as Snoop Dogg in James' private apartment at the top of the building.

#### Sex-Work for Russian-Speakers

Although it took a few years to see the connections, La Palma was a comparatively easy place to meet Russian-speaking migrants because its employees were free to move around the city and were not necessarily embarrassed to admit that they worked there (although Vanya never told me, himself). However, in general, the "high life" image for the Netherlands provided much more potentially exploitative working conditions and social exclusion. More of these migrants were working illegally and were monitored heavily by the local and national government, which was becoming much more conservative and conflicted about migration, drugs, and sex-work. For instance, most Eastern Europeans who still worked in Amsterdam in the Red Light District tried to

keep a low profile and, in some cases, obtained legal residency and work permits because of the raids on Eastern European sex-workers after sex work legalization. Police cameras, actual police (young female as well as male officers), paid security guards, and other interested parties (boyfriends/pimps) all watched passersby to make sure they were not bothering the sex-workers and to monitor the sex-workers themselves. Because of police crackdowns, the Prostitute Information Center, “Red Thread” prostitute union, the Amsterdam local public health organization, and other sex work organizations claimed that Eastern European sex-workers no longer worked in Amsterdam’s center.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, in the Dutch countryside, Eastern European sex-workers were definitely in evidence and in demand for brothels catering to German sex-tourists. In several “fieldwork” trips with Red Thread (which they conducted once or twice a year), I was able to meet a number of Russian-speaking sex-workers as we handed out pamphlets on sex-worker rights and tax law. However, in these sex clubs, “massage parlors,” and brothels, we were heavily monitored by protective and potentially exploitative brothel owners and managers. These brothels were very hard to find, some on tiny country roads miles away from train or bus stations. The tourists who visited them were Germans who crossed the border just for an afternoon or an evening adventure. The tourists probably found the brothels as we did through Web searches, word of mouth, and a random roadside sign. Without their own cars, the sex-workers could have had very little freedom from the brothel environment, they could not have socialized with other Russian or Bulgarian-speakers, nor could they have easily sought help if they were forced to work

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<sup>48</sup> By the end of my research period, I had begun to question how much “fieldwork” some of these organizations actually conducted in the city with their limited resources, their particular politics (some would not enter a brothel if they had to work through the brothel owner first), general access to the brothels, and interest in protecting the individual illegal migrant sex-workers they did know. Thus, I came to question these organizations’ statistics, although I did believe that there could have been fewer visible Russian-speakers in the center of Amsterdam than in the past as a result of the government crackdowns and brothel self-purging of illegal migrants.

in unsafe conditions. The women with whom we were able to talk were more concerned with whether or not they had the legal right to work in the Netherlands (most Eastern Europeans did not and some had been lied to about this) than in issues of pay, having a healthy relationship with the owners of their clubs and brothels, or knowing the new tax laws for sex-work. In any case, much of this material was in Dutch which they could not read. Red Thread had a few Russian materials on the subject of legality and foreign sex-workers' recourse to Dutch law if they were "trafficking victims," which did not seem to lighten their worries very much. At one brothel we visited, we were not allowed in the door by the brothel manager because he claimed that the local health organization had already said enough to the women inside (the health organizations and the union did not always work well together). However, as we were leaving, a Russian-speaking sex-worker sneaked out the back door of the house to run to our car where she gladly took all of the Russian-language materials, including a few fashion and culture magazines I happened to have with me.

The brothels we were able to enter ranged from tacky, glittery bars with fountains and leopard print to average-looking, single-family homes where we chatted around the kitchen table. The Russian-speaking women were equally diverse. At one dingy "massage parlor" in a very small town, a Belarussian woman told me that she knew she had no legal right to live or work in the Netherlands and that I could not resolve these issues for her. She preferred to discuss her love of the nineteenth century poet, Lomonosov, with whom she felt a deep connection. She believed he must have been a sex-worker in his day since he had little income from his books but lived so luxuriously and wrote so knowledgeably about women.

In a brothel which must have been a farmhouse at one point, I met a woman who was described as unintelligent by her manager because of her naïve demeanor. Our conversation was depressing. The sex-worker had come to the Netherlands because she had heard from other Russian sex-workers in Germany that it was legal for them to work

in the Netherlands (not true) and she told us that a local policeman had actually given her a work permit sticker in her passport (doubtful). She eventually admitted that she did not need to be too concerned about her status because she disliked the work and she hoped to return to her children in the south of Russia in just a few months.

I also visited *tipplezones*, the streetwalking zones I described in chapter four where sex-workers perform sexual acts with men in their cars, Red Light districts in three major cities (as well as Amsterdam), and Amsterdam's most popular club where sex acts are performed onstage. These sex-work venues, including the *tipplezones*, can be considered elements of the "high life" tourist image in that they are part of the prostitution industry which is promoted in tourism advertisements.

Prostitution in general contributes to the image of "open sexuality" which the government defines as one of the Netherlands' key cultural elements in its media productions. Although the average male tourist does not necessarily drive a car to a *tipplezone* during his visit to Amsterdam since they are usually outside of the city center, many Moroccan and Turkish migrants as well as Dutchmen frequent these zones. These migrants were probably drawn to the Netherlands' image of sexual freedom (at least as "exotica") and they may only visit the *tipplezones* because they are cheaper than indoor brothels. Dutchmen can also be considered "sex-tourists" of the different types of sex-work zones in the Netherlands. I met two such Dutchmen at the canal-boat brothels in Utrecht. They told me that they tried to visit a new brothel each month in order to retain the novelty of the experience.

All of these sex-work environments seemed fairly problematic in their individual ways, especially for non-E.U. workers or Eastern European workers from future E.U. states who do not have governmental protection for their labor. Yet, the *tipplezones* were particularly dehumanizing in that women were required to solicit clients outdoors and to have sex in cars or even standing against one of the walls separating the individual parking spots in the zones. *Huiskamers*, or small buildings in the zones, provided them

with a space to change into their working clothes, take a rest, eat or drink something, and sometimes get health exams. These “living rooms” run by the Dutch health organizations could not completely make up for the fact that the women had to work in often cold or wet conditions. The zones were meant to accommodate local drug-addicted sex-workers who charged too little to afford the rent on a window brothel.<sup>49</sup> Without legal papers, the more comfortable and safe brothels and clubs were closed to migrants even if they could pay the rent for a work space. And without sufficient information about where they were working and their rights in these situations, these women were ripe for exploitation.

When the Images of “High Culture” and “High Life” Pale  
for Russian-Speaking Migrants

Here I describe in greater detail the negative aspects of migrants’ experiences working and playing in Amsterdam’s tourist milieu. Life could be very difficult for migrants because of anti-immigrant attitudes, their often illegal status, and the types of jobs open to them. Russian-speakers faced perhaps less overt hostility because of their Christianity and “whiteness” but they were nonetheless treated as “newcomers” for several generations. Jobs in the tourism industry offered them opportunities both for making good money and for exploitation. Tourist attractions such as museums, international restaurants, coffeeshops, dance clubs, and brothels could be equally creative and destructive environments for Russian-speaking migrants who were often living on the edge of legality and social acceptability.

Drug Addiction and Mental Illness

A side effect of promoting tolerant drug policies in the Netherlands is that individuals who are not well-educated about drugs, who have a predisposition toward

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<sup>49</sup> As described in chapter four, these are the main type of brothel in Dutch cities in which a woman can advertise her services through a window opening onto the street.

substance abuse, and who are marginalized in Dutch society may fall prey to drug addiction. The following story illustrates this possibility among Russian-speaking migrants, some of whom are entranced by the idea of legalized drug-use in the Netherlands but do not use drugs in moderation (and with caution). Depressing economic and personal circumstances certainly lower an individual's resistance to the temptation of a drug high.

As winter closed in on Amsterdam, ice rimmed the canals, a biting wind blew through the tiny streets, and few people could be seen around town even during the meager hours of sunlight each day.<sup>50</sup> I rarely saw friends such as Roman and Vadim since they could not sell their work on the streets any longer and preferred to stay at home and “hibernate” during the winter. Some migrants were not so lucky as Roman and Vadim in being able to afford places to live during the winter and were forced to “squat” in abandoned buildings or return to their home countries. Another friend of mine, Valeri, became ill and homeless in the beginning of the winter due to: 1) too much partying and drug use; 2) a lack of steady employment without the summer tourism trade; and 3) a lack of social services and connections to help him.

Valeri's problems began in Russia, where he was unable to support his wife and two teenage children as a singer-songwriter, musician, and a salesman of “Herbal Life” vitamins. Valeri's wife met an American man online and took her children with her to be with him in Portland, Oregon. She had originally told Valeri that once she arrived in the United States, she would get her American citizenship and send for him as well. She must have known that she would have to actually marry the Oregonian in order to gain citizenship but Valeri only realized this months later when we talked about the situation. He did not know what a “fiancé visa” meant and that his (ex-) wife would have to wait at

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<sup>50</sup> The sun could rise as late as ten in the morning and set as early as three in the afternoon.

least three years before she could complete the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. He believed that they were still married to each other.

In his late thirties, Valeri was in many senses quite naïve about life in the Netherlands and the United States. He had rarely traveled outside of his small city west of Moscow and he knew little about the Dutch music industry and drug cultures. For him, as for many other foreigners, Amsterdam's party atmosphere was completely novel and exciting. Valeri had never taken drugs before coming to the Netherlands, but his new friends provided him with weed, alcohol, and some sort of pills we were not able to identify. Valeri's music was much appreciated by the equally stoned and inebriated crowds on Amsterdam's streets that summer and he felt that he had never been as productive and as creative as he was in the Netherlands. As a result, Valeri did not leave for Russia at the end of his tourist visa but stayed on to continue to party and follow his muse.

The crowds left as the summer wound down and Valeri was stranded with no income, no savings, no English or Dutch language-skills, and a drug addiction. An American pornographer whom Valeri had befriended took him in, rent-free. Valeri became paranoid that his pornographer friend was mocking him, probably due to the drugs and language barrier, and asked me to find him social services such as a homeless shelter or a plane ticket home. To our chagrin, the migrant organizations and homeless shelters were only concerned with aiding female sex-workers, trafficking victims, official refugees, or Dutch citizens. Several were overtly rude to me when I asked how I could find aid for a Russian man, assuming (albeit, correctly) that he was illegally residing in the Netherlands. After a month, Valeri's paranoia peaked and he showed up at my door with his two bags. That night, Vadim and Roman helped me babysit a very depressed

Valeri who exhibited signs of drug withdrawal. Thankfully, a Russian-Australian acquaintance of Valeri bought him a ticket home to Russia the very next day.<sup>51</sup>

Valeri was not alone in experimenting with drugs in Amsterdam and becoming almost obsessed with the party atmosphere. Felite and Ania (Roman's girlfriend) were just as sheltered as Valeri before they arrived in the Netherlands. Neither had much knowledge about drugs and they had been highly controlled by their families before they traveled abroad. Marijuana was simply "magical" to them. When I visited her at home in Lithuania, Ania could not stop talking about how amazing life in Amsterdam was, with its parties and music. Late that night, she and a close friend and I sat on her tiny balcony where they smoked a smuggled joint and played a CD of Valeri's music over and over again.

Ultimately, Felite, Ania, and even Valeri were able to move beyond the partying – by luck, circumstances, or force of will – to live relatively stable lives. Unfortunately, this was not the case for Vadim. As described in chapter two, he broke from reality and attacked another street artist whom he accused of being part of the Ukrainian mafia which was out to kill him. According to Roman and other acquaintances, Vadim's paranoia was probably induced by too much marijuana over a sustained period of time (three years), by jealousy of the other artist's success on the street, and by pre-existing psychological problems.

Vasili was also known to drink too much and to have an ongoing problem with depression. He was one of the fixtures on Rembrandtplein. He could be found sweeping the streets during the day and drinking on the benches late into the night. I came to know him at the Russian Orthodox Church down the street where he helped me learn some of

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<sup>51</sup> Valeri and his mother called me from Russia to thank me for aiding him in the Netherlands. Valeri even asked me to visit the American pornographer, who had hosted him at the end of his trip, to ask for the coat he had left there and to apologize for his behavior. Valeri hoped that he had not burned any bridges in his final days in Amsterdam because, even after his awful experiences, he wanted to return the next year.



its intricate rituals. Yet, when I asked Vasili about his life, he started to tear-up and told me it would have to wait until another day. He said that he had undergone many terrible things, such as time in a German prison, and that it was not easy to talk about. Vasili's recurring depression and alcoholism caused him to lose his driver's license and almost cost him his job as a city cleaner on Rembrandtplein.

Even Russian-speakers who did not overuse drugs could fall into psychological despair or find themselves homeless and unemployed when faced with legal and social barriers. One legally-residing street seller, Daniel, was unable or unwilling to depend upon Dutch social services to cope with his growing schizophrenia and depression over the summers I spent in Amsterdam. His sexual harassment and irrational behavior almost made me relinquish my research on Rembrandtplein in the summer of 2003. He constantly asked women out in offensive and physical ways. His problems were known by everyone and many people had tried to help him over the years. Vadim had even spent a night watching over him to keep him from committing suicide the year before. On the square, men would try to gently move him away from the women or distract him somehow rather than physically removing him from the area. Roman told me that he sold Daniel's pictures for him when Daniel would wander off – often with some of the Russian or Ukrainian thieves who may have been taking advantage of his illness – in order to keep him away from the female street sellers and tourists. Sadly, his condition worsened so much that Roman gave up trying to sell his badly colored-in pictures.

Homelessness probably added to migrants' pressure and stress. Housing was scarce in the center of Amsterdam for Dutch people, let alone for migrants. Most city apartment complexes and large buildings were owned by the Dutch government and Dutch people waited on long lists for years to rent apartments in the city. These apartments were then fairly cheap to rent, but were often sublet illegally by people who made large profits due to the high demand. Privately owned apartments were even more expensive, because they were legal, and many of my fellow Fulbright scholars spent

almost their entire stipend of 810 euros each month on rent. For years, young people and artists protested this difficult housing situation by “squatting” in abandoned buildings. Migrants with scarce work prospects, such as Alex when he first arrived from Georgia, were always on the lookout for such lodgings. I once toured the southern, poorer part of Amsterdam with two friends who were desperate for a “squat” because they had been living for months in different people’s living rooms.

