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**“You Can Always Find a Bride in Russia: An Investigation into the Mail-Order
Bride Industry”**

Intro

*“American women are reputed to be the worst possible mates on the face of this
planet.”¹*

*“No matter how much a loser you may be in your own country, you can always find a
wife in Russia.”²*

Above are some of the selling myths mail-order bride “guide” books and international match-making agencies use to convince lonely Western men that their best chance of meeting a wife is in Eastern Europe. In the pages that follow I hope to outline the basic contours of the mail order bride industry as well as the attitudes held by many male participants and the kinds of information that are available to them. I also specifically address the myth that these women are a passive part of the industry.

It is unfortunate that in today’s media the term “mail-order bride” is often given a negative connotation. In many cases, the women are portrayed as little more than prostitutes, wealth seekers, or con artists. More recently, media coverage has connected them with the issues of domestic abuse and human trafficking. Ironically, the

¹ Frank R. Coleman, *To Russia for Love: The American Man’s Best Option* (USA: Frank R. Coleman, 1999), 12.

² Mila Glodava & Richard Onizuka, *Mail-Order Brides: Women for Sale* (Fort Collins, Colorado: 1994), 14.

Western world that created this skepticism towards mail-order brides is also the one promoting the industry. The reality is that North American and to a lesser extent Western European culture has become so superficial and shallow that many find it incomprehensible for a beautiful Russian woman to consider marrying an older, larger, and less attractive man. This incomprehension, as well as the stereotypes it creates, is just one of the obstacles faced by women, and men, who chose to participate in this industry. The women must also get accustomed to a new husband, country and language. Mail order brides are frequently confronted with Western ignorance and jealousy, from both men and women. Yet, each year more and more Eastern European women are registering themselves to international match-making agencies with the hope of finding a potential spouse. Thus, the question remains, why would these women subject themselves to potential dangers and the stigma associated with the term “mail-order brides”?

Interestingly, the women do not consider themselves “mail-order brides” at all, for that term does not even exist in Eastern European languages. As I have come to understand, the average Eastern European woman has had to deal with a tremendous amount of sexism and injustice throughout her lifetime. When we take a closer look at these mail order brides, it is evident that they are regular women searching for love, a family, and a lifestyle that offers a future for their children. Majority of these women believe these necessities of life are difficult or near impossible to find in their home countries.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, why are Western men so intrigued with Eastern European women? Besides their stereotypically strikingly beautiful appearances and desires for love, it is assumed by many Western men, that Eastern women value a family more than a job. A frequently expressed opinion that is apparently held by many Western men interested in mail-order brides, is that their local women have become too career-oriented. As a result of this situation, a complicated yet very profitable industry has developed and flourished over the last twenty years.

The purpose of this essay is to bring forth the realities and myths surrounding the mail order bride industry. I will demonstrate where and how the business began. I will show how the advancement of technology has played a significant role in fueling the industry since the early 1980s. Subsequently, I move on to include an analysis of the major players in the industry; the men, the women, and the match-making agencies. Finally, I will conclude with a micro study investigating the contents of the guide books and the web sites run by international match-making companies.

The Mail Order Bride Industry

The mail order bride industry as it is known today is not a new phenomenon. Rather it has progressed rapidly since the 1980's owing to the advancement of technology and natural human desires, in this case, love and lust. In this section, I will demonstrate the most common paths men follow towards pursuing their Eastern European brides. I will also touch on some of the financial aspects of the industry and attempt to de-bunk some of the more popular misconceptions. In addition, I will use Anthony Giddens' notion of the commodified self to explain the dangers surrounding the mail order bride business, as well as the governmental laws that have been passed to protect the women who decide to immigrate to North America.

Before internet became widely accessible the most common way for men to inform themselves vis-à-vis the mail order bride industry was through magazines that targeted them. Many international dating agencies tended to advertise their product through male-focused national magazines such as Playboy, Rolling Stone, and The National Review.³ Dating agencies would then send brochures and catalogues with photos, descriptions and biographies of the women on their files to men who contacted them. Today, all of this information is available online. For a fee, the man is provided

³ Lisa Simons, "Mail Order Brides: The Legal Framework," in *Gender and Immigration*, ed. Gregory A. Kelson and Debra L. DeLaet (New York: New York University, 1999), 129.

with the home addresses and/or e-mail address of the woman he selects. Today, for example, www.loveme.com, offers free *registration* for all members. Being a member allows a man to send an email to anyone he desires. Of course, what is not mentioned in the promotional materials are the fees attached to the correspondence. It costs \$9.99 to send an email and an additional \$3.50 to add a picture. Furthermore, the men are charged another \$9.99 to view any e-mail responses from the women they have contacted. To avoid these extra fees, loveme.com offers a *platinum package*. As the site describes: “The activation fee for your Platinum membership is only **\$95.00**, which will give you instant access to the addresses on the site for one month, then only **\$29.95 a month** to remain a Platinum member and access up to 100 [virtual E-mail addresses](#) each and every month.”⁴ Thus, match-making companies encourage men to correspond with as many women as possible so they can turn a profit, while also promoting to the client that this is the way to find true love.

A great many of the women are solicited by agents from match making companies who place their clients’ photos in catalogues. Many women register themselves because they are pressured by family members to find a husband, others sign up out of curiosity or just to “test the waters”. To get on these listings, a woman in Russia pays a small fee to a local Russian agency that does business with the American one.⁵ However, there are occasions where the woman can sign up for free, depending on whether or not an agent plays an active role in finding their future mate. Once with the agency, the women undergo rigorous screening. While the advice for

⁴ www.loveme.com/invar/services/member/member_platinum.php

⁵ Lynn Visson, *Wedded Strangers: The Challenges of Russian-American Marriages* (New York: Hippocrone Books, 2001), 112.

men is to be “discreet” in their self-presentations, the same advice is not offered to the women. For example, one “personality evaluation” which was obtained from American Asian Worldwide Services (AAWS) includes over 100 questions which the women are required to answer in full. It not only asked for the woman’s biographical data but also sought information on family background, educational attainment, work experience, and character references. In addition, the woman was told to give a brief description of her ideal man, to complete a personality profile, and to describe her physical appearance, her hobbies and interests as well as habits and attitudes.⁶ This questionnaire is essentially used to aid the male clients in choosing possible mates - a feature that is not available to women. Please turn to the Appendix section, image 1, to view a similar questionnaire from www.loveme.com.

