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When animation and press caricatures meet the exile

In 2010, France welcomed 7, 2 millions of migrants, representing 11, 1% of its population, according to the United Nations international definition. At this day, this information remains unchanged. It means France is now the sixth country in the world, behind the USA (42, 8 millions), Russia (12, 3), Germany (9,1), Saudi Arabia (7,3), Canada (7,2), but anyway stands before the United Kingdom (6,5) and Spain (6,4)¹. France is also the country with most migrants (1st and 2nd generations) (26, 6%) ahead of the United Kingdom (24, 4%), Netherlands (23, 5%), Belgium (22, 9%), Germany (21, 9%) and Spain (20, 2%)₂ **(Picture 1)**.

So it isn't surprising that, during the last years, lots of fictions and documentary films were dedicated to migration themes. Anyway cartoons talk more and more about migration and exile, and emphasize how important this fact is from territorial and political point of view as well as economical and psychological ones. In addition to autobiographic story, cartoons are becoming a new way to deliver a political message, and report discriminating politics.

In this presentation, we'd like to talk about the way of representing such problems as immigration and exile in cartoons turned in France nowadays. After researching this problem's history, we also found that in the 1930s, Ladislav Starewitch refers to the Russian great exodus of the 1920s in *Duffy*, his series, released in France. This exodus not only sets Russian lifestyle in Europe, but also introduces an important amount of particular newspapers showing who the exiled people actually were. This will be the second part of our intervention.

1. Cartoons about migration and exile

Political message

If we start with most recent cartoons, we must point out they are often used by activists – politicians, associations or artists – against migration abuses. In 2012, after the audit led by all-sides parliamentarians with « That France » association, **Hélène Flautre**, member of European Parliament and Europe Ecology, supported by **Pierre Wolf** and **Julie Huguen** imagined and shot three two-minutes-long cartoons. They are based on statistical data from European Parliament and FOPRS (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless) and aim to contextualize again the objectives of migration towards France. They are the following short films:

¹Press Release, Eurostat, July 14, 2011, TF1, Alexandra Guillet, 24 November 2010 (Source: INED) Note INED, Population and Society, No. 472.

²Migrants in Europe: A statistical portrait of the first and second generation, Eurostat, décembre 2011, p. 122.

– *Rich countries... And the whole misery in the world*

– *Europe and France... Asylum land?*

– *Migrants... And State coffers (Picture 2).*

They talk about migration and try to set this fact in a world context: « 86% of the homo-sapiens have never left their home... » So, migrants aren't really invaders. « Nowadays, these migrants are the best actors in International help of development... » « European countries keep degrading their welcome, giving as a pretext it has high cost. And we can talk about pretexts knowing that asylum seekers cost in EU is almost the same as pets care in Britain » (Picture 3).

The same tone is used in *Shortcuts of History: the immigration*, a cartoon by **Marc Ménager** (France, 2008). During 10 minutes, his characters made of paper tell us about the great History of migration towards France, since prehistory. At the end, the main idea is told: « When playing together, kids don't care about their origins and skin color » (Picture 4).

Another short film (13 minutes) *A giraffe in the rain*, by **Pascale Hecquet** (Belgium / France) shot in 2007 with the support of Human Rights League, shows in an allegorical way an asylum seeker's life: a giraffe is forced by a despotic lion to leave its country and arrives in Europe, in a country inhabited by dogs, where she tries to rebuild its life. But those dogs aren't very welcoming and grunt more than they smile. In the rain, the giraffe is refused all jobs, and suffers the suspicious looks of those misjudging dogs. Anyway, it will accustom local usage, and this way, find some friends. But a refugee isn't totally in a safe place and must always be ready to move (Picture 5).

The unfriendly welcoming of strangers is also highlighted by **Gregoire Solotareff** and **Serge Elissalde** in their long cartoon *U*. In a country with whitish cliffs referring to Upper Normandy, so to France, a migrant family lands (Picture 6). This gipsy family, the Wéwé, arrives on lands governed by Rats, and squats an old pistachio. While the land's princess, Mona, and her loyal fellow, unicorn U fall in love with the two Wéwé sons, and the governor Monsignor Rat, with Mrs Wéwé's cakes, the old Rat matriarch tries first to banish the newly arrived family (“What are you doing here ? Where do you come from? You have one hour to pack your luggage!”), and then, to poison them (Picture 7).