Besides the pressures of unemployment, homelessness, and drugs, many men I met on Rembrandtplein were away from their families for months while working and were desperate for female companionship. I knew quite a few like Valeri whose wives had left them to marry men in Sweden, Finland, the United States and other countries as they searched for better lives. Yet, even when they were completely single, the Netherlands did not provide these men with many opportunities to meet or date women. Two different friends of mine told me that they could not get dates with Dutch or Russian girls because they did not make enough money and were not respectable enough. One of these was Vanya, who legally resided in the Netherlands through his sister’s sponsorship but who sometimes tried his hand at street art, and the other was an older illegal migrant, Pyeter, who worked as a masseuse at hotels along with other odd jobs. Both had higher college degrees and were intelligent and talented people, even forming an acting troupe together with other migrants from all over the Netherlands. On the other hand, Russian-speaking women I knew seemed to be much more connected to other social groups in the Netherlands through their children or Dutch partners.

The few social services I later found in Amsterdam to aid migrants who fell into drug abuse, mental health problems, or homelessness included one Catholic charity which supplied homeless men with coffee and sandwiches once a week and AMOC (the city of Amsterdam’s foreign drug-user program), which directly aided migrant drug addicts. Most organizations received government funding which meant that they needed proof of legal residency for their services and could not appear to be aiding illegal

immigrants.<sup>52</sup> AMOC opened in Amsterdam specifically to address the problems of foreign drug addicts (they call them “drug tourists”) because so many were arriving in Amsterdam in the 1970s and 1980s. The Dutch government would not treat them as a sick population who deserved help, as they did Dutch drug addicts, since they were illegally residing in the country. This organization attempted to provide them with such services as temporary housing, safe needles, health care, food, as well as assisting them to break their addictions and return home or become legal residents. AMOC aided a group of Polish men who sought clients for sex-work in a disco off of Rembrandtplein.

The Catholic homeless café aided more Russian-speakers than AMOC, perhaps because it was less stigmatized as a drug addict or sex-worker space. In the winter, I volunteered once a week at the café, handing out sandwiches, coffee, tea, and sometimes acetaminophen. The vast majority of the homeless were migrants from Morocco, Turkey, or Iraq but a significant portion also came from Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Central Asia. Many told me grimly of their inability to find jobs, housing, or ways back home. Although one of the shelter’s young regulars found a job at La Palma, several resorted to petty thievery. They sold stolen face cream, clothing, and other household items to Russian-speakers like Roman on Rembrandtplein. This sort of small-time shoplifting was a survival technique as well as rebellion against Dutch exclusion. Russian anthropologist Dina Siegel argues that Russians see crime differently from the Dutch because of their history of desperation in relation to the Tsarist and Soviet regimes. She says that because of “the difficult conditions of daily life, stealing from one’s work, corruption and abuse of power were not considered crimes” (Siegel 2002: 179).

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<sup>52</sup> This may explain why one of the main migrant sex-worker organizations I was planning to work with stepped back from using me as an intern. Migration officials misunderstood my status in the Netherlands and they accused the organization of hiring me as an illegal migrant worker. Graduate students are considered “employees” of a university in the Netherlands and I did not have an affiliation with a particular university.

### More Migrant Sex-Worker Issues

As I argued in chapter four, the idea of the “trafficked” Eastern European woman does not mean that Eastern European sex-workers were actually treated more sensitively by the police and local governments but, in fact, sometimes the opposite. This was made abundantly clear one night in the summer of 2003 when I rode along with a Dutch policeman to watch as he worked at the Amsterdam *tipplezone*, near the north-western docks. In the course of the evening, I learned that the police were divided in their interests in relation to the Eastern European sex-workers and that their behavior at times encouraged foreign sex-workers to work in the Netherlands and then punished them for their transgression.

My guide, Jan, and other policemen with him in the local police station hoped to foster good relations with the sex-workers in order to maintain order. However, they felt that it was important to keep out non-Dutch sex-workers because of the crime possibilities. In addition, they may have felt that illegal migrants should be deported because they were breaking the law. For example, Jan harassed several women whom he believed to be Eastern European as they approached the zone gates. They did not have or did not want to show him their passports and he told them that he would arrest and deport them if they came back. This same policeman bemoaned his inability to consistently ask for passports and consistently act upon breaches of the immigration codes because he felt that the zones and country in general would be safer. He was not always allowed to ask for passports due to worries about alienating women who might need police aid. However, even though Jan believed that there was no place for migrants among the Dutch sex-workers, he was quite friendly to a Latin American transgendered sex-worker whom we met in front of the *huiskamer*.

Health workers in the *tipplezone huiskamer* critiqued the police’s lack of consistency in their treatment of foreign sex-workers – ignoring Eastern Europeans one day and harassing and deporting them the next. They told me that within the police force,

the vice police were different from the *tipplezone* police in that their goal was to investigate instances of trafficking among these foreign sex-workers and to apply the limited legal protections for these women (a B9 visa which allowed them to stay in the country long enough to try their particular trafficker in court). In the past, the police who worked the *tipplezone* beat would have put the women's safety first, aiding the women with returning home or faking an arrest in order to get them away from a controlling pimp. The sex-workers and health workers no longer had this symbiotic relationship with the police. The weekly meetings between the police and the *tipplezone* workers, which the police at the station had been so proud of, were quite dysfunctional in the health workers' opinions. Few of the sex-workers spoke Dutch and the policemen who performed the community-building activities did not have as much experience with sex-workers as they had in the past. Yet, the health workers did depend upon the police to keep actual crime and violence out of the zone, such as could occur with overcrowding and the interference of pimps. One pre-operative transgendered sex-worker from Latin America had been killed outside of the zone the week before. A candle burned in a corner of the *huiskamer* for her.

Even the legal sex-workers find themselves under more surveillance and worse conditions since the law changed. The police monitor them more to make sure none of them are illegal migrants, tax police and health inspectors traumatize them by insisting on often illogical (and intrusive) health standards and methods of keeping track of their income, and they are paid less by brothel owners who are themselves forced to give more of their income to the state. In addition, they do not receive equal social services for their taxes as there is still some discrimination against sex-workers in the country and government officials have not always kept their word that women's names and employment will remain confidential.

Finally, the fact that the Netherlands is known as a Mecca for sex-work means that male migrants and tourists from countries where sex-work is highly taboo take

advantage of it by indulging in services or watching the women without any accompanying respect for them. Young British, American, Moroccan, and Turkish men often taunt and openly ogle sex-workers and other women, street sellers, and café waitstaff in Red Light districts. On weekends, the police park vans full of riot gear on Amsterdam's larger tourist squares during soccer games for fear of too much "fun" (although Dutch young people are participate in the activities which take place during important matches).

### Conclusion: Exploiting Tourism

Now the police have set up an anonymous phone line and put up large posters around the red light districts, where prostitutes sit behind windows.

They show the silhouette of a prostitute with a man holding a gun to her head. Reports of girls being smuggled into the Netherlands have caused a public outcry in recent weeks.

The mayor of Amsterdam also voiced concern. But the tourist authorities admit the city's famous red-light district is as much an attraction as the art galleries and cannabis coffee shops. (Coughlan 2006)

Tourism in Amsterdam draws migrants with an array of inducements – from semi-legal drugs to profitable seasonal work. Yet, there may be more exploitation of migrants in the tourism industry than exploitation of the industry by the migrants themselves. This is especially the case with migrants who are not legally employed or legally residing in the Netherlands. As migration laws become stricter and more harshly enforced, migrants have fewer safe jobs to choose from and fewer options when faced with difficulties in their living or working situations. Appealing to the police for help is no longer an option if the police are permitted to ask for their visas and to deport those migrants who lack legal status. In addition, Dutch laws and law enforcement reflect growing anti-immigrant attitudes in the population and burgeoning divisions in society between "locals" and "foreigners." Even legally-residing migrants, such as Ellie and Alex, find themselves isolated among other Russian-speakers on the edge of the

respectable art world. Finally, the particular ways that tourism is promoted in the Netherlands aid in creating a negative environment for migrants. The “high life” image draws migrants to Amsterdam and employs them in brothels, coffeeshops, and tourist squares – places where drugs, alcohol, and partying are commonplace and can help lead people, who might already be depressed or alienated, into spirals of self-destruction.

#### Dutch “Tolerance”

Short-term, international tourists are not always given a view of “real” Dutch life while engaging in Dutch “high life” and “high culture” activities. Tourists may never leave the center of Amsterdam and certainly would not cross the river to the north to see the rows and rows of newer, cheaper apartments built for the influx of former colonial migrants and lower income workers who moved to the area in the 1970s and 1980s (see Fainstein 2000: 100). This means that the tourists may not understand that there are actually very large differences between the Dutch poor and rich, even with generous government social services. For instance, they may never see the intense crowding of apartments in cities in the Netherlands (ibid.: 102). Thus, they will not easily notice the ever-growing and intensifying ethnic strife and ethnic ghettoization which is occurring between the “Dutch” and the “newcomers” in the Netherlands (ibid.: 102-105).

These tourists, then, will believe the government’s and some Dutch academic claims of social support for all, lack of poverty, and social equity. Dutch people and others often glowingly describe the “polder model” of society which has been built up in the Netherlands for hundreds of years. In essence, it is the idea that the Dutch have had to be more civil and tolerant of each other than other populations in order to work together to keep their below-sea-level land, or “polder,” dry (Deben, Heinemeijer, and van der Vaart 2000: x). Yet, this image of tolerance is not without its economic incentives and social costs. As Nijman says,

Tolerance, perhaps Amsterdam’s most prized commodity, is increasingly packaged and labeled to meet the demands of mass

tourism and instant gratification. In the process it has become something of a perversion, in the sense that it turned into a commercially motivated permissiveness that is in fact contrary to the city's Calvinist roots (Nijman 2000: 41)

Thus, Nijman argues that there is no true "tolerance" in the sense that all people are accepted equally, but rather, "the dominance and imposition of a specific subculture" on the Netherlands in an effort to draw tourists (ibid.: 44-45: see also Deben, Heinemeijer, and van der Vaart: 2000: x). Unfortunately for many migrants, Nijman's assessment of Dutch "tolerance" as a façade, seems all too true.



## CHAPTER SIX: MIGRANT COMMUNITY-BUILDING, ETHNIC BOUNDARIES, AND DUTCH NATIONALISM

During one of my last days in Amsterdam, I found myself at a table at an outdoor café on Rembrandtplein with two Ukrainian street artists, a high class Russian sex-worker, and an elderly Dutchman. Switching between English and Russian, I attempted to say goodbye to Sveta and Katya and to give away my printer and other bulky items to Jan and Roman. Sveta cautioned me not to forget my Russian while I was back in the United States and Katya gave me her e-mail address. Meanwhile, Jan interrupted to tell me more about his academic research on an esoteric Dutch history topic and Roman tried to redirect the conversation back to finding a home for my printer in Jan's apartment. When I left the group after half an hour of negotiations and goodbyes, I looked back and saw them returning to their conversations and drinks among the swarms of tourists basking in the late afternoon sun.

Even after more than a year of intense research with several groups of Russian-speaking migrants, I never could have guessed I would find these four particular people sitting at a café table and chatting with one another. Although Katya was a highly paid, high class prostitute in the Netherlands, I met her through a long line of references starting with a Dutch nun at a soup kitchen. Katya told me that she never socialized with other Russian speakers and I only once saw her pray briefly at one of the Russian Orthodox churches near Rembrandtplein. The Ukrainians, Sveta and Roman, were also not an obvious part of her social or economic spheres since they garnered much lower incomes selling art on the street. It was even more extraordinary that Roman's Dutch landlord was present, since an older Dutchman would not normally be expected to consort with younger, foreign, and socially marginal people. However, Jan had married two different Ukrainian women over the years and must have felt a connection to the group. This last moment in Rembrandtplein epitomized for me the very real, if often

hidden, connectedness of Russian-speakers with one another and with a select few non-Russian Russophiles.

In this chapter, I argue that Russian-speakers' networks of relationships are both a positive and negative sign of their position in the Netherlands. Migrants' community-building shows a positive adaptation to life in the Netherlands as they are obtaining enough capital and connections to open Russian grocery stores, host Russian discos, sell Russian art in galleries, find other lucrative employment in the formal Dutch economy, and become legal residents of the Netherlands. However, these connections among Russian-speakers of very different ethnic backgrounds, religions, and classes<sup>53</sup> are not simply a nostalgia for "home," but are also a reaction to the difficulties of migrant social integration<sup>54</sup> and tightening migration laws in the Netherlands. I will then illuminate in greater detail the bonds and cleavages among Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands in relation to a history of changing Dutch migration policies and attitudes toward migrant communities. In the first section, I discuss the importance of defining Russian-speakers' interactions as community-building even though earlier scholarship on Russians in the Netherlands disputes the presence of a community, individual Russian-speakers may deny knowledge of other Russians, and Russian-speakers are not as visible as other migrant communities such as the Turks. The second section describes outside incentives for community-building with Dutch society becoming increasingly exclusionary and intolerant of ethnic communities. In the third section, I illustrate

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<sup>53</sup> As sociologist and migration specialist Rosemarie Sackmann states, "it is not to be expected that immigrants constitute a homogenous group, sharing one and the same collective identity. Rather, it is to be expected that existing social lines of differentiation also bear an influence on the relationship of individuals to constructions of collective identity" (2003: 4).

<sup>54</sup> In general, Dutch and European scholars use the term "integration" to refer to migrants' ability to achieve "an established social position" with particular reference to their participation in labor or leisure activities, or in attitudes toward them (Engbersen 2003: 61). For instance, the Dutch government has sought to improve migrants' "integration" into Dutch society through policies which affect their social, cultural, and economic situations (Korteweg 2003: 148).

Russian networking as a response to their marginalization through examples of Russian-speakers' lives and the communal spaces they share. I also describe the growing importance of the Russian language even among former-Soviets who might harbor resentment against Russians as a colonial power in their homelands.