The women involved in this industry are realists and understand that although there is a possibility of finding a perfect match the odds are not in their favour. How successful these companies are in their matches is largely unknown, but estimates range up to 10,000 marriages resulting from mail-order services between 1974, when Cherry Blossoms began, and 1986. Cherry Blossoms pegs itself as the, “World’s first and still the best International Dating Since 1974.”⁷ No statistics are kept either officially or by these companies. The Russian mail-order bride market, on the other hand, reports a 10 percent success rate.⁸ Visson also emphasizes that there are no general statistics covering all the agencies, but Art Steckel, co-director of European Connections, says

⁶ Glodava & Onizuka, 20.

⁷ www.blossoms.com

⁸ Glodava & Onizuka, 9.

that of the 2,000 or so men who have taken his agency's tours since 1992, about 75 percent invited a woman to the United States on a fiancée visa and about half these couples got married.⁹ The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) does not keep records on the industry either, but it is estimated that each year anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 American men find wives through mail order bride agencies (Federal News Service, 1996).¹⁰ Between the lack of official statistics and the outrageous claims found on some of the websites, it is almost impossible to establish true success/failure rates.

Once a man has made his choice, there is usually a period of phone conversations and correspondence by letter or e-mail, with the agency providing translations when needed. Some agencies offer men an option to send a gift such as flowers, perfume, or language lessons to a woman of their choice - for an additional fee of course. The charges for these gifts by far exceed the local prices: for a trolley bus pass, for instance, *Virginia* was charging \$18 in the summer of 2003, while the pass itself costs less than \$6.¹¹ For Nina Rubasheva, the director of Vesta, one of the Russian agencies, this phase of getting acquainted is all right but should not go on too long. "Many men and women who met through the internet or catalogues and corresponded for years have been bitterly disappointed when they finally met in person and felt they were duped and had wasted a huge amount of time."¹² Thus, match-making agencies encourage men to visit the women they are corresponding with as quickly as possible

⁹ Visson, 213.

¹⁰ Simons, 130.

¹¹ Sonja Luehrmann, "Mediated Marriage: Internet Matchmaking in Provincial Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 56, No. 7 (September, 2004): 859.

¹² Visson, 212.

Once the virtual relationship has progressed to a certain point, the next step is for the men to visit their potential brides in their homeland. Almost all the guide books suggest that men should not venture off to Russia alone, but rather through the use of an organized tour. The bigger American agencies sponsor group or individual tours to one or more cities, with air fare, hotels, meals, and entertainment included in the fee. For instance, Mark Davis, on his site www.dreamconnections.com sells "Tour Dates".

One of these tours costs \$4,650.00 and it includes:

- 1) Personal coaching, training and resources to maximize chances of success.
- 2) Delivery of a Unique mix of Singles Events, designed to eliminate the barrier and help men connect with an abundance of beautiful, eligible, ladies in Ukraine.
- 3) Hotel with breakfast and WiFi comfortable rooms
- 4) An assigned personal translator / Assistant. Your translator will be your guide and B. S. detector.
- 5) Pick up at airport
- 6) Access to Our community of men and women who have met and married through international romance journeys.
- 7) Support with the visa process and adjustments to life at your home.¹³

The confirmed Tour Dates are approximately every two months, there are currently four posted for the remainder of 2013, all visiting Odessa and Nikolaev, Ukraine. What sticks out is that the price tag, in this instance, does not include airfare. Men are basically paying \$4,600 for a hotel and a translator. Everything else included in the price can be attained easily or at very little cost. Davis states he does not provide air transportation because it adds little value to the goal of finding a spouse and can cause complications.¹⁴ Therefore, depending where the interested men come from the cost of

¹³ www.dreamvacations.com/romance-tour/

¹⁴ *ibid*

a tour can run quite high. Lynn Visson, estimates that on average men spend \$3,000-\$10,000 on the tour alone.¹⁵

The idea behind the “entertainment” or social gatherings is to arrange to have a group of men fly out to a particular city, where the agency books a party venue, which is usually a restaurant, bar and/or club. Local women are invited to attend so they can meet the men. Agencies aim for attendance of many more women than men to make the men feel like they are surrounded by Slavic beauties. One American participant in such a social spoke of it later as a male fantasy come true. “I was like a little boy walking into a candy store. I’ve never seen so many beautiful women.”¹⁶ According to Smith, these socials are marketed as economy pursuits for clever coves who want to get ahead of the game; *make one trip and meet fifty to one hundred women* is usually how they are touted.¹⁷

Smith says that on the surface these socials seem like a good experience but in reality the men who attend them are often not attractive, have poor social skills, and have never travelled alone outside of the United States. Socials also tend to attract sex tourists and wealthy merchants with other interests.¹⁸ He goes on to add that the men should also be skeptical about the types of women who attend these gatherings. There can be a mix of over-made up forty-somethings, desperate to snag a rich American as well as professional daters, prostitutes, and party girls, there to take what they can

¹⁵ Visson, 213.

¹⁶ Visson, 213.

¹⁷ Stuart J Smith and Olga Maslova, *Russian Bride: How to Meet, Court and Marry a Woman from the Former Soviet Union* (Great Britain: Scruton Publishing, 2008), 71.

¹⁸ Smith, 71.

get.¹⁹ Agencies encourage socials because this is where the bulk of their profits come from. They also make great website pictures with which are then used to lure more men to their socials.

Apart from these social gatherings, much of the industry centers around written texts. First the advertisements themselves structure perceptions. But as we shall see so too do the guidebooks that some men feel compelled to write offering advice to others.

“Sensual, imaginative brunette, 25, artistic, intelligent, with a sense of humour. Enjoys home life, cooking, sports, country life. Seeking a tall, strong, intelligent, fun companion with inner depth for passionate, loving romance, 25-35. Photo guarantees reply. Must feel able to love Ben my dog too. London/anywhere.”

Dateline, a magazine published by a UK dating agency, claims this to have been the most successful personal advertisement they have ever published since it garnered 241 replies.²⁰ Self-advertisement for the purpose of meeting a partner has, since the early 1980's, gained acceptance among a wide set of users. Since the early 1990's, written advertisements such as the one above, have been supplemented by telephone, and more recently internet messages.²¹ In her study, Justine Coupland analyzes how individuals construct identities for themselves and others within a constrained and (at least in its written textual aspects) highly formulaic practice. She constructs her paper around Dr. Anthony Giddens' notion of the commodification of the self. Giddens identifies the late modern potential for consumers to buy a lifestyle, by making

¹⁹ Smith, 72.

²⁰ F. Bowden, “Operation Love: Finding a Lonely Heart,” *Daily Mirror* 19 (February: 1994), 18.

