INHERITED DISCOURSE: STALINIST TROPES IN THAW CULTURE

by

Alexander Prokhorov

BA, Moscow State University, 1987

MA, University of Pittsburgh , 1994

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2002

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Alexander Prokhorov

It was defended on

April 26, 2002

and approved by

Lucy Fischer

Mark Altshuller

Nancy Condee

Vladimir Padunov

Helena Goscilo
Dissertation Director

INHERITED DISCOURSE: STALINIST TROPES IN THAW CULTURE

Alexander Prokhorov, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2002

My dissertation argues that while Thaw cultural producers believed that they had abandoned Stalinist cultural practices, their works continued to generate, in revised form, the major tropes of Stalinist culture: the positive hero, and family and war tropes. Although the cultural Thaw of the 1950s and 60s embraced new values, it merely reworked Stalinist artistic practices. On the basis of literary and cinematic texts, I examine how these two media reinstantiated the fundamental tropes of Russo-Soviet culture.

In the first two chapters, I discuss approaches to Thaw literature and film in Western and Soviet scholarship, and my methodology, which is best defined as cultural semiotics. Chapter Three discusses the instantiations of the positive hero in Thaw literature and film. As case studies I adduce Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) and Grigorii Kozintsev's film adaptation of *Hamlet* (1964). Though both texts are considered "beyond" classical socialist realist aesthetics, I contend that they feed on major Stalinist tropes and dialogize and elaborate the Stalinist canon. The positive hero remains the major trope for constructing individual, and, above all, masculine, identity. The narrative of maturation into true consciousness remains central for the Thaw novel and film. The fact that the protagonists are insistently non-Soviet does not significantly alter discursive practices of Soviet culture and sooner reflects the interests of the intelligentsia who negotiated intellectual capital with the party elite.

The fourth chapter examines how Thaw culture redefines the family and war tropes in trench prose and film melodrama. Whereas the family trope family trope is central for constructing Soviet national identity, the war trope represents the culture's mode of existence, casting Soviet values in confrontation with their ideological "opponents": Non-Soviet natural laws, the elemental forces of market economy, and the spontaneous and irrational forces of human nature. Trench prose emerged as an unheroic and antimonumental way of representing the Great Patriotic War in response to the bombast of its Stalin era representations. Viktor Nekrasov's short novel *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1947)—a model of trench prose—was published before Stalin's death under the title *Stalingrad* and received the Stalin Prize. Thaw renditions of fundamental tropes were not completely alien to earlier Soviet culture: the new variants of the tropes stem from those established during the 1930s and 40s.

The central cinematic genre of the Thaw was family melodrama. My analysis of an exemplar of this genre focuses on Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* (1957) recycling the family and war tropes in a story of betrayal and redemption. National identity loses its monumental and patriarchal overtones and is transferred to the more traditional feminine figure, who functions as a symbol of Russia. The female protagonist, Veronika, incarnates in her life-narrative the sufferings and salvation of the nation. In *Cranes* the war trope stops reiterating the confrontation between Soviet "us" and non-Soviet "them." No longer external to the Soviet system, evil becomes part of the Soviet "us": Veronika's "stepbrother" first rapes and then betrays her.

The fifth chapter treats the ironic reworkings of the major tropes in Soviet culture of the 1960s. My case studies consist of Vasilii Aksenov's short novel *Ticket to the Stars* (1961) and El'dar Riazanov's film *Beware of a Car* (1966). Irony, as one of the major taboos of socialist

realism, was absent during Stalinism and early Thaw culture but became an increasingly dominant mode of late Soviet "aesthetics." I examine each text from the viewpoint of its inner system of values and in the context of the era's cultural politics. The dissertation traces the evolution of Soviet cultural tropes in literature and film of the Thaw: from the project of redefining them to the project of distancing from them. While the majority of writers on the period argue the radical departure of Thaw producers from the Stalinist cultural practices, I argue for the understanding of the Thaw as the period sharing basic cultural tropes with Stalinism while their specific instantiations in various modes of cultural production became different due to the changes in cultural capital, technologies, and values.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of the people to whom I owe my gratitude are not only my colleagues but my close friends. First and foremost I would like to thank Helena Goscilo for her friendly advice, encouragement, and indefatigable support. I have exchanged so many ideas with Helena that, in spirit of Bakhtinian dialogism, I can no longer claim that they are entirely mine. With all my heart I thank Helena for teaching me both to write and to theorize culture beyond common places and borders of the established field. She transformed the trying years of writing this thesis into a rewarding intellectual dialogue.

I want to thank my readers, Mark Altshuller, Nancy Condee, Lucy Fischer, and Vladimir Padunov. Volodia's proseminar still remains the most intellectually revealing and theoretically rigorous course that I have ever taken. It is this course that made me change my career from applied linguistics to cultural and film studies. I have been privileged to learn from and to write for Nancy Condee in her courses on Russo-Soviet culture, which provided the conceptual framework for this thesis.   I am grateful to Lucy Fischer who introduced me to film theory and criticism and served as a patient mentor and reader throughout my studies at the University of Pittsburgh. My next thanks are to Mark Altshuller and Elena Dryzhakova, whose seminars and book about the Thaw ignited my dialogic imagination and triggered my own writing about the late Soviet culture.

Many thanks to my mentors and colleagues from whose courses, comments, or writings I was honored to learn: David Birnbaum, Katerina Clark, Evgenii Dobrenko, Mikhail Iampolskii, Marcia Landy, Jane Feuer, Susan Larsen, Mark Lipovetskii, Maia Turovskaia, Josephine Woll, and Neia Zorkaia. I also want to thank the late Fred Koloc, whose catholicity allowed me to work at the University in Pittsburgh and complete this dissertation.

My fellow graduate students and family also provided invaluable support. I am especially grateful to my beloved wife and colleague Elena Prokhorova, and friends Michael Brewer, Seth Graham, Jerry McCausland, and Petre Petrov for intellectual dialogue and intertextual links, without which this dissertation would not be possible.

In the end this dissertation is dedicated to my parents. I still remember the time my mother wrote her Ph.D.: her perseverance and sagacity always encouraged my effort. Finally, I want to thank my daughter Dasha for learning at her early age the word "dissertation" and asking me whether I finished it yet.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter One. The Thaws: Narratives and Approaches

Thaw culture exists in narratives about it. This decade (1953-64) of relative liberalization in cultural policies after Stalin's death found numerous commentators both in Russia and in the West. Russian critics writing about the Thaw usually share the spirit of new beginnings after Stalin's death in 1953. The same year Olga Bergol'ts published an article arguing for lyrical poetry as the key mode of authentic self-expression. At the end of the year Pomerantsev wrote an article on sincerity as the prime value of literary writing. This quest for sincere and authentic voices that could revive the Soviet project permeate most of the Russo-Soviet writing about the period's culture.

Most accounts of Thaw culture focused on high literature, with only cursory comments on film, theater, or painting as long as these forms of cultural production were connected with the political events of the era. Many histories of the Thaw, for example, refer to Khrushchev's visit to the Exhibit of Moscow Artists in December 1962 because his criticism of the young artists' works signaled a shift in cultural politics of the era. The focus on literature is not to be underestimated, especially in a culture such as Russia's, where literature plays the role of a surrogate religion. However, during the Thaw literature's favored status overshadows culture's general distancing from Stalinist logo- and literary-centrism and the tremendous role of cinema in the articulation of the era's values.

The search for the discourse of sincerity that would help to establish truth and justice explains the major mode of writing about the Thaw among Russian critics. They write literary histories, the legitimacy of which is confirmed by their having witnessed the events they describe. The pinnacle of sincerity was achieved during the Gorbachev era when such a child of the Thaw as Vladimir Lakshin (the major critic of the liberal literary journal *Novyi mir*)

published in 1991 his diaries from 1953 to 1964. The publication was the most unmediated

sincere account of the literary politics from the point of view of Lakshin, as a Thaw liberal critic.

In short, Russo-Soviet histories of the Thaw assume that the writers of the period produced

works emanating sincerity fated to be suppressed by the authoritarian society. As a result many

of the critics and writers ended up in emigration, but with their sincerity intact. These literary

historians see the end of the Soviet Union as the victory of the spirit of sincerity over an

oppressive society. The exception to such histories of the period is Aleksandr Genis and Petr

Vail''s *The Sixties* (1988), which examines the Thaw as an interdisciplinary phenomenon. They

view the era's mindset as geared toward reviving the utopian ethos of Soviet revolution more in

the spirit of the 1920s avant-garde than of the pragmatism of Stalinism. In as much as their work

discusses cultural values and the construction of social identity, it establishes a new direction in

the studies of the era.

In the West, studies of poststalinist culture first appeared as the offspring of totalitarian

studies in the 1950s and 60s. Their primary focus was on high literature and their basic premise

found expression in a set of binary oppositions: oppressive society/free literature independent of

this society; inferior official literature/unofficial literary masterpieces; and surface lie/underlying

truth. The gradual revision of this model is the story of the last thirty years of Slavic Studies.

Most of the pioneering works in the field, however, eschewed the Thaw as a period for

examination. Historians Sheila Fitzpatrick and Richard Stites, who initiated the analysis of

cultural institutions and gendered and popular discourses, focused primarily on the culture of the

1920s-40s. With the 1970s, historians also initiated studies of Soviet film (Denise Youngblood,

Richard Taylor), which offered a way of broadening the scope of Soviet studies and diverting the

field's focus from high literature. They, however, also avoided Thaw cinema. The first history

of the cinema and politics of the era, by Josephine Woll, appeared only in 2000. In the recent years scholars attempted to examine how different modes of cultural production reflect the "cultural consciousness" of the Thaw. For example, in his Ph.D. dissertation "The Fate of Socialist Realism in an Indeterminate World: The Aesthetic of Thaw Fiction and Film," Simon Greenwold argues that Thaw effectively destroyed socialist realism as an aesthetic system by articulating the new aesthetic concerned "with a more honest representation of contemporary Soviet life" (11). If this study of the Thaw contends that "cultural consciousness" of the era was about dismantling Stalinist tropes, I argue for the understanding of the Thaw as the period sharing basic cultural tropes with Stalinism while their specific instantiations in various modes of cultural production became different due to the changed cultural values.

1. Reading the Literary Thaw

1.1. Vigilant Witnesses

One of the important ways of making sense of Thaw culture is writing witness accounts. The first-person emotional crescendo of such works allowed Russian literary critics to embrace the concept of sincere self-expression, which they inherited from Thaw culture. The best known among them are Grigorii Svirskii's *At the Place of Execution: Literature of Moral Resistance 1946-1976* (hereafter *At the Place*), Anatolii Gladilin's *The Making and the Unmaking of a Soviet Writer*, Mark Altshuller and Elena Dryzhakova's *The Path of Renunciation: Russian Literature 1953-1968,* and Raisa Orlova and Lev Kopelev's *We Lived in Moscow 1956-1980.*[1] These works do not present themselves as pure memoirs, but, rather, as scholarly literary histories, with a high

---

[1] Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova, *My zhili v Moskve* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981). Lev Kopelev, *Utoli moia pechal'* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981). Lev Kopelev, *Khranit' vechno* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975).

level of credibility because the authors witnessed the history they narrated. Efim Etkind, for example, introduces Svirskii's history of Soviet literature by noting that the author is not just a memoir writer, but also a literary scholar who possesses an "objective concept of literary evolution" (15). In short, such literary histories/witness accounts purport to be twice reliable because the authors lived in the target culture and because they possess an objective method of analysis.

Many of these works tend to contain the master plot of the socialist realist novel. The author of such a work narrates a story of his/her reeducation during Khrushchev's Thaw from Soviet faith into anti-Sovietism. The very titles often emphasize the master plot: Anatolii Gladilin's *The Making and the Unmaking of a Soviet Writer*, Mark Altshuller and Elena Dryzhakova's *The Path of Renunciation: Russian Literature 1953-1968.* The authors pass from the demonic Chaos of Soviet ideology into the true consciousness of the Russian intelligentsia. They become positive heroes, while Russian writers—especially those with martyrs' credentials—serve as their mentors: "V te gody . . . k nam prishli na pomoshch' Gumilev i Tsvetaeva, Voloshin i Pasternak" (Svirskii 81). "In those years . . . Gumilev and Tsvetaeva, Voloshin and Pasternak helped us." [2]

---

[2] Witness literary histories of the Thaw gravitate toward *Ich-Erzählung*: Svirskii, Kopelev/Orlova, and Gladilin write primarily first-person narratives, while Altshuller and Dryzhakova's book mixes third-and first-person perspectives, the former emphasizing the objective scholarly stance of the book, while the incorporation of the first-person viewpoint indicates the credibility of this particular history of the literary Thaw. Here is how Dryzhakova writes about Evtushenko's poems: "Mozhet byt' s nikh nachinalas' nasha vera v vozmozhnost' drugoi Rossii, a znachit, i nashe otrechenie ot lzhi i merzosti sovetskoi sistemy" (22) "Perhaps they (the poems AP) marked the beginning of our faith in the possibility of a different Russia, and our renunciation of the lies and baseness of the Soviet system."

The literary histories/witness accounts of the Thaw mirror the opposition of the Soviet "us" vs. non-Soviet "them." Svirskii in his *At the Place* simply switches the orthodox attributes, pitting the anti-Soviet "us" against the Soviet "them." Following the general Thaw trend toward cultural and psychic internalization, Svirskii depicts post-World War II Soviet literary life as the conflict between domestic literary villains (aggressive and malicious) and domestic saintly martyrs (usually self-sacrificial and virtuous).

Because for the Thaw generation of Soviet and anti-Soviet critics the very concept of the positive hero was associated with Stalinism, Svirskii, echoing the era's values, devotes much more space to the depiction of literary villains: Stalin's protegé, the Head of the Writers' Union, Aleksandr Fadeev, Konstantin Simonov, and others. Svirskii devotes to each of them an entire chapter, titled "Karateli" (1998 65-74, 261-70, 309-18) "The Hatchet Men" (1981 143-48, 241-50, 301-310). The émigré critic Efim Etkind, who wrote an introduction to the 1998 reprint of Svirskii's work, singles out as its great merit its focus on the "literary villains" ("literaturnye zlodei") of the era (14).

In addition to the domestic confrontation between honest intellectuals and Soviet hack writers, Svirskii's work contrasts honest and wise Russian intellectuals with simple-minded and

---

Additionally, the first-person "critical" narrative evokes the sincerity of Thaw first-person stories, which replaces the faceless official narratives of the Stalin era. Most of the authors of such literary histories matured during the Thaw, and use of the first-person voice was their device for truth-telling. Witness histories of the Thaw, moreover, echo the values of the era in their joint authorship: the book turns into a family project (Kopelev and Orlova, Altshuller and Dryzhakova) or into a reincarnation of a homosocial continuum (Genis and Vail' *Contemporary Russian Prose*). Although Genis and Vail's are obviously much younger than the rest of the witnesses, these two critics also affiliate themselves with Thaw culture and call themselves "late children of the Thaw" (1998 5).

superfluous Westerners. According to Svirskii, Westerners did not understand that Zhdanov's attacks on Zoshchenko and Akhmatova stemmed from the demonic nature of Stalinism.

> Ves' mir prinialsia toroplivo ob"iasniat' neob"iasnimoe: "Leningrad byl vsegda oknom na Zapad, ne sluchaino atakovali Leningrad, chtob ne gliadeli na Zapad",—ob"iasnil Walter Vickery. (23)
>
> The entire world hurriedly started explaining the inexplicable. "Leningrad was always the window to the West. It is not a coincidence that Leningrad was attacked, so that nobody would look to the West"—Walter Vickery explained.

Vickery tried to explain Zhdanov's attack according to the period's political model, as part of post-war Russian culture's anti-Westernism and its expanding nationalism. According to Svirskii, such an approach undeservedly reduces metaphysics to politics. He exposes Vickery as a naive Westerner, unable to grasp the evil nature of Bolsheviks.[3] Svirskii wishes to educate the West and to establish the commandments of émigré anti-Sovietism. He ironizes what he presumes to be Westerners' ignorance, exemplified in their discussing a war novel of Viktor Nekrasov—a dissident and immigrant—in the same breath as the works of Konstantin Simonov, a successful Soviet writer (52). Svirskii also reprimands Westerners for first learning about Simonov's mediocre novels and only later about the "truthful" and great works of Nekrasov and Emanuil Kazakevich (74). In short, honest Russian intellectuals must contend, on the one hand, with Soviet hypocrites, and, on the other, with Western naifs contaminated by Soviet body snatchers.

---

[3] Svirskii's argument follows the tradition of preaching à la Archpriest Avvakum: crude language, personal experience, and demonizing the enemy.

Feeding on the trope of confrontation between "us" and "them," the witness histories of the Thaw occasionally lapse into the military discourse of totalitarian art. Svirskii compares the Russian non-conformist writer or literary critic to an infantry man during an offensive: "pisatel' v sovremennoi Rossii srodni pekhotintsu v atake; talanta malo, nuzhna sila v rukhakh chtoby otorvat'sia ot zemli." (27) "A writer in contemporary Russia is akin to an infantryman in attack; talent is not enough, one needs powerful arms to detach oneself from the ground in order to attack." A little earlier Svirskii compares literary prose with the "infantry—the queen of the fields" (27). Anti-Stalinist literary criticism appropriates the key militaristic metaphors of totalitarian writings in order to make sense of Thaw literature.

1.2. Ironic Witnesses

Few among the Soviet era intelligentsia, however, have been ironic about the intelligentsia's role in destalinization.[4] Russo-Soviet intellectuals' memoirs/histories foregrounded themselves as the Saviors of the nation. Until recently it has been taboo to discuss the intelligentsia as a state funded professional caste that, first, took part in the creation of, and then benefited from and legitimized, Stalinist culture.

The authors of numerous works on Russian literature and culture, Aleksandr Genis and Petr Vail' in their volume on the sixties adopt a highly ironic voice, the tone of the time when they matured as thinkers (the 1970s). They attempt to look at Soviet culture of the 1960s as part of the Russian intelligentsia's utopianism, which originated in nineteenth-century populist ideas.

---

[4] David Lowe points out that the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandel'shtam (*Hope Against Hope* [1970] and *Hope Abandoned* [1974]) and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (*The Oak and the Calf* [1975]) are among the few works that do not "depict the well-intentioned intellectuals as saints" (34). On the contrary, they depict many Russian intellectuals as those who paved the road to hell with their good intentions.

For Genis and Vail' the sixties were the last gasp of such utopia-building. The authors' postmodern irony and campy approach made their memoir/history of the 1960s both a pioneering project and a farewell to the values of the era.

The first edition of Genis and Vail's book (Ann Arbor 1988) received critical acclaim, but did not become a success. The work was too ahead of its time and too remote from its Russian audience: the intelligentsia, enjoying itself during Gorbachev's glasnost, could not identify with the self-irony of Genis and Vail's implied author. When the book was reissued in postsoviet Russia (Moscow 1998), it became an immediate and controversial bestseller. The authors' campy attitude toward the intelligentsia's utopianism and its claims of spiritual hegemony, as well as the authors' challenge to the traditional focus on high literary culture, finds much more resonance with postsoviet Russian culture than with the Soviet period's logocentrism and cult of high culture.

Genis and Vail''s witness history of the late Thaw both exhausts and ironically refracts earlier witness accounts of the Thaw. If these works represented themselves as anti-Soviet, while resorting to the discourse of their Soviet opponents, Genis and Vail' avoid the trappings of Soviet discourse by aesthetisizing and ironizing it. Their volume is a hilarious *Doctor Strangelove* of Cold War era Soviet culture, in which the supposed opponents turn out to be discursive twins. The discourse of 60s culture becomes the work's prime protagonist. This discourse speaks through the villains and the pious men of the era.

Genis and Vail' articulate two interrelated features of Soviet culture: (1) the cult of the word, privileged over the world, and (2) the utopian nature of Soviet culture, which enabled the primacy of the verbal project over social and economic realities (5-6). For the authors, the 1960s provide an illustration of that utopia in action.