### How or Why Define a Russian Community?

Russian-American anthropologist Helen Kopnina studied Russian migrants in Amsterdam and London in the late 1990s and came to the conclusion that there was no “Russian community” with separate Russian institutions, Russian spaces, or group identification in the cities (2001, 2005, 2006).<sup>55</sup> Rather, she argues that a number of “subcommunities” existed which were made up of migrants with similar life experiences such as the wives of Dutchmen or Englishmen, car salesmen, or academics. She writes:

The question, ‘is there a community?’ can best be answered by the Russians themselves, as well as the Dutch and the British in their respective countries...neither Russians themselves, nor the members of the receiving society, see them as a ‘community’, while they do use the term to describe groups within a larger group (2005: 80).

Kopnina’s main concern in defining a “Russian community” is to show how Russians are different from many other migrant groups in that they are “invisible” to non-Russians and even to each other, except in particular spaces or social groups, because they, and others, do not identify a cohesive, homogeneous Russian “communal” identity. Concepts such as “ethnicity” and “culture” are nonetheless used among Russian migrants to define group boundaries. Kopnina concludes that

migrant cultural and ethnic identities remain rather ‘fixed’ (as opposed to ‘chosen’ as the postmodern theories imply) by both

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<sup>55</sup> I learned of a slight overlap in Kopnina’s and my research subjects when I met her in Amsterdam through a Dutch research institute. I recognized some of the faces in her photographs and we later socialized together with these mutual acquaintances (Summer 2003). However, overall, we did not study the exact same people since we entered upon the networks through different acquaintances in different time periods with different objectives.

external pressures and the internal sense of ‘self’ (having to do with ideas of origin and belonging) (ibid.: 207).

Kopnina’s overall argument is to critique what she sees as the postmodern concept of “transmigrant,” a person who moves back and forth between identities as well as geographical space. Although their personalities, experiences, and identities were quite diverse, Russians still thought of themselves in relation to where they had come from in the former Soviet Union as opposed to some new “cosmopolitan” notion of “self” (ibid.).

While my own research with Russian-speakers in the Netherlands confirms many of Kopnina’s conclusions about Russian understandings of ethnic and cultural identity<sup>56</sup> and their “invisibility” to outsiders, my different objectives and later research period have caused me to highlight Russian community-building activities in the Netherlands as opposed to explaining them away. By “community,” I mean a fluid network (or networks) of people who are connected by economic dependencies, friendship, animosity, social activities, similar life experiences, and outside definition. I will not always use this term, however, because my goal is to stress the *process* of Russian-speakers forming connections with one another as well as the *process* of others defining them as a group separate from the population at large.

Caroline Brettell, a longtime scholar of migration, advocates for the use of the concept of “social networks,” as opposed to an older definition of “community” because it “moves us away from a preoccupation with geographically or sociologically static systems. It allows us to find a ‘sense of community’ even where the members do not live in proximity” (2003: 109). However, she cautions fellow researchers not to assume that a “community” of social networks exists among people simply because they have a common origin (ibid.; see also Kopnina 2005: 207, Peters 2003: 15, and Sackmann 2003:

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<sup>56</sup> See my chapter three, for instance, for a review of several Baltic migrants’ negotiations with ethnicity, culture, and ideas of self in relation to “home.”

4). In her research on Portuguese migrants, Brettell found a geographically-located “Little Portugal” in Toronto, Canada but not in Paris, France. She notes that,

I had to come to terms with the urban structures themselves as they influence the lives of newcomers. I also had to view the formation of a community, be it a geographical community or one based on social networks, as a strategy appropriate in some situations and inappropriate in others (2003: 110).

Social and political theorist Bernhard Peters even more strenuously critiques automatic assumptions about collective identity. He argues that,

for some people, collective identifications might be important, for others much less so. And forms of collective identity might have different relevance to different people. There may be important situational and historical factors which influence the relevance or salience of collective identifications (2003: 16).

Thus, the physical, economic, political, cultural, and even personal contexts all come into play in individuals’ identification with a collective identity.

Although I agree with Kopnina that there is no true “Little Moscow” in Amsterdam to the extent that shops, living spaces, and other economic activities dominated by Russian-speakers all exist in one part of the city, I will argue that overlapping networks of Russian-speakers and a growing number of organizations and businesses do show a sort of Russian community activity and identity in the Netherlands. As with Brettell’s study in Paris, a year of research with a variety of different Russian-speakers led me to see connections among them that were not immediately evident. In addition, I will argue that networks of Russian-speakers and Russian institutions were becoming more popular in my research period as a defense mechanism against the increasing politicization of migration in the Netherlands. This could be seen in long-term migrants’ return to Russian networks and identification after years of living in the Netherlands.

At first glance, however, Russian-speakers were not always easy to see as a single group, per se, in the city of Amsterdam. Kopnina lists a number of possible explanations for Russian invisibility and lack of an established community in the Netherlands: the

small population of Russian migrants in Amsterdam; competition among migrants for “black jobs” or sublet housing; “community” in the Russian language is not a popular term; negative experiences with group identities and control in the Soviet Union; an interest in avoiding elements of Russian culture and social control; and histories of ethnic and class rivalry in the Soviet Union (2005: 84-95). Most of these reasons seem applicable, to a limited extent, to my research period. Moroccan, Turkish, and Indonesian migrants are more numerous and have a longer history of migrating to the Netherlands than the Eastern Europeans. Russian-speakers are often (but not always) “Christian” and “white” so that they do not obviously stand out in crowds. I did witness competition among illegal and temporary migrants who were worried about finding cheap sublet housing, space on the squares to sell or perform for tourists, and jobs in the informal economy of construction or tourism. Others may not have cared that much at first about finding other Russian-speakers as they were simply excited to be in the Netherlands because they could reinvent themselves in a different cultural milieu or extract themselves from controlling families and societal influences back home.

Kopnina also admits that many of the migrants might hide their knowledge and relationships with one another around nosy anthropologists since many were illegal (see Kopnina 2005: 88). Kopnina and I both experienced fears that we were “spies” for the American, Dutch, or Russian governments (ibid: 10-12). A good example of this is my experience attempting to interview the two owners of the “Moskva” grocery store in Amstelveen. Both owners agreed to interviews but they did not seem to trust me very much when I met with them in person. The first owner I met gave me a different name from the one I heard someone use with him in the store (not a nickname), admitted that he was liable to lie to me because he was a “shifty person,” did not want me to tape record our interview, and requested a look inside my purse to make sure that I was not hiding a recording device. I did not know if this older, mustached man simply liked to joke with a former Cold-war enemy, American anthropologist or if he was sincerely

afraid of sharing too much information with a potential spy for the government. He also questioned the entire basis of my research on “Russian-speakers,” since he denied that Uzbeks had much cultural overlap with Russians. Of course, his store’s name and their products revealed such connections between the groups, but I argued that it is important to pay attention to how people communicate in a common language even if they are considered ethnically different. He agreed and admitted that Russians and Uzbeks sometimes eat a similar rice dish. The rest of the interview with the other, more senior, owner was just as difficult as he was evasive about why he had opened the store and what he thought about other Russian-speakers in the Netherlands. Instead, he emphasized his connection to the Netherlands, saying that he liked the country quite well, that he had Dutch friends, he spoke Dutch and English fluently, and he found running a business in the Netherlands much easier than elsewhere. Yet, he admitted that he returned with his family to Uzbekistan every summer.

I found these store owners’ suspicions (whether feigned or real) of my research objectives surprising considering that they seemed to own a legitimate business. They could not have been operating two, well-advertised stores without at least gaining legal residency or Dutch citizenship. I understood why illegal migrants such as Roman, homeless thieves, or sex-workers might be suspicious of me and wary about telling me too much about their lives because they lived on the edge of deportation or even imprisonment. I concluded that either Moskva’s owners continued to hold Cold War suspicions of U.S. citizens or that their position in the Netherlands was in actuality much more fragile than their large stores seemed to suggest.

The store owners’ paranoia may represent a general migrant suspicion of unknown persons who spoke Russian in the Netherlands. I heard several tales of migrants taking advantage of one another. Although migrants’ success in selling street art, finding an apartment, or obtaining legal Dutch residency papers would most often depend upon connections to other Russian-speakers, this did not mean that some former

Soviets did not exploit others' marginal position in Dutch society. This is yet another reason why Russian-speakers might avoid or deny knowledge of other Russian-speakers.

For instance, Sasha the Lithuanian-Russian-Jewish hairstylist claimed not to be interested in knowing other Lithuanians in the Netherlands even though I knew that he favored Dainius enough to charge him half the price he charged me for a haircut. One day, I told Felite about this contradiction and she explained that she knew a number of stories of Lithuanians in Sweden and in London who cheated or threatened other Lithuanians whom they met abroad. She said that Dainius had heard of several Lithuanians in London who would extort money from others by threatening to turn them in to the immigration police.<sup>57</sup> As a result, she was similarly wary of Lithuanians and other former-Soviets living in the Netherlands. Felite explained that she just talked with people superficially rather than making close friendships with them because she feared being used by others, even though she admitted that the people she had met through the Lithuanian-Dutch community website were all friendly and worked respectable jobs. Felite summed up her attitude toward other Lithuanians by repeating a Lithuanian proverb which she translated into Russian: "A Lithuanian is happy when his neighbor's house is burning down." She then illustrated this proverb with a story about her cousin and uncle.

As she was growing up, Felite's richer cousin would come to their house and see something she liked. She would then demand that it be given to her because she was wealthy and her lifestyle regularly included such objects, whereas they were poorer and did not need it. When the borders opened after the fall of the Soviet Union, Felite's father went over to Germany to buy a Ford Granada car and when he returned, her uncle went to Germany as well to buy an even better car – a Ford Escort. Felite argued that

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<sup>57</sup> In 1999, Siegel found that some Russian-speaking migrants avoided socializing with other Russian-speakers because they worried about coming into contact with members of the violent Russian Mafia based upon popular European and Russian media reports (2002: 83, 180).



Lithuanians needed to have even more or even better possessions than their neighbors, no matter whether they had the funds to support this. Felite told me that she used this competition to her advantage in her own interior design work as she convinced clients to buy new appliances or design styles because they could be trend setters among their neighbors.

Felite and many other migrants could be harshly critical of their fellow countrymen and former homes because of economic or social insecurity, real personal exploitation, or newfound critical viewpoints due to travel and experience. Felite eventually settled in London but when I knew her in the Netherlands, she had no idea where she and her new husband would be living month to month and whether they would have enough funds or connections to continue to obtain work and feed themselves. Paranoia among fellow migrants makes perfect sense in this sort of precarious situation. Yet, people may have had negative feelings for other individual Russian-speakers without totally avoiding them – perhaps quite the opposite. If they had not felt a part of the larger Russian-speaking group, their annoyance or concern with other Russian-speakers would have been much less pronounced. Roman<sup>58</sup> and others on Rembrandtplein could just as easily have ignored the Ukrainian street seller whose schizophrenia became debilitating, just as they ignored the insane Dutchman who sometimes wandered into the square to yell obscenities at them. Instead, they complained about the street seller and then tried to help him until he gave up selling art altogether.

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<sup>58</sup> At one point, Roman even voiced his concern with my lack of “American” friends; he asked me why I did not socialize with other Americans or do “American” things as he did with other Russian-speakers. In fact, I did socialize with “American” friends, but definitely not as often as Roman because I was researching Russian-speakers and there seemed to be fewer U.S. citizens permanently residing in the Netherlands than Eastern Europeans. In addition, although Dutch people certainly did not immediately open their homes to me because I lacked fluency in the Dutch language (even though they spoke English very well), they still considered me more “like them” in being “Western” and “modern” as opposed to Eastern European migrants who were from poorer, “less-advanced,” societies.

Another reason migrants might disclaim any connection to other migrants is that they may want to integrate into or be associated with Dutch society. Felite, Ania, Lana, and several other Russian-speaking women told me how differently they looked and felt in relation to women back home because they had learned to dress more casually and be more “open-minded” in the Netherlands. I saw this first-hand while accompanying Felite through the streets of Kaunas, Lithuania as we ran in our tennis-shoes, from store to store in preparation for her wedding while women around us walked cautiously in high heels and skirts along the seventeenth century, cobblestone streets. Felite was quite proud of her “Europeanness” in relation to these other women. She believed that Dutch, and European women in general, were much more informal and practical in their attire.<sup>59</sup> Felite thought that Lithuanian ideas about femininity were different from European, with more emphasis on gender differentiation and separate roles than in the Netherlands.

Another example of a Russian-speaker who saw “Dutch culture” as superior to “Russian culture” and claimed not to socialize with other Russian-speakers is the manager of the Russian Orthodox Church near Rembrandtplein. Pasha took pride in his ability to make the Russian-Orthodox church parishioners act appropriately “Dutch.” However, Pasha’s story illustrates the complexity and imperfection of a long-term, former-Soviet’s relationship to Dutchness.

I met Pasha at the church through my friend Vanya while Pasha chastised him for talking too loudly at inopportune moments. Vanya’s main goal in attending services was to meet other Russian-speakers and he was a gregarious character who often hung out on

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<sup>59</sup> I did not altogether agree with Felite on this point. While Dutch women and men were often informally dressed in NGO’s I worked with or while they were relaxing at street cafés (I was openly criticized the first day I visited one organization because I was told that the suit I was wearing made me look like a tour guide, not a researcher), there were plenty of wealthy, high-heeled European women walking around Amsterdam’s fashion districts. Felite did not often leave Amsterdam’s tourist districts. Lithuanian ideas about femininity certainly differ from Dutch ideas, however.

Rembrandtplein.<sup>60</sup> Although Pasha knew I was Vanya's friend, he nonetheless decided that as an American academic, there was some hope for my salvation and he invited me to his home one day. He also advised me to avoid Vanya in the future because "he talks too much about people" and spent too much time on the street.