²¹ Justine Coupland, “Dating Advertisements: Discourses of the Commodified Self,” *Discourse & Society* vol. 7(2) (London: 1996), 187.

consumer decisions about how to live, how to behave, what to wear and what to eat. He interprets this as evidence of the interpenetration of commercial practices into the lifeworld and into selfhood. Self-identity, Giddens argues, is constituted less in the roles and structures of the traditional order and more in individual market-place decisions: To a greater or lesser degree, the project of the self becomes translated into one of the possessions of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life.²² Thus, out of the thousands of women to choose from, Western men select the ones that best fit their personal needs. In essence, from a picture and roughly two paragraphs of information, men perceive this as a way to satisfy their needs. The predicament that follows concerns the fact that an attractive woman and similar interests does not guarantee a successful relationship. Coming from a position of wealth and having so many women to choose from, Western men are intentionally placed in a position of power. What does not show up on internet profiles are emotions, thoughts, and experiences, all of which play a significant role in building relationships.

Matchmaking companies that advertise Russian women proclaim, “No matter how much a loser you may be in your own country, you can always find a wife in Russia. ‘An ordinary American accountant married a famous Russian actress.’”²³ Marina Smiley warns readers not to believe what dating agencies say. Every dating/marriage agency on the web has its fair share of fairy tales about these May to December marriages.²⁴ Marie-Claire Belleau adds that the mail order bride industry feeds heavily

²² Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

²³ Glodava & Onizuka, 14.

²⁴ Marina Smiley, *The Truth about Russian Brides* (USA: International Soulmate, 2003), chapter 9.

on unrealistic and contradictory expectations about marital relationships.²⁵ In her study, Belleau, investigates the sexism that leads to a flourishing mail-order bride trade. This sexism is linked with Giddens' theory, in essence it puts women at an extreme disadvantage in terms of power and being successful in North America. Belleau adds, most husbands will try to keep their bride in a state of dependence and vulnerability.²⁶ One example of this is that numerous husbands refuse to allow their wives to obtain a driver's license. However, Russian women are slightly beginning to catch on to men who have these intentions. In an interview with Tanya (a Russian lady registered in an agency) she asks Ericka Johnson, "I have heard that American men want Russian wives because they want a housewife. Is that true?"²⁷ Therefore, women should be extremely cautious about who they decide to venture to America with. For some women who have made the journey to North America, the results have been positioned as a housewife and not getting a driver's license.

In addition to being cautious about the men they choose, women must also be skeptical about the match-making agencies where they register themselves. Stories abound in the former Soviet Union of women who are promised waitress or nanny jobs in the West but end up raped, beaten, stripped of their passports and identities, and "sold" to brothels in America, Europe, and the Middle East. The trafficking of human beings is a huge and sordid business. According to the UN protocol dealing with trafficking in humans, trafficking is, "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring

²⁵ Marie-Claude Belleau, "Mail-Order Brides in a Global World," *Albany Law Review* Vol. 67 Issue 2, 596.

²⁶ Belleau, 602.

²⁷ Ericka Johnson, *Dreaming of a Mail-Order Husband: Russian-American Internet Romance*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007,) 89.

or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability... or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”²⁸ Reports have appeared in the media of traffickers who shoot or even behead girls as an example in front of others they are trying to force into prostitution. Other stories tell of women who have been killed while escaping or upon returning home.²⁹ Several organizations as well as Western governments have launched awareness programs and modified immigration laws in an effort to protect women from trafficking and domestic abuse. The Russian government has also taken a stand to protect its women by imposing restrictions on the growth of the mail order bride industry.

Prior to 2002, women immigrated to Canada with a spousal visa when the marriage had been held in the bride’s country or with a fiancée’s visa when the marriage was to be held in Canada at some future date. In the case of the fiancée’s visa, the bride and her husband were under the obligation to marry and to prove that the marriage had been held within a period of ninety days from her entry into Canada. This condition gave tremendous power to the husband over his bride and led to increased abuse since she became an illegal immigrant in Canada if she did not meet these requirements within the ninety-day period. In June 2002, Canada recognized spouses

²⁸ United Nations ODCCP 2000.

²⁹ Johnson, 89.

and common-law partners for immigration purposes. With this legislation reform, Canada abolished the fiancée's visa.³⁰

Like Canada, the United States regulates the mail order bride industry primarily through its immigration law. The United States has passed numerous laws in the last two decades to protect foreign women within the immigration process. In 1996, the United States Congress adopted a law dealing specifically with the mail-order bride industry. The act requires that the mail-order bride agencies disclose information about immigration laws and procedures to the brides they recruit and impose fines of up to \$20,000 for each failure to comply.³¹ Since 1996, lawmakers in the United States have begun taking the issue more seriously, particularly after a number of high profile cases in which mail-order brides have been abused and even murdered by their husbands. The International Marriage Broker Regulation Act has begun to regulate the visa application process more justly, including mandatory criminal background checks on the men which are disseminated to their potential fiancées.³²

Other countries have also been imposing restrictions with regards to the growth of the mail-order bride business. In Russia, registration requires a passport and a guarantee from the groom's embassy that there are no obstacles to his getting married. The French embassy, for example, takes a very serious attitude toward marriages to foreign women. It requires that the French groom obtain certification of his 'legal capacity for marriage.'³³

³⁰ Belleau, 597.

³¹ Belleau, 598.

³² Johnson, 104.

³³ Glodava & Onizuka, 98.

“Guide” Books and the Men Involved in the Mail Order Bride Industry

Apart from the advertisements placed by women and men, the dominant texts of this industry are the guide books created by men to advise other men. The authors who write and publish these mail order bride guide books share strikingly similar characteristics. In almost all instances they are over thirty-five years of age. They are also educated and wealthy divorced men who chose to explore the dating scene in Eastern Europe in what they see as a last resort to finding a spouse. In addition, these men all agree that there are serious flaws with American society, most notably with its women. They have unrealistic, conservative and traditional opinions of how a wife should be. A *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter who tagged along on an agency trip to Russia wrote that what seemed to unite the men on the tour, “was a strong conviction that American women were materialistic and had been corrupted by feminism. They saw themselves as victims.”³⁴ In their books, the men openly outline their distaste for and

³⁴ Visson, 207

distrust of American women in today's society, and exhibit a yearning for what they term a more "traditional" woman.