Such an approach to post-Stalinist Russian culture determines the displaced chronological frame of the project. Genis and Vail' do not write another anti-Soviet history of the Thaw (1953-64), in which mythologized geniuses and prophets (Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn) fight "cruel *oprichniki*" (Svirskii 247) and the Cannibal, Stalin (Altshuller and Dryzhakova 13). They start with the year 1961, when Nikita Khrushchev announced the new program of the Communist Party, according to which Communism would be attained in the Soviet Union by 1980. The final year they assess is 1968, when Soviet tanks aborted the Prague Spring and destroyed any illusions about socialism with a human face. That moment, according to the authors, marked the last gasp of the Soviet utopia and ushered in a profound crisis for the last Soviet generation—the generation of the 1960s, "children of the Thaw" (5).

Genis and Vail' try to distance themselves via irony from Soviet discourse, but are painfully aware that the language they use is full of quotations from Soviet slogans and canonical texts. As opposed to Svirskii and Gladilin, who believed that they had completely separated themselves from Soviet culture, Genis and Vail' have no illusions that *The Sixties* has overcome "Sovietdom." That awareness explains the absence in the work of a reeducation plot—the backbone of most witness accounts.[5]

---

[5] *The Sixties* represents the voices of the era through quasi-direct discourse, rather then by objectifying Soviet language via a tendentious retelling of literary works (standard practice in most Russian literary histories). On first glance, syntactically, Genis and Vail's writing might recall an official Soviet text of the era. Minor displacements in grammar, thematics, and tone, however, put the discourse of the era in ironic quotation marks. Here is how they describe a Thaw-era rendition of the war theme.

> In the story "Fate of a Man" (1957), Sholokhov explained that victory did not come easy, but there were no ordeals from which our man failed to emerge stronger. There was nothing new in this idea. For many years everyone had known all too well how steel was tempered. Probably, the

Genis and Vail' blur the sacred borders that dominated binary witness histories of the Thaw, above all, those separating anti-Soviet "us" and Soviet "them." Genis and Vail' view the utopian modernism of Il'ia Erenburg's memoirs *Liudi, gody, zhizn' (People, Years, Life)* not as a dissonant voice, but, rather, as an echo of the totalitarian utopianism of Khrushchev's Party Program. The authors in their introduction emphasize that the official Soviet sources of the time functioned not only as distorting agents, but also as forces that shaped and semiotically organized the period's culture (5).

An even more important border transgressed by Genis and Vail' is that between high, literary culture and its low counterpart--that is, the rest of the Russian cultural industry. Most witness accounts of the Thaw comprise literary histories of the era, with cinema and other arts interpolated merely as supportive evidence of the epic war between Good and Evil in Russian literature.[6] For Genis and Vail', mass culture of the period (film, sports, urban folklore,

---

only new thing was the fact that the fate of Sholokhov's man was the fate of Russian man. (89 translation mine)

The clichés of the era are appropriated by the authors' discourse, which offers a dialogized representation of the language of the time. The incorporation of clichés into the zone of the authorial voice is indicated by these clichés' slight distortion, the change of tense. Genis and Vail' detextualize Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (a canonical Soviet novel) by transforming the title into a "truth" about everyday life: "how steel is tempered." Together with the rhetorical introductory passage ("For many years everyone's known all too well"), the title of the exemplary socialist realist text becomes part of an ironic representation, a quasi-direct representation of the Soviet language of the period. Significantly, in approaching Thaw culture from this perspective, Genis and Vail' discover very little difference between the language of the Thaw anti-Stalinist authors and their Stalinist opponents.

[6] See, for example, the chapter in Svirskii's *At the Place of Execution* titled "Razgrom kinoiskusstva," "The Destruction of Film Art" (341-47).

television programs, and popular songs) constitutes a no less legitimate form of knowledge than the writings of Erenburg, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. In short, Genis and Vail' question the hierarchy of discursive practices inherent in Russo-Soviet culture.[7]

What Genis and Vail' did in their critical prose, conceptualists Timur Kibirov and Lev Rubinshtein[8] introduced into poetry during perestroika. Their conceptualist poetry creates a

---

[7] Genis and Vail' pay special attention to the design of their volume: the visual (photographs, design of the era's magazines and newspapers) and verbal aspects of the work reinforce its ironic stance. The chapter titled "Europe: Birch-like Palm Trees" opens with a photograph from a magazine of the time depicting the highest TV tower in the world, constructed in Moscow. In the background are the Eiffel Tower and the Stuttgart TV Tower, which are obviously much shorter than Moscow's TV Tower. The chapter narrates the reevaluation of Soviet relations with the West: from "us" against "them" to "us" becoming part of "them."

> My--eto oni! Oni--eto my!--krichal Erenburg … V 1961 godu eta kontseptsiia vylilas' v formulu:
> "Bereza mozhet byt' dorozhe pal'my, no ne vyshe ee."
> Na samom dele, togda sovetskaia intelligentsiia byla uverena, chto pal'ma vyshe … V etikh botanicheskikh sporakh opredelialias' istoriosofskaia model' Rossii. (45)
> "Us means them! Them means us!—shouted Erenburg … In 1961 this concept led to the formula:
> "The birch tree may be dearer than the palm, but not taller than the palm"
> In fact, the Soviet intelligentsia was convinced that the palm was higher … The historiosophic model of Russia was defined in these botanical arguments.

In an ironic interplay the Russo-Soviet phallocentrism of the visual quote (the biggest TV tower in the world) is juxtaposed to the literary and philosophical discussions of the era about the place of Russia in Europe and in the world.

In addition to including ironic visual quotes for the introductory pages in their chapters, the authors appropriate the avant-garde design of 1960s poetry books. The avant-garde design that used to frame the neo-utopian poetry of Andrei Voznesenskii in the 1960s now frames Genis and Vail''s ironic puns ("Slovo kak delo" [155]) and sarcastic observations ("Ruiny utopii" [155]).

pastiche out of Thaw discourses. Kibirov, for example, positions himself as a witness-outsider

of the cultural values and heroes of various periods of Russo-Soviet culture.   In his long poem

"Skvoz' proshchal'nye slezy" ("Through Farewell Tears"), chapter four covers the common

places of Thaw culture. The protagonist of this chapter is the language of the era: almost every

word in the poem as a quote from popular songs of the Thaw, a catch phrase from the films of

the era, a line from the fifties and sixties poems of Evtushenko, Voznesenskii, and Vanshenkin.

Kibirov also mentions such recognizable signs of Thaw material culture as a scooter, a hula

hoop, or pegged pants.

---

[8] See "Kommunal'noe chtivo" (135-46) and "Dym otechestva, ili Gulag s fil'trom" (221-28) in *Domashnee*
muzitsirovanie.

To the conceptualist recycling of Stalin- and Thaw-era discourses belong the exhibitions of material culture

of the era, such as, for example, *Body Memory. Soviet Underwear (Pamiat' tela. Nizhnee bel'e sovetskoi epokhi)*.

This exhibition was conceived by an artist and critic Katia Degot' and opened on November 6th (on the eve of the

Bolshevik Revolution Day) 2000 in St. Petersburg. The curators and organizers attempted to introduce Soviet

underwear as the other of its Western counterpart. The first part of the exhibition is titled "Private/Public"

("Chastnoe/Obshchestvennoe) and presents uniform-like underwear of the 1920-40s. This underwear gravitates in

its design to the military uniform and athletic wear. The second part of *Body Memory* covers late Stalinism and the

Thaw (1946-64) and is titled "The Everyday Life and its Shame." The curators displayed seductive German corsets

captured from the Nazis and also Thaw-era Soviet attempts to produce Western-style swimming suits and

nightgowns.

Similarly to Genis and Vail', Kibirov blurs the common borders and divides of Soviet culture. For example, via an ironic tone Kibirov questions the Thaw sense of liberation from totalitarian ideology.

> Vse uzhe pozadi, moi rovesnik,
>
> Strashnyi Stalin i Gitler-podlets.
>
> Zavodi komsomol'skuiu pesniu
>
> Pro ogon' komsomol'skikh serdets. (142)
>
> Everything is behind [us] now, my contemporary:
>
> Terrifying Stalin and Hitler the scoundrel.
>
> Start up the komsomol song
>
> About the fire of young hearts!

The Thaw defeats Hitler and Stalin and begins again to construct a totalitarian utopia: "Vnov' otkrylis' lazurnye dali za stenoi kommunal'nykh khalup" (142), "Azure expanses opened up again beyond the walls of communal slums." Kibirov does not distinguish between the official and liberal discourses of the Thaw, either. The official cult of Lenin incarnated in the icebreaker *Lenin* merges with the poetry of Evtushenko and Voznesenskii about Lenin. Kibirov actually chooses the epigraph to chapter four from Evtushenko: "Net Lenina—vot eto tiazhko!" (142) "There is no Lenin—now, that's really hard!"

Genis and Vail''s memoirs and the conceptualist pastiches of poets like Kibirov or Rubinshtein depart from the canon of witness accounts of the period. They provide an alternative and more detached perspective on the representational practices of the era. Most importantly, Genis, Vail', Kibirov, and Rubinshtein question the Thaw's resistance to Stalinist culture—a recurrent theme in the writings of Kopelev/Orlova, Mal'tsev, Svirskii, and many

13

others. The Thaw may have tolerated such Western novelties as the hula hoop and pegged pants, but it also preserved the fundamental totalitarian tropes of the preceding decades and the utopian thrust of the Stalinist project.

1.3. Post-Stalinist Literature through the Looking Glass of the Totalitarian Model

Western studies of post-Stalinist literature, and the Thaw in particular, are inseparable from the rise of Sovietology during the Cold War years. Ironically, what the West named the Cold War, Russians titled the Thaw. Western contemporaries presented Thaw literature for the most part as an illustration of the political events of the time. Post-Stalinist culture had a low status in Sovietology, the only exception being authors whose works caused big political scandals in the Soviet Union, such as Pasternak or Solzhenitsyn. An entire cottage industry of literary analyses emerged around the controversial status of such works as *Dr. Zhivago* or *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, while the rest of Soviet literary and other cultural production of the post-1953 period remained a peripheral topic for Slavists.

Any discussion of the literary studies of the 1950s and 60s in the West requires that one examine the major code word for Cold War Soviet Studies: totalitarianism. The Harvard Russian Research Center, established in the late 1940s, played a key role in the development of totalitarian studies. One of the most prominent early theoreticians of "totalitarianism" in Soviet Studies was Merle Fainsod (*How Russia is Ruled* [1953]). For him Soviet totalitarianism meant autocratic oppressive rule in a society that combined industrial modernization with the controlling methods of Tsarism: hierarchical autocracy, total control of all spheres of social life, absence of institutions characteristic of civil society, and reliance on censorship and secret police in cultural affairs. According to the "totalitarianists," Stalin's rule lacked popular support in Russia. Fainsod's pivotal analysis of the Smolensk archive (1958) argues that the era of

industrialization developed the centralized oppressive system that was able to control all aspects of Soviet life. In the West totalitarianism remained the main descriptive model for Soviet society until the late1960s.

Western studies of Soviet literature in the 1950s and 60s also used the totalitarian model as the major explanatory paradigm and focused on literature as the sole object worthy of cultural analysis. Visual culture, for example, was virtually absent in the scholarly analyses of the era. Close reading--an analysis of the intrinsic structure of a literary text--was not usually the primary concern of Thaw literary readings. The few examined in detail were politically controversial, with a strong claim to high culture legitimation (Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, above all). As a result, a model of two literatures emerged: that which opposed the official literature of the oppressive state to the literature of the oppressed but freedom-loving Russian writers. The model replicated the Cold War political opposition between the West and the Soviets.

At the center of Soviet literary studies was usually the main Soviet "writer"—the Soviet State, which controlled all Soviet literary producers and pressured them to write non-literature that served the interests of the state and the party. One of the best known works of the era symptomatic of its major tenets is Harold Swayze's *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959* (1962). The study examines not Soviet literature, but "the methods by which imaginative writing is controlled in the USSR" (viii). Revealingly, Swayze acknowledges the help and advice of the historian-"totalitarianist" Merle Fainsod, "to whom I (Swayze AP) am indebted in more ways than I know" (ix). Indeed, Swayze is indebted to Fainsod's totalitarian model of Soviet society, which shapes Swayze's analysis of Soviet literature.

According to Swayze, the communist party successfully uses conformist literature as an instrument of social control. The party, however, is also "aware of the threats inherent in

imaginative writing" (that is, non-party literature AP) and attempts "to eradicate its capacity for producing effects that contravene its (the party's AP) goals" (Swayze 265).

If someone produces anything of any artistic importance, it is by definition non-conformist and does not belong to Soviet anti-culture. Such a work contradicts the monolithic control system of Soviet culture and constitutes a voice of freedom. Such are the writings of Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, Pasternak, and even the poetry of Evtushenko. The artistic and cultural importance of such masterpieces is opposed to the aesthetic and artistic poverty of party-loyal writings, which belong to the realm of anti-culture and anti-civilization.

Swayze's work was one of the exemplary monographs to reincarnate the totalitarian model for studies of contemporary literature, and it clarified what kind of literature deserves analysis ("dissonant voices"), in contrast to the writings that deserve only dismissal as non-art (the majority of literary production printed in the Soviet Union).

Studies of dissonant voices during the Thaw became the prime object of Western literary scholarship during the 1950s and 60s. Two types of academic projects examined non-conformist works from Russia: literary anthologies[9] and literary histories.[10] Anthologies of translations played a decisive role in studies of post-Stalinist culture because they allowed Western Slavists to ground discussion in a knowledge of primary sources. One of the first anthologies widely

---

[9] The most important anthologies of Thaw literature are *Soviet Short Stories,* edited by Avrahm Iarmolinsky, *The Year of Protest 1956. An Anthology of Soviet Literary Materials,* edited by Hugh McLean and Walter Vickery, *Half-way to the moon; new writing from Russia*, edited by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward, and *Khrushchev and the Arts, The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-64,* edited by Priscilla Johnson and Leopold Labedz.

[10] Among the best known are *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw 1954-57* by George Gibian and *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* by Edward Brown (first edition).

used in classrooms was *The Year of Protest 1956. An Anthology of Soviet Literary Materials* (1961)*,* translated and edited by Hugh McLean and Walter Vickery.

The introduction to this anthology establishes important conceptual oppositions for literary discussion under the auspices of totalitarian studies. "Soviet gobbledygook" (9) should be distinguished from true literature. The authors specifically juxtapose what they deem the non-Soviet novel, *Dr. Zhivago,* to the rest of Soviet works published at approximately the same time.

The only contemporary Russian novel that can be said to have appealed to Western readers on literary grounds is Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* . . . [It] cannot be regarded as a product of Soviet literature at all. (3)

The anthology in effect presents to the readers the dissonant voices within Soviet anti-civilization. Not all of them may be called great literature in the proper sense of the word, but because they oppose the Soviet regime these dissident writings deserve readers' attention. The subtitle of the collection, *An Anthology of Soviet Literary Materials*, reflects the authors' discomfort with calling the texts literature. "Literary materials" better convey the notion of politically significant writing disguised as *belles lettres*.[11]

---

[11] The authors' introduction tunes the analytical apparatus of the readers, preparing them to look for political deviancy instead of literary sophistication. McLean and Vickery warn readers that they can hardly find any literary merit in the translated works, and urge readers to look for techniques of resistance--above all, the aesopic language of political opposition: "The most he (the Soviet writer AP) can hope for, like the writers included in this book, is to maneuver as best as he can within the narrow limits set by Party dictates" (26). The Thaw, and above all the year 1956, is an episode of protest, an outburst when "Ehrenburg and others used fiction as a vehicle for veiled criticism of the political and social situation" (19). The pieces of prime value by definition are those that could not be published in the Soviet Union. For example, "an extremely forthright and vigorous speech delivered by . . . Konstantin Paustovskii (and never published in the Soviet Union) is included in this book" (5).

While literary anthologies familiarized students and scholars in Slavic Studies with the most recent literary works, the literary histories of the 1960s made the first attempt to both conceptualize and contextualize post-Stalinist developments in Soviet culture. The chief focus of analysis was, again, the "intervals of freedom" and "dissonant voices" (Brown, Gibian, Roythberg, Vickery). Edward Brown's *Russian Literature since the Revolution* (1969) is one of the best-known literary histories dealing with post-Stalinist Soviet literature. The work had a long life, and a significantly revised second edition of the history was published at the end of the Cold War (1982).

McLean and Vickery mention the possibility of a close literary analysis of the presented works, only to dismiss it. For them, such an analysis means, above all, a New Critical approach. "But such an undertaking would doubtless seem a bit ludicrous . . . A work must have some ballast of literary quality before it can stand such a buffeting" (28).

According to the coauthors of the volume, a close literary analysis of Soviet literature, especially of socialist realist works, is a nonsensical project. Only great books (and in the Russian case, only one contemporary novel qualifies as such--*Dr. Zhivago*), deserve scholarly analysis.

The authors also justify the dismissal of Soviet literature as an object of close investigation by referring to the opposition between true ("high") art and surrogate (mass) art. According to McLean and Vickery, Soviet literature is similar to American popular film and television: both are based on taboos and stereotypes. Western popular culture, though, is somewhat better than Soviet literature because in the West there is a genuine "high" art that leaks at least a couple of drops of true art into the gutter of popular culture. Soviets, on the other hand, abolished their high art by party decree and now have to suffer the consequences: of having bad Soviet pseudo-literature (32). Paradoxically, McLean and Vickery are pointing toward the heart of the matter: indeed the socialist realist novel, the backbone of Soviet literature, is not a high-culture genre, but is both middle brow and formulaic (Clark 1997 29, Dobrenko 160).

Brown's point of departure is that "no piece of literature produced in the Soviet Union can escape involvement with politics" (17). Literature therefore becomes an illustration of historical and political developments. Within the framework of the Cold War, the most interesting Russian literature is one that serves as evidence against the Soviet state. Accordingly, Brown describes Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* in the following terms: "This novel, direct and conventional in its literary method, is an important document on the Stalin era in Russian history" (307). The primary concern and merit of the literary text is historical evidence of the era's political life.

Brown devotes special attention to the term "Soviet." He ensures that nobody suspect his respectable project in studying the literature loyal to the Party: "We shall be concerned here not so much with the propagandist and Party-oriented literature . . . but primarily with that Russian literature which has inherited the great tradition of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii" (21). Hence, the work is titled *Russian Literature Since the Revolution*—not Soviet literature.

The key division, between freedom-loving writers and the oppressive state, is based on the totalitarian model. Brown notes: "There are two distinct currents even in Soviet Russian literature: official socialist realist literature and a literature not yet clearly defined, partly underground, and struggling for a free development of literary styles and genres" (296). Brown obviously is interested only in the latter because the former, according to him, is not worth analyzing (Brown 333).

In this framework the post-Stalinist years turned into an uncertain Thaw—the second season when the voices of freedom melt the ice of the official iceberg. During the Thaw, Russians can raise their voices against Soviet oppressors (35). Official Soviet literature, beyond

any legitimacy and scholarly analysis, is "the hackneyed, the obvious, and the false" (324). "True" high literature provides relief from the banality of its Soviet counterpart (324).

Brown devotes most of his attention to two types of Thaw literary texts: the literature of the underground and literature from earlier periods that was rediscovered in the sixties. In both cases the intrinsic properties of the texts are of secondary importance, while their political status determines the incursion of the texts into Brown's literary history.

Finally, Brown addresses Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. Echoing McLean and Vickery, Brown names it the only great book written in post-Stalinist Russia. Pasternak was able to write his novel because he remained independent of Soviet society. As Brown puts it: "Pasternak . . . stands as a refutation of Lenin's famous dictum, 'It is impossible to live in a society and be free from it'" (268).

Brown makes a disclaimer symptomatic of less blood-thirsty times (the late 1960s after all, were not the heyday of the Cold War) about Pasternak's work having been crudely used as a weapon in the psychological war against the Soviet Union (273). However, Brown's own concluding remarks about the novel remain within the framework of the totalitarian model. The entire universe of Pasternak's novel is reduced to an opposition between "the language typical of Bolsheviks . . . tending to the dead letter" and "the live rhythms of poetry and of untrammeled thought" (276).