Biographies

Among the biographical narratives describing exile, we would like, first, to discuss the animated feature *Persépolis* by **Marjane Satrapi** and **Vincent Paronnaud** (France, 2007). It is an adapted autobiography of cartoon into four volumes by M. Satrapi, illustrator of Iranian origin, exiled in France in 1994. It is a memory of her life and her exile. Told in the first person, it is a bitter memory, black and white, inspired by the aesthetics of Fritz Lang (Picture 8).

The black is, first of all, the color of clothes that the Iranians, the film's characters, wear. It is also the fear of the little heroine, narrator still a child, the sadness and grief that invade the narrator's family and her country. *Persépolis* shows the transition from the regime of depression to the other regime of suffering. The political prisoners were present under the Shah's regime and there are always the political prisoners under the next one. The narrator arrives so in Europe (first, in Austria, then, in France), and it is another cold reception that awaits her. And yet, despite all this, the heroine dares not return to the native Iran. *Persépolis* opens and ends with the same scene, the only scene in the movie made in color: at Orly airport, the narrator goes to the boarding for Iran. But, at the last minute, she

turns into a statue, all her life passes in black and white. The narrator slides towards a bench, sits. She does not go anywhere, she stays in France. « It has been thirteen years since I have not set foot to Iran, confesses Marjane Satrapi in one of her recent interviews. I miss terribly Teheran, my city, in which I know every corner. But given my professional success and all the sufferings that the Iranians undergo in everyday life, complaining would be really indecent! »³.

On the sideline of many short films, there is also the feature film called *Waltz with Bachir*, an animated documentary film directed by **Ari Folman** and released in 2008. It is an Israeli-French-German co-production. The character looked mentally and physically for war crimes committed during the Invasion of Lebanon in 1982 by Israeli army, several years after, he starts looking for the memories, sometimes fantasized. The film does not speak directly of exile, but gives the picture of a man who has gone into exile within himself (**Picture 9**).

The research of himself is also at the heart of a short autobiographical film *Irinka and Sandrinka* by **Sandrine Stoianov** (France, 2007). In this title, the director joyfully reduces, in a Russian way, using the suffixes, her surname and that of her grandmother, to evoke their origins. Her grandmother, Iryna or Irene, issued from Russian nobility, had lived through the fall of regime and the absence of her father, exiled, former military like thousands of other « White Russians », immigrants of the October Revolution and the Bolshevik regime⁴.

Very early orphaned, she was raised by her grandparents. As for Sandrine, it is a young French woman of Russian origin, origin almost erased, forgotten. And it is thanks to Iryna story – a mixture of traditional drawing, collages and puppets, - that Sandrine tries to understand where she comes from, she, who is, after her own imagination, a Russian princess. The two women discuss their memories over a cup of tea and bundles of old photos, where historical events punctuate a half-century history of immigrants' family (**Picture 10**).

Exotic character

Through cartoons' allegory like U or A giraffe in the rain, we already notice that a stranger is shown as an odd species, different from the others: a giraffe among grunting dogs, or a rabbit among starving rats. In *The Rabbi's Cat*, a cartoon adapted from his comic, **Joan Sfar** introduces a human-like stranger. Anyway, all is not as simple as it seems. It is actually a mysterious Russian painter of Jewish origin, coming to Algeria in a huge boat full of Talmud's. This boat is sent from a Jewish village harassed by Soviet persecutions. With the same look than Marc Chagall from comic, Chagall in Russia from Joan Sfar, this exotic painter enters the house and the life of an old rabbi living in Algiers (**Picture 11**).

The Painter wants to go to Ethiopia, a paradise for black Jews, and that is why he will turn to the interpreter, the former military and Russian exile Vastenov. He is the only Russian in Algiers who makes his prays in the only Orthodox church in the city. The catholic priest of this church

³Marjane Satrapi : « Avoir une double culture, c'est une force ! », propos recueillis par Claire Baldewyns, *Gala*, janvier 2013, p. 54.

⁴« Parmi les étrangers qu'abrite la France de l'entre-deux-guerres, les Russes occupent une place à part : réfugiés d'abord politiques, ils seront toujours appelés les « émigrés » russes, définis prioritairement par le drame de l'exil et du déracinement » (Menegaldo Hélène, « L'émigration russe (1919 – 1939) », dans *Histoire de l'immigration en France au XXème siècle*, Paris, Somogy, éditions d'Art, 1998, p. 94) ; surnommés aussi les « Russes blancs », ils fuient la Révolution d'Octobre et la guerre civile qui s'en suit ainsi que les persécutions engagées par les bolcheviks, Russes « rouges ».

characterizes Vastenov as “an extremely extravagant individual”. He is a bon vivant, eccentric and hot-tempered, he loves women, food, nice cars, good cigars, alcohol and ... his poor executed Tsar. Even if in the film the figure of Vastenov is less provocative than in the cartoon, it, nevertheless, seems to be very stereotypical. Is it always necessary that a Russian should love vodka? And a person from Maghreb – the mint tea.