Nonetheless, dozens of these guide books exist and the number of [endless] online international dating sites continues to grow. Thus, the question arises, who is buying these books and fueling this billion dollar industry? According to a research study by Dr. Davor Jedlicka, from the University of Texas, concerning the men who involve themselves in the mail order bride business, the men are generally white (94%); highly educated (50% with two or more years of college); politically and ideologically conservative (56% identified themselves as conservative, while 90% said sex should be between married or live-in partners); and usually economically and professionally successful (64% earned more than \$20,000 per year). Their median age was 37 and fifty-seven percent had been married at least once; most had been divorced after an average of seven years of marriage.³⁵ The word from European Connections is that most of the men who sign up for the agency's get-together tours across the demolished iron curtain are between 30 and 55 - the bulk around 41 or 42 - and they are evenly divided between lifelong bachelors and divorced men. On one trip to Russia the oldest man was 74 and the youngest 27.³⁶ While the typical man looking for a foreign wife used to be a middle-aged divorcee, in the 1990's, many younger men were not even bothering with American women first. One of the self-proclaimed experts, Gary Clark,

³⁵ Glodava & Onizuka, 26.

³⁶ Visson, 206.

notes that American men need not be rich for foreign women to find them attractive.³⁷

Hence, the authors and readers typically share the same features.

In terms of content and structure, most of the guides follow the same pattern and offer the same advice with only a few minor differences. This section will analyze several authors while comparing and contrasting their opinions on the mail order bride business. It will demonstrate that the authors are trying to turn a profit just as much as they are trying to help or guide American men towards Eastern European women. Furthermore, I will emphasize how some of these authors are using these books as a way of promoting their own international match making agencies or ones with which they have established a business relationship.

One notable aspect of the “guide” books is that they are usually self published. Without the editorial oversight that comes from working with established publishing houses, the author now has final say on the written content and pictures that are used. This often leads to a variety of errors in syntax, diction and punctuation. For example, Ivan Asimov’s handbook is filled with sentences like this. “And, yes, I have heard several people (a large minority) who have sent money under premises similar to above and the woman not lying and the whole thing not being a scam.”³⁸ Cases such as this - in other words of sloppy writing - are apparent in almost all of the books. However, the errors that would be erased with proper editing do not hinder an author’s ability to turn a profit, which is ultimately the goal for most of the writers.

³⁷ Simons, 129.

³⁸ Ivan Asimov, *Russian Bride: A Quick and Dirty Guide to Meeting, Dating and Marrying a Russian Woman* (Ivan Asimov, 2010), 17.

Billy Conn's, *How to Happily Survive Marriage to a Russian Woman* is our first example. Self-published in 2002, the book is littered with grammatical errors, misinterpretations, and an obvious desire to reach out to a North American male audience. In the preface, Conn states that he was born in 1947. He notes that he first got married at the age of twenty one and was divorced for eight years before meeting his Russian bride Luda. These basic facts conform to the characteristics of the men who write guides to the Russian bride industry. Representative of the over-generalizations and even outright factual distortions that can be found in such works, I give this example: according to Conn, "I believe quite a rivalry has developed between Russia and the Ukraine in the last several years."³⁹ In reality, one can argue that this particular "rivalry" has historical roots that go back hundreds of years given that the relationship between Russia and Ukraine has been punctuated by episodes such as the famine in 1930s Ukraine, which was triggered at least in part by Josef Stalin's collectivization of Soviet agriculture. Yet, because they (the self-proclaimed experts on the subject) do not have publishers and editors to properly manage the information that gets written, the authors' main goal is to offer a product that leads to profit, rather than to accurately enlighten and strengthen the readers understanding of the topic and the region in general.

In 2009 and 2010, Ivan Asimov wrote and published two books intended to assist Western males on their search for an Eastern European bride. The first, *The Russian Bride Phrasebook*, should not even be considered as a narrative book, since it consists of random English phrases translated into Russian, something an English/Russian

³⁹ Billy Conn, *How to Happily Survive Marriage to a Russian Woman* (Bloomington: Billy Conn, 2002), 6.

dictionary can do just as well. But the author's choice of content is illuminating. Chapters are created according to situations where knowing these phrases might be useful such as "Getting Acquainted" and "Shopping". The inclusion of Chapter 11 "Bedroom Talk", speaks to the sexualized nature of the industry in general. Here, the reader will find phrases such as "touch me here. Prikosnis ko mne zdes."⁴⁰ Furthermore, upon inspecting this little guide book it is difficult to overlook the website written at the start of every chapter, www.russiantutor.us. Readers are also told in the introduction that "Note: Pronunciation tutoring is available for an additional fee at www.russiantutor.us."⁴¹ Thus, the author is not only intent on selling books but establishing an on-going commercial relationship via a language assistance website. It is perhaps a sign of the fast pace of change in the industry that the website can no longer be found on the internet, however.

Asimov's second book, *Russian Bride: A Quick and Dirty Guide to Meeting, Dating and Marrying a Russian Woman*, offers a little more substance, albeit in just thirty eight pages. In contradiction to the other authors of the genre, Asimov offers no personal experience with mail order brides. Still his conclusions are based on similar generalizations and his work follows the format typical for these types of books. The prose is designed to tempt the reader by offering images an exotic "other" as a potential spouse, a woman who has not been tainted by Western-style feminism. Asimov writes early on in his book, "Men have always been known to fall for the exotic women of Russia because of their beautiful accents and gorgeous features. They're not the cookie-cutter women at home, formed by the requirements and expectations of

⁴⁰ Ivan Asimov, *The Russian Bride Phrasebook* (USA: Ivan Asimov, 2009), 42.

⁴¹ Asimov, *The Russian Bride Phrasebook*, 1.

American society.”⁴² Although he has a Russian name, this excerpt suggests that he is an American and, like all the other authors, is skeptical towards American women.

Mark Edward Davis is another American driven to write his guide book on mail order brides, *Mastering the Adventure of International Dating*. Unlike the previous books, this one is not explicitly self-published. However, the publisher, MMIX International Dating for Men (ID4M), could not be found anywhere on the internet today. In the acknowledgement section Davis thanks the staff at *A Foreign Affair* from around the world for allowing him to use pictures of women in his book. *A Foreign Affair* is an international match making agency that is presently connected to the site www.loveme.com. *A Foreign Affair* is still active in the market today, as one can see by the contents of Appendix 2-a and 2-b. - city “maps” were printed and distributed by the agency in Nikolaev, Ukraine. Printed in English and displaying pictures of beautiful women all over the paper, the advertisement is meant to appeal to a Western male audience. So how does Mark Davis fit into this equation?

In his introduction Davis attempts to create a connection with the reader. He portrays himself as a simple common man who unintentionally stumbled upon the world’s greatest asset: Eastern European women. As he writes, “I’m not a millionaire or anyone famous. I’m Mark, an average guy who makes mid-level managers’ salary and lives in a comfortable middle-class house.”⁴³ Furthermore, he adds, “I am one of the most valuable commodities in the world to women in most other parts of the world.”⁴⁴ On

⁴² Asimov, *Russian Bride*, 2.

⁴³ Mark Edward Davis, *Mastering the Adventure of International Dating* (Las Vegas: MMIX International Dating for Men, 2009), i.