The anthologies and literary histories of the Thaw that followed the totalitarian model were important in foregrounding the controversial works of Soviet literature. Their interest in *belles lettres*, however, was limited to the political significance of the literary texts, which was more important than its intrinsic qualities and its place in Soviet culture. The Cold War division of Russian literature into genuine high art masterpieces and inferior official writings dominated

Russian anti-Soviet, and many Western, scholars' descriptions of Russian literature. With official culture not analyzed, as unworthy of scholarly investigation, and most of the works translated and discussed during this period reflecting only high literature, scholars of the Cold War era provided a selective discussion of high culture and politically controversial great books.

<u>1.4. Revising the Totalitarian Model in the 1960s and 70s.</u>

Perhaps unexpectedly, historians have been the specialists to redefine approaches to post-Stalinist Russian literature and culture. Their revisions of the totalitarian model indirectly challenged the model of two literatures (dissident vs. official). Moreover, historians' focus on material culture allowed them to broaden the range of matter available for discussion beyond the conventionally preferred modes of cultural production, such as literature.

Revisions within Soviet studies of the totalitarian model focused on the issues of continuity and change in Soviet history.[12] In his work *The Soviet Political Mind: Studies in Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (1963), Robert Tucker pioneered the issue of continuity. Soviet history, he maintained, is not a homogeneous set of evidence against Bolshevik oppression, which in turn mirrors the autocracy of the tsarist empire. Tucker warns against a simplistic vision of the totalitarian model, which suffers from "an uncritical 'ideological determinism'" (x).

Arguing against an exclusive emphasis on the similarities between tsarist and Stalinist Russia, Tucker notes that Soviet history underwent various stages: "Yet within the continuity, we find the inexorable law of change at work. Between the Soviet political mind in its Leninist

---

[12] Although historians led the way, literary scholars also contributed to the process of revising the totalitarian model. See Brown's *Soviet Russian Literature Since Stalin*, Clark's *Soviet Novel*.

phase and what may be called the Stalinist political mind there lies a gulf" (x). Tucker proposes

a discontinuity model, according to which conservative Stalinism superseded "Leninist

revolutionism" (xi). Tucker's "discontinuity approach" opposed a dynamic image of Soviet

history to the static vision implied by the totalitarian model. In his scenario, Soviet

history/culture no longer figured as just an impediment on route to something wonderful and

progressive, but became a culture with its own inner structure and laws of evolution. The key

question of Tucker's research, and a highly productive one, is "the problem of Soviet change"

(xi).

Tucker's student, Stephen Cohen, likewise criticized the totalitarian model as too

deterministic and crude to explain the entire span of Soviet history. Cohen perceives Stalinism

not as a logical continuation of Leninism, but, rather, as an unsuccessful choice (point of

discontinuity) from among several socialist models that existed in Russia during the 1920s:

"There was, in fact, a viable Bolshevik alternative to Stalin's revolution from above" (385).

Cohen's book about Nikolai Bukharin reexamines the Bolshevik revolution and "the formative

decades in Soviet history" (xv) in terms that cast Soviet culture as a set of competing models of

socialism.

The discontinuity model suggested by Cohen implies that the totalitarian approach is

applicable only to Stalin's rule itself, while telling very little about the rest of Soviet history,

above all, NEP and the Thaw. Cohen suggests that the non-Stalinist periods of Soviet history

(1920s and the Thaw of the late 1950s and 60s) require historical and cultural rereading because

"the Bolshevik Party was far more diverse in character than is often imagined and the outcome of

the revolution considerably less predetermined" (xvii). The implied opponents of Cohen's

position here are adherents to the totalitarian model.

In his work on Bukharin, Cohen presents the Thaw as pseudonymous neo-Bukharinism. In East European countries, he points out, "communist reformers became advocates of market socialism [. . .] and tolerance of cultural and social pluralism within the framework of one party state [. . .]. Bukharin's official reputation has been significantly upgraded in some of these countries" (384). Because Bukharin was not officially rehabilitated during Khrushchev's Thaw, his name was not openly linked to the era's liberalization. The values of the Thaw, however, clearly related to Bukharin's version of socialism: "It seems fair to conclude that three decades later, anti-Stalinist Communism is again—however pseudonymously—significantly Bukharinist—in spirit" (385). The significance of Cohen's work goes far beyond rehabilitating Bukharin or the Soviet twenties: his monograph legitimizes the study of Soviet history and culture as a diverse and ambiguous phenomenon and encourages new approaches beyond the totalitarian model.

If for Cohen culture is a valuable by-product of politics, for Sheila Fitzpatrick Soviet cultural history serves as the prime focus of analysis. One of the pioneers in this field in the 1970s and 80s[13], Fitzpatrick is also an important critic of the totalitarian model in Soviet/Slavic

---

[13] Fitzpatrick's major works include

Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times; Soviet Russia in the 1930s. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War. Princeton:
> Princeton UP, 2000.

Stalinism: New Directions. London: Routledge, 1999.

The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.

Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture. Eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander
> Rabinovitch, and Richard Stites. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.

The Russian Revolution: 1917-32. NY: Oxford UP, 1982.

studies. Her study of the Commissariat of Enlightenment (*The Commissariat of Enlightenment:*

Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharskii [October 1917-1921 [1970])

offers a new approach to studies of Soviet culture: "institutional history" (xi).[14] Fitzpatrick

transcends the binarism of the totalitarian model, which envisions two major stock characters:

the authoritarian Soviet state and freedom-loving anti-Soviet dissidents, mainly writers.

Moreover, she painstakingly analyzes the institution that totalitarianists would summarily

dismiss as an entity implementing the oppressive policies of the Soviet state.

Fitzpatrick's major, and illuminating, interest lies in the internal structure of the

Commissariat of Enlightenment and its relations to other branches of Soviet culture. Fitzpatrick

abandons the traditional fixation on literature as the sacred cow of Russian culture, examining

instead educational institutions and artistic organizations.

Although Fitzpatrick does not directly treat the period of Soviet history discussed in this

dissertation, her discussion of culture as an institution, her decentering of literature in the

narrative, as well as her focus on the interrelations among the various fields of cultural

production, are of prime importance for my own approach. In addition, Fitzpatrick's studies

demonstrate awareness of any history's own narrativity, as illustrated by her witty description of

historical figures, e.g., individuals in Narkompros, as fictional characters (xii). Apart from

---

Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-31. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

The Commissariat of Enlightenment; Soviet organization of education and the arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-21. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970.

[14] It is important to note that Fitzpatrick conceived her work in a more traditional way—as a political biography of Anatolii Lunacharskii (1875-1933), the head of the Commissariat of Enlightenment from 1917 until 1929. Later she redefined her approach: instead of writing the great man's biography, she addressed institutional history, avoiding both the trappings of biographism and the limits of the totalitarian model.

archeologists of knowledge such as Michel Foucault, few social scientists even outside the Slavic field could afford such a heretical stance in the late sixties. It is also reasonable to suggest that Fitzpatrick's pioneering research paved the way for revisionist historians of culture who initiated studies of non-traditional fields, such as Russian film (Ian Christie, Richard Taylor), popular culture (Richard Stites, Jeffrey Brooks, James von Geldern), and women's culture (Richard Stites, Helena Goscilo, Catriona Kelly).

The work of revisionist historians stimulated new approaches to post-Stalinist literature and interest in other forms of post-Stalinist cultural production. Even in the sphere of literary studies historians were often ahead of many literary scholars. British social historian Geoffrey Hosking, for example, in 1980 published a history of Soviet literature after Stalin, *Beyond Socialist Realism*, in which he argued against the Cold War era division of Russo-Soviet literature into prostituted official literature and virginal underground writing. In his introduction he notes that in the late seventies such a notion was still a heresy:

> I do, then, regard, *samizdat* (unofficial underground literature AP) and published literature as part of the same phenomenon—as part of one Soviet literature. Probably neither Soviet critics nor many émigré ones will approve of this view, and it is, of course, true that the operation of the censorship makes a big difference to the way the two types of literature are produced. Nevertheless, I think the boundary between them has been persistently overstressed. (x)

Hosking strategically turns the argument of those who emphasize the division of Soviet literature into two literatures against itself: Since critics on both sides of the barricades tell the same story of two literatures, on the level of discourse we have an instance of the same cultural formation.[15]

Two years earlier, Deming Brown had argued a similar point in his *Soviet Russian Literature Since Stalin* (1978). Struggling with the slippery term "Soviet literature," he noted:

> Regardless of whether works are published inside or outside the USSR, all of them have emerged from the same society. The kinship among them is so close that for the purposes of the present book the term Soviet literature will be applied to all of them. (2)

The implicit polemic is again with the totalitarian model of Soviet literature common for Western literary histories of Soviet literature and émigré writings demonizing non-émigré Russian culture.

Brown suggests that Soviet writers loyal to the authorities are not always slaves or hacks, but simply people who share the values of the regime: "It would be inaccurate . . . to portray Soviet writers . . . merely as a group of slaves . . . A far larger number, sharing the illusions of a multitude of their compatriots, sincerely and willingly submitted to the prevailing doctrine" (3).

Both Brown's and Hosking's histories not only rejected a simplistic "two-literatures" model inherited from the Cold War era, but also claimed that socialist realism cannot be dismissed as a cultural non-entity or propaganda trick—a common stance among earlier literary historians. Brown and Hosking discuss socialist realism seriously enough to examine such

---

[15] The issue of how many Russian literatures exist and should be studied was still a major question in 1984 at the conference *Third Wave: Russian Literature in Emigration* (Eds. Olga Matich and Michael Heim, Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984).

fundamental categories as party-mindedness and people-mindedness (Brown 16, Hosking 12-23). Brown briefly comments on the chronotope of socialist realism: life as it is, but mainly as it should be (17). Both scholars treat at length "a keystone of socialist realism—the concept of the positive hero" (Brown 17). They also survey discussions of socialist realism in Soviet criticism of the 1950s and 60s. Brown in particular notes that much of Thaw-era literary criticism focused on (1) the role of tragedy and satire in contemporary Soviet literature, and (2) socialist realism as its major method (18).

In the surveys of Brown and Hosking, the literary Thaw partly offers a platform to display revisionist tendencies within Soviet studies. According to the critics, the Thaw stems from internal developments within Soviet culture and is not a *deus ex machina* of dissonant voices whom Soviet oppressors failed to notice earlier. The evolution of socialist realism as the official artistic method also becomes an important part of these internal cultural developments. Brown's book established a standard story of the literary Thaw. It started in 1953 with Stalin's death and ended in 1966, when Soviet authorities jailed Andrei Siniavskii and Iulii Daniel' for publishing their works abroad (8). Within this time frame there were three periods of liberalization (1953, 1956, and 1961-62), followed by periods of more conservative cultural politics. The Thaw, according to Brown, is about gradually abandoning the imperatives of socialist realism. The oscillations between liberal and conservative periods reflect the fluctuating nature of cultural politics.

Brown's and Hosking's histories of post-Stalinist literature revised the totalitarian model of Soviet literature and integrated into the picture socialist realism as the method of Soviet literature. Both scholars, however, continued to conceive of Soviet literature as a shadow of Soviet politics.

Stalin's death implicitly remained a metaphysical divide between bad and good writing. Brown, for example, discusses at length how formative socialist realist works of the Stalin era were for Soviet literature, but at the same time he describes Stalinism as the nadir of Soviet literature. Finally, both volumes favor literature as the ultimate mode of cultural production, with a consistent focus on high literature.

The major question posed by Slavists in the 1980s became: how to analyze Soviet literature if the totalitarian model is not a productive approach? David Lowe's survey, *Russian Writing Since 1953* (1987), is indicative of the concerns within the field. Lowe avoids the issues of political allegiances, to focus on discursive concerns: "Stalinist classics shun irony, ambiguity, humor, and modernism of any sort . . . The classics eschew dialectal forms, colloquialisms, slang, and substandard variants, not to mention obscenities" (Lowe 11). Lowe's work also tries to create a typology of Russian writing following Western paradigms: non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama. Lowe broadens the scope of discussed works beyond high art and mentions popular texts: the historical novels of Valentin Pikul' and the spy thrillers of Iulian Semenov (55, 57). Most of the time, however, Lowe's survey continues focusing on high literature. Although the survey raises interesting questions, it provides few original answers. The major problem of the survey is its adherence to the divide between Stalinist and post-Stalinist culture. Such a divide prevents a thorough analysis of the major cultural patterns of Soviet culture—the patterns that are persistent in Russian culture from the late 1920s until the present.

If Lowe's study raised important questions, Katerina Clark in her *Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (1981) provided important insights that seriously influenced the state of the field. According to Clark, the Stalinist novel is not divided from post-Stalinist literature by the year 1953. The Stalinist novel has provided the narrative model for Soviet culture from the 1930s to

the present. At the heart of the novel, Clark argues, is the master narrative of Soviet culture: the positive hero's transformation from a spontaneous youth into a conscious communist. She calls the chronotope of such a narrative "modal schizophrenia," the narrative constantly oscillating between the present and signs of the communist future within the present.

While discussing the verbal instantiations of the master narrative, Clark also examines the key myths of Soviet culture: the cult of the machine, the war on nature, and the myth of the Great Family. Finally, Clark maintains that the Soviet novel belongs to mass culture. That is why high-culture oriented Soviet studies have failed to analyze adequately that type of writing.

Unlike her predecessors, Clark links Stalinism with post-Stalinist culture. Such a paradigm casts the Thaw not as the abandonment, but as the elaboration, of Stalinist myths and Soviet culture's master narrative. Most importantly, Clark not only introduces into Soviet studies but also legitimizes a close morphological analysis of Soviet mass culture. My discussion of the tropes of Soviet culture and their instantiations in Thaw literature and film relies on Clark's research.[16]

---

[16] Even twenty years later Clark's argument sounds revolutionary against the background of many recent studies of Stalinism and the Thaw. Many of them continue to retell the Cold war narrative about the Thaw abandoning Stalinist paradigms and the demise of the socialist realism. See, for example, Simon Greenwold's study "The Fate of Socialist Realism in an Indeterminate World: The Aesthetic of Thaw Fiction and Film," which opens with the following statement: "This dissertation charts the demise of socialist realism during the period commonly referred to as "the Thaw" (iii).

2. Points of View on Thaw Film

2.1. Looking for the Sincerity of Film Language

Unlike Thaw literature, which elicited copious scholarship from both Western and the Soviet critics during the Cold War era, most writing on Thaw films came out of Russia. One of the reasons for the relative silence in the West was, quite simply, an absence of information about Soviet film. In addition, film studies was practically non-existent as an academic field during the 1950s and early 1960s. Finally, film occupied a low tier in the hierarchy of arts and consequently "deserved" less attention than literature.

Soviet critics of Thaw films shared one value with their literary counterparts—both tried to write sincerely about the cultural life of their time. Whereas in literature the major method of sincere criticism was legitimation through witnessing, in film criticism the new methodology was associated with the neoformalist focus on cinelanguage. The focus on *kinoiazyk, kinematografichnost'* signified the sincerity of both the film medium and criticism about it. The second important feature of Thaw film criticism was a shift in the set of artistic authorities to whom the critics referred. Thaw film scholars favored the revolutionary film avant-garde of the 1920s as an example of authentic and sincere filmmaking and downplayed the role of Stalinist genre cinema of the 1930s—50s. These two features of Thaw cinesincerity manifested themselves in both filmmaking and film scholarship.

Three distinct patterns in the cultural behavior of Soviet film workers of the era represented the return to the sincerity of self-referential film language and especially that of the Russian film avant-garde of the 1920s: (1) the politics of remakes, (2) the revived cult of Lenin in Soviet films, and (3) the rehabilitation and republication of works by 1920s film directors, above all Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov.

30

Remakes were both acknowledged and not acknowledged. In 1956 Grigorii Chukhrai completed an acknowledged remake of Iakov Protazanov's *Forty First* (1927). The film's focus on visual expressivity at the expense of narrative made it an event in Soviet cinema and an international success (a prize in Cannes 1957). It is also important that Sergei Urusevskii, the cameraman, became as famous as the director of the film. As in avant-garde films of the 1920s, where the role of the cameraman was almost as important as that of the director (Eisenstein and Tisse, Vertov and his brother Mikhail Kaufman), Thaw cameramen and directors were equal co-authors of many films.   Urusevskii co-worked with Chukhrai and Kalatozov; Vadim Iusov collaborated with Andrei Tarkovskii. These cameramen usually received prizes together with the directors.

El'dar Riazanov was the major director of non-acknowledged remakes. His first feature film, *Carnival Night* (1956), was a Thaw-era remake of the Stalinist musical *Volga Volga* (Alexandrov 1938). For detailed discussion of this Riazanov's remake see Evgenii Dobrenko, "Soviet Comedy Film: Or The Carnival Of Authority."   Later Riazanov directed *A Girl without an Address* (1958), a remake of one of the most popular comedies of the 1920s: Boris Barnet's *A Girl with a Hat Box* (1927). In the late Thaw he used a Barnet film for yet another of his comedies: *Zigzag of Fortune* (1968). And in 1973, as the last gasp of the Thaw, Riazanov undertook a Soviet-Italian co-production *The Extraordinary Adventures of Italians in Russia*, a remake of Kuleshov's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of Bolsheviks* (1925).

The shift from the cult of Stalin to the cult of Lenin in Soviet culture echoed Russians' revived interest in 1920s film, since the cult of Lenin and his comrades-in-arms formed the core of political iconography during the 1920s. In Thaw films the cult of Lenin was a visual sign of

destalinization and a return to the pure, revolutionary twenties. A key film for the replacement

of the cult of Stalin with the cult of Lenin was Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes are Flying* (1957).

In one of the opening scenes, the protagonist of the film, in the year 1941, keeps a bust of Lenin

on his desk instead of the bust of Stalin that would be logical for the era.   Similarly, the figure of

the non-monumental and highly mobile Lenin replaces the monumental and statuesque-like

Stalin in Iulii Raizman's *Communist* (1958) (Woll 84-85). Mid-level functionaries and activists

in films of the period also started to look similar to the egalitarian Lenin, rather than to the

monumental Stalin. In Mikhail Shveitser's *Michman Panin* (1961), the action of which takes

place during the Russian Revolution of 1905, the head of the anti-tsarist group strongly

resembles Lenin. A sensitive and thoughtful head of a district Party committee in a popular

melodrama, *It Happened in Pen'kovo* (Rostotskii 1957), wears a hat and suit familiar from

Lenin's iconography.

Finally, the avant-garde film masters of the 1920s started getting rehabilitated and

republished. In 1958, on the tenth anniversary of Eisenstein's death, the second part of his *Ivan

the Terrible* was released from the cine-Gulag. The film has been shelved in the late 1940s, after

Stalin and Party decree denounced the portrayal of Russia's despotic ruler as too Hamlet-like.

See also Grigorii Kozintsev's recollections about Stalin's reaction to Eisenstein's *Ivan the

Terrible* (Part 2): "Shakespeare came to us through the back door. Human resources hesitated

for a while, whether to hire him or not . . . Then Stalin stamped with his boot: 'Hamletism!

Prohibit!'" (1994, 125). The six-volume collected works of Eisenstein were published during the

late Thaw (1964-71), and the collected works of Dziga Vertov in 1966.

Directors who had been famous in the 1920s and were still alive in the 1950s received

renewed attention. Among the most important survivors were Kozintsev and Trauberg, the two

leading directors of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor in the 1920s, who had continued making films together through the 1930s and early 1940s. For a general discussion of the FEKS group, see Oksana Bulgakowa's *FEKS: die Fabrik des Exzentrischen Schauspielers*. When the anti-cosmopolitan (anti-semitic) campaign started, Trauberg turned out to be a rootless cosmopolitan, while Kozintsev went on to make Stalinist classics (*Pirogov* 1947, *Belinskii* 1953). Thaw culture's interest in Kozintsev resulted in the publication of his memoirs, *Deep Screen* (first in *Iskusstvo kino* and later as a book) and his Thaw film adaptations of *Don Quixote* (1957) and *Hamlet* (1964).