The Vastenov’s consumption of alcohol being somewhat exaggerated, Joan Sfar at the same time shows perfectly the way Russian exiles were attached to the values of the Empire and to their Tsar. Due to the altercation, which occurs in Islamic tribes, Vastenov is challenged to a duel by a young fanatic. Vastenov kills him before being killed by other combatants. His last words are nostalgic: “My life belongs to Tsar!” (**Picture 12**).

While focusing on this topic we cannot help paying attention to the work of **Ladislav Starewitch**, Russian filmmaker and puppeteer of Polish origin. Being exiled to France after the October revolution, he had his own film studio in the Parisian district Fontenay-sous-Bois. Between late 1920th (his arrival to France) and 1965 (the year of his death), he directed 30 films⁵, the majority of which are permeated by nostalgia to Russia⁶ and allegorically demonstrates the theme of exile.

His foreigner and emigrant, dressed up as an animal – a Dog, a Monkey, a Fox – always represents someone “different”, a trickster who is neither good nor bad. This image is autobiographic as it resembles the image of Starewitch⁷ himself and of his destiny as an exile⁸. In the majority of his films Starewitch uses the motif of travel, from departure till return, the motif which also marks the cinema of actors (represented by Russian film directors of the studio Albatross in Montreuil)⁹ and which may be explained by the traumatic fact of being obliged to leave his native country at the risk of losing his life” (**Picture 13**).

The majority of Russian exiles were evacuated by the British fleet from the Crimea to Constantinople and then to Europe. Thus, this itinerary marks a number of films directed by Russian

⁵ Martin Leona Béatrice, Martin François, *Ladislav Starewitch (1882 – 1965), le cinéma rend visibles les rêves de l’imagination*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2003.

⁶ For exemple, *Carrousel Boréal* (1958).

⁷ « *Le Roman de Ranart* commented on by Léona-Béatrice Martin-Starewitch », bonus to DVD, Doriane films, 2000.

⁸ « Exile is a part of the vector that does not produce any meaning. It represents the meaning itself, as it arises from the impossibility of governing, from certainty. Exile means to lose oneself in the vector of time and space, it is the beginning of uncertainty in myself and others. An exile is a person of search, conjuring fate and fearing that the end is close. At least the end of his imagination, the main component of his creation. The life of an exile consists of his imagination, connected to the realities of exile. (Le Huu Khoa, « L’identité du créateur exilé », dans *L’immigration entre loi et vie quotidienne* (sous la dir. de J. Barou et K. Huu Le), coll. « Minorités et société », Paris, L’Harmattan, 1993, p. 154 – 155).

⁹ « For L. Borger, « although this films are diverse in their contents, they take advantage of the theme of exile, that returns as stabbing nostalgia. *La maison du mystère* (The house of mystery) tells us the story of expatriation and return ; Le chant de l’amour triomphant (The victorious singing of love), the main character, the Italian prince, comes back to his native country after years of exile... » (Borger Lenny, Morel Catherine, « L’angoissante aventure : L’apport des russes d’entre-deux guerres », *Positif*, Paris, 1988, n° 323, p. 38 – 39). According to N. Noussinova, the poetics of Russian cinema in exile was marked by the autobiographic: « we have some kind of rebus-films containing a big coded story of white Russians in immigration ». Thus, the researcher gives definitions to the following myths, narrative structures and symbols connected to this type. At first place she mentions the theme of « that returns again and again in every film like a nostalgic and stabbing memory » and « the ship as a symbol of immigration ». The second myth is Paris, as a final destination of all the dreamers. Further on, N. Noussinova describes wealth and money. Their unexpected gain or rapid lost are often shown in diabolical light, influenced by Russian classical literature and by the miserable everyday life of exiles. (Нуссинова Наталья, *Когда мы в Россию вернемся... Русское кинематографическое зарубежье. 1918 – 1939.* – Москва: НИИК, Эйзенштейн-центр, 2003, p. 107 – 112) (in Russian).

film makers during the years 1920-1930¹⁰. For example, in the film *Duffy in the wedding trip* of Starewitch (1936) the heroes board a ship that takes them to something unknown, to the broken destiny. His characters of *Love black and white*, a film that pay homage to Charlie Chaplin (1923), of *Rat of cities and the rat of fields* (1926), or of *Frogs ask for a king* (1922), films inspired by the fables of La Fontaine, always travel with hope to come some day back home¹¹. And they use all the possible tricks to survive. A lot of characters, such as the designer in *Duffy the Mascot* (1933) or the Rat-driver in *Rat of cities and the rat of fields* – refer to the professions occupied by Russian exiles in France (Picture 14).