⁴⁴ Davis, 11.

the back cover, Davis proudly stated he is, “a successful entrepreneur and CEO, and as of 2006, husband of Anna, a stunning Ukrainian-born runway model.”⁴⁵ Thus, if Davis can do it, then anyone can right?

In addition to creating an “average guy” connection with the reader, Davis uses pictures to justify his argument. On many occasions he uses pictures of himself with beautiful European women (please view image 3 in Appendix), or sometimes of the women alone in bikinis or strikingly sexual poses. As he calls them, these are “pictures that would keep her on my mind.”⁴⁶ This physical evidence is used to create the illusion that any “average Joe” can date a beautiful woman. Furthermore, at the start of every chapter, there is a picture of a pretty woman along with her name, age, height, weight, country of origin and a link to the website www.sheisthere.com. Currently, this site is no longer active and re-routes users to europeandreamconnections.com, a company devoted to international match-making, founded by none other than, Mark Edward Davis. The site has since been moved to dreamconnections.com. The site offers thousands of women’s profiles which can be browsed for free. It charges an additional fee to view extra pictures and send letters or emails. There are also forums where people can discuss their international dating experiences, as well as a section where Davis organizes and sells trips to certain cities where social meeting gatherings are held in order to introduce Western men to Eastern European women. Finally, on his site, Davis also posts “guide” videos with his Ukrainian wife giving the information. The video

⁴⁵ Davis, cover.

⁴⁶ Davis, 152.

quality and sound is atrocious; it is almost impossible to comprehend what his wife is saying.

This is not the only instance of a foreign bride going on to assist in the publishing and business ventures of her husbands. Another partnership is evident in the case of *Russian Bride Guide: How to Meet, Court, and Marry a Woman from the former Soviet Union*. The book was co-written by Stuart J. Smith and Olga Maslova. Having his wife's Russian name on the cover gives the author credibility – it demonstrates that he was successful in marrying a woman from Eastern Europe. Unlike the other American authors, Smith is British. He offers a slightly different perspective on the process as well and he certainly includes information – such as immigration and travel details for EU countries - not found in guides aimed at the American market. In essence, the details are very similar, yet he describes his ambitions in a less vulgar, more courteous manner than many of the authors of the genre. As a matter of fact, this book makes the reader feel like the author is genuinely trying to help and not just promote a website or dating agency for personal gain.

Like most men who turn to searching for brides in Eastern Europe, Smith decided to investigate Russian women after a long term relationship with a local woman ended. In 2006, he married his Russian wife, Olga. In the introduction Smith states he works as an administrator of a comprehensive, internet based advice forum, dealing with relationships with Russian women and that his wife owns and operates a small agency website.⁴⁷ I had mentioned the book felt genuine because at no point did the authors try to overtly promote their own agency and website. However, at the end in the “other

⁴⁷ Smith, 3.

resources” section of the book, they do include a link to their site russianwomenbook.com. Nonetheless, the site only sells copies of the *Russian Bride Guide* and information on mail order brides as opposed to other authors like Davis who are selling a wider array of products. Moreover, on the site Smith admits, “ We wrote this book to educate you about the sharks in this industry. We seek to open your eyes to the mega-agencies who have translators scamming guys, faking letters at ten dollars a shot.”⁴⁸ Throughout the book he suggests sites that men should use when searching for a mail order bride. For example, he mentioned love.mail.ru and that his resources site offers the tools available to navigate a free Russian language dating site. Finally at the end, Smith provides information for a handful of free websites and discussion forums where men can get additional information on the topic. Conveniently, all the sites still work.

From the most useful guide book in this analysis it is time to turn to the one that is the most vulgar and demeaning towards women, *To Russia for Love: The American Man’s Best Option* by Frank Coleman. “Dedicated to the millions of men who deserve better than what they have been able to find on American soil”⁴⁹ the book resounds with criticism of North American women and presents an essentialized and highly sexualized portrait of Russian women. Needless to say this is another self-published book littered with grammatical errors and sweeping generalizations.

Coleman is a middle aged man who ventured into the Eastern European realm after his divorce was finalized in 1991. His feelings towards American women are

⁴⁸ russianwomenbook.com

⁴⁹ Coleman, 3.

expressed quite bluntly in the first few pages and continue throughout the book. Written in bold face type at the end of his introduction, Coleman states, “Russian women are simply better at being women than American women are!”⁵⁰ The book is basically the story of all the Eastern European women he dated before eventually settling with “the one”. While he may not realize it, Coleman demeans all women in the book not just the American ones he criticizes. What he calls dating is an obvious exploitation of the precarious positions of women living in parts of the world that lack economic security. In addition to being sexist, Coleman is a racist. As he writes, “For many years I was aware of agencies that represent Latin women, Asian women, and Filipinos to American men. Quite frankly, I know my own prejudices and one is that I want my children to look like they are my children.”⁵¹

A 1994 article demonstrated that Filipinos had dominated the mail order bride business, by exporting more than 50% of total mail order brides worldwide.⁵² However, since the fall of Communism, many Western men sharing Coleman’s perspective of racial homogeneity have shifted their attention to Eastern Europe. Over the past five years (1994-1999), there has been an explosion of dating agencies in the United States specializing in bringing American men together with women in Russia and Eastern Europe. In the business of mail-order-brides, which goes back to the frontier days of the old West, the Russian contingent has shot up, ranking Russian women second only to

⁵⁰ Coleman, 15.

⁵¹ Coleman, 19.

⁵² Glodava & Onizuka, 47.

Filipino women in the number of “fiancee visas” granted by the U.S. immigration service in 1999.⁵³

The Women AKA: Mail Order Brides

The financial aspect of the mail order brides industry is essentially fueled by Western men, however, there would not be a business without the hundreds of thousands of women from all around the world willingly enlisting themselves with match-making agencies. American men marrying foreign women is not a new occurrence: foreign women have long captivated the male imagination in popular culture, and the traffic of women for marriage and/or prostitution in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was widespread. There has, however, been a notable rise since the early 1980's in the numbers of women entering the United States as mail order brides. For example, in 1970, only 23 Asians were issued fiancee-petitioned visas; while in 1983,

⁵³ Visson, 205.

the figure jumped dramatically to 3,428.⁵⁴ This section will investigate the many reasons women turn to match making agencies which, include: lack of jobs available to women, lack of quality Russian men, economic hardships, and ambitions of traveling to the West among others. My primary focus will be on Eastern Europe, however, some comparisons with Asian women involved in the industry are also fruitful for my analysis.