I was surprised when Pasha told me he was only thirty-two years old. His one sightless eye (childhood accident), dark clothes, and serious demeanor made him seem quite a bit older. He spoke with relish about his ability to handle unruly crowds at the Orthodox Church – knowing just how to deal with the different groups of church attendees, from less rowdy Dutchman to Russians who "need a strong hand." He described how he forced "real criminals" to monitor one another's actions in the church so that candle funds were not stolen and quiet reigned. He said that Russian and Georgian churches could sometimes be loud or drunken places. However, he believed that it was necessary to maintain peace in his small church because "this is Holland." Thus, in a "civilized" country, unruly Russian behavior was unacceptable. He acknowledged that his strict attitude had alienated many other Russian-speakers but he consoled himself that the church priest supported him.

Pasha's passionate concern with maintaining order in the church cannot be divided from the problems he faced in the rest of his life. Pasha's did not know whether his wife was planning to move back to the Netherlands after she finished her second graduate degree in the United States and he was worried that she was reconsidering their marriage because she had been too young (twenty-four) when they married. In addition, Pasha was pessimistic about ever becoming a successful musician in the Netherlands after nine years of performing his keyboard in clubs there. His work and church duties also kept him more than occupied as he rose to begin work at 4:30am every day. Perhaps

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<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, Vanya was also an extremely educated and talented person. He had been a star athlete in Southern Russia, an actor, an artist, and was working as an architect for a legal temporary agency.

because he felt resentment from some of the other Russian-speakers and wanted to keep up his English language-skills, Pasha's best friend in Amsterdam was an American artist who spoke no Russian. Yet, even with Pasha's worries about proper behavior and his personal crises, he still worked very hard, unremunerated, for a Russian cultural and spiritual institution. Pasha's claims of being different from other Russian-speakers did not mean that he was not still utterly connected to them through his spiritual and community commitments.

### Growing Anti-Migrant Policies and Attitudes

Whether or not some Russian-speakers would admit to knowing other Russian-speakers, there were still quite a number of "Russian" community developments during the time that I was conducting my research. There were new Russian stores, discos, magazines, online communities, and cultural organizations. One of the main reasons for this growing interest in visible forms of Russian-community building was that Dutch people were grouping Russian-speakers and migrants together in ways that had substantial detrimental affects on their lives in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Tightening migration laws and controls were creating a less hospitable environment for the formerly popular temporary migration patterns of Eastern Europeans. At the end of my research period, migrants were either remaining longer in the Netherlands than they intended or beginning to migrate to other countries, such as England or Spain, which provided better short-term work possibilities. Changing Dutch attitudes toward migrants were also heightening social stigmatization and rejection of migrant communities, causing them to bond even closer together.

In a recent article, Han Entzinger, a pioneering migration scholar and past consultant to the Dutch and EU governments, asks:

Why is it that a country [the Netherlands] that had institutionalized the acceptance of difference and that was reputed for its tolerance could shift so quickly to what is perceived as coercive and assimilationist policy? (Entzinger 2006: 121).

His answer to this question is that the Netherlands' history of "pillarization," first among religious groups and then later among migrants from Turkey and Morocco, meant that different ethnic groups were encouraged to form separate institutions and preserve their languages and "cultures." The general population assumed these migrants would then leave after their short-term labor contracts ended or integrate into society like the former Dutch colonial Guineans, Indonesians, and Moluccans. Entzinger says that, "what had been intended as a respectful acknowledgement of cultural difference ended in cultural 'ghettoization' in densely populated, somewhat neglected, and relatively unsafe urban neighborhoods" (Entzinger 2006: 136). The Dutch social welfare system sought to improve migrants' lives through unemployment benefits and housing but, in turn, further "trapped many migrants in a quasi-underclass position" since their "low employment and educational levels" created dependencies upon these marginal benefits (Entzinger 2006: 140).

Unfortunately, like the Dutch family described in chapter one, many formerly liberal Dutch were becoming quite reactionary about migrants "abusing" their social services and disregarding Dutch values after 2002. Entzinger links this sudden change in attitude to post-September 11 fears about terrorism and militant Muslims, which "led to the paradox that migrants who initially had been encouraged to preserve their own identity were now blamed for insufficiently identifying with Dutch culture" (Entzinger 2006: 132). Rather than attempting to understand why migrant groups had higher unemployment rates and lower education levels, policies were undertaken to force migrants to learn the Dutch language and culture in order to remain in the Netherlands. The Dutch government began to require migrants – no matter how long they had resided in the Netherlands – to pass elaborate and expensive Dutch language and cultural tests in order to obtain or renew residency permits (BBC 12/22/05).

These migration fears represent an identity crisis in the Netherlands due in part to the expanding and integrating European Union as well as worries about terrorism and

out-of-control migration. Unlike the United States and Canada, many European countries' definitions of "nation" and "citizenship" continue to be linked to a single ethnicity and cultural identity (Entzinger 2006: 138-140). This becomes a problem when migrants and other minority groups assert their right to have multiple identities and citizenships, challenging a cohesive, single nationality/cultural idea of "self." In addition, Entzinger notes that, "apparently European societies feel a need to reaffirm from time to time who they are and where they stand" (ibid.).

Sociologist Anna Korteweg's study of Dutch media reports about the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh's murder by a second generation Moroccan immigrant, supports this idea of Dutch national insecurity. She argues that language used in newspaper articles, government research, and policy literature show a growing fear of the "disintegration of Dutch society under the weight of increasing numbers of immigrant 'others'" (ibid.: 157). Korteweg argues that when the government and media called for more "cultural integration" of migrants after September 11 and Van Gogh's murder, they actually meant "assimilation" in the form of "secularization and acceptance of gender equality" (Commissie Blok 2004, Dagevos 2001, Favell 2001, and SCP 2004 in Korteweg 2005: 149). In these texts and government policies, even migrants who have dual citizenship, are products of Dutch society (as Van Gogh's murderer), and speak Dutch are not considered truly "Dutch" (i.e. "modern") if they are religious or do not advocate for the same sort of "gender equality" as the Dutch (ibid.: 159). This "gender equality" includes equal rights, equal opportunities, and a lack of gender discrimination in society. However, Korteweg notes that "contrary to popular belief, Dutch culture is marked by a traditional gender regime in which women continue to be primarily responsible for home and hearth and men for breadwinning" (ibid.: 160-161). She concludes that this Dutch effort to remake migrants into an idealization of themselves is in truth about "(re)establishing the ethnic basis of the Dutch nation-state, one that is defined via particular gender and religious practices" (ibid., parentheses in original).

Jan Rath, a leading Dutch migration scholar and anthropologist, describes even deeper roots to the Netherlands' integrationist/assimilationist policies and attitudes. Rath links contemporary Dutch social science scholarship and government policies toward ethnic groups to that of earlier "anti-social family" (*onmaatschappelijke gezinnen*) discourses and policies (1999: 153). Beginning at the turn of the century and the height of the industrial revolution, progressive scholars, Christian charities, and government officials sought to improve society and individuals' lives by enacting a "civilizing offensive" (*beschavingsoffensief*) (ibid.: 153-4). They targeted socially "deviant" families at the lower levels of society with education programs, social services, and even psychological help. These efforts at social improvement were based upon a middle-class Dutch ideal and were inherently meant to reinforce "the socio-cultural hegemony of the middle class, sanctioned by the state" (ibid.: 155). By 1950, rehabilitation efforts became so institutionalized that whole departments of universities were devoted to the study of these families and "housing schools" separated out the poorest or most desperate families for education on good work ethics, domestic work, morals, and their proper place in the social hierarchy (ibid.: 157-158). Significantly, lower class women's and men's education differed in focus – women were taught domestic skills and men were taught work skills. Academics and government officials admitted that upper classes could contain "deviant" individuals, such as artists or inventors, but these people were not considered as detrimental to society as "deviants" in the lower classes who "were socially diseased and threatened to affect the stability of the whole society" (ibid.). By the 1960s, many of these programs for anti-social families were disbanded and anti-social families were viewed more sympathetically as products of their "politico-economic context" (ibid.: 158).

However, in this same period, in the middle of the twentieth century, progressive activists and bureaucrats turned their civilizing efforts away from anti-social families to focus on migrant groups arriving from the Netherlands' former colonies and guest

workers from Mediterranean countries. Rath describes the Dutch government's efforts in the 1950s to house Indonesians in hostels away from the rest of society where they could be "instructed in the Dutch style of housekeeping, bringing up children, budgeting, cooking, dress, language, home furnishing and so on" in the same way that anti-social families were rehabilitated (ibid: 160). Groups of guest workers from Spain and Italy in the 1960s, and the Turks and Moroccans after them, were equally considered a threat to Dutch society and given special social services and attention in order to better integrate them. However, because of assumptions about the temporary nature of these migrants' stay in the Netherlands, authorities refrained from outright condemnation of migrants as they had with the anti-social families (ibid.: 163). In the 1970s and 1980s, programs in schools and community centers promoted migrants' home languages and cultures but "this basically served to confirm their exclusion from the Dutch mainstream" (ibid.: 163).

Yet, as with the anti-social family phenomenon, only the lower class migrants were presumed to create "great tensions" in society (ibid.: 162). For instance, Rath describes how upper and middle class Japanese migrants in Amstelveen, a suburb of Amsterdam, have been welcomed even though they

are concentrated in a number of apartment blocks, send their children to Japanese schools, spend their free time in Japanese clubs, have little proficiency in the Dutch language, and do not show a great interest in learning the language or interacting with the Dutch (ibid.: 162).

During my research period in the Netherlands, I also heard few critiques of such well-off migrants as this group of Japanese, but many Dutch people would complain (in English, to me) about Moroccans' and Turks' lack of respect for their language and culture.

Like Entzinger (2006) and Korteweg (2006), Rath links these efforts to pinpoint and eradicate lower class deviant behavior with the construction of national identity in the Netherlands. He argues that "progressive" efforts to help these "backward people with a lifestyle of an earlier pre-industrial period" only exclude them from Dutch society (ibid.: 166). Although Rath says that Dutch people see these deviant groups as only



culturally problematic and thus treatable, the identification of them as “other” is similar to “racialization” in United States and the United Kingdom where a unified identity is created through condemnation of nonconformity (ibid.). Similarly to Korteweg (2006), Rath shows how particular gender constructions are employed in this creation of national identity and “civilizing” missions, as the Dutch government has taught both anti-social families and migrants proper women’s and men’s proper roles in Dutch society through their Dutch culture programs.

Many lower class migrants in the Netherlands – such as Van Gogh’s murderer described above – may act more rebelliously or “deviantly” than they might otherwise be inclined as a reaction to these “civilizing” efforts and exclusionary discourses. Pedagogy and child development scholars Yvonne Leeman and Trees Pels state that in their research on three schools in Amsterdam, Turkish and Moroccan youths “report feeling compelled to choose sides in a way that might endanger their integration into Dutch society” (Leeman and Pels 2006: 67). In other words, they cannot be both Moroccan and Dutch. Unlike past decades, the Netherlands no longer promotes multiculturalism, and “holding on to one’s mother tongue and identity is now viewed mainly as an obstacle to successful assimilation” (Leeman and Pels 2006: 66).

These attitudes toward migrants and increasingly restrictive migration laws in the Netherlands intensify the need for separate “Russian” migrant cultural organizations, social groups, and economic ties. Although, again, Russian-speaking migrants are not considered the “worst” (i.e. poorest, non-Christian, nonconforming) migrant groups in the Netherlands, the social and political environment has become so divisive that Russian-speakers do not often feel that they are accepted members of Dutch society. This is not only the case with temporary street sellers and illegal sex-workers but also with “respectable” long-term migrants such as Russian-speaking businessmen, social workers, academics, and media workers. Although these migrants may be affluent and educated, notions about them as Eastern Europeans and non-Dutch continue to separate them from

the dominant society. As mentioned above, even people whose first language is Dutch or who speak Dutch fluently can still be considered “newcomers” because of notions of alterity based upon racial distinctions, ethnicity, group identity, or religion. Individual migrants’ stories about their lives in the Netherlands show the confluence of personal histories and difficult social dynamics which lead them to seek out other Russian-speakers.

### Russian Networking in Reaction to Marginalization

One of the most striking findings of my research was that migrants who had learned Dutch, lived in the Netherlands for more than a decade, had Dutch citizenship, and worked with Dutch people on a daily basis were still finding themselves socially isolated within the country. The two founders of the new Russian Cultural Center in Amsterdam, a Russian cameraman for a Dutch television station, and a Belarusian college student were four such migrants with respectable jobs and residency permits, but a continuing or renewed need for Russian connectivity. This section also describes the counterintuitive language connections between former-Soviet migrants and the spaces they are beginning to carve out for themselves in Amsterdam.

This first story about Ira, one of the Russian Cultural Center’s founders, illustrates the contradiction of a long-term migrant’s social respectability in Dutch society and his continuing experience of social alienation. Ira’s story also shows the social cleavages among Russian-speakers which are overcome in the face of greater Dutch exclusion.

Ira’s respectability was immediately evident when he took me to an upper-middle class country club for our interview while his thirteen-year-old daughter was attending a tennis lesson. In our conversation, Ira often emphasized his high status. In fact, Ira’s search for social acceptance as a successful businessman was the reason he had begun Amsterdam’s Russian Cultural Center that year. He was tired of being treated in the Netherlands as a “stupid foreigner” rather than as an educated, twelve-year resident of the

country. He told me that his daughter spoke many languages and was fitting into life quite well as a “Dutch girl” but that his own difficulties had spurred him to form the Russian Cultural website and organization in order to help others from the former Soviet Union. Ira did not believe that all former-Soviets were worthy of help, however. He disapproved of my socializing with Russians on Rembrandtplein, saying that they were of a different “sort.” He told me that his friends might take walks outside on the weekends, but they would never be found just “hanging out.”