Apart from this, the characters-marionettes of Starewitch are also dreamers. Their dreams help them to forget their diseases and old age, their poverty and degradation. To fall asleep and to never wake up, as in *The Lion became old* (1932) is the manifestation of the last exile, death. The beautiful dream and the creative act is an exile inside themselves, a hiding place, a shell, while a nightmare is compared to the historical events in Russia, and, thus, one has to wake up. And after awakening, there will be something good waiting for you, like an orange in *Duffy the Mascot*. The Russian press treats a dream as a narrative structure in the following way: “What is happening now is just a nightmare, a test of our fate. Life, real life will begin only when these bitter days of exile will come to an end”¹². In other words, if for the French avant-garde fantasizing in cinema was a part of its poetics, for Russian emigrants, who worked in this domain; it became metaphoric of their lives in exile¹³.

2. Caricatures on immigration and exile

Between 1920 and 1939, the immigrants (workers and political exiles) arrive en masse to France, which due to the human losses during the First World War finds itself in need for the workforce¹⁴. The immigrants settle in France and publish their periodicals. During this period almost 130 German titles, 120 Armenian titles, 15 Chinese titles, 9 Spanish titles and 230 Italian titles are edited in France¹⁵. Russian exiles, which represent only 2,6% of all the foreigners living in France during the period between two wars¹⁶, representing minority, create a record number of periodicals, almost 300 titles¹⁷. Among these

¹⁰ For exemple, *L'Angoissante aventure* de J. Protazanoff (France, 1920).

¹¹ According to Jean-Loup Bourget, cinema, like dreams, has something to teach us of our desires, our deep fantasies and our fears (Bourget J.-L., « Puissances du rêve », Forum des images, le 20 mars 2009). In other words, Russian exiles were hoping for a long time to return to Russia ; numerous texts if magazines, that were preserved till our days, regularly point out to the fact.

¹² *The voice of an emigrant* («Голос эмигранта») de 1921 cited through N. Noussinova in Нусинова Н., *Когда мы в Россию вернемся... Русское кинематографическое зарубежье. 1918 – 1939.* – Москва: НИИК, Эйзенштейн-центр, 2003, p. 102 (The texts were translated by us).

¹³ Ibid., 103.

¹⁴ « According to the 1851 census and the first count of foreigner ceases prior uncertainty in numbers. On this date foreigners represent 381 000 people, out of whom 128 000 are Belgians, 30 000 are Spanish, 63 000 are Italians, 25 000 are Swiss and 135 000 others. (...) in 1921 foreigners account for 1 532 000 people, eiin 1926 – 2 405 000 and in 1931 – 2 715 000 » (Moigne Le Guy, Lebon André, *L'immigration en France*, coll. « Que sais-je ? », PUF, Paris, 1999, p. 6).

¹⁵ Rémond R. (éd.), *France des étrangers. France des libertés. Presse et mémoire*, Paris, Mémoire génériques éditions/Éditions ouvrières, 1990.

¹⁶ Kaplan Hélène, Gousseff Catherine, « Presse et émigration russes en France », Ibid., p. 162. According to the studies of C. Gousseff et de N. Struve, the number of russian refugees during the period between two wars varies from 70 000 to 80 000 people (Gousseff Catherine, *L'exil russe. La fabrique du réfugié apatride*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2008, p. 9 ; Struve Nikita, *Soixante-dix ans de l'émigration russe (1919 – 1989)*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, p. 18), while P. Kovalevsky accounts from 120 000 to 150 000 emigrants (Kovalevsky Pierre, *La Dispersion Russe à travers le monde et son rôle culturel*, Chauny, éd. A. Baticle, 1951, p. 9).

periodicals we can distinguish between such satirical journals and illustrated magazines as *Bitche* (*Beater*), *Satyricon*, *Russia Illustrated*, *Ouhkwat* (*Pot hook*), daily newspapers *The Latest News*, *Rebirth* and specialized newspapers (for example, *Steering Wheel*) that regularly published the caricatures dedicated to the theme of exile (**Picture 15**).