The mail order bride industry in Eastern Europe began gaining in popularity shortly after the fall of Communism. Understanding Eastern European culture is a crucial component to uncovering the numerous reasons why women in this area of the world are searching for foreign men. In the West, after WWII returning women to the kitchen was intended to re-establish the pre-war gender order and showcase the affluence of the West. In the Soviet Union, women were put to work to show progressiveness.⁵⁵ During this period, women reached levels of education equal to, and in many cases higher than men; they provided a substantial percentage of the professional class of physicians, lawyers, engineers, and scientific lawyers. Workforce participation rates for women were the highest in the world, with 90 percent of working-age women either on the job or attending school.⁵⁶ Under communism, working full time and taking care of family and home chores was the norm for women. As one woman put it,

⁵⁴ Simons, 128.

⁵⁵ Shana Penn & Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern & Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17.

⁵⁶ Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Strong Women, Weak State: Family Politics and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine," in *Post Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism*, ed. Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias. (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 4.

“How was our life then? The fact that we found work, we were promoted and we got raises... it didn’t seem difficult to me.. it didn’t matter if you were well paid or just sufficiently paid, each person was important in their own way. We led a very industrious life. I came home from work, I washed, I ironed, I made food... and still had time to embroider and knit.”⁵⁷

Furthermore, work also helped shape women’s experiences, attitudes, self-identities, and relationships with colleagues and spouses. The collapse of communism in the early 1990’s introduced a history of patriarchal values in the organization of labour. This shaped gender roles in the post communism era. According to Tatiana Zhurzhenko, the neonationalism that swept the former Soviet republics after 1991 added impetus to the idea that motherhood formed women’s central mission in life. In many cases, women found themselves in a position in where rejecting Soviet ideology meant embracing an ethnonational identity that subordinated women’s social role to far more conservative expectations.⁵⁸

Since the 1980’s women’s employment has decreased by 20% in comparison to 8% among men.⁵⁹ According to the United Nations, women in the former Soviet Union are starting businesses at half the rate of men because of traditional prejudices against women in business. Additionally, many women trained as doctors and teachers began working as secretaries or selling goods in kiosks as they saw their previous government-paid positions disappear or their salaries erode.⁶⁰ In the words of one, “at the present time, thousands of people, among them many with high levels of education

⁵⁷ Interview with Maria Brasov, summer 2003 by Jill Massino, “Workers under Construction: Gender, Identity, and Women’s Experiences of Work in State Socialist Romania,” in *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe* ed., Shana Penn & Jill Massino, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13.

⁵⁸ Zhurzhenko, 5.

⁵⁹ Johnson, 70.

⁶⁰ Johnson, 72-73.

and excellent specialist skills, are not necessary to anyone; factories are standing still, industry is in a serious crisis, and there is very high unemployment.” Valentina, works in an open-air stand, selling imported clothing in a large bazaar next to a train station - this despite her university degree in chemistry. “There haven’t been jobs in chemists here in ten years. I am lucky to be working at the market.”⁶¹ For single women trying to make ends meet, discrimination like that is the last thing they need. This difficulty is magnified for single women with children.

The “guide” books analyzed earlier, along with the information from numerous international match-making sites and the media have cast an unrealistic portrait of the mail order bride industry. Contrary to the stereotype of the 20-year-old Russian beauty marrying an elderly American pervert, the ages of the women advertising through *Virginia* vary widely. In November 2002 the first 55 women on the site ranged in age from 20 to 53, with the largest group of women (21) being between 31 and 40. All of them had post secondary education, more than two-thirds of them at university level. Eleven of the women had never been married, while 24 were divorced, and one was in the middle of divorcing her husband. Three women were widows and the remaining 16 gave no information on their marital status. More than half the women already had one or two children.⁶²

There are numerous reasons women like these choose to look for men abroad. The economic collapse that has reduced almost half the Russian population to dire straits, with poverty, malnutrition, and poor health care becoming endemic across the

⁶¹ Johnson, Interview with Valentina, 69.

⁶² Luehrmann, 864.

country, has been especially hard on women.⁶³ In a survey done in the province of Yoshkar-Ola, Russia, Sonja Luehrmann concluded that the desire to move to 'the West' was a primary motivation for women who use the services of matchmaking agencies. On the other hand, many women - whether young and unmarried or middle-aged and divorced - talked about being lonely and wanting to have a family. They would be happy to marry a Russian, many of them said, if they could find someone who was not a drunkard and would actually be a more helpful partner. American men have a reputation in Russia of being more sensitive and caring in their relationships with women. "Russian men are drunkards, not physically fit, not very good sexually... while Western men seem to be leaner, more responsible, and fit," commented to the head of the St. Petersburg Center for Gender Issues.⁶⁴ Such men, they claimed, were almost impossible to find in Yoshkar-Ola, because they were either 'taken' by other women or moved away to find work in a bigger city.⁶⁵ Zina, a young Russian woman who married an American man also exhibited the pessimism women of her country feel for local men. "In Russia, all the men know what women's obligations are - to sew, to cook, they know all that by heart. But they have no idea whatsoever of what their obligations might be... In Russia, the men have been spoiled by women."⁶⁶ The search for 'quality' men seems to be a recurrent problem that common Eastern European women are faced with daily.

A serious concern over the gender imbalance that has been apparent in Russian society long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was one of the reasons for the

⁶³ Visson, 210.

⁶⁴ Visson, 211.

⁶⁵ Luehrmann, 864.

⁶⁶ Visson, 216.

legalisation of match-making services during the Brezhnev era. The life expectancy of Russian men has been declining since the 1960's, a trend that increased in the 1990's. In Moscow during the 1980's, the main causes of death for males who were capable of working (i.e., not diagnosed with a debilitating illness) were alcohol-related accidents and alcohol poisoning (overdose).⁶⁷ Russian men are four times more likely to die alcohol related deaths than women.⁶⁸ In 2001, life expectancy at birth was 58.6 years for men. Since the mortality rate is especially high for men between 35 and 55, it is in this age bracket and above that women outnumber men.⁶⁹ Because of this situation, finding (and keeping) a Russian husband is often considered a challenge. Alcoholism among Eastern European men has become so prominent that it has led women to venture into the online dating world to find foreign men who do not drink excessively.

While examining some of the women's profiles on www.loveme.com in the "drinker" section majority of the women responded "no" with a few "casual" responses from younger women. It is evident Russian women are looking to foreign men who do not have alcohol problems and who will live long enough to maintain a family. Masha's Russian husband used to get drunk every night. She then moved to America with her new husband, Paul. "When we arrived at Paul's house and he got himself a glass of orange juice and poured in some vodka, I thought, 'Oh my God, I've done it again.' I'd

⁶⁷ Boris S. Bratus, "Alcoholism in Russia: The Enemy Within," in *States of Mind: American and Post-Soviet Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Psychology*, ed. Diane F. Halpern & Alexander E. Voiskounsky, (New York: Oxford University press, 1997), 200

⁶⁸ Johnson, 52.