By contrast, Leonid Trauberg, who stopped working with Kozintsev after their split in the late 1940s, was not completely forgiven even during the Thaw. Ivan Pyr'ev, the director of Mosfilm Studio and later of the Filmmakers' Union, however, helped the rootless director to start making films again: *Soldiers Are Marching* (1959), *Dead Souls* (for television 1960), and *Free Wind* (1961). Pyr'ev also put Trauberg in charge of the Film Directors' Workshop in Moscow (1962-68), one of the major filmmakers schools in the Soviet Union.

Critics started writing about the directors of the 1920s. A monograph on Vertov was published in 1962 (Nikolai Abramov *D. Vertov*), the year of Neya Zorkaia's study of Iakov Protazanov, and in 1963 Efim Dobin published a monograph about Kozintsev and Trauberg. The reappearance of forgotten names and a discussion of filmmakers' style instead of their tribute to the cause of the party signaled a greater openness and sincerity in film criticism.

The quest for sincerity changed the way critics wrote about contemporary films. Of Thaw film critics, Neia Zorkaia and Maiia Turovskaia, more than anybody else affected criticism about contemporary cinema. I would also argue that the fact that both critics were women was also part of the changes that Thaw brought into the male-dominated film industry. The reviews

and analyses of Zorkaia and Turovskaia in *Iskusstvo kino* focused on the style of Thaw films. In a way these critics' writing represented one more modality of a return to the sincerity of the 1920s, specifically of the period's formalist discussions of film.[17]

The end of Khrushchev's Thaw saw a relative decline of scholarship about Thaw films. To be more precise, the change of political climate in Eastern Europe after the end of the Prague Spring (1968) triggered the internal and external emigration of sincere film criticism. Many individuals, such as Neia Zorkaia, were harassed and silenced by the authorities (Zorkaia 1998, 433-48). Literary critic Svirskii moved to the West and discussed Thaw cinema as an echo of Thaw literary politics. At the end of his history of post-Stalinist literature he appended a chapter titled "The Destruction of Soviet Cinema." This chapter narrates the conflicts between the authorities and film directors (Khutsiev, Tarkovskii, Mikhalkov-Konchalovskii) in the period between 1962 and 1967 (1979 341-47) and, predictably, ends with the following passage: "Just as Tartar khans used to feast and carouse on top of their bound Russian captives, so the new khans celebrated the jubilee of the world's first socialist state with the bound and crucified body of the Soviet film industry at their feet" (1981 341-42).

The perestroika years revived interest in Thaw film, an interest that was predominantly political and less scholarly. Both the Russian intelligentsia and the Soviet authorities thought of perestroika as the continuation of the interrupted cultural Thaw. In a revival that recalls the Thaw's return to the ideals of the 1920s, early Perestroika-era intellectuals viewed themselves as recuperating the purity of Thaw values. Early Perestroika, indeed, wrapped up the unfinished

---

[17] Turovskaia's major works of the period include *Da I net: o kino i teatre poslednego desiatiletiia* (1966) and *Geroi bezgeroinogo vremeni* (1971). Neia Zorkaia's major monographs of the era are *Sovetskii istroiko-revoliutshionnyi fil'm* (1962) and *Portrety* (1966).

business of the Thaw: in the film community that meant publishing the writings of such

filmmakers as Mikhail Romm and Leonid Trauberg. Trauberg was still alive and even managed

to publish his memoirs (1988). The transcript of Mikhail Romm's audiotaped memoirs about the

Thaw, titled *Ustnye rasskazy (Oral Stories),* appeared a year later.[18]

Perestroika artists and politicians used Thaw films for their political ends. The quest for

sincerity in cinema and the return to Thaw films during perestroika triggered intellectuals' attack

on censorship in art. In May1986, the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers' Union led to the

election of Elem Klimov as the Union's new head. Klimov was a surviving child of the cultural

Thaw: his first films—ironic satires—made him a controversial director during the late Thaw

(Lawton 54). His election signaled a reform of the filmmakers' community, the industry, and its

control by the state.

One of Klimov's first moves, two days after the Congress, was to create the Conflict

Commission, charged with releasing films banned by the censors. The Commission, led by

Andrei Plakhov, started with the casualties of the late Thaw. The biggest discoveries and

sensations for both the Russian intelligentsia and cinephiles in the West were the films of

directors who had started in the mid 1960s: Kira Muratova and Alexander Askol'dov. The

release of Muratova's *Brief Encounters* (1967/rel. 1986) and Askol'dov's *Commissar* (1967/ rel.

---

[18] One of the big unfinished projects of the Thaw was the Kino Center and the Film Museum, behind which Naum

Kleiman had been the major driving force since the 1960s. As the head of the Filmmaker's Union during the Thaw,

Ivan Pyr'ev planned to open both the center and the museum in the 1960s as research and screening facilities for

professionals and the general public. Plans for Kino Center were published in *Iskusstvo kino.* Only during

Perestroika, however, did the new Kino Center and the Film Museum, led by Kleiman, open in downtown Moscow.

1987) marked the end of Soviet-era censorship in the film industry and in other forms of cultural production. Censorship became predominantly the realm of the market.[19]

With the Thaw political agenda now completed—the end of state censorship and state control of the film industry--a less politically engaged and more distanced view of the Thaw started to prevail in postsoviet writings on the period. These works, however, were still dominated by modes of writing that claim to be sincere, personalized (as opposed to official) examinations of the films and cultural politics of the era. Among the postsoviet writings on Thaw cinema prevail memoirs, reminiscences, interviews, and archival findings.

The interest that remains to this day in the cinematography of the Thaw may be partly explained by the fact that the intelligentsia has a nostalgic attachment to the period. It was a time when the party allowed intellectuals to negotiate cultural capital and power. Ideological control was looser than during Stalin's rule, while state funding was still abundant. The second important reason for a continued engagement with Thaw films by the postsoviet intelligentsia is that these films serve as a fetish of the fading cultural capital. Here, in a peculiar Russian way, Freud intersects with Marx. With the end of the Soviet Union, culture stopped being controlled by the state. At the same time culture and its producers also stopped being the state's kept class. The growing scholarship about the Thaw is a surrogate for the intelligentsia's loss of cultural power and capital in the postsoviet era.

Perestroika saw the appearance of memoiristic surveys and essays by the "children of the Thaw" that combine the recollections of the authors' youth with a discussion of film art and the film community of the Thaw. Lev Anninskii's *The Generation of the Sixties and We* (1991) and

[19] For detailed account of the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers' Union and the work of the Conflict Commission see Anna Lawton's *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time* 55-59, 111-38).

Irina Shilova's . . . *My Cinema Too* (1993) exemplify this tendency. The body of texts constantly expands, mostly via memoirs[20] and reminiscences published in *Iskusstvo kino.*[21]

While memoirs lend a personal touch to the cultural history of the Thaw, the declassified archival materials on the period's cinema constitute a logical continuation of the work of the Conflict Commission: lifting the taboos established by the state censorship agencies. Now Russian film scholars release classified files of the State Film Committee, Ministry of Culture, and other government agencies that are related to the film industry of the Thaw. The publication of archival materials on the Thaw is the result of studies conducted by the working group at NIIKINO (Institute for Cinema Studies) in Moscow. Valerii Fomin heads the team and makes discovered materials accessible to readers through *Iskusstvo kino* and the publishing house Materik. A unique collection of documents and witness accounts, compiled by Fomin, titled *Cinematography of the Thaw* (1998) includes letters, diary entries by film workers of the era, KGB and the Party Central Committee's secret memos and reports, denunciations, recollections of filmmakers, critics, and party functionaries. In 1996 Fomin also issued a volume of materials, *Kino i vlast' (Film Art and the Authorities),* on the film politics of the 1960s and 70s. Together with his colleagues, V. P. Mikhailov, L. D. Pustynskaia, G. M. Ikonnikova, and I. V. Izvolova, he made available to researchers invaluable primary sources about the cultural politics around Thaw film.

---

[20] El'dar Riazanov, one of the best-known directors of the Thaw, published several editions of his memoirs, *Nepodvedennye itogi*, a big part of which consists of reminiscences of the Thaw. In 1999 appeared memoirs by Innokentii Smoktunovskii, the major film and theater actor of the Thaw and the renowned performer of Hamlet and Prince Myshkin.

[21] See, for example, Armen Medvedev's recollections about Thaw cinema or those of Boris Metal'nikov.

Fomin's collection *Kinematograf ottepeli* is part of a three-volume project—one volume of archival documents and two compilations of articles on film art of the era—conceived by the research group at NIIKINO. The project grew partly out of the Conference *Cinematography of the Thaw* organized in June 1991 at the Moscow Kino Center. Vitalii Troianovskii edited the first collection of articles, released in 1996. The second volume, originally slated for completion by 1997, has yet to appear. Troianovskii's collection approached the films of the era from two main perspectives: first, Thaw film as representing the cultural values of the era, second, Thaw film in its dialogue with other arts and cinematic traditions.

The collection also initiated a conceptual rethinking of the period. For example, the researchers questioned the traditional time frame of the Thaw as regards film. According to most political accounts of Soviet cultural history, the Thaw started with Stalin's death (1953) and ended either with the removal of Khrushchev from office (1964) or with the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. On the basis of their research and their analysis of the films' cinematic style, Troianovskii and his colleagues argue that many important decisions that led to the Thaw occurred during Stalin's rule, above all the Nineteenth Party Congress decree to increase the number of feature films (1952). Stylistically, cine Thaw came in the late 1950s. The end of the Thaw in film Troianovskii designates as the early 1970s. The closing of the Experimental Studio led by Chukhrai in May 3, 1976 (Fomin 1998 237) and the style of works by Kozintsev (*King Lear* released 1970), Riazanov (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Italians in Russia* 1973) and Kalatozov (*Red Tent* 1971) definitely confirm the broader framework of cine Thaw proposed by Troianovskii. What is even more valuable is Troianovskii and others' refusal to crudely politicize cine history and to link the film industry and film aesthetics unmediatedly to the political events of Russian history.

2.2. Viewing Thaw Film in the West

The Thaw is the least studied period of Russo-Soviet cinema. Jay Leyda's comprehensive history of Russo-Soviet film, which appeared in 1960, was the first such history to comment briefly on the films of the 1950s. This outstanding work became a revisionist history *avant la lettre* because Leyda violated many taboos of writing about Soviet culture established by the totalitarian model. Unlike countless Westerners and Soviets, he started his narrative from 1896 instead of 1917 or the early 1920s, the era of the heroic avant-garde. By doing so, he established a continuity between the pre- and post-revolutionary culture industry. Moreover, his account attempted to discuss film as social praxis rather than as a set of illustrations documenting the Soviet regime's oppressiveness.

One of the major problems with his study, however, remains a disproportionate focus on the great directors of the 1920s at the expense of a treatment of the industry and cultural politics. This imbalance may be partly explained by his sources: Christie notes that Leyda did not have access to many materials that cast light on the role of the German businesses and workers' organizations (Aufbau and International Workers' Relief) that supported Soviet productions in the 1920s. Leyda also did not analyze the role of cultural revolution in the transitional years 1927-33 (Christie 11). And he only touches at the end of his work on the films of the 1950s. For subsequent discussion of Soviet film and for my work, however, the value of his survey lies in Leyda's avoidance of the banalities of Cold War scholarship, above all, the obligatory binarism of "us" vs. "them" that underlay most historical and literary scholarship in the fifties and sixties.

Parallel with Leyda's perspective and in tune with Soviet film scholars' interest in the cinema of the 1920s, Thaw films (above all, the success at international festivals of Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* [Cannes 1958] and Chukhrai's *Ballad of a Soldier* [1960])

attracted cinephile audiences in the West, who viewed these films as the heirs of the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s. Christie notes that Western intellectuals perceived Russian avant-garde cinema as the idealized "other" of Hollywood narrative film and the cornerstone of European art cinema, together with German Expressionism and Italian Neo-Realism.[22] Mira and Antonin Liehm published a survey of Eastern European cinema in the late 1970s, *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film After 1945,* where they devote a chapter to the cinema of the Thaw and its revival of the experimental tradition originating in the cine avant-garde of the 1920s.

The majority of Thaw films, however, languished in relative oblivion until the mid-80s, when the West's interest in them was inspired by political changes during Gorbachev's perestroika. The Conflict Commission released dozens of Thaw shelved films, among them Aleksandr Askol'dov's *Commissar,* which became a major festival hit in the West. *Commissar*, which addresses in unconventional terms such controversial topics as the Holocaust and the Bolshevik Revolution, received numerous prizes at international film festivals, including the Silver Berlin Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival (1988) and the Silver Spur at the Flanders International Film Festival (1988). It was screened for the US Senate in 1989, as one of two films to emerge from the new, open Russia.[23]

---

[22] For a brief discussion of the reception of the Russian cine-avant-garde by Western intellectuals of the 1950s and 60s, see Christie "Introduction. Soviet cinema: a heritage and its history" (1, 11-13).

[23] The other film was the commercial action blockbuster Alexander Proshkin's *Cold Summer of 1953* (1988). For this information I thank Vladimir Padunov.

In the 1980s, the works of such film historians as Ian Christie, Anna Lawton, Vance Kapley, Richard Taylor, and Denise Youngblood covered most of the century of Russian film.[24] The Thaw, however, remained outside all these discussions, in part, I would argue, because early perestroika's cultural and political agenda continued the cultural Thaw of the 1950s and 60s. In the West the Thaw was not so much analyzed as celebrated through the release of forbidden Thaw films.

Postsoviet Western studies of Russo-Soviet film have approached the Thaw in a less euphoric way, but the rhetoric of liberation from Stalinist aesthetics still dominates the field. In 1993 Marcel Martin published a survey of post-Stalinist Soviet cinema titled *Le cinéma soviétique: de Khrouchtchev à Gorbatchev, 1955-1992*, which included a large section on Thaw film. The first comprehensive non-Russian survey of poststalinist film follows the political history plot, implying that Gorbachev's reforms completed the changes in film style and cultural politics inititated during Khrushchev rule. Josephine Woll's volume, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema And The Thaw* (1999), provides the first survey in English of cultural politics around the Soviet film industry during the Thaw years. Woll examines the cultural paradigms of Soviet culture as they were represented in the films of the time, covers newly discovered archival records, and closely analyzes specific films that are virtually unknown in the West.

---

[24] [25] Denise Youngblood discussed silent films of the 1920s and 30s (1985) and mass film of the 1920s (1992). The nineties witnessed the publication of Youngblood's survey of Russian prerevolutionary film (1999), Richard Taylor's (1993, 1998) and Peter Kenez's (1992) studies of Stalinist-era film, and Anna Lawton's overview of Perestroika film (1992). Finally, one of the most insightful articles on postsoviet cinema is Susan Larsen's "Melodramatic Masculinity, National Identity, and the Stalinist Past in Postsoviet Cinema" (2000).

A more revisionist perspective on Thaw cinema was offered by the US-based Working Group for Studies in Soviet Film and Television. In 1997 and 1998 the group held two annual meetings devoted to Thaw film (Yale 1997 and Amherst 1998). At the Yale meeting participants screened and discussed the films of late Stalinism and the early Thaw, whereas the Amherst meeting focused on films of the sixties. The discussion at the Yale meeting raised the most important point for my reading of Thaw culture. At the round table concluding the work of the group, Nancy Condee, Mikhail Iampol'skii, and Vladimir Padunov all questioned the notion of cine-Thaw as a period of liberation from Stalinist aesthetics. Their alternative model conceived of the Thaw as a dialogue with and a recasting of the cultural system founded in the 1930s and 40s, above all the evolution of Stalinist tropes: those of the war, the family, and the positive hero.[25]

---

[25] Recently Thaw culture attracted scholars' attention. The new studies of the period include Raoul Eshelman's provocative examination of the Thaw as the early stage of Russian postmodernism (*Early Soviet Postmodernism*), Irene Kolchinsky's study of the era's cultural life, especially poetry (*The revival of the Russian literary Avant-Garde : the thaw generation and beyond*), and Simon Greenwold's detailed examination of Thaw literature and film ("The Fate of Socialist Realism in an Indeterminate World: The Aesthetic of Thaw Fiction and Film").

Chapter Two. Methodology, Conceptual Apparatus, and the Object of the Dissertation.

       The methodology, conceptual apparatus, and object of the dissertation include the following six key terms: the first two—trope and culture—describe the methodology and major concepts underlying my research; the last four—melodrama, masculinity, socialist realism and the Thaw—examine the object of my analysis.

1. Key Word #1: Trope

       This dissertation analyzes the master narratives of Thaw culture as they are represented in literary and cinematic texts of the era. Two of them dominate Thaw culture: the *Bildungsroman* of a creative individual and the story of fall and salvation modeled on gospel narrative. These narratives are predicated by the key cultural tropes of the Soviet era: the positive hero, the family, and war.

       Literary and rhetorical studies usually define tropes as figures of speech. Scholars distinguish two (metaphor and metonymy) or four (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) major tropes.[26] While most analyses of figurative language focus on literature, some historians and philosophers of science, such as Hayden White, apply tropological analysis to the narratives produced by the social sciences, and history in particular.

---

[26] Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Lacan are three major champions of metonymy and metaphor as two fundamental poles of the linguistic (Jakobson), the cultural (Lévi-Strauss), and the unconscious (Lacan). For a detailed discussion of this model see White (31-38). The four-element taxonomies of the figures of speech may be traced back to the sixteenth-century works of Peter Ramus and Gaimbatista Vico's study of the stages of human consciousness (White 32).

Hayden White notes that "the historian's problem is to construct a linguistic protocol . . . by which to characterize the field and its elements in his own terms (rather than in the terms in which they come labeled in the documents themselves) . . . This preconceptual linguistic protocol will in turn be . . . characterizable in terms of the dominant tropological mode in which it is cast" (30). White contends that each trope promotes a unique linguistic protocol: metaphor—the languages of identity, metonymy—extrinsicality, synecdoche—intrinsicality, irony—the discourse of self-reflexivity (36-37). Taking its cue from White, this dissertation extends tropological analysis beyond the boundaries of literary criticism. My project entails examining the enactment of cultural tropes by various media, above all, literature and cinema, and to a lesser extent in such forms of cultural production as journalism, literary criticism, radio, poster graphics, and technical design.

While White's discussion of tropes serves as a useful point of departure for my work, it contains several limitations. First, White's fundamental analysis of nineteenth-century historiography favors logocentric consciousness, while I would argue that verbal and visual instantiations of a specific trope constitute a much more complex set of relations within a specific culture than that assumed by the traditional primacy of the word subsequently reimaged by visual arts. Second, I believe that tropes represent the tensions between the superstructure of a society and its basis. Tropes constitute operational systems generating meanings and values necessary to maintain the society's existing mode of economic production. Such operational systems manifest themselves isomorphically in different cultural media.

The notion of a cultural trope operating in this dissertation is closer to the idea of practice developed by Michel Foucault. Thomas Flynn in "Foucault's Mapping of History" defines practice as "a preconceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one's

manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting . . . A practice forms an intelligible

background for actions" (30). Following Foucault's notion of practices, Oleg Khakhordin notes

that discourses of an era may contradict one another and be in open conflict, but while doing so

may share the same practice: "Different statements from opposing theories . . . could contradict

one another, but they both conformed to the same practice at the background level" (14). This

point is extremely important for my procedures in the dissertation. One of the unfortunate

illusions about the dissident artistic discourses of the Thaw is their misperceived radical

dissociation from the official discourse of the era. The conflict between the discourse of the

dissident intelligentsia and official Soviet discourse does not prevent them from sharing the

cultural tropes/practices of the era: the positive hero, and the family and war tropes.

My work examines the background practices (tropes) that enable the production of

artistic discourses of the era, above all, literature and film. As an archeological investigation of

the era's cultural tropes, my thesis examines the manifestations of tropes sedimented in the

literary and cinematic texts of the era, so as to make evident the "enunciative base" of the period

(Deleuze 54). The cultural values enforced via the narratives instantiating the tropes reveal the

power relations within the society. In short, Thaw literature and film reflect above all the

negotiation and distribution of power among Soviet political and cultural elites.