I had originally met Ira at a Russian-themed art show in one of Amsterdam’s luxurious Golden Age mansions on Prinsengracht, where he and a friend, who admitted that he was unemployed, were wearing nice suits like the rest of the Dutch crowd. Nonetheless, Ira, his friend, and the very small group of actual Russian-speakers at the show stood at the edge of the party in the back of the garden, looking nervous, and in awe of the beautiful gardens and architecture. The other Russian-speakers Ira was standing with were not wearing suits and one woman was even dressed in quite youthful, bohemian jeans and shirt. She spoke loudly in Russian, took pictures of a famous Dutch author with her glittery gold camera, hung an ornament on one of the trees, and even smoked a pipe of hash in full sight of the crowd.<sup>61</sup> Yet, this seeming free-spirit was Ira’s co-organizer of the Russian Cultural Center. Whether or not Ira truly avoided less “respectable” Russians, he certainly seemed more at ease around an odd assortment of Russian-speakers as opposed to wealthy Dutch businessmen, politicians, and authors.

Ira’s co-organizer, Nina, was another long-term migrant in the Netherlands who was tired of feeling alienated in Dutch society and was promoting Russian artists and musicians in Amsterdam. She admitted to me later that she had known how formally people would be dressed at the art show but that she had purposely acted much younger

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<sup>61</sup> Marijuana is legal to own but not to sell in large quantities in the Netherlands. However, it is still considered a “drug” and is generally not suitable for public display.

and crazier in order to rebel against the crowd. My experiences with Nina showed me again how migrants, no matter how “integrated” into Dutch society, with official citizenship and Dutch jobs, are connected to other Russian-speakers and Eastern Europeans from entirely different backgrounds. Yet, these connections to other Eastern Europeans are not without their problems and Nina moved selectively between migrant and Dutch cultural milieus.

At our interview near her work in a gentrifying part of Amsterdam, Nina was difficult to recognize. Gone were the student jeans and masculine shirt, replaced by a very upper-class Dutch suit and cheaper but stylish black plastic raincoat. As I was locking up my bike to a car rail outside of the cafe, the Georgian artist Alex and another familiar-looking woman walked by. Evidently, Nina had been seeing people she knew up and down the street all day and had even glimpsed these two a couple of times already. She knew the woman very well and had seen Alex before so she felt obliged to ask them to sit down with us. When he saw me with Nina, Alex exclaimed that I must know every single Russian-speaker in the Netherlands. While we all chatted, I learned that Nina had arrived in the Netherlands at the age of twenty-five and that she had at first felt quite isolated but decided to stay because she liked the city and the people she was beginning to know. She was passionate about promoting Russian artists in the Netherlands. Contrary to popular assumptions about Eastern European migrants, economic considerations were not a part of her decision to stay. I later learned that she had left Moscow not only to see the world but also because of a difficult family situation with alcoholic parents and a heroin-addicted sister.

The next time I met up with Nina, our conversation was more relaxed without Alex’s lively but dominating presence. I learned even more about the ways that Nina promoted – and became frustrated with – Russian and Eastern European networking. Like Ira, Nina lives in a very respectable part of Amsterdam, near the former Olympic stadium. All of the buildings in this area are art-deco 1920s and 1930s creations with

grey stone, wooden doors, and copious amounts of decoration. I sat down with her in her living room where I could see some small paintings on either side of the fireplace. The furniture was modern but the room looked a little bare. Nina explained that she and her husband were divorcing and most of her belongings were packed in suitcases for whenever she suddenly had to leave. This made it difficult to find the pictures she wanted to show me.

We talked a little about the work I was doing and she told me how some Russian DJ's were interested in meeting me because they had heard about me through others in the Russian-speaking community. I found this slightly disconcerting but she explained that Russian people in the Netherlands form a small village, scattered as they are through the city, and that they like to gossip. She said that "at home" in Moscow, people would never brazenly ask her such personal questions, such as who she was dating, as they do in Amsterdam. She told me that people should wait for others to give them information about themselves and hope for an equal exchange of confidences rather than simply digging into each other's lives. This worry about gossip was making her wary about dating another Russian in the Netherlands.

She promised to take me to the radio station to meet the DJs and we listened to some bands she had been trying to promote from Russia – one called "Volga" which was excellent but which was not having much success in the Netherlands. She explained to me that Dutch people did not want to take risks with anyone they were not certain would be popular or for whom they had to pay transportation, promotion, and concert costs. The only reason that Amnesty International had brought the band, "Babsley," from Russia for a benefit was because one band member had a Dutch boyfriend, the band members were willing to drive there on their own, and they agreed to play for little money.

We ended inevitably on the topic of her husband whom she was trying to get out of her house. She had not been cooking or cleaning in order to persuade him to leave.

They had a small, one-bedroom apartment with one bed so it was understandable that life was hard for her at that moment. Nina and her husband had met when she first came to the Netherlands and she had been illegal. While she lived with him, she did not leave the house much because she lacked permits to attend school or work. Instead, she cooked, cleaned, and performed all of the domestic duties. Her husband was accustomed to women cleaning and cooking for him because that was how he had been raised in the Bosnian countryside, where domestic labor was women's work. Nina's husband had agreed that Nina would have to give up some domestic duties once she gained Dutch citizenship through their marriage because she wanted to attend university and build a career in counseling. However, when she began school, he would yell at her if she did not prepare dinner for him in the evenings. She decided to separate from him. Nina's husband had tried at this late date to ingratiate himself with her by preparing food for them and performing other domestic duties but she was not impressed, and this was evident when he arrived home while I was there.

Unlike Nina, her husband had not found, and was not hopeful about finding, a community or place for himself in the Netherlands. He was a refugee from Yugoslavia and felt resentful about his situation in the Netherlands and negative about his prospects. He had had a great life in Bosnia and did not like the Netherlands even after living there for several years. Nina's more successful adaptation to life in the Netherlands showed her strength, perseverance, adventurous spirit, and also her very different relationship to the country. Nina's husband had been forced to migrate, which most certainly affected his ability to have a positive mindset about adapting to a different cultural milieu.

Nina's and her husband's migration story illustrates the complexity of living as an Eastern European migrant in the Netherlands. Nina took advantage of certain aspects of Dutch society and found community and assistance among others from Eastern Europe. She was at first thankful for her Bosnian husband's support when she was new and illegal to the Netherlands. Yet, she eventually rejected his treatment of her as a woman and a

wife, separating from him when he challenged her educational and career goals. However, like Ira, Nina again became interested in fostering connections with Russian-speaking artists and musicians in Moscow and in the Netherlands when total integration into Dutch society did not seem possible or appealing. Ira and Nina were successful in developing the Russian Cultural Center even more after my time in the Netherlands,<sup>62</sup> hosting music festivals, art shows, and Russian/Dutch language courses. The center's popularity may be a sign of the decreasing number of temporary migrations between the former Soviet Union and the Netherlands due to increasing migration controls on cross-border travel and negative attitudes toward migrants, overall.

Close to the end of my research period in the Netherlands, Nina introduced me to the DJ friend who had heard about my research through other Russian-speakers and wanted me to interview him. Yan's story is similarly one of admiration for Dutch society as well as nostalgia for Russia. Yan and his family were discriminated against in Russia as Jews and yet he still helped Nina create a Russian community in the Netherlands.

Yan had lived in the Netherlands for several years, gained Dutch citizenship and worked as a cameraman for a local television station. Nonetheless, he felt a great love and nostalgia for the Russia he had left, ten years before, and he hoped to keep its memory alive by participating in Russian migrant and street cultures. He hosted a radio show called "Nobody's Perfect" once a week on a pirate radio station in one of Amsterdam's less affluent neighborhoods. He would mix Russian balalaika ballads with popular Russian punk music, classical music, and street performances he had taped. In between the songs, he would host call-in contests in Russian and in English about Russian trivia in order to award listeners with Russian music compact disks. His fans could hear his show online while they were at work and occasionally on the radio when

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<sup>62</sup> Although most of the pictures, links, and festival information on their website, [www.cultureelcentrum.nl](http://www.cultureelcentrum.nl), are from 2005 or earlier, Nina was still promoting the center by email in April, 2007.

the group that ran the station had enough funds to use the transmitter. The station was truly “pirate” in that it was completely hidden in a rundown building behind steel doors which could be barricaded from the inside in the event of a police action.

For Yan, this station and its counter-cultural politics represented Amsterdam’s possibilities for freedom as well its exclusionary dominant culture.<sup>63</sup> A decade before, he had migrated from Saint Petersburg to Israel with his wife and daughter. Yet, Israel had never felt like home to him and he became stressed from the constant militarization and bombings. He met another Russian woman and took a tour of Europe with her. They preferred the Netherlands to any of the countries they visited and decided to settle there. However, after years in Amsterdam, Yan’s life had come full circle; he was returning to his Russian roots in his radio show and participating in a Russian social organization (“Salon USSR”). He made it clear to me that some other Russian-speakers would not consider him “Russian” because of his Jewish heritage but that did not seem to hinder his, or their, efforts at creating “Russian” spaces together in the Netherlands. Again, this inclusion in Amsterdam’s networks of Russian-speakers of people who would most probably be excluded from dominant social groups in Russia or other parts of the former Soviet Union, is an unequivocal sign of the importance of Russian-speaking networking in the Netherlands. Exclusion from dominant Dutch society would certainly cause people to bond together around a shared language, Soviet cultural heritage, and negative or limited views of them as a group apart.

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<sup>63</sup> Police and other government officials ignored young people’s rebellion against dominant society in the form of pirate radio stations, “squatting” in abandoned buildings, and drugs as long as they were not a nuisance to the population as a whole. However, see chapter five for a discussion of assumptions about “tolerance” in the Netherlands, popularly held values, and increasingly conservative politics. As previously discussed, many migrants from Eastern Europe and elsewhere were drawn to the Netherlands because of its reputation as “free.” This does not mean that they were necessarily drug-addicts or heavy party-goers. Yan, for instance, was well-educated but harbored a romance with street culture.



Oksana's migration story provides another example of a migrant who has "respectable" status and is fairly adapted to life in the Netherlands but still yearns for connections with other Russian-speakers. This was the case even though Oksana had formed deep Dutch relationships as well as gained Dutch language fluency. Oksana would have been able to "integrate" into Dutch society much more easily than other migrants because of these connections and language skills.

Oksana had lived for three years in a small college town on the German border when I met her at a wedding in the Russian Orthodox Church near Rembrandtplein. Originally from Belarus, she arrived in the country to work as a nanny through the aid of a Belarusian *au pair* agency. She had heard of women being "sold into slavery" through faux employment agencies in Eastern Europe so she made sure that it was legitimate by interviewing a woman who had already used the same agency and had returned to Belarus. Although she was half "Russian," Oksana did not feel discriminated against in Belarus since most people were a mix and predominantly spoke Russian, despite the government's efforts to institutionalize the Belarusian language after the break-up of the Soviet Union. She simply sought to do something different with her life after realizing that she did not want to teach geography with the degree she had just received from a Belarusian university. Because she had a close relationship with her mother and sister, Oksana planned to move somewhere within Europe, rather than to the United States or elsewhere farther away. She still visited her family in Belarus at least once a year.

Because Oksana knew some English, she was sent to the Netherlands with two other women as an experiment for the program. Otherwise, most of the *au pairs* were sent to Germany and France. Oksana believed that the program would never grow very large in the Netherlands because it was becoming increasingly difficult for migrant workers to receive visas. Oksana and the other two *au pairs* were sent to families across the country from one another but they continued to keep in close contact and to see each other in Amsterdam whenever possible. They had all remained in the Netherlands after

their year-long contract as *au pairs*. Oksana was enrolled in a technical school and another of the three had married a Russian with Dutch citizenship.

Oksana was lucky to be placed as an *au pair* in such a supportive Dutch family. Oksana had reaped many rewards from the experience even though the work could be difficult when she was on call twenty-four hours a day in an isolated house. Her family sponsored her application to attend Dutch college and they still spent a good portion of time together. For instance, the day before I visited Oksana, she had been babysitting the children. Oksana had also learned English and some Dutch while living with the family. The street sellers and other illegal migrants I met in Amsterdam never had as many opportunities as Oksana to experience life in the Netherlands with a Dutch family and learn the language organically. Oksana came to love her family and decided to remain in the small town near their home when she attended school.

However, because she was so far away from her own family, Oksana said that she had more incentive to create a family for herself with Dutch and other foreign friends. She did not think it was difficult to form relationships with Dutch people, and she tried to use her improving Dutch language skills and to “fit in.” However, she did not want me to leave at the end of our day together because she said that so few of her (Russian-speaking) friends from Amsterdam would visit her, a three hour train ride away, in the countryside. She hoped that she could visit me in Amsterdam some day soon.

Oksana’s story shows the possibilities and problems of depending upon Dutch sponsorship in the Netherlands. On the one hand, Oksana was better able to learn Dutch, obtain legal residency and student visas, and to learn ways of “fitting in” Dutch society through her year working with a Dutch family. On the other hand, Oksana’s life could have been very different if she had not been so lucky in finding an honest employment agency and kind (if demanding) family. Because she was in the countryside, it might have been much harder for her to find help if something had gone wrong with her employment and living situation.

In my collaboration with Red Thread, I saw that Russian-speaking sex-workers who work in the countryside could not easily be helped because of local corruption and NGO limitations, even though their politicized victimhood made them targets of governmental and NGO attention. Ania, the Lithuanian street seller and restaurant waitress who had come to the Netherlands as an *au pair*, had fallen into an intolerable situation, only days after she arrived. As described in chapter two, Ania's only recourse was to find a succession of Russian-speaking migrants who would help her find housing and a job. Oksana acknowledged that she had not known very much English when she arrived in the Netherlands and she did not have Ania's Russian community from which to obtain aid. However, even without needing emergency help, Oksana expressed her dependence upon her Russian-speaking friends in the Netherlands.