⁶⁹ Luehrmann, 866-867

never seen a man have just one drink and stop.”⁷⁰ Alcoholism is a real fear preventing Russian women from dating local men which is why foreign men seem so appealing.

In her research, Ericka Johnson has confirmed that Russian women have lost hope with the men of their country. “They (Russian men) are having a hard time negotiating the economic upheaval , social change, and not least of all the resulting unemployment.”⁷¹ One interviewee in Yoshkar-Ola who spoke to Luehrmann explained how young people used to get married when they felt like it, because they knew that their salaries were more or less assured, child care and education for their children would be provided, and that they would be assigned a state-owned apartment eventually. Today, by contrast, people really need to assess whether they would be able to support themselves and children, how and where they would find housing, and how they would pay for their children’s education.⁷² Despite the statistics, the average age for women getting married in the post communist states remains relatively low (twenty-three, and even younger in the provinces) in comparison to America, where most people get married for the first time in their late twenties.⁷³ Furthermore, seventy percent of Soviet women say they have never experienced orgasm. Partly this is because many Russian men apparently do not know, or do not care, what satisfies a woman, but lack of sexual satisfaction may also stem from the fear of pregnancy given that there is a widespread belief that the female orgasm increases the chances of conception.⁷⁴ For all these reasons, many Russian marriages tend to end in divorce, and children being

⁷⁰ Visson, 220.

⁷¹ Johnson, 53.

⁷² Luehrmann, 866.

⁷³ Johnson, 53.

⁷⁴ Visson, 119.

raised by their mothers. Match making agencies are filled with divorced single mothers. According to Valentina, (a women in her thirties registered with one such agency) most Russian men were not interested in starting a romance with a woman her age, and her situation was made even more difficult because she had a daughter from her first marriage. "Russian men don't want to raise someone else's children. They are looking for free, well-provided-for and beautiful women."⁷⁵

On the other side of the spectrum, there are, inevitably - the so-called Natashas- whose search is for American sugar daddies with furs, jewelry and Jaguars to hand out, but they are mostly fashion models and the quota is small. Furthermore, there is another small group that reflects sadly on conditions in Russia today - widows whose businessmen husbands were gunned down by the Russian mafia and who do not want to relish the prospect of going through the same tragedy again.⁷⁶ While the number of such women is small, they are another example of the dilemmas Eastern Europeans confront with their culture and men.

The general consensus among Eastern European women is that it is very difficult to find a local man who is financially and emotional stable and will take care of a family. It seems as though women from these poorer nations share the same predicaments as those from economically disadvantaged parts of Asia. Of the fifteen most populous nations in 1989, Vietnam had the lowest ratio of men to women at the peak marrying ages. By 1999, there were approximately 92 men for every 100 women between the

⁷⁵ Johnson, 67.

⁷⁶ Visson, 211.

ages of 30 and 34.⁷⁷ In her study, Hung Cam Thai, follows the arranged marriage between Thanh, an educated Vietnamese woman, and Minh, a Vietnamese man living in the United States. Her statements are strikingly similar to those Eastern women mentioned earlier.

“I am already in Vietnam. You know, at thirty-two here, it’s hard to find a decent husband. I knew that when I decided to get a good education here that many men would be intimidated by me. In Asian cultures, but maybe in Vietnam especially, the men do not want their wives to be better than them.”⁷⁸

Unlike Eastern European women who are searching for foreign men who might be just as happy with a desirable local partner, Vietnamese women maintain a belief that a man living in the West inherently holds more value than local men. It is as though despite their relative incomes and education, if the man is from a First World country, he has the “up,” while a woman from Third World Vietnam has the “down”.⁷⁹ Furthermore, again drawing similarities to Russia, Vietnamese men are known for showing little respect to their wives. This is why marrying a low-wage worker overseas looks attractive to Thanh, because she knows that in Vietnam, her high educational status will not help her escape the gender subordination of marital life. She can think of few men she knows in Vietnam who show respect to their wives.⁸⁰ Thus, a comparison can be drawn with Eastern European women whom are also searching for Western men who will treat them with respect. Nonetheless, the lives and experiences of Eastern European women differ greatly from those of South East Asia.

⁷⁷ Hung Cam Thai, “Clashing Dreams: Highly Educated Overseas Brides and Low-Wage U.S. Husbands,” in *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, ed. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 232.

⁷⁸ Cam Thai, 236.

⁷⁹ Cam Thai, 233.

⁸⁰ Cam Thai, 237.

The Truth about Russian Brides by Marina Smiley was purposely left out of the “guide book” section. In this particular case, Smiley is a Russian woman who successfully courted and married an American man. Her book follows the same principles of the other “guide” books but, offers a female perspective. Information about the publisher, *International Soulmate*, could not be found anywhere. There are numerous grammatical errors, no page numbers, and poor Russian to English translation in some cases. These elements suggest that the book may have been self-published and certainly was poorly edited. Nonetheless, Smiley offers a perspective the other books do not. The male guide books analyzed earlier generalized all Eastern European women into one category. For her part, Smiley divides Russian women by their age, or rather, the generation they grew up in. She argues that the vast difference is not so much about age, as it has to do with growing up every ten years in entirely different Russian societies.⁸¹

She begins by looking at women born between the years of 1958 and 1968, which in 2003 (the year the book was published) would make them thirty-five to forty-five years old. She assumes that women born in Russia during this period most likely had parents that were affected by World War II. Millions of men died during the Great Patriotic War and women of this age group often grew up with only one parent, usually their mother. The single parent usually worked long hours and with little child-care present in the Russian system, these children were trusted with the key to their flat at very young ages (4-6 years old). Thus, women of this age group were raised with a strong work ethic and sense of independence. Members of this cohort have not had

⁸¹ Smiley, Chapter 1.

easy lives, and do not enlist themselves with a dating agency because they are searching for wealth. They want to meet a man who will see them as a lover and friend, not just as a partner for survival.⁸²

A second generation of Russian women aged eighteen to twenty-five. The generalizations and misconceptions regarding the industry are no doubt stemmed from this age group. Smiley says that it is not impossible for forty year old men to marry women from this age group, however, these women are immature and the relationships are doomed to fail. Children of this age group are often called the “Kids of Perestroika”, the first generation born around the time the Soviet Union collapsed. They grew up with barely any baby food, clothing, and toys. At ten years old, these children spent a lot of time with their parents standing in lines to exchange their ration ticket for a bag of sugar and a little piece of butter.⁸³ According to Smiley, these women do not wish to live as their parents did. A proposal from a foreign man and the possibility of living in America tends to lead them immature women of this age group to jump into marriages that they are not ready for. Women of this age group, that have been raised in a capitalist system are not much different than their American counterparts.