Paul Rabinow notes that Foucault distinguishes between two major types of practices:

objectifying ones, which enable the production of objective knowledge (160-67), and

subjectifying techniques, which help to form human subjectivity (178-83). My dissertation

analyzes the specific tropes-practices that provide both an objectifying and a subjectifying basis

for the literary and cinematic discourses of the Thaw. The hypothesis is that war and family are

the key objectifying tropes of the era. The war trope is instantiated as Soviet society's war

against nature, human spontaneity, and outdated social formations (above all, the capitalist West). The family trope provides a pattern for community formation. The divine paternal leader is the summit of the hierarchical family, with his son as the Soviet positive hero, who under the leader's guidance finds communist consciousness. The family trope is isomorphic, inasmuch as the son of one family can simultaneously function as a paternal figure in another, less conscious family. For example, in Mikhail Chiaureli's film *The Fall of Berlin* (1949) the protagonist Alesha is the surrogate son of Stalin himself, but becomes a paternal figure to the soldiers of his platoon. The soldiers, the representatives of non-Russian Soviet nations, are the sons of their Russian commander.

The positive hero is the major Soviet trope/basis for creating oneself, for constructing Soviet subjectivity. It is the fundamental subjectifying practice of Soviet culture. The Stalinist hero is the flawless warrior fighting for Russian communism. Such heroes are usually monumental builders of the Communist Empire. After Stalin's death the positive hero of Stalinist culture becomes the major field for renegotiating power inside the political and cultural elites, as images of warriors get replaced by artists and intellectuals, who compensate for their physical and organisational inaptitude by their emotional riches, spiritual depth, and the power of individual talent. The story of the protagonist's *Bildung,* however, remains the central narrative model of both the Stalin era and the Thaw.

2. Key Word #2: Culture

This dissertation studies the tropes/practices of the era, above all as they are instantiated in Thaw literature and film, in order to provide an evolutionary morphology of the cultural period. As a point of departure for my analysis I rely on the model of culture articulated by the Tartu School of Semiotics, primarily Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii's "On the Semiotic

Mechanism of Culture," and the notion of sign as ideologeme articulated in the works of

Valentin Voloshinov (*Marxsim and the Philosophy of Language*) and Mikhail Bakhtin

("Discourse in the Novel").

Tartu semioticians define culture as "the nonhereditary memory of the community, a

memory expressing itself in a system of constraints and prescriptions" (213). Culture, according

to this model, is an evolving system of signs: so-called natural language constitutes the primary

modeling system, while the languages of literature and other arts constitute secondary modeling

systems, which stand in isomorphic relation to the primary one.

The semiotics of culture examines the functional correlation of different sign systems.[27]

Following Tartu semioticians, I assume the existence of isomorphic relations (the unity of the

principles of representation) among various artistic activities in a given period that can be

articulated as a system of tropes/practices.[28] The fundamental units in my analysis are cultural

tropes/practices—the semiotic-ideological invariants of a given culture at a given period.[29]

Although the work of Tartu semioticians provides me with the basic heuristic tools for

examining culture, my approach to Soviet culture differs from the Tartu School's in several

ways. First, I do not share the Tartu school's belief in primary and secondary modeling systems.

---

[27] For a detailed discussion of the Tartu semioticians' approach to culture, see Lotman, *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Culture*.

[28] For an extended discussion of the isomorphism of various artistic discourses, see Uspenskii, *A Poetics of Composition*.

[29] I make no essentialist argument by tracing the fundamental tropes of a given culture in a specific era because tropes are culture-specific and may not be universalized across cultures. They are instantiations of power relations by means of which the dominant ideology negotiates and maintains the economic and political status quo.

Instead, I follow the Bakhtinian model of dialogical interaction among the numerous discourses of various cultures.

Even in Russian culture, with the domination of high literature as the core of cultural tradition and the deification of the artistic word, not everything is subjugated to the power of the word. Verbal and non-verbal (above, all visual) systems of representation enjoy more complex dialogical relations instead of being subject to the dictate of the word over the image. Visual discourses become especially resistant to the tyranny of logos in periods of transition, during crises within semiotic systems. Khruschchev's Thaw was one of such crisis periods, when relations between verbal and visual were destabilized and renegotiated. The film genres of comedy (Georgii Danelia and El'dar Riazanov) and family melodrama (Mikhail Kalatozov and Lev Kulidzhanov) became visual narratives alternative to the narrative forms driven primarily by the official word.

The notion of sign that informs my dissertation also differs from that of the Tartu school. The Tartu School elaborates the Saussurian model of the sign as an arbitrary but fixed combination of signifier and signified[30], while I use the notion of sign as a floating signifier. This concept of a sign has been developed in the works of Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Lacan.[31] The sign constantly changes its meaning/referent, depending on

---

[30] Ferdinand de Saussure argues that "the linguistic sign is . . . a two-sided psychological entity . . . the two elements (signifier and signified AP) are intimately united, and each recalls the other" (71).

[31] Roman Jakobson in *Shifters, Verbal Categories, and The Russian Verb* emphasizes the elusiveness of the signifying process and the instability of the relationship between the signifier and the referent. The notion of phoneme developed by either the Moscow or Prague Phonological Schools (with Jakobson as one of the founding fathers of both) also emphasizes that the phoneme's meaning is not fixed, but depends on its specific instantiation in a specific position. Lévi-Strauss's notion of mytheme follows a similar logic: the unit of a cultural code manifests

the cultural context, power relations, and politics of a given culture.   An analysis of the fundamental tropes of Soviet culture demonstrates how artistic practices constitute floating signification. For example, in the course of decades, one of the master tropes of Soviet culture—the positive hero—is constantly destabilized via negotiation of its meaning by various groups of Soviet cultural producers and consumers. The signifier of the positive hero acquires referents within official Party discourse different from those of the intelligentsia's discourse. In fact, the trope of the positive hero exists at the intersection of various voices that attempt to articulate the meaning of the positive hero during an era. The notion of a cultural sign used in this study is characterized, above all, by the dialogical instability between the signifier and its referent.

The third major difference between my approach to Soviet culture and that of the Tartu semioticians concerns the status of ideology in cultural analysis. Tartu semioticians assume the position of conducting objective scientific cultural analysis, purified of any ideological bias. The Tartu School's belief in the possibility of a pure science of culture is one of the last gasps of modernist culture. As Boris Groys notes: "The artistic praxis of modernism involved the continual purification of the internal space of artwork, cleansing it of everything external to it" (1997, 77). In a similar vein, Tartu semioticians developed a pure science of culture. Ironically, Soviet semioticians designed their so-called non-ideological point of view in opposition to openly politicized official Soviet literary and art criticism.

---

only part of its meaning in any specific cultural situation. Lacan's notions of self-identity and language exist on the border, split between the conscious and the unconscious, and constitute an unfinalizable floating signifier. The transcendental sign, the one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified, is an ideal unattainable in living discourse.

Bakhtin in "Discourse in the Novel" and Voloshinov in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* argue that every utterance is an "ideologeme." Michael Holquist explains the notion of ideologeme as follows: "Every word/discourse betrays the ideology of its speaker … Every speaker … is an ideologue and every utterance an ideologeme" (Holquist 429). Following Holquist, I believe that the notion of discourse/ideologeme is semiotic because it implies the exchange of signs in history and in society.

Bakhtin points out that novelistic discourse became the discourse of the modern age, where every utterance exists at the intersection of ideologies (for Bakhtin, worldviews): "Social heteroglossia . . . —this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel" (Bakhtin 1981, 263). Examining Dostoevskii's novels, Bakhtin notes that the writer never articulated ideas, but, rather, created the image of an idea, making it a part of different characters' voices: "The . . . condition for creating an image of the idea in Dostoevskii is his profound understanding of the dialogic nature of human thought, the dialogic nature of an idea" (1984 87). My discussion of culture and cultural sign relies on the Bakhtinian notion of discourse as social heteroglossia, the site of negotiating discursive (cultural) and economic power.

Power negotiations among various groups of Soviet elite constitute one of the key meanings of the Thaw as a cultural period. These groups, with the more liberal organized around literary journal *New World* and the more conservative around the literary journal *October*, accrued cultural capital during late Stalinism, when Stalin formed the intelligentsia estate as the social foundation of the regime (Dunham). During the Thaw, these groups attempted to renegotiate the meaning of the major tropes of Soviet culture in their own interests. This negotiation of power underlies, for example, the cult of an artist/scholar as the positive hero of

the Thaw. Sometimes such a positive hero masqueraded as the hero of universal (that is, European/Christian) values: Don Quixote, Hamlet, King Lear, and Jesus Christ.

3. Key Word #3: Melodrama (Between The Aesthetics of Melodrama and The Aesthetics of Attraction).

The crisis of the literature-centric model of Russian culture in the 1950s positioned visual arts, and especially, film in a more privileged position within the hierarchy of Russian cultural discourses. I avoid general discussion of literary culture of the Thaw because of the numerous works that already have examined the topic at the expense of the visual culture that arguably provided an important counter-balance to the rule of word.

Scholars usually speak of Thaw film as liberating itself from the dominance of the Stalinist narrativity. The liberation is often described as a return to the poetics of the avant-garde film of the 1920s (Anninskii 36, Liehm 199-200). My dissertation provides a critique of such a belief. I contend that Thaw cinema continued the traditions of popular narrative cinema developed in the 1930s-40s. The visualization of Russian culture during the Thaw was, however, not only about formal innovation but also and more importantly about expanding visual industries, above all film production and distribution, and generic models of popular cinema, above all melodrama, comedy, and film adaptation.

Before providing an analysis of specific Thaw films and generic models, I would like to demonstrate my point by contextualizing Thaw-era film in the history of Russo-Soviet cinema. Specifically, I would like to focus on the way various periods in the history of Russian culture have appropriated two major modes of cinematic representation: the mode of the visual display of attractions and the mode of melodramatic narration.

Walter Benjamin's famous dictum about a work of art's loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction suggests two possibilities for modern artistic practices: first, to develop discourses capable of existing in the new aura-less environment, and second, to regain the lost aura by forging a new stylistics. In film art, the first approach is characteristic of films emphasizing the aesthetics of attractions (Gunning 824). The second approach is characteristic of film melodrama, the major narrative mode of American and European film (Williams 88). For Soviet film of the 1950s and 60s discussed in this dissertation, this second approach, the search for the lost aura, is the dominant trend.

As Gunning and Laura Mulvey have shown in two very different contexts, both trends-- attraction and melodrama--rarely exist in pure form and are usually combined in a given cinematic text. The attractions trend usually starts to prevail with the advent of a new technological development in the medium, while the search for the lost aura via melodramatic imagination resurfaces in periods of technological slowdown.

Discussing primarily film reception in the West, Gunning characterizes the early pre-narrative era of the film medium as a period of "the aesthetics of attractions": "The cinema of attractions solicits a highly conscious awareness of the film image, engaging the viewer's curiosity" (1999 825). Two features characterize the film of attractions: first, a focus on visibility, and, second, a foregrounding of the transition from still to moving picture. Gunning contends that early cinema was driven more by the impulse to show than to narrate (Gunning 1986 64). Early film, for example, uses such attraction devices as actors' direct glances at the camera. The close-up in early film does not fulfill a narrative function, but serves as exhibitionistic enlargement: "Its principal motive is again pure exhibitionism" (1986 66). Gunning reinforces his point by positioning early cinema in the context of the cultural institution

of the amusement park, where the first films were screened. He points out that "early audiences

went . . . to see machines demonstrated (the Cinématographe, the Biograph) rather then to view

films" (1986 66). The aesthetics of attraction dominated over the aesthetics of narration.

Producing the effect of surprise entails a magical metamorphosis rather than a seamless

reproduction of reality. Gunning describes early Lumière screenings as the transition not from

the dark screen to the motion picture, but from the still picture to the motion picture (1999, 822).

The major attraction was the image in motion.

The narrative cinema superseded pure attraction cinema in the mid-1900s in the West

(Gunning 1999 824) and in the late 1900s in Russia (Tsiv'ian 1994 162-63). Gunning argues:

"The concept of narrativization focuses on the transformation of showing into telling" (465).

Melodrama became the prime narrative model. Peter Brooks maintains that film has not just

used elements of theatrical melodrama; melodrama, as it took shape in the nineteenth-century

European novel, constitutes the dominant mode of cinematic representation (53).[32] Brooks

distinguishes as a key feature of melodrama the stylistic excess that represents the "moral

occult"—a search for the spiritual in the post-religious world. The terms in which Brooks

discusses the "moral occult" approximate what Walter Benjamin calls the "aura" of uniqueness

and spiritual mystery surrounding a work of art, its quasi-religious quality.

The advent of narrative film did not mean the disappearance of the cinema of attractions.

As Gunning conceives of it, the cinema of attractions, on the one hand, stimulated avant-garde

---

[32] Thomas Schatz's *Hollywood Genres* makes a similar claim for classical Hollywood film: "In a certain sense

every Hollywood movie might be described as melodramatic" (Schatz 221). Approaching genre as an industrial

rather than academic designation, Stephen Neale notes that it is useless to distinguish melodrama as a specific genre

because Hollywood referred to all of its films as melodramas (Neale 66-89).

practices, with their aesthetics of astonishment and stimulation[33], and, on the other, became appropriated by the narrative film as visual spectacle, a tamed attraction at narrative's service. With the advent of sound, the visual excess of cinematic spectacle is often accompanied by music at the moment of narrative and emotional tension.

Although the melodramatic imagination is often discussed as the mode of cinematic representation, such critics as Thomas Schatz or Thomas Elsaesser note that, based on visual style, as well as narrative and thematic conventions, one can distinguish specific genres of melodrama characteristic of national film traditions—for example, that of Hollywood family melodrama. Its conventions include: a powerless protagonist-victim (often female, orphaned) (Elsaesser 86), a troubled family (Elsaesser, 74, Schatz 226-28), a moral polarization of characters (Brooks 53, 60), an externalization of characters' interiority through *mise-en-scène* and music (Elsaesser 84), and a temporality of loss and lateness.

In Russia, family melodrama became the major genre of the 1910s, with Evgenii Bauer as its most prominent practitioner (Tsiv'ian 1989, 546-52, Leyda 78-80, Youngblood 80-86). Neia Zorkaia describes the major conventions of the genre as a female protagonist, seduction followed by repentance and death, and a punished villain, who, however, manages to realize his evil plans (183-247). Richard Stites notes that such a pessimistic denouement "reflected one aspect of Russian sensibility: the fatalistic attitude about [sic] the inevitability of tragedy, loss, and deep suffering" (33). Tsiv'ian argues that the difference in the sensibilities of European and Russian audiences led to the differences in the closure of Russian film melodramas: for export they were

---

[33] Gunning refers to Marinetti's writing on variety theater ("The Variety Theater 1913") and Eisenstein's writings on theater and the cinema of attractions ("The Montage of Attractions" and "The Montage of Film Attractions") (1986 65-66).

produced with happy endings, while for domestic consumption they were released with a tragic

closure (Tsiv'ian 1991, 29-30). The Russian model will survive the zigzags of cultural politics

and return to the Russian mass viewer during the Thaw.

For Russian avant-garde filmmakers of the 1920s, such as Sergei Eisenstein or Dziga

Vertov, the melodramatic quest for a lost spirituality was the art of the banal and decadent

bourgeoisie.[34] The avant-garde did not search for the lost aura, but tried to find new essences in

the surface reality of a post-religious civilization. The early works of Kuleshov, Pudovkin, and

Eisenstein favored editing as the essence of the new medium, concentrating on visual display at

the expense of the narrative: the transformation of telling into showing.

---

[34] Both early Eisenstein and Vertov rejected narrative melodrama film as "the yoke of illusory depictions"

(Eisenstein 35). Eisenstein envisioned creating a cinema of attractions via a system of dialectic conflicts on

different levels of a cinematic text. The exhibition of cinematic attractions was supposed to introduce the viewer to

the new ideology.

Vertov considered even Eisenstein's films not sufficiently avant-garde because they had elements of fiction,

that is, were infected by bourgeois film drama. Vertov's Cine-Eye group proposed to make only fact-based films

composed of documentary footage that catches life "unaware."

> Skillful organization of the filmed factual material will make it possible to create a "work of
>
> cinema" of great agitational power, without an obtrusive and unimposing faith in the grimacing of
>
> actors and without the love- or detective-based inventions of one or another person's inspiration . .
>
> . The film drama shrouds the eyes and brain in a sickly fog. The Cine-Eye opens the eyes, clears
>
> the vision. (116)

Gunning notes that "it is precisely the exhibitionistic quality of turn-of-the-century popular art that made it attractive

to the avant-garde" (1986 66). Vertov, with his drive to show, to exhibit the world caught "unaware," became the

Lumière of Russian cine avant-garde, while Eisenstein became its Méliès—the director of breathtaking montage

attractions.

Eisenstein introduced the notion of attraction in his 1923 article, "The Montage of Attractions," published in the avant-garde journal *LeF* (*The Left Front of Art*). He defined attraction as

> any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e., any element of it that subjects the audience
> to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and
> mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator
> in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity
> of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological
> conclusion. (34)

Jacques Aumont distinguishes four major elements in Eisenstein's theory of theatrical and cinematic attractions. First, attraction is performative and foregrounds the "visually striking existence" (43) of a cinematic image. In this respect attraction is anti-narrative or, as Eisenstein calls it, anti-naturalist, as opposed to the transparency of a continuously edited film. Second, cinematic attraction is defined by its associative relationship to the theme and its collision with other attractions (Aumont 43). The third aspect of attraction, according to Aumont, is the focus on spectators' direct engagement, an attempt to attract their attention (44). For Eisenstein, the engagement of spectators means, above all, infecting them with Marxist ideology, reeducating the masses (45).

Finally, Eisenstein creates a scientific foundation for his theory of attractions. He borrows some assumptions from reflexology, which was popular at the time. This discipline contends that "all human behavior can be considered as the response … to a series of stimuli" (Aumont 45). Accordingly, Eisenstein sees the cinematographer's goal as that of determining and manipulating "those processes of response to stimuli" (45).

In Eisenstein's works reflexology merges with Marxist class analysis. For example, he explains the failure of *Strike* to influence workers or peasants by his incorrect calculations of how the representatives of the working and peasant classes will respond to the artistic stimuli created by his film. Eisenstein specifically refers to the famous montage sequence linking the mass murder of workers with the butchering of a bull at a slaughterhouse.

> [The scene] did not have that blood-curdling effect on the working class public
>
> for the simple reason that in the mind of the worker beef blood is associated first
>
> of all with the blood recuperation plant of the slaughterhouses! As for the effect
>
> on the peasant accustomed to slaughtering cattle himself, it was absolutely nil.
>
> (cited in Aumont 46)

Aumont notes that this scientific foundation of the notion of attraction links it to the idea of ideological and political efficacy (47). Attraction's artistic and ideological quality can be estimated based on the effect that it produces on the working masses.

Ironically, along the lines of efficacy, attraction later was redefined in terms of its potential synthesis with narrative. In his article "Constanza," Eisenstein revises his notion of attraction and allows the possibility of attractions being combined with pathos-evoking narrative. *Potemkin* becomes an example of such a film.

> In *Potemkin* there is an absolute revision of attractions (at least from *Strike*) and a
>
> positive effect (pathos) . . . obtained by means which are all negative . . . And I
>
> believe that it is only through sentiment that they can be led to the necessary and
>
> correct, left-wing, active pumping up. (cited in Aumont 48)

Already in the second film, *Potemkin,* Eisenstein abandons the eccentric attractions of *Strike* in favor of a narratively motivated spectacle (Aumont 48). He continues, however, to view attractions as the way to aggressively engage spectators, enriching them with the new ideology.

The synthesis of a montage of attractions with the Marxism-driven narrative theorized by such leaders of the avant-garde as Eisenstein found a response with intellectuals, who possessed the requisite visual sophistication, but hardly with the broad masses of moviegoers. Richard Taylor notes that the horror thriller *Bear's Wedding* (Eggert) released the same year attracted twice as large an audience as Eisenstein's film. "Later in the year public demand led to *Potemkin* being replaced by Douglas Fairbanks in *Robin Hood*" (195). The implied spectator of Eisenstein's films was intellectually active and visually sophisticated. This spectator, however, perceived film as a high culture exercise rather than a popular work of art. The "Great Divide" between high and popular culture remained unbridged by the cinematic attractions of the Soviet avant-garde.