Being limited in time, we will stop our attention on the exile representation in the journal *Bitche* (*Beater*), the first Russian satirical illustrated magazine founded in Paris in 1920 by a satirical cartoonist Mikhail Linsky. This magazine launches the sections entitled “The ours abroad”, “Our caricatures” and “Those, about whom we talk...”, where he publishes the satirical portraits of ordinary emigrants (**Picture 16** : B. Belkine, “The types of exiles”, *Bitche*, n°5, p. 13 – 14 :1. From Baku. (...) 2. From Kharkov. (...) 3. From Kherson. (...) 4. « A man in the past. Once, there was a vice-governor » 5. “Primary school teacher V. G. K.” 6. “Lieutenant-Colonel”. 7. “He is a seller” 8. “The professor” 9. “the angel of the socialistic paradise”) and the leading figures in exile, such as for example, general Vrangél, anarchist Nestor Makhno, etc.).

The caricatures in *Bitche* also allude to the topics of work, of the professional flexibility of emigrants, of instability and despair (**Picture 17**: Anonymous, “What should I do (the question of the day for the exile)”, *Bitche*, n°2, p.10; MAD, “Russian exiles in Constantinople”, *Bitche*, n°1, p.8 : “those, who do not want to serve their country... serve willingly other countries”).

They speak about the difficulties in receiving their papers and visa (**Picture 18**: A. Savitski, “The Russian right to live”, *Bitche*, n°8, p. 6: “Will you imagine, my Highness, that for four-five years more, we will refuse other in this “right”, about ideological conflicts within their community¹⁸, about the linguistic difficulties (**Picture 19** : M. Linsky (M.L.), “The only possible means”, *Bitche*, n° 3, p. 10 : “ The 1st refugee:- This is surprising! I’ve learnt this book by heart, but when I start talking, not a single Frenchman understands me. The 2nd refugee: - So, you should look for the French who also studied with this book, so you can understand one another!..”)

The exiles are nostalgic of their past (**Picture 20**: M. Alexandrov, “The refugees”, *Bitche*, n°5, p.3 : “ – The revolution put me on my feet. - ... - I used to get around by car. Now, I get around on foot...”) and are hopping to come back to their native country, to Russia (**Picture 21**: M. Alexandrov, “Waiting for renting”, *Bitche*, n° 9, p. 8 : « - Wait a little bit, the homeless refugee, this apartment will soon be on rent”).

It is necessary to mention that Russian caricaturists - (Mikhail Drizo) et PEM (Pavel Matunine) – worked together in the French press. It is from the second part of the 20th century, when there was a massive arrival of immigrants from the Maghreb and Europe, that French caricaturists like, for example, Plantu (Jean Plantureux) (**Picture 22** : Plantu, “Between two chairs”, 1985 © National Museum of history and culture of immigration ; Plantu, “The immigrant-exhibitionist”, 1979 ©

¹⁷ Ossirguine-Bakounine Tatiana (dir.), *L’Émigration russe en Europe. Catalogue collectif des périodiques en langue russe : 1855 – 1940*, Vol. 1, 2^{ème} édition, Paris, Institut d’études slaves, 1990.

¹⁸ The disagreements within Russian community in exile, being very heterogeneous, are sharply denounced in satirical press. Besides numerous monarchists, the diaspora included liberals, i.e. the socialists opposed to the Soviet system, among which we can find not only ancient antirevolutionary immigrants, but also people without any political opinion. “Editorial board: from the technical point of view, it seemed to be better to put caricatures on general Vrangél and Trotski side-by-side. But, being afraid that those two figures, being places together, i.e. face to face, could kill one another in the same issue of *Bitche*, the editorial board, out of simple caution put them into different pages. This seemed to be more peaceful...” (Linsky Mikhail, « Ceux de qui on parle... : Trotski », *Bitche*, Paris, n° 2, p. 8).

National Museum of history and culture of immigration) really start paying attention to this problem in press. But it should be stressed that this process did not achieve such an intense level as during the years 1920-1930 and will probably be the subject of another discussion.

Conclusion

The position of immigrants evokes several questions. These questions pertain to the development of our society, and first of all to the uneven distribution of wealth, individualism, to the construction of European fortress, that is afraid of foreigners. But also it evokes the questions that concern everyone as a human being: the warm welcome of others, the difference, the exchange... And the problems of immigration, being as old as 100 years, are still present both in politics and in art.

We do not treat the images of history, photos and films in the same way we treat caricatures or the animated films. The first and the second ones give us a possibility to materialize and to make public the personal experience of the artist, his point of view, his militant spirit, and his memories. The animated films and drawings in press, which have been demonstrated in this intervention, represent a reliable and legitimate way to embody the exile and immigration in an original way, and through the excessive expressiveness, allegory and salvatory laughter.

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