Oksana, Yan, Ira, and Nina are all creating or participating in a Russian-speaking community composed of migrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds: from Uzbek grocers to Lithuanian street sellers. Many of these migrants are from countries which were dominated by Russia for decades if not centuries in the form of Soviet and Imperial rule. The end of the Soviet Union has meant a great dismantling and rejection of Russian-Soviet culture through discrimination of Russian ethnic minority populations in the former-Soviet states, renamed streets and cities, broken statues, and laws to require native language knowledge in schools and state functions. Yet, even migrants such as the Moskva store owner could still be heard using the Russian language with other former-Soviets around the Netherlands. Migrants would sometimes pull me aside to complain about having to speak Russian in order to communicate in migrant social spheres or about how they did not like being called "Russian" or "Eastern European" by Dutch people just because they were from the former-Soviet Union. From the very beginning of my research, I saw several Lithuanians, Moldovans, and Georgians resuscitating their Russian language skills in order to relate to other Russian-speakers in Amsterdam. They did this even though they would never have spoken much Russian at home and may have

harbored ill-will toward Russians. For instance, Felite had always disliked Russian-language courses in school, fifteen years before in her highly nationalistic town of Kaunas, Lithuania but she relearned the language in order to socialize and work with Ukrainians, Russians, and Georgians on and off of Rembrandtplein. Several other migrants who attended the Russian Orthodox Church or social activities on Rembrandtplein similarly spoke Russian, with varying degrees of fluency.

Linguistic anthropologist Nancy Bonvillain says that many “lower class” groups are deeply connected to one another and that “because of the strength of interpersonal bonds and community pressure in close-knit networks, members may maintain distinctive forms of speech that may actually be severely stigmatized by the society as a whole” (Bonvillain 2000: 136; see also Romaine 2000: 85). Most Russian-speakers in the Netherlands would deny belonging to the “lower class” since they often have high levels of education and, in some cases, high incomes. However, in this dissertation, I have argued that they belong to a marginalized group in the Netherlands as *migrants* from Eastern Europe. Furthermore, I argue that they are much more interconnected than many of them might admit.

I found it much easier to make contact with Russian-speaking migrants than with Dutch people because the Russian language, Soviet cultural knowledge, and outsider status in the Netherlands bonded us together. I will never forget the strange figure of an Armenian bicyclist who stopped by the street artists one day to excitedly speak to us in very broken Russian. This man had recognized Pyeter from somewhere and was thrilled to meet him and other Russian speakers on the square. He attempted a conversation about his new high tech bicycle and camera, telling us the prices of each. Then he asked a passerby to take our picture and promised to send us copies via e-mail. I never heard from this fellow again but he definitely gave me the impression that he had found a piece of home for a minute. His Russian language efforts suggest the importance of making

connections with fellow former-Soviets or Eastern Europeans, despite coexisting cultural, ethnic, class, and educational animosities.

In this context, Russian-speakers' relationships were certainly quite close-knit and the Russian language was not dying out among longer-term migrants. Several migrants learned Dutch, especially if they obtained some education in the Netherlands, but many continued to use only English with Dutch people because they believed it to be a more international language. Migrants such as several artists and architects I knew, who had lived for many years in Amsterdam, did not know if they would permanently settle in the Netherlands and did not want to bother to learn the language. One well-respected artist told me that he hoped to move to San Francisco or Spain someday because there was only "so high you could get as a foreigner, or Dutch person, for that matter," in the Netherlands.

Whether or not migrants imagined themselves settling forever in the Netherlands, Russian-centered spaces in Amsterdam were becoming more prevalent and more popular during my research period than during Kopnina's research in the late 1990s. By the early 2000s, the Russian restaurant Kopnina and other Russians had frequented, had closed, but many new businesses and organizations had appeared in different parts of Amsterdam and the Netherlands as a whole. There were two Russian grocery stores in the Amsterdam area and one in Groningen, a bi-weekly Russian-Dutch magazine (published in Dutch and in Russian),<sup>64</sup> Russian-themed coffeeshops, a Russian cultural center, several Russian-Dutch online communities, periodic Russian disco events, Russian art

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<sup>64</sup> The magazine's full name is, "RUS: ВИЗА, The Magazine of Russian-Speaking BeNeLux," which is the free version of the monthly magazine, "RUS, The Magazine of the Russian-Speaking Intelligentsia." Both titles were in English although half of the free RUS magazine was Dutch language classified ads, articles, and Russian language lessons for Dutchmen to use when corresponding with potential Russian spouses. The RUS magazine for "intelligentsia" was entirely in Russian but was published alongside a Dutch version called, "RU, Het Tijdschrift Over Alles Wat Russisch Is." All of these versions were published by RUS Media, Amersfoort, The Netherlands. I repeatedly attempted to interview RUS editors or managers, with no success.

shows, Russian-Orthodox religious events and popular Russian-Dutch holiday celebrations (ex. a Russian “Queen’s Day” party). These Russian-speaking sites were a source of positive connectivity between Russian-speakers, for rebellion against exclusionary Dutch society, for social control, and for promotion of Russian (or former Soviet) culture.

As I have often recounted, many of the Russian-speakers I originally met in the Netherlands were employed or socialized on Rembrandtplein or at the nearby Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, for the purposes of this argument about the significance of networking among Russian-speakers, I must reiterate the importance of the square by the time I was in the Netherlands. Several Dutch and Russian social scientists immediately referred to it when we discussed my research. One of the Russian anthropologists, like Ira, made a distinction between people who would hang out on the square and those who would stay away from such lower-class (in Dutch views) public visibility. Yet, an African missionary’s visit to Rembrandtplein shows how well-known the square was among people who were interested in Russian-speakers, the variety of people to be found on the square, as well as the Russian-speaking group’s own exclusionary attitudes. One day, a well-dressed man approached Roman with Russian-language pamphlets and attempted to chat with him in Russian. Roman rebuffed him but the man told others on the square that he loved the Russian language and just wanted to give the group something to read. A classical violinist from Saint Petersburg and a Ukrainian thief accepted some of the pamphlets while other migrants looked away or smirked – exhibiting racist views against Africans, shock that a “black man” spoke Russian, or a dislike of missionary activities. However rudely he was received, it is still significant that the missionary knew to speak Russian to the group on Rembrandtplein rather than Dutch, English, or even some other European language.

In many conversations with Dutch people, including anthropologists of Dutch society in the Netherlands, I found that Russians and other foreigners used public space

in different ways than the Dutch. Younger Dutch people may eat a picnic lunch or sunbathe on the grass in Vondelpark but, according to several Dutch friends, only homeless people or “hippies” spend large amounts of time on park benches with friends. People with financial means would sit in a café or a private home. My experiences in Russia and with many Russian migrants, however, showed me that people often spent time together in public spaces such as Rembrandtplein in order to socialize because they did not have much space at home in which to do this, they did not have extra funds for beer or coffee, they enjoyed the possibility of meeting other Russian-speakers, and they simply liked to experience the outdoors after a long and dreary winter.

Because these Russian-speakers were “migrants” and by definition “not Dutch,” they attracted police attention and popular disdain while congregating in public spaces such as Rembrandtplein. Sociologists Karien Dekker and Gideon Bolt describe Dutch residents in two lower class neighborhoods in Utrecht and Rotterdam as aggrieved by migrant youths hanging out on their streets (2005: 2463). They say that in general, “many native Dutch residents resent the presence in their neighbourhood of a large proportion of ethnic minorities, since they are held responsible for the neighbourhood’s deterioration” (Dekker and Bolt 2005: 2463). However, other, long-term migrants such as Ira and the Russian anthropologist might condemn these migrants’ activities on the street even more than “native Dutch” people because of their own sensitivity to social mores and attempts to blend into society. Dekker and Bolt found that ethnic and racial minorities in the neighborhoods they studied were less accepting of “deviant behaviour” than native Dutch respondents because “social control in several ethnic groups is stricter than among the native Dutch” (ibid.). Again, in my experience, this social control or at least sensitivity concerning other migrants’ actions is less about inherent cultural rules and more about migrants’ social insecurities.

The Russian Orthodox Church was also a main hub of Russian spirituality, socializing and networking despite Pasha’s attempts at enforcing “Dutch” behavior in the

church and the assumption of inalienable differences between groups of Russian-speakers. An acquaintance of mine would ask people in the moments between the services if anyone needed a package taken to Saint Petersburg where he traveled several times a month to see his family and sell used cars from elsewhere in Europe. After church services, others would spend hours in the tiny tearoom and decrepit balcony, chatting about life in the Netherlands and Russian politics. Groups would then move on from the church to one of the city's nicer cafés, to a park, or to someone's home to continue their socializing. One of the most striking moments in my research was the opening ceremonies of the Orthodox Easter celebrations. This event brought into focus just how popular Russian-cultural events are becoming as well as how deeply interconnected Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands were, even if they claimed otherwise.

In 2003, Roman and Ania invited me to celebrate Orthodox Easter with them at the Church, even though they had scorned my interest in attending church months before because of the types of people I would meet there. They told me that they still wanted to uphold Orthodox Easter traditions by walking around the church and performing rituals the night before Easter Sunday. We met down the street from the church in front of my apartment and immediately Roman greeted a couple of Russian-speakers he knew who were also attending the services. Then, in front of the church, Roman introduced me to Vanya's sister.

Vanya had told me that he lived with his sister, who sponsored his residency permit with her own Dutch citizenship which she received through a former Dutch-citizen spouse. In exchange for her aid, he had bought her a new stove, dishwasher, and refrigerator for her apartment. I knew that my friend Juliana had also been acquainted with Vanya and his sister, but when Juliana informed me of this, it was in the context of attempting to avoid Vanya's attention as we sat at a café on Rembrandtplein one evening. However, I never made the connection between Vanya's sister and one of the women



Juliana introduced me to in the VIP lounge of a popular discothèque during the summer I conducted preliminary research for my dissertation in the Netherlands. That woman and another in the disco were accompanied by self-identified “Mafiosi” male partners and were too “cool” and aloof (or on drugs) to take off their designer sunglasses in the darkened room and to acknowledge my presence. Vanya’s sister, Olga, was clearly less high status, powerful, or wealthy than she had appeared to be at the disco, two years before, if Vanya was buying her much needed kitchen appliances and if street sellers such as Roman knew her. Roman appeared a bit uncomfortable in introducing us all to one another, as Olga was not overly friendly. Soon after we left Olga to enter the church, Roman whispered to Ania that he thought Olga’s tight pants and low-cut shirt were more appropriate for a party than for church.

The rest of the church service that late evening was a blur of burning candles and tightly packed bodies. There were so many people attending the service and the procession on the small Medieval street outside that there were several points when gridlock reigned and no one, including the priest and his aids, could move anywhere. Because we were all holding candles for long periods of time in this crush of bodies, one woman’s hair caught on fire but was quickly extinguished, and a friend’s cuff burned. Roman joked that a group of rough-looking guys with scars on their faces and leather jackets looked Ukrainian, like himself (although Roman was quite the opposite in appearance) and a few people smelled strongly of liquor. Otherwise, the crowd was very serious, patient, and polite – repeating the Easter rituals to one another every time they saw a new face near them. After we escaped to the relative freedom of the crowded street, Roman, Ania, and I swiftly greeted almost all of our Russian-speaking acquaintances and went home to our beds in the early morning hours. This event illustrated how popular Russian community events are becoming, as well as the extraordinary webs of connections between Russian-speakers in Amsterdam.

Conclusion: Minority Communities and Dutch Society

With all of its shortcomings, the Netherlands is still a country which offers many migrants more opportunities than they would otherwise have in such places as the United States or back in their home countries. As I have argued, people do not migrate if they do not benefit somehow from the movement. For example, the artist Alex experienced both the United States' migration regime and the Netherlands,' and chose the Dutch system. In 2000, Alex had an opportunity to attend a conference in the United States and he decided to try living in Los Angeles for a few months to see if it would be better than the Netherlands. His friends in Amsterdam were always complaining about Dutch society and how the people were "ice cold," so he hoped the United States would be more open. Unfortunately, he "hated it" there. He had a "glittering picture of America" but soon realized how unfair he had been to Dutch society. He said,

I didn't know what was West of the West. And all of this unfairness and negativity that I was receiving for awhile [in Los Angeles]... it was like something was wrong with this society. The immigration system was unfair to me. I mean they got me some things but when I went to the U.S., first I had a residency permit but I had no citizenship. And I had all of this pain going through that.

In the United States, Alex said that he had problems with government corruption and suffered police cruelty. He came to believe that the system was much more illogical than the Dutch. In addition, bureaucrats kept losing his files, so he eventually returned to the Netherlands. Nevertheless, he might have stayed if there had been nothing for him to return to in Amsterdam. While he was in Los Angeles, he kept receiving e-mails from his friends, telling him that he should return to the Netherlands. A Dutch artists group found him a government subsidized studio in Amsterdam. He finally obtained a Dutch passport because it made travel easier than with a Georgian passport, and he gave up any interest in returning to the United States because of his strong disagreement with U.S. foreign policies and the war in Iraq.

When I asked him if he then wanted to become “Dutch” or integrate more into society, he responded:

I have a very pragmatic relationship with Dutch society. I live here. I’m trying not to break any laws, any rules, and... ethics. I work in my profession and that’s it. And I receive any benefits a person in this society should have. I don’t try to fall in love with them. They don’t even want it. They are happy in their houses without me. I was suggesting to people from East Europe that I see the Dutch as the landscape.

While Alex continued to feel apart from Dutch society, the country has offered him numerous forms of support now that he is a Dutch citizen. He is free to follow his whims in creating fine art, running a mural business, authoring novels, and writing opinion pieces for periodicals in Russia and elsewhere. He might not have had this freedom and social support system if he had remained in Georgia or even in Moscow where he had attempted to establish a career in journalism at another point in his life. Life for social critics, writers, and artists is not always as free in these countries as had been predicted with the fall of the Soviet Union (e.g., there is a lack of privately-owned media in Russia, today).

In addition, Russian networking and community-building is not without its own inequalities and exploitation. Nina, among many others, described Russian-speakers in Amsterdam as a “village,” in which gossip could be quite hurtful or intrusive. Just because of the possibility of others talking about her, Nina reconsidered dating a Russian man in the Netherlands. Also like a “village,” Russian groups could be exclusionary. The African missionary who spoke Russian to the migrants on Rembrandtplein was clearly not welcomed by most in the group either because of his religion or racial designation. Pasha’s efforts to enforce his notions of respectable behavior in the Church, certain migrants’ rejection of people who hung out on Rembrandtplein, and suspicions of fellow countrymen exploiting each other also show how Russian-speaking individuals and groups could be even more judgmental than outsiders might be. However, I argue

that these criticisms and fears only show in greater relief how insecure Russian-speakers are as a marginalized group in the Netherlands.