The Soviet culture industry's response to the avant-garde appropriation of attractions at the expense of narrative in its more traditional forms became the central issue at The First All-Union Party Conference on Cinema in March 1928. This conference adopted a resolution that for the first time announced the famous slogan of socialist realist film: "The main criterion for evaluating the formal and artistic qualities of films is the requirement that cinema furnish a form that is intelligible to the millions" (Party Cinema Conference Resolution 212).

Boris Shumiatskii, the head of the Soviet film industry (1930-37), assumed a leading role in creating popular Soviet film for the millions. He outlined his major points in the book *A Cinema for the Millions* (1935). Popular film, he insisted, was to be plot-driven: "Without plot no film could be entertaining . . ." (cited in Taylor 203). Synchronized sound, according to

58

Shumiatskii's demands, was to play the key role in contemporary popular film. Sound provided control over the ambiguity of the image. Sound also served as the technological attraction that could serve both ideology and entertainment. The key device incarnating the ideological entertainment of Stalinist sound in the cinema became the mass song. Narrative cinema, Shumiatskii proposed, should exist as a system of recognizable and hierarchical genres, and he urged a concentration on three major genres: drama, comedy, and the fairy tale (Taylor 208), the genres in which spectacle and dynamic formulaic narrative are easily combined.

Finally, Shumiatskii promoted the concept of the studio system, whereby individual functions are divided among professional employees and supervised by Party-appointed managers. The Party manager of the studio system and his narrowly specialized employees would replace the artist-director, who, like a Romantic artist, tries to create the entire work of art by himself. Shumiatskii's Taylorism stemmed in part from his visit to Hollywood and in part from the general trend of the era. The goal of catching up with the capitalist West inspired the hiring of Western advisers and the adoption of Western production practices by Soviet industries of the 1930s.

The film that received Shumiatskii's praise as "a film that represents the genuine summit of Soviet film art" (212) was *Chapaev* (the Vasil'ev brothers 1934). Loosely based on the eponymous socialist realist novel by Dmitrii Furmanov (1923), it depicts events during the Russian Civil War between the Reds and the Whites (1918-21). The protagonist is the famous Red commander Chapaev, who transforms from a spontaneous guerilla leader into a conscious communist hero. His magic helper and mentor is the commissar of the division. Like Comrade Stalin, the commissar smokes a pipe and gradually tames the good-natured but unruly protagonist and his men in tune with the new consciousness. Chapaev's natural popular talent

and the commissar's Party rationalism and discipline turn the division into a harmonious masculine family/military unit. At film's end the commissar is reassigned to a different unit, while Chapaev, abandoned by the Party's commissar, is ambushed by the Whites and killed. The long sequence in which Chapaev attempts to escape from the enemies and drowns in the river closes the film.

In the melodramatic mode of a war between good and evil, the film reenacts the main Soviet tropes: the positive hero, the militaristic resolution of the ideological confrontation, and the state's masculine family with strong military overtones. *Chapaev* uses the temporality of mistiming characteristic of melodrama: the characters adjust their differences so as to unite in the harmony of the military family, only to become separated by death at the end of the film. The closure appeals both to Russian popular tastes and to ideological commandments. For the popular viewer, there is the inevitable end (the death of the protagonist), while for the cine-commissars there is the Red Army's counter-attack, which avenges the death of the hero.

Chapaev also redefines the place of spectacle in Soviet film. The spectacle sequences are incorporated into a continuous and dynamic narrative. Visual spectacle primarily surfaces in the battle scenes. The nature of the spectacle is completely different from the avant-garde attractions of Eisenstein, for the spectacle of Stalinist film is driven not by montage, but by the visual organization of bodies within the frame. The prime object of the visual spectacle of *Chapaev* is the monumental military leader and his mentor, the commissar.

The spectacle is based on a reversal of the notion of cinematic attractions as they were understood by pre-narrative cinema or the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s. Instead of the astonishing metamorphosis from still into motion, in Stalinist film the spectator is presented with

a metamorphosis from motion to stasis. In the most dramatic shots of the film, the heroes' bodies petrify in sculpture-like poses.

This static spectacle reinforces the restrictive logic of the narrative. The film starts with Chapaev stopping his men when they retreat from battle. The key shot is of Chapaev standing on a horse carriage and directing machine gunfire. This shot also inspired one of the posters promoting the film (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Another series of static spectacle shots shows the commissar confronting Chapaev's men when they loot the local population.

In all the sequences the dramatic posture of the leader is accompanied by the sound of military/Party commands or of a machine gun. The spectacle shots always reinforce the narrative: Chapaev and his men become reeducated, while the Reds get the upper hand in the war against the Whites. Spectacle provides an unambiguous, entertaining exegesis and resolution of the film's narrative.

As in folklore and popular melodrama, *Chapaev* externalizes and personifies virtues and vices: Chapaev, the spontaneous and smart peasant-warrior and popular justice fighter; the commissar, the wise and paternal Word of the Party; and the White general, the treacherous, rich,

hence, overweight villain. In this respect Shumiatskii's praise of the film is somewhat
misleading:

> In *Chapaev* the heroism of the movement of the masses is depicted alongside the
> fate of individual heroes and it is in and through them that the mass [sic] is
> graphically and colorfully revealed . . . The film *Chapaev* has proved that in a
> dramatic work it is the characters, the intensity of the tempo, the ideological
> breadth that are decisive. (cited in Taylor 212)

The film established not individual but iconic stock characters for future Soviet film: the
spontaneous but fair commander of common origins, the wise commissar, the picaro-like
orderly, the fat White/Nazi/NATO general. Socialist realist film combined melodramatic
narrative with visual spectacle, and made them serve the ideological needs of the Party. The
viewer of such films was supposed to consume passively the monological and unambiguously
tautological narrative imposed upon him by the Party-minded filmmaker.

Thaw film reworked the traditions of Stalinist narrative film by favoring the nuclear
family as the locus of melodrama, by rehabilitating some devices of avant-garde cinema (fast-
paced montage, eccentric camera angles, expressive use of light), and by changing the
iconography of positive heroes and villains in Soviet cinema.

Family cine-melodrama became the major genre of Thaw culture, first, because the
prominence of a visual genre signaled the crisis of cultural models revolving around verbal arts,
literature above all, and, second, because the transformation of the family-trope itself was the at
the center of the changes in cultural politics of the era. The nuclear family became the Soviet
Mini-Me of the Great State Family. On the one hand, the nuclear family preserved a link with
state teleology (the construction of the radiant future); on the other hand, it provided a

humanizing facelift for totalitarian culture. Soviet culture managed to readjust to new cultural values: anti-monumentalism, the cult of the individual, and the emotional side of human personality.

Strong narrative drive remained a staple of Soviet film. Such films as *Cranes Are Flying*, *Clear Sky,* and *Communist*, however, replaced the traditional state/military family narrative with two narrative lines: that of the big (state) family and that of the nuclear family. Films of the period start at a point in the past. Two moments of epic-scale upheaval served as a historical background: the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Great Patriotic War (the phase of World War Two when Russians were part of the anti-Nazi coalition). The two narratives—that of the big state family and that of the small nuclear family—are initially in conflict but eventually come to terms with each other. The conflict in Thaw films is often linked either with the Stalinist past or with the dominance of state family's interests over the individual or nuclear family's interests.

The moment when the families' interests collide constitutes episodes of melodramatic excess: the narrative is suspended and yields to the visual spectacle of characters' sufferings or extreme emotional stress. In such episodes, Thaw directors usually employ sequences imitating the style of avant-garde montage or literal quotations from films of the 1920s. The visual ambiguity of such sequences signals emotional tension, subjectivity of point of view, and concern with the emotional state of an individual. Thaw filmmakers, however, never favor the visual display and graphically self-conscious focus on the medium characteristic of films by Eisentstein or Vertov. All these features of avant-garde cinema were denounced as formalism in the late 1920s and thereafter Soviet filmmakers did not dare to revive such heretical poetics. In Thaw films, narrative always motivates fast-paced montage, unconventional camera angles, and eccentric light patches.

The major narrative event stimulating visual ambiguity in Thaw film is the separation of family members. In *Clear Sky* (a war melodrama about Russian POWs), for example, such a moment of separation is displayed via a montage sequence. It shows young women looking at a train with POWs, presumably their husbands, being transported on Stalin's orders to Gulag camps. A similar motivation was used earlier by Kalatozov in *Cranes Are Flying.* The structure of cause-and-effect narrative, periodically disrupted and spiced by moments of visual spectacle at climactic junctures in the story, became a distinctive feature of Thaw film.

Quotations from the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s in Thaw film indicated two major tendencies of that era, neither of which had anything to do with a revival of the aesthetics of attractions. First, the visual citations reinforced certain ideological statements congruent with the new cultural values. Such a use of the artistic heritage was closer to the ideologized reappropriation of the art of the past characteristic of Stalinist narrative film than to the avant-garde focus on medium specificity and the display of cinema' artistic and technological possibilities. Second, Thaw directors' citing of avant-garde cinema indicated that the avant-garde of the 1920s had became a part of the canon. As Andreas Huyssen notes in his work on the avant-garde and modernism in Germany, the avant-garde was "retrospectively absorbed by modernist high culture even to the extent that modernism and avant-garde became synonymous terms in the critical discourse" (viii). In the Soviet Union not only high culture but also middle-brow socialist-realist culture started to use avant-garde devices in its narratives.

A look at Mikhail Shveitser' film *Michman Panin* (1960) illustrates my point. The film's action takes place on the Imperial Navy cruiser after the Revolution of 1905, as the ship sails

from St. Petersburg to France, to visit the ally's Navy.[35] Michman Panin, a member of the

Bolshevik Party, helps to smuggle on board fugitive sailors from a mutinous ship. Apart from

the secret police officer on board, everyone knows about, and sympathizes with, Panin's project.

Even the captain, who suspects Panin of being a revolutionary, helps by advising him to desert

ship when his arrest becomes inevitable. Demoted from officer to a simple sailor for desertion,

Panin joins the military proletarians to participate in the new revolution.

The film ends with a visual quote from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. The last frame

of the film unveils the front part of the ship, with the crew lined up for morning review—the

moment preceding the uprising in Eisenstein's film. Shveitser's quote from the famous film is a

clear political move: the reference to a filmmaker not yet fully rehabilitated at this time was a

nonconformist gesture of a Thaw-era intellectual. The quote is also an inside joke,

understandable only to the few intimately familiar with Eisenstein's masterpiece, indicating that

the avant-garde had become part of the high culture canon. The visual pleasure evoked by the

quote could be shared only by a handful of cinema connoisseurs and meant hardly anything to

the general viewer, who enjoyed the film's adventure story and the spirit of family-like

community on the ship.

Finally, the reference to *Potemkin* was wholly within the conventions of Stalinist

narrative cinema. As opposed to the avant-garde poetics of attractions, which laid bare the

---

[35] Shveitser originally planned to make a film about Lenin to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of his birth.
Michman Panin was supposed to meet and work with Lenin in France. The director wished to depict the leader in a
less canonical way: for example, in a scene Lenin was to ride a bicycle during his stay in Paris. Censors opposed the
director's plans to represent the great leader in such a frivolous light. In the released film, Lenin is only mentioned
but never appears on screen.

metamorphosis from still image to motion picture, Shveitser's quotation from Eisenstein halts the motion within the frame. Just as in a classical Stalinist film, *Michman Panin* surprises the viewer by the metamorphosis from motion to stasis. The last shot brings everyone and everything within the frame into the stasis of military order. Moreover, the long take of the motionless crew not only suspends motion, but also provides closure to the film's narrative.

Thaw cinema elaborated and made more sophisticated the popular narrative film developed in the 1930s and 40s. In Thaw film, the memory of avant-garde traditions manifested itself either in visual citations from films of the masters of the 1920s[36] or in devices reminiscent of avant-garde poetics.[37] Avant-garde references did not, however, revive the poetics of attractions, but expressed the new cultural values of the era: abandoning monumentalism, loosening the rigidity of Stalin-era narrative film, and modifying the primacy of the state Big Family over the interests of the individual. References to films of the 1920s were intended not to perpetuate avant-garde aesthetic, but to diversify the narrative canon established in the 1930s.

It goes without saying that during the Thaw there was no attempt to implement Eisenstein's notion of a cinema of attractions. During the period, Eisenstein was rehabilitated as a high culture artist, not as an avant-gardist. To put it differently, the avant-garde of the 1920s had become part of the high culture canon by the 1950s and 1960s. Poised between the cinema of attractions and narrative melodramatic cinema, Thaw filmmakers and their mass viewer favored the latter. The devices and quotes from avant-garde films were incorporated into

---

[36] Among numerous directors citing the works of the 1920s are Iulii Raizman quoting Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* in *Communist* (1957) and Andrei Tarkovskii citing Dovzhenko's *Earth* in *Ivan's Childhood* (1962).

[37] See, for example, fast-paced montage and constructivist diagonal lines within the frame in Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* (1957), *The Letter That Was Not Sent* (1959), and *I Am Cuba* (1964).

narrative to highlight its climactic moments or to signal new cultural policies as applied to cinematic style. For established high culture filmmakers and viewers of the 1950s and 60s, such moments of visual excess also provided the vicarious pleasure of belonging to the subversive revolutionary artistic tradition at a time when the tradition was safely dead.[38]

4. Key Word #4: Cinemasculinity: From Stalinism to the Thaw.

Steven Cohan defines masculinity as the "gender masquerade of an ordered field of power relations" (xviii). In a patriarchal society, representations of masculinity are central to the system of the era's dominant cultural values. Soviet culture of the 1950s and 60s articulated its images of masculinity against the background of the Stalinist norm: the Stalinist homosocial militarized family, the positive hero, and his war ethos, which combined war on capitalism with war on nature and on the irrationality of the human psyche.

Thaw culture privileged the depiction of a male who, owing to his age, had not yet made the transition to adulthood. The era's positive males are often boys, teenagers, and young adults who were born after Stalin's death or were small children during the early 1950s. Thaw artists tended to represent a character at the stage when he had not yet completely entered the social order. By doing so, they managed to eschew many difficult ideological dilemmas—above all, defining the role of the collective and the individual—, because a child does not distinguish

_____

[38] The aesthetics of attractions was partly revived in slapstick comedy, which became briefly popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Leonid Gaidai was the major maker of these films, many of them shorts, as, for example, *Barbos and the Unusual Cross* (1961) or *Moonshiners* (1962). Even his narrative films consist of a series of eccentric bodily attractions: *Captive of the Caucasus* (1967) and *Diamond Arm* (1969). Most of his films have very little dialogue and some are practically silent (*Barbos and the Unusual Cross* [1961] and *Moonshiners* [1962]).

between self and the social Other (in the Soviet case, above all, the community). In addition, the regression to the childhood stage left open the possibility of entering a better (usually unspecified) Symbolic order in the future.

Thaw texts favor heroes with verbal skills in the process of development: from this perspective it is easy to understand why during the Thaw era film, as opposed to the verbal mode of literature, became the prime medium for constructing the rejuvenated Soviet male. Even the adult cine-protagonists of the Thaw lack verbal skills, reason, and are at their best when they perform nurturing functions, which are characteristic of the maternal/Imaginary sphere. Thaw filmmakers favored Soviet men who operated primarily on the Imaginary level and tentatively assayed the first steps in mastering the Soviet Symbolic Order.

The defense film—a genre film about the life, or an episode from the life, of a military unit—became the main narrative of Stalinist cinemasculinity in the 1930s.[39] If a military leader figured importantly in the iconography of Russo-Soviet military history, the film about him would transform into a biography picture. Among such films are *Chapaev* (Vasil'ev Brothers 1934), *Pugachev* (Petrov-Bytov 1937), and *Minin and Pozharskii* (Pudovkin 1939).

Films about warriors, which Richard Taylor calls "quasi-cultic films" (88)[40], were one of the major genres of "Soviet Hollywood" and fell into a predictable pattern. Stalinist warriors

---

[39] In 1932 Vsevolod Pudovkin and several other Soviet filmmakers published a letter calling for the creation of a "defense cinema": "We appeal to all creative workers in Soviet cinema to participate actively through specific films in helping the cause by reinforcing the defense capability of the USSR and the strength of the Red Army" (323).

[40] Richard Taylor defines quasi-cultic films as films with a linear narrative revolving around the figure of the hero(ine) who undergoes ideological maturation. In quasi-cultic films "the hero's tale unfolds against an overtly political background" (1983, 86).

usually arrive in a community weakened by the lack of a strong ruler and reunite it. In Soviet film, every Soviet and allied nationality had its own warrior-national leader: Aleksandr Nevskii for Russians (*Aleksandr Nevskii*, Eisenstein 1939), Bogdan Khmelnitskii for Ukranians (*Bogdan Khmelnitskii*, Savchenko 1941), Salavat Iulaev for Bashkirs (*Salavat Iulaev*, Protazanov 1940).

The lives of the most distinguished empire builders were too monumental to handle in one film. Usually several films covered key events in the lives of the greatest leaders: *Peter the First* (two parts, Petrov 1937), *Ivan the Terrible* (two parts 1943-48). Only three episodes of Stalin's monumental life as the patriarch of the nation were reenacted on the Soviet screen: Lenin's passing the baton of power to Stalin, in *Oath* (Chiaureli 1948), Stalin's victory in World War Two, in *Fall of Berlin* (Chiaureli 1949), and Stalin's victory in the Russian Civil War, in *The Unforgettable 1919* (Chiaureli 1951).

The cine-life of a warrior usually followed one of two narrative schemes: (1) the maturation of a hero or (2) the deeds of the mature leader who defended Russia. Films about minor leaders usually adopted the maturation plot, whereas films about major empire-builders, such as Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible, combined the maturation plot (Part 1) with the deeds of the ruler (Part 2). Films about Stalin never covered the maturation stage, for Stalin was always already the great leader.

Stalin-era masculinity consists of two major components: repressed libidinal energy and ideological consciousness. Both components channel an excess of energy into socially legitimated killing. The ideological consciousness of the Stalin era downplays Marxist internationalism, emphasizing nationalism and empirial expansion. Libidinal energy is rechanneled into the aggressive energy of killing in the name of the Russian/Soviet people.

An example of such a rechanneling of the sexual drive is the storyline of Vasilii Buslaev (Okhlopkov)[41] and his beloved Vasilisa (A. Danilova) in *Aleksandr Nevskii* (Eisenstein 1938). The scene of Buslai's courting Vasilisa opens with Buslai playing with the end of his belt, which resembles an enormous penis.[42] The courting scene is interrupted by the announcement of war against the German knights. Buslai finds an outlet for his libido in the battle with the German knights, sanctified by the idea of defending the Russian land. The scene of a bloody, dynamic battle substitutes for the courtship and romantic encounter of the two lovers. Vasilisa, as well as Buslai, joins the Russian army and sublimates her excess of sexual energy in killing the invaders.[43]

Stalinist males also manifest an excess of energy in openly asocial behavior. Soviet audiences' most beloved scenes from *Chapaev*, a film about the ideological maturation of a Red Army commander, are those depicting Chapaev's fits of rage when his ideologically untamed energy spills over and produces a comic effect. One of many such popular episodes is Chapaev's demand that his nurse give a local butcher a doctor's diploma. Chapaev is outraged that the educated classes do not allow commoners like the butcher to join their elitist circle and tries to shoot the nurse, who refuses to certify the butcher. The didactic resolution to a slapstick episode comes via the intervention of a political commissar, who physically and ideologically

---

[41] Vasilii Buslaev is a warrior hero from the Novgorod cycle of Russian medieval epic poems (*byliny*).

[42] Sergei Eisenstein uses a similar motif of enormous sexual power rechanneled into state service in his costume sketches for the soldiers of Tsar Ivan (*Ivan Terrible* [1943]).

[43] In *Chapaev*, Pet'ka and Anka fall in love while learning how to use a machine gun. The scene that follows, however, does not develop their courtship, but is a battle scene, where Anka kills dozens of enemy soldiers with her machine gun.

restrains the unruly Chapaev. Chapaev's class instinct might be correct, but he is not yet educated in the Party line about enlightening the lower classes. Unchanneled murder attempts, brutal behavior, and fits of rage are characteristic for the cinematic portraits of Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible until they acquire the consciousness of empire builders. Only then is their excessive energy channeled into the sanctioned military project of killing invaders, traitors, and pretenders. Socially justified killing, in short, is the major outlet for the energy of a Stalinist male.