The ideal age Western men should pursue in their search for Russian women, in Smiley’s opinion, range in age from twenty-five and thirty-five. These women were raised under Communism, witnessed its fall and fought through the poor times. In Russia, public opinion about women who are 25+ and unmarried without any children, is

⁸² Smiley, chapter 6.

⁸³ Smiley, chapter 9.

very cruel.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, these women often look just as young as members of the 18-25 age group but are more mature. They are more willing to marry older foreign men because they think these men will be thankful to have a wife that is much younger and be more appreciative than their Russian counterparts.

Conclusion

Much has been said about the mail-order bride industry with regards to where it began and the players involved. However, where does the future lie? Mail-order brides coming from Eastern Europe have been exoticized and glamourized by Westerners because they were born and raised in areas that the West knew little about. There was an assumption that Western men were 'saving' Eastern European women from poverty and malnutrition after the collapse of Communism. Presently, most of the younger generation of Eastern European women (aged 20+) have never lived a day under a Communist regime. Capitalism and the far reaches of globalization have changed the landscape of Eastern Europe over the past two decades. The quality of life in larger Eastern European cities is much better than it was twenty years ago. Women from major cities like Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, and Kiev do not live much differently than Western women do. Of course, there are culture differences that have impeded the advancement of women in these places and a gender imbalance has led some women to look outside their hometowns for husbands. Nonetheless, for Western men, the allure

⁸⁴ Smiley, chapter 11.

of the exotic Eastern European “mail-order bride” still remains the top selling characteristic for international match-making agencies.

The internet has changed the way people meet and communicate. There are dozens of local match-making agencies that connect people living in the same city. Yet, Western men are instead turning to Eastern European women to chase a fantasy that does not really exist anymore, that of the beautiful stay at home passive wife. There may be Eastern European women of this sort but there are also Western women who may fit that description as well. Nonetheless, it is American women who are vilified in this industry. Self-published “guide books” include sentences such as, “American women want and expect more rights and privileges than any man could ever hope to have.”⁸⁵ Phrases like the one above continue to lure lonely Western men into spend anywhere between \$10,000 - \$20,000 to meet, visit, and date Eastern European women, why? Through my research I have concluded that although it is the men fueling the industry, it is the agencies that are doing a great job of selling a myth. Whether they are convinced by the guide books, agencies and/or their own failed marriages, single and desperate men are buying into the idea that Eastern European women make better wives. Whether they are right or wrong is not the issue, the fact that they are willing to invest enormous sums of money to pursue this illusion is where the problem lies. Western men can venture to Eastern Europe to meet women on their own and save thousands of dollars, yet this option is never mentioned once in any guide book or site. Match-making agencies can be useful and have no doubt witnessed many success stories, but the fact remains that they are selling an opportunity to men, not a guarantee.

⁸⁵ Coleman, 48.

The men are not buying a wife, they are purchasing the chance to fall in love, unfortunately, this truth is often lost in translation.

Appendix

1)

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Major points of interest

Map Key

1 AFA Office	6 Nikolaev Zoo	11 The monument to St. Nikolay	16 City Center
2 Hotel Continent	7 Yacht club	12 The monument to Pushkin A.S	17 Bazaar Koloss
3 Hotel Ukraine	8 The church of st. Nikolay	13 Restaurant White Sun of the Desert	18 Central Bazaar
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2-
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possess these qualities among men my age, because they are not actually men yet, they're still boys, and I need someone mature enough to be able to truly understand a woman's needs and capacity to love. This is also the reason why I'm attracted to older men.

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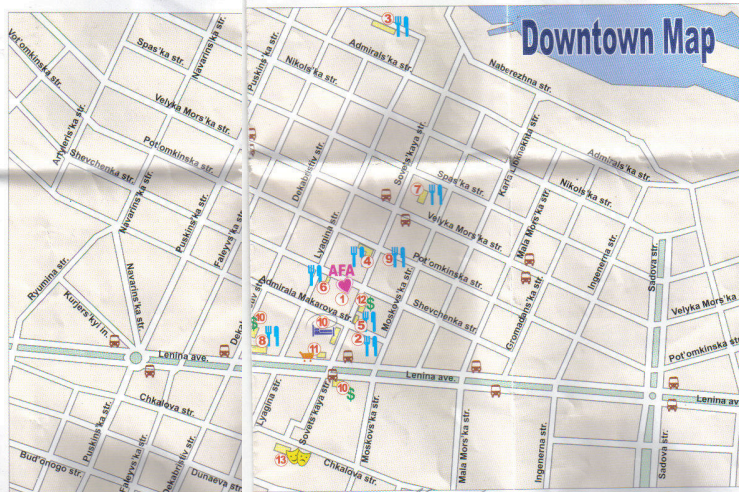
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- 1 AFA office
- 2 McDonald's
- 3 Restaurant Kazbek
- 4 Pizzeria Bokas-del-Ioro
- 5 Restaurant and disko club Mon
- 6 Cafe Veranda
- 7 Nightclub Illusion
- 8 Restaurant Vareniki
- 9 Restaurant Dikanka

- 10 Hotel Continent
- 11 Grocery Sotka
- 12 Bank Privatbank
- 13 City Palace of Culture
- Bus stop

Major points
 of interest
 Map Key

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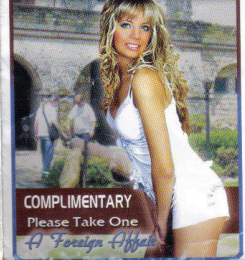
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MASTERING THE ADVENTURE



These lovely ladies were great company at the third social

By the end of that first social I had four dates lined up for the next two days. After the dance wrapped up and people started to leave, I asked one of the girls if she'd take me out for a late night on the town. She took me to two of her favorite discos. These were amazing night clubs – part of a chain from Germany. I had the time of my life.

THE QUEST TO FIND YOUR QUEEN



This is Anastasia. She gave me the tour of the local dance clubs that night and we met up again the next day to tour Odessa.

Every Social Makes the Next One Better

I have to give credit to my friend John for this observation. As I was reliving the social experience with him, I told him how great the last social was in Kherson. I said, "It was an amazing atmosphere. The girls were in a great mood and ready to party. It was so comfortable. I remember being waved over to a table of girls who wanted me to join them. It was crazy fun! The night was filled with laughter, dancing, stories, tons of flirting and lots of energy."

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