Despite the drawbacks of “village-life” for Russian-speakers in the Netherlands, the overall development of “Russian” spaces, networks, and community events is becoming even more important for them as they face growing discrimination against migrants in general in the Netherlands and deepening Dutch nationalism. Even migrants from the Baltics and other Eastern European countries who were becoming legitimate members of the European Union could be found socializing on city squares, partying in private homes or Vondelpark, attending weddings at the Russian Orthodox Church, or working with other Eastern Europeans. Kopnina says that in the late 1990s,

it can generally be said that most migrants, while denying the existence of a Russian community or their belonging to it, have a strong sense of their cultural and ethnic identity. This self-concept is developed in part as a reaction to external labeling (being identified as a migrant or as a Russian) and as a continuation of the identity that was formed back in the CIS (2005: 206).

Integration or assimilation of Russian-speaking migrants into Dutch society will certainly occur just as generations of other migrant groups have become “Dutch” in the past (Entzinger 2006: 141; see also Lucassen and Penninx 1997 and Peters 2003: 33) but the lack of a real “multicultural” national identity in the Netherlands does not lead “newcomers” to feel like a legitimate part of society. When given the option of assimilating totally or remaining completely separate, many will choose the separate identity and establish support systems among themselves. As Entzinger states, “forcing ‘them’ to become like ‘us’ in the old-fashioned assimilative way is not only counterproductive, but it may also provoke a re-ethnicization, as can be observed in the Netherlands, today” (2006: 141).

## CONCLUSION: MIGRATION AND EASTERN OTHERNESS IN EUROPE AND THE NETHERLANDS

The 2004 enlargement of the EU finally heals the rift opened up by the East-West confrontation and the Cold War (European Commission 2003).

Europe is currently undergoing a virtual orgy of self-construction, and this has generated some further anthropological reflections, although many of them are occidentalist in their relative exclusion of the formerly communist regions. It is vital at this juncture to keep in full view the artificial nature of these processes and the direct engagement of social scientists in them (Herzfeld 1997: 715).

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Europe or the Netherlands. However, it has become a newly politicized issue in these regions during the early 2000s as: 1) the European Union prepared for massive enlargement and integration; 2) post-911 terrorism and Muslim extremist violence inflamed fears about national security; and 3) there was a resulting growth in nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment. Although what is considered “Eastern” and “Western” has long shifted historically, geographically, and culturally, these concepts of difference are still employed in order to designate some people as legitimate “Europeans” (read “civilized” and “modern”) and others as “Eastern” or “Southern” (less “civilized” and more “traditional”). As I have argued throughout this dissertation, migrants in the European Union from the former-Soviet states are not considered European, especially in relation to assumptions about their poverty, their gender relations, crime, and their communist history. In this conclusion, I reflect upon the importance of studying such migrant groups as the Netherlands’ Russian-speakers in order to understand the larger processes of nation-building and social, economic, and political exclusion in Europe today. Although the Russian-speakers are not the most maligned minority group in the Netherlands, their experiences highlight the constructed nature of such notions as “Europe,” “Western,” “Dutch,” and “integration.” Whether or not migrants from such recently acceded states as Lithuania and Romania

become legitimately “Western European” in time, ideas about an Eastern “other” seem particularly entrenched in Europe.

### Eastern and Southern Expansion in the European Union

In 2004 and 2007, the European Union enlarged to encompass twelve new Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. While I was in the Netherlands in 2002 and 2003, the European Union promoted the first enlargement to the East and South through multiple media venues, including a television channel which covered news headlines in the Russian Federation (in the Russian language) as well as the rest of the European Union and accession states.

The first quote at the beginning of the chapter derives from an informational pamphlet on the changing European Union called “More Unity and More Diversity: the European Union’s Biggest Enlargement,” which was published during the time of my research in the Netherlands (European Commission 2003). I recall seeing it and numerous other E.U. informational guides on a table in one of Amsterdam’s main libraries with signs celebrating the European Union’s future growth and integration. This particular pamphlet features a photo on its cover of a crowded street in which only two figures are in focus as they are walking away from the camera. The male figure has his hand on the woman’s shoulder in order to either comfort or guide her. I interpreted the male figure as representing the current E.U. countries and the female figure as the group of newcomers it would be bringing into its fold, since the pamphlet’s aim is to convince E.U. citizens of the benefits of enlargement and the economic and social needs of the new E.U. states. The ten accession states of 2004 – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Malta, Hungary – are described as both similar to and different from the E.U. countries. The authors say that “all 10 newcomers are joining because they see their *natural* place within the EU and they share its goals of freedom, democracy and prosperity” (ibid.: 3, my emphasis). The pamphlet includes

descriptions of the new states' natural resources, industries, population, famous countrymen, and a few historical facts which connect them to the other European states. For example, the Czech Republic "was one of the 10 most industrialised states before World War II" and Slovenia's "architecture bears many traces of its links with the Habsburg Empire and with Italy" (ibid.: 16, 17). The pamphlet argues for even further collapse of East-West divides with a description of how the European Union will "offer the neighbours to the east and in the Mediterranean region increasingly close ties with the EU in return for progress towards respect for democratic values and the implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms" (ibid.: 21). Yet, the ten accession states' main responsibility, in return for receiving such generous E.U. economic aid and group identity, is to protect the rest of the European Union by securing their borders against their neighbors (ibid.: 4).

In the pamphlet, European enlargement does not actually erase the East-West border but simply moves it eastward (and southward) and intensifies the divisions between these spaces. People from non-E.U. countries are to be defended against while citizens of the new E.U. states are meant to become more economically and politically "European." Legal scholar Joanna Apap observes this contradiction in E.U. policy when she writes that

on the one hand EU external relations have focused on encouraging cooperation between the EU and its future Eastern neighbours, on the other, the logic of EU enlargement and the demands made on candidate and accession countries to adopt the Schengen criteria lead to an exclusionary situation on the EU's future border. The incorporation of Central European and the Baltic States in the EU has the marked potential of drawing new dividing lines across Europe... (2002: 326)

While the European Commission has attempted to liberalize and harmonize migration policy across the European Union in directives stemming from the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam (Apap 2002), East-West border maintenance and discourses have indeed increased. Dutch migration scholar Kees Groenendijk describes a distinct bias in

European Commission directives toward protecting state borders from illegal migration as opposed to encouraging legal migration and migration for the purpose of asylum (2004: 117-118). Even the E.U. directives meant to facilitate particular migrations, such as that of family reunification, have been revised and challenged to a point where they do very little to inform policy in such countries as the Netherlands (ibid.: 118). Thus, a Dutch and German-sponsored clause in the E.U. family reunification directive restricted the migration of children over the age of twelve because it is harder for them to “integrate” than for younger children (ibid.: 119). Yet, these countries also inserted a clause requiring spouses to be over a certain age in order to somehow avoid “forced marriages” which also impede “integration” (ibid.). The E.C. courts have since dropped these clauses from the directive based upon their infringement on family rights but the Netherlands, with several other states, has been pressuring for more directives which emphasize the importance of migrants’ “integration” or assimilation (ibid.: 121).

The Netherlands was long regarded as one of the most “tolerant” nations in Europe and even in the world and yet recent years have seen a deep conservative backlash against many of the country’s former liberal practices such as its generous social benefits and relatively open migration policies. Its increasingly anti-immigration laws, policies, and attitudes are beginning to repel migration. Many of my closest acquaintances in the Russian-speaking community in the Netherlands left the country soon after I returned to the United States in July, 2003. Roman wrote me from Lithuania that Dutch officials were checking work and residency permits for street-selling in Amsterdam and that most of the former-Soviets had disappeared from Rembrandtplein’s summer tourism scene. A few who remained were well-established migrants with legal residency in the Netherlands. Because Dutch society and migration laws were in such a state of flux while I was in the Netherlands (due to E.U. expansion and post 9/11 restrictions and fears), I could not venture a guess as to what networks would fuel future migration from Eastern Europe. However, I suspect that the number of Russian-speakers



who migrate to the Netherlands from non-European Union states will be far fewer than in the past as smaller numbers of migrants in general (legal and illegal) are arriving or remaining in the Netherlands.

As I described in chapter six, Dutch ideas about citizenship and belonging are much less “multi-cultural” than they might have been in the past. Dutch policies now stress “integration” (assimilation) as the key to improving the lives of minority groups in the Netherlands. However, these policies simply mean that migrants and other marginalized groups must choose between being Dutch or being “other” rather than inhabiting a mix of situational identities and attributes. Ethnic groups, like “deviant families” before them, have then become the site upon which Dutch society defines what it means to be Dutch (Rath 1999). In turn, gender inequality and religious affiliation have become key designators of Dutchness (Korteweg 2006). As such, Dutch ideas about Eastern Europeans’ supposedly exploitative gender relations mean that they join other groups, such as the Muslim-Dutch minority, in the “traditional” category of people who need to be enlightened or defended against in “modern” Dutch society.

### Russian-Speakers in the Netherlands

The main goal of this dissertation has been to highlight the lives of a group of migrants in Europe that has been characterized as “other” to a Western European concept of “self.” Russian-speaking migrants have been seen as victimized sex-workers and cruel Mafiosi in Dutch and European popular and scholarly writing and in migration policies. I have argued that not all Russian-speaking women in the Netherlands are former “mail-order brides” or trafficked sex-workers and not all men are connected to Eastern European organized crime syndicates. These images of crime, prostitution, victimhood, and gender exploitation serve to further distinguish “real” Europeans from their Eastern others. In fact, these discourses seem connected to European historical traditions of

“orientalizing” and racializing people from states and former colonies in the East and South.

In the Netherlands, police crackdowns on Eastern European sex-workers reassure Dutch people that Eastern Europeans cannot simply invade their country, even with E.U. enlargement. The police are sending a message to Eastern European nations to control unauthorized emigration and to Eastern European mafia groups that their sex-trafficking activities will be thwarted. Representations of Eastern “otherness” in these images of migrant mafia and trafficking victims also reinforce a threatened Dutch national “self” as a consequence of increasing E.U. integration. In the early 2000s, the Dutch were concerned about a possible loss of their language and cultural difference with the ubiquity of English-language use in Europe, the shared Euro currency (initiated in 2002), and increasing concentration of migrants in Dutch cities. The Dutch, as well as others, have resisted European-wide controls over such traditional state prerogatives as migration in E.U. legislation (Apap 2002: 320-321, 324). The Netherlands’ and France’s rejection of the new E.U. constitution in 2005 spelled the death of that document, which has yet to be rewritten or resuscitated (BBC 9/21/05, BBC 3/25/07, Mulvey 2005). One *Australian* commentator summed up this attitude by saying that “the EU is trying to draw up a common policy on immigration and asylum, but with 25 countries jealously guarding their borders and their right to choose who settles, the task is nigh impossible” (Australian 2006).

Yet, fears about uncontrolled migration after E.U. enlargement have not been justified. Poor migrants have not been swarming into Western European countries in unthinking hordes in order to steal Dutch jobs, traffic in women and drugs, or to take advantage of social benefits since the European Union’s last enlargements. Another more recent European Commission pamphlet, “20 Myths and Facts about Enlargement,” particularly disputes such worries as migrant “floods” and crime due to Eastern European nations joining the union (2006). The authors say that “labour migration from new to old

member states has been modest, rarely reaching even 1% of the active working population of the host country” and “the EU has developed police, customs and judicial cooperation to tackle terrorism, organised crime, drugs, trafficking in human beings and illegal migration” (ibid.: 6, 11). Migrants from the accession states are not overwhelming European labor markets and any crime that they bring with them is also under stricter European-wide monitoring, according to the pamphlet. Of course, the pamphlet does not critique the association of Eastern Europeans with crime or describe why it is that the Netherlands has not opened its labor market to workers from Eastern Europe while other countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, and Spain allow these new E.U. members the same freedom of movement as members of the older E.U. states (ibid.: 6).

As Sassen has argued, discussions about migration in which people are represented as “floods” not only dehumanizes these migrants – making it easier to legislate against their human rights – but also ignores the very real patterns of migration which have occurred in particular places over particular periods of time (1999). The experiences of Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands confirm Sassen’s hypotheses about migration as process. The migrants are not the poorest of those in their home countries, they come to the Netherlands for specific reasons based upon individual networks and ideas that they have about the Netherlands (not purely because the Netherlands is a rich country), and certain migrations will probably end for those whose economies improve with inclusion in the European Union (e.g. Lithuania). I have shown how these patterns of migration from the former-Soviet Union into Western Europe have constantly changed in relation to social, economic, and political conditions both at home and in the destination countries. More migrants have moved between the former-Soviet states than outside of them. Those who have migrated are often young, have a high level of education, and are mainly interested in temporary migration. Indeed, many Russian-speakers may benefit the Dutch economy with their labor.

My discussion of individual migrants' experiences suggest that even personal attributes such as perseverance, beneficial social connections, and inexpensive housing, play a part in their ability to succeed in migration. For instance, Nina from the Russian Cultural Center had the social skills and creativity to adapt well to life in the Netherlands by taking advantage of and building upon her Russian connections. Although she had legal status to live in the Netherlands, a good job and good education, she was still unable to "integrate" fully into Dutch social circles. She therefore created her own circles of friends and support among the Russian-speakers of Amsterdam through the center. However, when success really is not possible, many migrants leave for other destinations or return home, because most would not choose to remain and depend upon social benefits or crime if they had another option. The Estonian sailors I met on the bus back from Latvia illustrate this point. They did not have the motivation, funds, or patience to remain in the Netherlands when they were unable to find their key Russian contact or employment. They returned to Estonia only days after arriving in Amsterdam.