Stalinist masculinity is teleological, with ideological maturation as its primary goal. The bottom line of this ideology is the legitimation of the empire and the cult of scientific reason. If the action takes place in the Middle Ages, scientific reason is represented as the superiority of Russian military technology (the storming of Kazan in Part 1 of *Ivan the Terrible*). In the 1930s, the church serves as the "natural" opposition to reason. Clergy usually fulfil the function of the villain, pitted against model masculinity. For example, in *Aleksandr Nevskii* a priest is a treacherous collaborator with the Germans, just as in *Ivan the Terrible* priests join the anti-tsarist conspiracy.

The Stalinist man's route to reason is through reeducation. Stalinist literature and film produced numerous narratives about homeless orphans reeducated by the state in special male orphanages-communes. One of the first popular Soviet talkies, *Road to Life* (Ekk 1931), narrates the experiences of such an orphan, who loses his family, becomes a member of a street gang, and then, at a special boarding school, is reeducated into an exemplary Soviet citizen. The film was sponsored by the secret police, which is present in the film as the general administration of the school for young delinquents.

The Stalin-era positive hero, the model of Soviet masculinity, easily accepts the death of his immediate family, starts his quest for reason, and acquires it with the help of his ideological *pater*. The motif of betrayal en route to ideological consciousness is of prime importance because the Stalinist male cannot acquire reason without learning how to be vigilant. Paranoia is an indispensable part of male reason in Stalin's time. In the blockbuster of the 1930s, *Engineer Kochin's Mistake (Oshibka inzhenera Kochina)* (Macheret 1938), the major error of the protagonist, who designs a high-speed fighter plane, is his lack of vigilance. Foreign spies use this shortcoming of his to steal the secret blueprints of the fighter plane. Kochin loses not only the blueprints, but also his lover, who becomes a foreign spy and later is thrown under the train by foreign agents. The death of a female lover, however, is not just a melodramatic gesture, but is the mandatory ritual of sexual repression on the protagonist's way to acquiring vigilant consciousness; it enables the ideological Candide to be reforged into the exemplary Soviet man.

Stalinist masculinity requires not only displaced social energy, but also participation in the interrogation, trial, and destruction of an enemy. Interrogation or a communal interrogation-trial reminiscent of a lynch trial are part and parcel of almost every Stalinist film. The maturing male usually witnesses how the mentor uncovers and destroys the enemy. In *Chapaev,* one of the central scenes is that of the trial of the looters, who are Chapaev's friends. The political commissar, Klychkov (literally, Small Fang), engineers the show trial, in the course of which Chapaev undergoes ideological transformation. His own decision to punish his former friends for the sake of ideological and military discipline marks a key juncture in Chapaev's reeducation. Chapaev's natural warrior talents receive a sense of direction when he learns the party's commandments.

The Thaw broadened the genre range of films dealing with normative Soviet masculinity. Instead of Stalinist biopics originating in the militaristic poetics of the defense film, Thaw filmmakers explored tragedy, melodrama, and even comedy to portray the exemplary Soviet man.

During the Thaw, tragedy became one of the chief genres codifying Soviet masculinity. "In Spring 1956 . . . Sergei Iutkevich's *Othello* opened in the wake of the Party Congress" that denounced the cult of Stalin (Woll 42). Iutkevich's adaptation of *Othello* constructs the conflict of a neo-classicist, not Renaissance, tragedy: duty versus passion. The tragedy emerges out of the protagonist's temporary loss of reason. Internal treason and even more destructive forces— love and jealousy—invade Othello's idyllic world. Both key components of Soviet masculinity—skill as a warrior and the agency of reason—are put in jeopardy. The Soviet Othello resolves the conflict by the paradigmatic mode of the Stalinist cultural economy— killing. As in Stalinist film, killing replaces the potential intercourse of the two lovers and also returns to Othello the faculty of reason. The difference between Iutkevich's work and the Stalinist film is that the restored reason of the Thaw positive hero—disguised as Othello—comes at the cost of a crime: the murder of one of "us," a member of our family, and not the enemy. Such a movement within, however, characterizes the Thaw era, which internalized those elements that Stalinism externalized and monumentalized. The critics praised, above all, the topicality of the film at a time when the cult of Stalin had been denounced and faith in the party and communist utopia had been restored (Frolov 16).

Grigorii Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964) took a different approach to the representation of masculinity in the genre of tragedy. In Kozintsev's film repressed sexuality is still part and parcel of Soviet masculinity, and, not unlike in the Soviet *Othello*, the aborted romantic plot

results from betrayal and intrigue. Hamlet, however, avoids rechanneling his excess of energy into action because action equals murder and he is determined to eschew the standard route to power and maturity via violence.   Absolutizing Thaw's emphasis on interiority, Hamlet directs his energy into the realm of self-reflection, and his soliloquies eloquently express his intellectual power. Kozintsev opposes Hamlet to Laertes, who enacts the Stalinist war ethos and whose simplistic quest for justice via violence makes him a puppet in Claudius's intrigues. Hamlet avoids the war ethos as long as possible, until Elsinore's Stalinist values force him to kill. The tragedy of observing the rules of Elsinore necessitates Hamlet's death; otherwise he would join the gallery of Claudius-like rulers in Elsinore's labyrinth.   In Kozintsev's film, murder is not part of exemplary masculine behavior, but tragedy.

Kozintsev's Hamlet also preserves reason as a distinct feature of Soviet cinemasculinity, but this reason is the intellectual agency of an individual rather than communal ideology: "Hamlet—Smoktunovskii [the actor who played Hamlet AP] is a reflecting hero-intellectual, a thinker whose potential is chained by the state-prison" (Shemiakin 140). Hamlet's reason is opposed to the insanity of Elsinore, with paranoia at its heart. From Hamlet's point of view, the entire project of "communal common sense" justified by complicity in crime and conformism equals mass insanity.   In light of the Thaw's cultural values—above all, the cult of the individual and the emotions—Hamlet's individual reason is reinforced only because that "reason" does not exclude the ability to experience human weakness. Kozintsev's Hamlet is capricious and unpredictable, and, importantly, neither insane nor driven by Freudian complexes. He remains an ideal man of the Red Enlightenment, an individual driven by humanist reason and not by the dark forces of an irrational, unreflective nature.

Film posters advertising these two film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays conveyed change in the use of tragedy to represent exemplary Soviet masculinity: the Soviet Othello was a temporary solar eclipse in the radiant paradise, as opposed to the Soviet Hamlet, who personified the tragedy of human dignity amidst complete darkness.   The poster for *Othello* visualized the central theme as the conflict between the Edenic purity of the world captured by the film and the base lie that crawls snakelike into the militarized paradise (Figure 2).[44] The black head of the moor is a small dark spot against the radiant white background of the poster. The artist slightly tilted both the title and figure of Othello, to mirror the protagonist's emotional condition.

Figure 2.

---

[44] Images of these film posters are cited from the web page for the course *New Russian Media* (URL: http://www.pitt.edu/~slavic/courses/russ1771/) taught by Vladimir Padunov.

Figure 3.

In the poster for *Hamlet* (Figure 3), the artist reverses the color pattern: the general background is black, while Hamlet's head, heart area, and hands are the only white patches in the darkness. Hamlet's posture expresses a reserve of action and emotion. The title and male figure are immaculately upright. Hamlet is supremely sane; his reason and human decency oppose the passion-driven bestiality of Elsinore. The prince's firm, tranquil grasp on his sword signals his avoidance of Elsinore's temptations: to become a murderer, like his opponents.

The Thaw era welcomed family melodrama as its central cinematic genre, with the postwar recuperation of a nuclear family as its major theme. Thaw film melodrama downplayed the Stalinist Big Family in favor of the individual small family. Within this category, male melodrama developed into a special subgenre. The narrative usually focused on the returning war veteran whose adjustment to peaceful life parallelled the normalization of life within his immediate family. In pioneering the new subgenre, Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The Return of Vasilii Bortnikov* (1953) opened new possibilities for representing Soviet malehood.

Male melodrama reassigns roles in Lacan's Imaginary and Symbolic spheres. It usually excludes or marginalizes a maternal figure, transferring the Imaginary maternal functions to the father. Two main characters usually form the core of the family: the war veteran who lost his family, and an orphan boy whom the protagonist "adopts" (*Two Fedors* [Khutsiev 1958], *Fate of a Man* [Bondarchuk 1959], *Serezha* [Daneliia and Talankin 1960], and *Trip to the Harbor* [Daneliia 1962]). The paternal figure becomes feminized, favoring emotions over reason, and his ability to nurture is valued over his capacity to pass on intellectual or ideological knowledge. The surrogate son, associated with the stage preceding the Law of the Father, is usually a child or a teenager unprepared for indoctrination but requiring everyday care and emotional warmth. In short, the Imaginary triumphs over the Symbolic.

Male melodrama of the Thaw regularly relegates the war/rior experience of a male protagonist into the past. The paternal figure recollects war as a personal trauma. Although he did not kill, part of his own family was killed and part of him died in the war: a castrating experience that enlarges his heart and breasts. In male melodrama of the 1950s and early 1960s, the Stalinist war ethos not only separates from the male protagonist, but turns against him: he is a victim, not a Victor, of the war. The orphanhood of the son figure usually echoes the father's war experience. In *Two Fedors,* for example, both father and son are war orphans.

The scale of this male family reflects the anti-monumentalist trend of poststalinist film. The nuclear family preserves the overtly homosocial overtones of the Big Family in the bond between father and son as its structural dominanta; male figures, however, lack not only the epic scale of Stalinist men, but also their warrior values and their ideological rigor.

In representations of Thaw masculinity feeling replaces the primacy of fanaticism, romance takes precedence over warrior prowess, courting over killing. The beginning of

Rumiantsev's File (Kheifits 1955) is structured around this opposition. The truck driver

protagonist, Sasha Rumiantsev, gets into an accident saving the life of a small girl who crosses

the road in front of his truck, and in so doing injures the woman to whom he is giving a ride.

Sasha starts visiting the woman in hospital and falls in love with her. The moment of not

committing a murder (however unwitting) thus becomes the start of a romance. In *Ballad of a

Soldier* (Chukhrai 1959), the movement of the male protagonist homeward from the frontline

coincides with the development of his love affair with his companion, Shura.

Finally, Thaw melodrama alters the role of paranoia as the decisive factor in male

reasoning. Although interrogation and trial scenes remain a prominent *topos* in Soviet film of

the Thaw, the uses of the *topos* change dramatically. Echoing the campaign, initiated by

Khrushchev, of rehabilitating Stalin's prisoners, Thaw melodrama confronts the Stalinist secret

police investigator with a wrongly accused positive hero. The conflict becomes resolved with

the arrival of a new investigator, who prefers to trust people instead of suspecting them, and

rehabilitates the hero. Such is precisely the plot of *Rumiantsev's File*, where Sasha first becomes

a victim of a paranoid detective, then meets with an understanding KGB colonel, who uncovers

the conspiracy behind Sasha's imprisonment.

The interrogation/trial scene also becomes a reeducation scene, with a young, confused,

but potentially positive hero undergoing reeducation. In *The Case of Many Colors* (Dostal'

1956), as a rookie cop and young criminals undergo interrogations/counseling sessions with

senior police officers, the young cop learns how to be humane with the prisoners, while the

young criminals repent and abandon their criminal way of life. Paranoia stops being the staple of

Soviet masculinity; instead, it is linked to an excessive vigilantism associated with Stalinist

practices. The interrogation scene remains, but acquires a different function: in lieu of teaching

the positive hero how to uncover the enemy, the paternal investigator conducts a counseling/reeducation session with a prospective positive hero. Melodramatic masculinity of the Thaw displaces into the past the male protagonist's warrior experience. Ideologized and paranoia-driven reason yields to the cult of emotional bonding between father and son.

Stalinist comedy avoids focusing on positive masculinity. At the center of this genre's narrative there is usually a male villain-bureaucrat confronted by a positive female protagonist. In representing the male villain, such directors as Aleksandr Medvedkin or Grigorii Aleksandrov use slapstick and bodily humor. Thaw comedy introduced a positive male hero and engaged both major components of exemplary Soviet masculinity: the war ethos (killing instead of romance) and the cult of ideologically correct reason. The chief comedy director of the Thaw was Leonid Gaidai, whose slapstick comedies became major blockbusters of the era. His most popular films feature the same male hero—the naive student Shurik—whose contemporary urban appearance disguised the popular hero of Russian fairy tales, Ivan the Simpleton (the youngest of three brothers who by a miracle turns out to be the luckiest and most successful of the siblings). Just as in fairy tales, so in Gaidai's films, Shurik is a flat mask fulfilling the narrative function of the hero pitted against comic villains. True to genuine folkloric conventions, no ideological maturation, psychological depth, or even melodramatic moralism is attached to this comic mask.

The male protagonist's war against social vices—such as rudeness in public transportation ("Partner" [1965]), cheating on exams ("Hypnosis" [1965]), theft ("Operation Y" [1965]), forced marriage (*Captive of the Caucasus* [1967]), and smuggling (*Diamond Arm* [1969])—is just an excuse to stage a series of slapstick attractions and bodily jokes. Ideologically legitimate war turns into a farce. As part of his externalization and physicality, Gaidai's positive male is completely uninhibited about his sexuality: he is the only Soviet male to

get into bed with a female since the 1920s ("Hypnosis" [1965], and *Diamond Arm* [1969]). He

gets the girl at film's end, however, not because of his conscious struggle and feats of courage,

but because of his magic luck or because the narrator needs to impose closure on a series of

comic attractions.

In Gaidai's films, the ideological message central to the representation of positive

masculinity in Soviet cinema serves an auxiliary function: the major function is that of

entertainment. The absence of a clear ideologized narrative—present not only in Stalinist

biopics, but also in Thaw tragedy or melodrama—accounts for the episodic structure of Gaidai's

films. Most of them consist of a series of shorts: *Barbos and the Unusual Cross* (1961),

Moonshiners (1962), *Business People* (1963), *Operation Y* (1965), and *Diamond Arm* (1969). At

a time when ideological narratives were undergoing major revision, Gaidai's films revived the

cinema of attractions. In his comedies, Soviet cinemasculinity ceased being the core of the

narrative and turned into a comic device. As ideological confrontation transformed into slapstick

comedy, the carrier of positive ideology turned into the comic mask of Ivan the Simpleton.[45]

The motif of reason as the distinctive feature of Soviet masculinity became central also in

El'dar Riazanov's comedy *Beware of A Car* (1966). His protagonist, Iurii Detochkin, is a pure

and naive grown-up child. He fights for justice in contemporary Soviet society, where only

thieves and embezzlers enjoy prosperity. Like Robin Hood, Detochkin steals from thieves,

resells their cars, and donates the money to orphanages. In his free time, he rehearses *Hamlet* in

an amateur theater. Riazanov's hero follows another model of the fool that persists to this day in

Russian culture—the Fool-in-Christ as the voice of prophetic and benign irrationality.

---

[45] In *The Diamond Arm,* Gaidai even names his male protagonist after Ivan the Fool's magic helper from the fairy

tale *The Hump-backed Horse (Konek-Gorbunok).*

Detochkin, a comic Fool-in-Christ, is first suspected of insanity, then is compared by his fiancée to Dostoevskii's Idiot, and finally is tried and sent to jail. The community denounces the voice of decency and reason as "sheer insanity."   In the late Thaw, comedy starts bordering on tragedy, for the male protagonist's reason and decency gradually come to represent insanity in a community rife with hypocrisy and crime.

Cinemasculinity of the Stalinist era, with its cult of the war ethos and reason, underwent transformations in Thaw culture. Three major narrative models emerged: those of tragedy, of family melodrama, and of comedy. Tragedy and melodrama elaborated on the Stalinist exemplary male: at the center remained the problematics of the reason-driven warrior, his homosocial family unit, and sexual repression sublimated into an instinct for killing. The third model, that of comedy, and above all Gaidai's slapstick comedy, emptied the positive male hero of his ideological filling: he became a mask used for bodily jokes. War became slapstick, while ideology became an excuse for a series of comic attractions. To cite a film critic from the 1960s, by the late Thaw, positive Soviet masculinity had metamorphosed into "grotesque [beings], without any excuses, and clowning, without any psychological weight" (L'vov 40).

The only genre in which Stalinist masculinity remained unaltered during the Thaw was the fairy-tale film for children. Aleksandr Ptushko made several film adaptations based on Russian epic poems and fairy tales during the Stalinist and Thaw periods: *Sadko* (1953), *Il'ia Muromets* (1956), and *The Fairy Tale of Tsar Saltan* (1966). In the context of Soviet film genres during the 1950s and 60s, however, these films signaled the general tendency to marginalize Stalinist masculinity in Soviet cinema.

5. Key Word #5. Socialist Realism

During the period of the 1950s and 60s, every Soviet cultural producer defined his artistic practice in observance or violation of the official method of Soviet art: socialist realism. Consequently, the major tropes of Soviet culture—positive hero, family, and war—are central in the discourse of artists either adhering to the socialist realist method or disregarding it. Therefore my work examines how Soviet culture of the Thaw era redefined the major method of Soviet culture and rearticulated its fundamental tropes in tune with the new cultural values: anti-monumentalism, the cult of individual, and a focus on the emotional, spontaneous aspects of human nature.

My interpretation of socialist realism follows Groys's argument that socialist realism was a response to high modernist aesthetics, but contained some elements of proto-postmodernist practices.

> Socialist Realism was … a "style and a half": its protopostmodernist strategy of appropriation continued to serve the modernist ideal of historical exclusiveness, internal purity, and autonomy from everything external. (79)

Comparing the discursive practices of modernism and socialist realism, Groys contends that "according to the ideology of modernism, it was only in liberating himself from everything external that the artist could reveal the inner truth of art and express it adequately . . . The artistic praxis of modernism thus involved the continual purification of the internal space of the artwork" (77). The fundamental opposition of modernism was between high art and low mass culture, what Andreas Huyssen calls the "Great Divide" (viii), while the fundamental antinomy of socialist realism revolved around the opposition between Soviet and non-Soviet (Groys 77).

This second, horizontal opposition constitutes the war trope that permeates all the discursive practices of Soviet culture.

Groys believes that "the notion of Sovietness, like the notion of high culture in modernism, was understood . . . in terms of autonomy, with communism defined as man's liberation from the forces of nature and the market economy (which was viewed as the effect of natural laws on the society)" (77). The war trope embraced the transformation of nature, of national and individual identity. The confrontation with the West was only a side product of the state's modernist project.

"The distinction between socialist realist art and traditional academic mass art," Groys argues, "was drawn in terms of its specific contextual use of available artistic devices and forms, which drastically altered their normal functioning: instead of just being enjoyed … these devices and forms became a means of propaganda, deployed to achieve a very modernist ideal of a historically original society independent of any tradition or prototype" (78). For Groys this contextual reappropriation of the form makes socialist realism parallel to postmodernist artistic practices, "for postmodernism can be generally characterized as the appropriation of ready-made cultural forms deployed in contexts at odds with normal functioning" (78).

Like many avant-garde movements of the era, such as Futurism or Constructivism, socialist realism offered a self-referential programmatic manifesto of its method. The term emerged out of the polemic between the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and the organizational commission of the Writers' Union.[46] This polemic ended when RAPP was

---

[46] For a detailed discussion of the relations between RAPP and the Party, see Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature.*

dissolved by the Party decree in April 1932.[47] RAPP claimed to represent the interests of the

proletariat on the literary front. The organization consisted of radical left intellectuals who tried

to establish an ideological monopoly for their version of Marxism in the field of literature and

culture in general. Most importantly, RAPP constantly tried to speak in the name of the Party on

matters of cultural politics. Although RAPP was the most prominent organization, in every

sphere of cultural production there arose a similar organization with aspirations to ideological

monopoly: in film it was ARK (Association of Revolutionary Cinematographers).