The popular media assumption about migration "floods" also takes for granted the idea that all people from outside of the "West" would want to move there if possible because of its obvious economic and cultural superiority. This is of course not the case and migration to Western Europe is not always lauded in the former-Soviet Union. I saw this firsthand when I traveled back to Lithuania and Latvia with several of my acquaintances from Amsterdam. In fact, my Lithuanian friends' families were particularly unsupportive of migration. They were not wealthy but they were proud of their work, community, family relationships, and self-sufficiency. Felite's parents even interpreted her and Dainius' work abroad as materialistic in a negative sense. While Felite and Dainius were pleased that they could earn enough money abroad to stage a "real" (if small, in their view) wedding in Lithuania, Felite's parents wished that their daughter and son-in-law could work in more respectable jobs at home for less pay. In the same way, Felite pressured her parents to be more "modern" and "European" by

consuming new products, replacing their Soviet-era furniture, and taking better care of themselves. Yet, Felite's rejection of her parents' "Soviet" culture did not mean that she and Dainius hoped to break away entirely from their home country. The fact that Dainius and Felite held their wedding in Lithuania, at great expense, to honor different family members and friends shows that their own identities were still tied to their social standing at home. In addition, Felite and Dainius did not feel peer pressure in migrating. Many of their young friends in Lithuania were uninterested in migrating even though they were unemployed or underemployed, because migration into the "West" did not seem overly appealing to them and they hoped that Lithuania would become more economically stable with E.U. membership.

However, my experiences in Vilnius with a Russian-Polish-Lithuanian friend and a Latvian-Dutchwoman showed me the distinct difficulties in being ethnically different in contemporary Lithuania and why migration might seem to be a good option. Ania's family lived far outside the center of Vilnius in a Russian slum and her social sphere was almost entirely made up of other "Russians" and foreigners. While I did not witness any overt discrimination against Ania in our few days together, Juliana was thoroughly upset by her experiences in Vilnius. After rude treatment from taxi drivers and restaurant staff, Juliana concluded that people in Vilnius mistook her excellent Russian-language skills and expensive clothing to mean that she was a "New Russian" (i.e. Mafia-related) who deserved to be ostracized. She vowed never to return to the city.

There are myriad personal as well as economic, social, or ethnic reasons for migrating. Juliana's long-awaited reunion at home in Ogre, Latvia illustrated the destructive cycle of poverty and abuse she had escaped by moving abroad as well as the guilt she felt in leaving. Although Juliana's mother had finally separated from her abusive husband, she was still living precariously in another family's small apartment and working the night shift in a factory's laundry facility. Juliana's brother was also not succeeding in life as he was depressed, unemployed, and often inebriated. Juliana

suffered nightmares in the Netherlands because of her guilt in not aiding her friends and family while she was away. However, she realized that return would be impossible for her now that she had changed so much in her years abroad and had very little in common with her former friends and family members. She ultimately believed that she was lucky and smart to have escaped from such an insular and poverty-stricken place.

Well-funded European anti-trafficking campaigns in Lithuania and Latvia, such as the IOM's campaign and European Union's HIV/AIDS meetings in 2002, have some influence on people's decision to migrate. The organizations perpetuate a connection between the idea of migration and sexual-slavery for female migrants. As discussed earlier, in Lithuania Felite warned Ania not to migrate back to the Netherlands after viewing an IOM billboard along the highway but Ania disregarded such worries and returned to Amsterdam the next spring. Migration was seen as a positive or at least popular choice around Ania's university, as countless posters advertised jobs abroad in its doorways and halls. Most of Ania's classmates had been employed outside of the country during their summer breaks. Although Ania had encountered an abusive *au pair* employer and found herself homeless in Amsterdam one summer, she believed that she was a lucky person and that fate would aid her in the future as it had in the past. Fortunately, this was the case.

For would-be migrants such as Ania, Juliana, Felite, and Dainius, Amsterdam's tourism industry often drew them to the country as well as employed them once they arrived. Tourism provides jobs to these migrants and economic benefits to the city, and yet the "high life" type of tourism is detrimental to many migrants. They are exploited as illegal sex-workers, construction workers, hotel maids, and bar attendants when they are paid less than legal workers and denied social benefits. In addition, the "high life" environment of drugs, alcohol, and sex often wreak havoc on already depressed and marginalized individuals. These exploited migrant sex-workers or drug-addicted migrants may very well support stereotypes of Eastern Europeans in European media,

which feed into anti-immigration policies such as the crackdowns in streetwalking zones. And yet, their presence in the Netherlands as illegal migrants often proves lucrative to the city's businesses. While they are kept illegal, these migrants are much more amenable to performing stigmatized jobs (e.g. sex-work, selling drugs, and cleaning hotels) for less money, with little recourse to legal protection in cases of abuse.

Life in the Netherlands is likewise often difficult for more "respectable" or legal migrants. I have argued that Russian community-building and networking is both a sign of Russian-speakers' increasing establishment in Dutch society as they are becoming a more visible group, and a sign that they have not been altogether successful in "integrating" into Dutch society. Long-term migrants continue to seek each other for socializing and economic relationships even though people from particular ethnicities would consider one another enemies in their home countries (i.e. Armenia and Azerbaijan). I predict that these connections between Russian-speakers will grow – no matter the ethnic, educational, class, national, religious, or personal differences between them – as anti-immigrant attitudes remain entrenched in the Netherlands. The older migrants share a history of Soviet culture and Russian language while the younger migrants encounter similar negative stereotypes of themselves as Mafiosi, prostitutes, and members of "traditional" cultures.

Yet, migrants remain in the Netherlands because they have been able to establish careers for themselves, they have come to love many aspects of Dutch culture and society, or because political and economic situations at home are prohibitive to their return. Migrants may complain bitterly about stigmatization or glass ceilings for non-Dutch ethnics but they agree that their children receive excellent educations and social benefits when they belong to the Dutch state. Finally, although anti-immigrant sentiment and policies have increased in the Netherlands since the early 2000s, Dutch officials are not always individually inhumane. The following story illustrates many Russian-

speaking migrants' views that individual Dutch officials can be lenient and that migrants can manipulate Dutch stereotypes of Russia to their benefit.

One day, the Georgian artist Alex told me a story that I had heard from several other long-term migrants about a “black” Russian man, Michael, who was the son of a Russian woman and an African-American man, who was raised in Moscow. After several warnings about selling art on particular streets in Amsterdam without a permit, Michael had been arrested by the police and left in a cold prison cell for five days. In the cell, he became sick from the chill. For some reason, a dentist was sent to help him but instead of aiding him, the dentist “broke his teeth.” Michael was then forced to sign a paper promising that he would not sue the Dutch government. Eventually, the Dutch government decided to deport him back to Russia. However, when the plane landed in Moscow, the various storytellers claim that Michael started screaming and yelling that the Russians were so racist that they would kill him if the Dutch officials made him descend from the plane. Since this claim confirmed the Dutch officials' own assumptions about Russian brutality, the Dutch officials evidently believed Michael and allowed him to return to the Netherlands. The storytellers each described this situation as ludicrous – that of course Michael would not have been killed by Russian officials upon return to his country. I asked several people, including Alex, if they knew Michael's current whereabouts so that I could confirm the story but people had lost track of him after several years. Whether or not the story is true, it does show that these migrant storytellers felt that Dutch officials considered Russia to be more racist than the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the storytellers also meant for their listeners to understand that Dutch officials were more “tolerant” than those in other countries, such as Germany (always used as an example of cruel policing), since migrants could sometimes appeal to the Dutch officials' sense of human decency.



### Reflections on Anthropology and Research in Europe

We should do our best to preserve the sense of the strange in the heart of the familiar – to disorient (not to Orient)...in the process of making the familiar strange, by engaging Europe in the calculus of a universalizing cultural critique, they have the potential to turn the paradigmatic House of the Other into a common Global Home (Parman 1998: 16).

In a very trenchant history of anthropology of Eastern Europe, David Kideckel argues that Eastern Europe, as a subject, is still considered “other” by “Western” anthropologists based upon its economic difference rather than its politics, as in the past (1998: 134). He writes that “for the West’s own sake, the East had to be considered an utter other, more different precisely because of its proximity” (ibid.: 135). The creation of national, ethnic, and racial identities is always a process in which certain characteristics of individuals are favored over others in order to stress similarities among individuals. However, when these identities become naturalized and their histories are erased, they can have an exclusionary effect with sometimes disastrous results. For instance, Sassen describes the mass refugee movements which occurred after WWI and WWII as indicative of the extent to which the construction of the “nation-state” has created a vast potential to treat human beings without respect. After WWI, there were an “estimated 9.5 million refugees” and “these refugees included those escaping revolutionary upheavals and persecution and those expelled for having the wrong ‘nationality’ or ethnicity in still fragile nation-states that sought to establish themselves in terms of a national identity” (Sassen 1999: 84). In the same way, the European Union is itself fragile and seeks strict control over its borders and populations in order to bolster its legitimacy as a governing body and union of similar people.

My aim in researching and writing this dissertation has been to critique such naturalized concepts as “Eastern” and “Western” and to call attention to the ways that current Dutch and European Union nation-building has marginalized particular groups of migrants. I have sought to humanize the often statistic-based or fear-based accounts of

migration from Eastern Europe into the Netherlands and European Union through: 1) individual migrants' stories; 2) research into the social, economic, and political conditions of their migration and lives abroad; and 3) discourse about them in Europe today. Migration is not about "flows" or "floods," but about real people's lives. However, I would not want to fall into Kideckel's and Parman's trap of re-Orientalizing Russian-speaking migrants in the Netherlands by representing them as powerless victims in the face of marginalization. Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld similarly cautions against simplistic notions of victimhood and state power (2001). He writes that

none of us – not even anthropologists! – are immune from the temptation to accept the conceptual safety of a system of classification that appears to divide the world into good and bad, agency and structure, sufferers and oppressors – a division that shows dualism to be alive and well today. (Herzfeld 2001: 220).

When possible, I have sought to highlight individuals' (albeit limited) choices and decisions in creating lives for themselves in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Nonetheless, in constructing an argument about Dutch and European relationships to migrants from the "East," I have necessarily focused the ethnographic lens upon the more grim aspects of life in Amsterdam from the perspective of the migrants. This concentration may have resulted in a more critical view of Dutch society than of the Russian-speakers, thus skimming the boundaries of Herzfeld's worry about identifying fixed oppressors and sufferers. However, this dissertation is an effort to reflect the relative injustice I observed, and to do justice to the many people who generously told me their stories, invited me to their homes, let me watch them work, and challenged my research assumptions in our frequent philosophical debates.

Although Russians often teased me for not laughing at their jokes, I did understand the following one which sums up many of my acquaintances' understandings of Europe:

Globalizatia, eto kogda ykraynets zhivet v gollandie, poexal otdixat vo frantsiu, zashel v kitaiskii restoran i ego obsluzhuvaet tourak.

Globalization is when a Ukrainian lives in Holland, goes on vacation to France, enters a Chinese restaurant and a Turk serves him (my translation).

My Russian-speaking acquaintances saw Europe as a multi-ethnic or multi-cultural space, despite migration policies and nationalistic assumptions of a dominant monoculture in individual European countries. Migration to Amsterdam offered these migrants the possibility for new life experience among diverse groups of people in an urban setting. As a short-term migrant myself to the Netherlands, I felt a great deal of respect for Russian-speakers who braved personal change, social and economic marginalization, government bureaucracy, or illegality in order to make their homes abroad and for the Dutch who (reluctantly or enthusiastically) welcomed them to their neighborhood.

There are definite signs that the Netherlands' political and cultural scene could swing back to a more liberal bent in the future and become a more truly "tolerant" and cosmopolitan space (see BBC News 12/13/06). In his award-winning book, "The Politically Correct Netherlands Since the 1960s," Dutch scholar Herman Vuijsje describes the evolution of Dutch attitudes and governmental policies from ultra-liberal in the 1960s to ultra-conservative in the 1990s (2000). He argues that 1960s intellectuals and activists were able to institutionalize the idea that individual rights were more important than public governance so that "power had to be decentralized, and society had to be as 'self-regulating' as possible (ibid.: 4). In practice, this meant that there was a "taboo on racism" (ibid.: 21). Officials focused on the ethnicity and race of particular populations in order not to be racist, but their "positive discrimination" only played "into the hands of negative stereotyping" (ibid.: 23). Laws were applied differently to ethnic store owners or ethnic "truants" because civil servants did not want to be labeled as "racist" by cracking down on these individuals (ibid.). However, Vuijsje saw a drastic turning point in popular opinion about such official permissiveness with the child-porn ring scandal of 1998 in which the Dutch realized that there needed to be limits to personal freedoms (ibid.: 15-16). He writes that in the late 1990s, "social control is not a dirty

word anymore” as closed-circuit television cameras have proliferated throughout the country and police have cracked down on illegal migration, squatting, sex-work, youth petty vandalism, theft, drug trafficking, and murder. Yet, Vuijse argues that such a quick turn in popular and institutional practices shows the potential for another swift shift toward more liberal views again “when the time is ripe” (ibid.: 29).

Vuijse does not advocate simply for a swing back toward the political and cultural left, which in the past simply meant a neglect or exacerbation of social ills. During the height of liberal state policy, he accuses ethnic organizations and government officials of exaggerating the amount of actual racism which existed in the Netherlands in order to fund their projects and justify their employment (ibid.: 22). He says that even with the recent conservative backlash against non-Dutch ethnics, “the Netherlands continued to show up well in comparison to the rest of Europe” in relation to racial violence and discrimination (2000: 20). Vuijse connects this relative social cohesion to the lack of “real” ghettos of ethnically or racially-defined groups in the Netherlands as well as the history of “pillarization” in which people of different religions have lived peacefully alongside one another “from a distance” (ibid.).

From the migrant perspective there is still room for improvement. Eastern Europeans and other migrants in the Netherlands may at times feel a geographic, social, and cultural “apartheid” (see Bourgois 1995) from the rest of society. The Netherlands’ next social and political transformation would be most effective at creating real “tolerance” if it occurred within the very definitions of what it means to be “Dutch” or “European” and to allow for much more fluidity and inclusivity. The creation of a European identity does not have to include an opposite, Eastern European foil, nor does it require ineffective and inhumane migration laws, policies, and exclusionary relationships with ethnic communities.

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