     After the dissolution of RAPP, its members insisted that the organization, which

represented proletarian literature, should have a special section within the Union and that the

Union should adopt RAPP's dialectico-materialist method of creation as the official method of

Soviet literature (Robin 38). In May 1932 a special commission, which included Stalin, Pavel

Postyshev, and Gronskii, reviewed the petition and rejected both demands. The special section

was not acceptable because it reproduced the literary groups of the 1920s instead of providing a

hierarchical and manageable literary institution. Furthermore, the Party wanted to get rid of an

organization that believed it had the authority to speak in the name of the Party.

---

[47] "Party Central Committee Decree: The Reorganization of Literary and Artistic Organizations" appeared on April 23, 1932. The four major stipulations were that:

1. the association of proletarian writers (VOAPP, RAPP) be liquidated;

2. all writers who support the platform of Soviet power and wish to participate in socialist construction be united in a single union of Soviet writers with a Communist faction in it;

3. a similar change with regard to other art forms be carried out;

the Orgburo be entrusted to work out practical measures for the implementation of this decision." (cited in Taylor 1988, 325).

The Party was also unwilling to adopt the dialectico-materialist method as the method of Soviet literature. First, its name was not the Party's choice. Second, the name sounded too abstract, philosophical, and sectarian (Robin 38). Third, by virtue of originating in RAPP, the method was associated with that organization's ideological rigidity, above all, its hostility toward popular entertainment: traditional narrative film (film melodrama, comedy), mass fiction, and popular song (cruel and Gypsy romance).

Stalinist culture emerged as a stabilizing response to the extremism of the proletarians, specifically RAPP as its literary branch and ARK as its film counterpart. Stalinist culture was also the culture of the new Red elite, mostly of peasant and working class origin, which was catapulted to leadership roles in the 1930s and became what Vera Dunham calls Stalin's middle class, and I call the Soviet intelligentsia: a state-funded cultural and political service estate. In the 1930s this Red elite replaced left intellectuals, commonly known as proletarians, who tried to monopolize the cultural capital of Soviet Russia in the 1920s. Thus, neither the aesthetics nor the name of the new artistic method could be associated with RAPP.

The May 1932 discussions about the method of Soviet literature gave birth to the term socialist realism. Stalin allegedly proposed the label communist realism, but opponents protested that the term should correspond to the current, socialist condition of the Soviet state and society (Robin 38). In May 19 Gronskii, the chief editor of *Izvestiia*, defined socialist realism as the method of truthful representation of reality, given that the reality is itself dialectical (Robin 39). In May 23 *Literaturnaia gazeta* reproduced Gronskii's declaration in print. Although historical accounts associate the first use of the term with Gronskii, Stalinist mythology made Stalin the true author and inventor of both the method and its name.

The key event for socialist realism's self-definition was the First Congress of the Union of Writers of the USSR (August 17-September 1 1934), at which both writers and party leaders articulated the major premises of socialist realism. Before this event, however, the Organizing Committee of the Writers' Union held two plenary sessions (October-November 1932 and February 1933), at which the delegates attempted to conceptualize the method. Anatolii Lunacharskii's proposed definition is the most remarkable on account of its insightfulness. He notes that the new realism ought to be goal-oriented, with the critical aspect of traditional realism contextualized in the larger framework of a historical, progressive evolution.

> When he [the artist, AP] sees [the inadequacies of Soviet life, AP] as evolutionary phases, elements that are to be overcome and that are indeed in the process of being overcome, there is a conclusion to be drawn . . . that is quite different from the overall criticism of our struggle . . . that is required if these phenomena are held to be inherent to our system. (Lunacharskii 100)

Lunacharskii crystallized two key elements of socialist realist texts: their teleology and their obsession with strong, unambiguous closure.[48]

The First Soviet Writers' Congress did not make defining the major method of Soviet cultural production its major theme. The Congress focused, rather, on celebrating the multinational nature of Soviet literature. The definition of the method published in *Pravda* on May 6, 1934 and reiterated by A. Zhdanov at the First Congress should be discussed in this context.

---

[48] The ironic formulation of the method as teleological writing resurfaced in Abram Terts's "What is Socialist Realism?"

Socialist realism, the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary

criticism, demands truthfulness from the artist and a historically concrete

portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. Under these conditions

truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic portrayal ought to be combined

with the task of ideological remaking and education of laboring people in the

spirit of socialism. (*Pravda* May 6, 1934, translation from Brooks 977)

This definition, combined with the main theme of the Congress, led Maxim Gorky to discuss one

of the four major categories of socialist realism: *narodnost'* (people-mindedness).[49]

Gorky examined the category of people-mindedness in his closing speech at the

Congress. At stake in his speech is the link between the culture of writers, i.e., high culture, and

popular culture. The absence of such a link in pre-socialist realist art is not unlike Huyssen's

notion of "the great divide," which Huyssen believes constitutes the distinctive feature of

modernist culture. Gorky sees two lines of literature having developed in earlier societies: folk

culture (presumably, genuinely in the spirit of the people) and professional literature, which

serves the ruling class. People-mindedness is the project of reintegrating professional and folk

art into a new socialist realist art.

Vladimir Padunov in one of his lectures noted that people-mindedness echoes the

Lukacsean notion of the "loss of unity" that constitutes the driving force behind the novelistic

discourse from Cervantes' work to the present: "The novel is the epic of an age in which the

extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life

has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality" (Lukacs 56). People-

---

[49] The other three major categories of socialist realism are party-mindedness, class-mindedness, and idea-mindedness.

mindedness, then, was this search for totality, the art accessible/intelligible to the people. Art should educate the masses and depict their common life. Later Stalinist aesthetics also argued that art should come from the masses.

Régine Robin emphasizes that people-mindedness is not a *deus ex machina* created by Party fiat. *Narodnost'* goes back to pre-romantic and romantic German culture, in particular to the works of Herder: the notion translates the German *Volksgeist* (52). This ambiguous concept refers to the nation, the poorest classes, and the spirit of the Russian people. The first use of the concept of *narodnost'* is recorded in a work by Orest Somov, a prosaist close to the Decembrists (Robin 52).

As a "purloined letter" *narodnost'* changed its meaning and political affiliation depending on who reappropriated the concept. S. Uvarov used it to define the essence of Russian monarchy: "autocracy, orthodoxy, and *narodnost'*" (53). The Slavophiles and Vissarion Belinskii negotiated the meaning of the term as defining the essence of the Russian people. Part of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia called themselves *narodniki* (populists), to emphasize their project of reuniting with peasants so as to create a new, better Russia. The attempts to live with and reeducate peasants usually ended with the peasants requesting local authorities to arrest the strange newcomers. The discussions of *narodnost'* at the First Congress echo the intelligentsia's dreams of regaining unity with the people and capturing true and progressive Russian *Volksgeist*.

> The spirit of people was indeed at issue, but a hardworking, active people, a
> progressive element that would be able to rejoin the intelligentsia and blend in to
> a whole new national and popular synthesis. Folklore must indeed be at the

center of writers' preoccupation, but it would be a transformed folklore, a totally

new popular culture. (Robin 53)

People-mindedness encompassed the goal of regaining the lost totality of culture via merging

high culture with low/folk culture, modern with traditional. The new positive hero emerged as

both the bearer of the popular tradition and the seeker transformed by modern technology and

reeducated by revolutionary ideology. The transformed national spirit epitomized the war on

nature: the old folk tradition was the elemental force to be reforged and made to serve the new

progressive power.

People-mindedness also implied an art intelligible to the masses. As one of the Zhdanov-

era critics formulated it: "The artwork should be accessible to the broadest masses; simplicity

and clarity of form are among the most important criteria of the new aesthetics" (Ozerov 189).

Accordingly, the subsequent taboo of socialist realist literature and film was any experimentation

with the medium. Evgenii Dobrenko (160) and Katerina Clark (1998 55) note that socialist

realism eschews the highbrow register and gravitates toward low- and middle-brow genres and

forms: the formulaic novel and explicit cause-and-effect narrative film.

People-mindedness also materialized in the enormous fakelore industry of the Stalin era:

the epic folk bards glorified industrialization, collectivization, Five Year Plans, and Soviet

leaders.[50] Katerina Clark has discussed in great detail how the traditional folk world merged

with modernity in the kolkhoz variation of the socialist realist novel. In film the so-called

collective farm musicals epitomized the convergence of modernity and folk spirit. Unlike

Hollywood folk musicals, Soviet musicals created dance numbers out of work episodes.

Physical labor, especially fieldwork, was the prime spectacle of collective farm musicals.

---

[50] The best accounts of pseudofolklore of the Stalin era are those of Felix J. Oinas and Frank Miller.

Tractors and farmers merged in the machine-like rhythm of both harvesting and conquering nature, and folk melodies accompanied the collective work dance.[51]

During the Thaw, the intelligentsia, like the intellectuals in nineteenth-century Russia, contended for its own version of people-mindedness, which differed from the official version of the concept. Boris Pasternak was the most successful in employing neoromantic folkloristic motifs in what is manifestly a high culture text--his novel *Doctor Zhivago*. Iurii Zhivago is transformed by his creative power into a semi-folkloric St. George and is also immersed in folk culture during his stay with the Red guerillas in the Siberian forests. Finally, the totality of people-mindedness is regained through Zhivago's lover Lara, the allegoric character symbolizing Russia. In the trench prose of the Thaw era (anti-monumentalist prose about the Great Patriotic War), officers-protagonists bond with common Russian people on the sacred Russian soil of the trenches. Film melodrama of the era casts the female protagonist as the personification of suffering Russia. The narrative of such films revolves around separation from, and/or regained unity with, such a protagonist. *Cranes Are Flying* is the best-known example of such a cinematic narrative.

The polemic of the Party with RAPP leaders about the method of Soviet literature led to the gradual disappearance of the notion of class-mindedness from socialist realism. According to Soviet Marxists, art always bears the traces of class interests. Discussion usually focuses on the

---

[51] Ivan Pyr'ev was the director of such films as *Rich Bride* (1936), *Tractor Drivers* (1939), *Swineherd and Shepherd* (1941), and *The Cossacks of the Kuban River* (1951). The most comprehensive analysis of Pyr'ev's work is Maia Turovskaia's article "I. A. Pyr'ev i ego muzykal'nye komedii." See also Taylor (1999).

degrees of mediation between the basis and the superstructure.[52] The proletarians (in particular, RAPP and ARK leaders) often pushed this point to the limit and contended that the artist is reducible to his/her own class and cannot escape its interests. The proletarians also argued that only the working class will be able to produce genuine working-class art. Soviet culture of the Stalin era rejected this approach in favor of people-mindedness. In the absence of antagonistic classes, the society of the victorious proletariat does not need an exclusive proletarian literature. In the new monolithic society, class-mindedness dissolves in the totality of people-mindedness.

Thaw culture demonstrated a loss of totality, in the sense that class-mindedness became a living category again. Now the interest groups within the Soviet elite, above all the intelligentsia, received some limited rights to voice their opinion on the issues of cultural politics. For example, the creation of the Union of Filmmakers resembled the seemingly analogous event in Soviet literature only superficially. The Organizational Committee of the Filmmakers' Union, led by Ivan Pyr'ev, defended the interests of filmmakers in their discussions and conflicts with state institutions. Class-mindedness resurfaced during the Thaw as the intelligentsia's tendentiousness.

The merging of class-mindedness with people-mindedness during Stalin's era does not mean, however, that socialist realism abandoned the idea of tendentious literature because there

---

[52] In Russia the issue of the mediation between the base and superstructure was widely discussed by Marxist and sociological critics. Positions varied, from those insisting on an immediate relationship between the class of writers' origins and the ideology of their works (the notion of Pereverzev) to a very sophisticated position on the multiple mediations between social and aesthetic phenomena (the stance of such Marxist critics as Voloshinov or of the scholars of the sociological school, such as Bakhtin of the late twenties and thirties).

were no antagonistic classes in Soviet society. Andrei Zhdanov emphasized this point at the

First Congress:

> Our Soviet literature is not afraid of the charge of being tendentious. Yes, Soviet
>
> literature is tendentious, for in an epoch of class struggle there is not and cannot
>
> be a literature that is not class literature . . . allegedly nonpolitical. And I think
>
> every one of our Soviet writers can say to any dull-witted bourgeois: "Yes, our
>
> Soviet literature is tendentious, and we are proud of this fact, because the aim of
>
> our tendency is to liberate the toilers, to free all mankind from the yoke of
>
> capitalist slavery." (21)

In the country of victorious socialism the Party provides the point of view from which the writer

is supposed to represent and change reality in its ascent to the communist future. Leonid Heller

notes that party-mindedness (*partiinost'*) not only illustrated the communist idea, but also

represented a militant, aggressive position, producing an active effect. An art work was party-

minded insofar as it contributed to the construction of communism (Heller 53). The party-

mindedness of socialist realism evokes the avant-garde notion of art transforming life.

Clark argues that party-mindedness was the major category in the method of socialist

realism because it underscored cultural producers' centrality in engineering mass habits of

thinking. Zhdanov reified writers' social function in the famous formula: "engineers of human

souls" (Clark 1998 55). The cultural producers, and, above all, writers, however, stopped being

the original creators of their texts. They became state-employed creative writers responsible for

elaborating themes assigned by the Party. The created texts belonged to and were reworked by

the Party and its publishing institutions. The party-minded writer was to provide "legitimizing

myths for the state" (Clark 1998 56), the two major ones being the myth of the positive hero and

the myth of the Big Soviet Family. I would add to this list the war trope, which implied the opposition between Soviet "us" and non-Soviet "them," and the militaristic resolution of this dialectical opposition.[53]

Thaw culture did not abandon the major tropes of Soviet culture. The Soviet intelligentsia tried to redefine these tropes in order to enhance its own power, and to promote its own cultural values: anti-monumentalism, cult of the individual, his creativity and emotions. Thaw critics and writers attempted either to recast party-mindedness according to the new values or to replace party-mindedness with the so-called universal humanist values of the intelligentsia. An important device in this process was the creation of alternative positive heroes and Big Families, based on overtly non-Soviet but accepted authority figures: Don Quixote, Hamlet (Kozintsev's stage productions and films), Dostoevskii's Prince Myshkin (the famous stage production of the Leningrad Drama Theater), or even Jesus Christ (in Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone* and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*).

Idea-mindedness was not discussed at length at the First Congress and was elaborated later by the theoreticians of socialist realism. Idea-mindedness referred to concrete current problems artists are called upon to address.

Idea-mindedness is often confused with party-mindedness[54], but it is quite different: idea-mindedness emphasizes the topicality of Soviet art and its readiness to subordinate the artistic structure to the changes in Party policy. For this reason a novel could undergo changes without a writer's knowledge and consent, so as to reflect changing Party policies. The best study of idea-mindedness is Thomas Lahusen's analysis of various editions of Vasilii Azhaev's *Far Away*

---

[53] Dobrenko, in *Metafora vlasti,* notes the centrality of war as the *modus vivendi* of Soviet culture.

[54] See Heller 54.

from Moscow in the course of Soviet history. Lahusen's meticulous examination demonstrates how the category of idea-mindedness was observed by publishers and editors depending on the fluctuations of the ideological market in the USSR. The other well-known examples are Fedor Gladkov's rewriting of *Cement* and Aleksandr Fadeev's revision of *Young Guard* after criticism that the novel did not adequately represent the guiding role of the Party. In this paradigm Pasternak's refusal to rewrite his novel after official criticism serves as an example of overt abandonment of idea-mindedness. Not only specific novels but the entire body of writers' works could be changed in tune with current party policies. The fate of Pasternak's works provides a good example: his poetry remained part of permitted literature, while his novel was cut off from the canon.

In film idea-mindedness manifested itself in editing out criticized leaders and shelving ideologically incorrect or outdated films. Films were shelved or doctored throughout Soviet history. During the Thaw attacks on Stalin's cult of personality, Stalin was eliminated from many classical Soviet films, such as *Lenin in October*; Lavrentii Beriia (the head of Stalin's secret police) was excised from *The Fall of Berlin* after his execution in 1954.[55]

The Thaw released many films shelved during the Stalin era: the best-known example is the release in 1958 of the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* by Sergei Eisenstein to commemorate the tenth anniversary of his death. The other example is the release of *Common People* (Kozintsev and Trauberg [1946], which was shelved after Zhdanov's criticism of the film. The Thaw, however, also took out of circulation such Stalinist classics as *The Fall of Berlin* and *The Unforgettable 1919*. These films' glorification of Stalin did not fit the current policies of the Party, and they were shown again to the general public only after the end of the Soviet Union in

---

[55]   This information is from a personal discussion with Neia Zorkaia.

1991, when political censorship was lifted and the idea-mindedness of socialism was replaced by the market rules of supply and demand.

6. Key Word #6: Thaw

The term "Thaw" (*ottepel'*) usually refers to the Soviet period of the 1950s and 60s, and stems from the titles of two literary works: a poem by Nikolai Zabolotskii[56], and Il'ia Erenburg's novel.[57] For the intelligentsia the publication of these works, especially of the novel, signaled a relaxation of Party control primarily in the realm of culture: above all, in literature, as well as cinema, theater, the visual arts, and commercial design.

Critics usually describe Soviet culture between 1953 and 1968 in terms of thaws and freezes. For literature Clark's monograph on the Soviet novel probably sums up the fluctuations in the most concise and clear way. The first Thaw came after Stalin's death (March 5th 1953), with the highlight of the period being Vladimir Pomerantsev's article "On Sincerity in Literature," published in the December issue of the literary journal *Novyi mir* (*New World*). This neoromantic manifesto sounds extremely conservative and restrained when compared with the avant-garde manifestos of Futurists or Constructivists, but it became the major event in Soviet culture of the 1950s. Pomerantsev's chief points may be summarized as follows: (1) the writer should express his own sincere feelings instead of just echoing official decrees; (2) the immediacy of emotions is the ultimate measure of literary value; (3) the positive hero of Stalinist

---

[56] Zabolotskii's poem "Ottepel'" ("Thaw") was written in 1948 and published in *New World (Novyi mir)* 10(1953).

[57] The first part of Erenburg's novel *Ottepel'* (*Thaw*) was published in *Znamia(Banner)* 5(1954); the second part, in *Znamia (Banner)* 4(1956). The time gap between the two stages in publication is in part due to the criticism of the novel by the official Soviet press.

literature is the epitome of insincerity. Sincerity becomes the code word for refurbishing Soviet literature in accordance with the new cultural values: anti-monumentalism, the cult of emotions, and the individual. The style of the article—speaking from the first person and using irony—violated the norms of socialist realist poetics.[58] The first literary Thaw ended in 1954, when conservative literary and Party officials criticized Pomerantsev's article and Erenburg's novel, and fired Aleksandr Tvardovskii as the chief editor of *Novyi mir*.[59]

Critics favoring political explanations of the history of culture argue that the second literary Thaw started in 1956, with Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" denouncing Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress (February 1956), and ended with the anti-Soviet uprisings in Hungary and Poland in the Fall of 1956. Usually such critics also link these events with the beginning of the Thaw in film (Anninskii 8, Liehm 199-200).

During the second literary Thaw, the monolithic body of the Union of Soviet Writers began to splinter and multiply: in 1955 the Moscow Writers' Organization was established,

---

[58] Among other important literary works of the year 1953 is an article by Ol'ga Bergol'ts, "A Conversation about Lyric Poetry" (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 16, 1953). She emphasizes that the prime subject of poetry should be subjectivity and sincere expression of feelings. Bergol'ts defines lyrical poetry as love poetry. The unspecified target of the article is Stalinist neoclassical ode writing. In October 1953 Il'ia Erenburg published the article "On the Work of a Writer," in which he contends that in literature, veracity and passion are more important than adhere to the prescriptions of the authorities. In October 1953 at the plenum of the Writers' Union, Konstantin Simonov criticized the clichés in representations of literary characters and called for republication of prohibited works from the 1920s and 30s (*Ottepel' 1953-1956* 426).

[59] The first sharp attack on Pomerantsev—"Razgovor nachistotu" ("An Honest Conversation")—appeared in the February 1954 issue of *Znamia*, to be followed by attacks through the spring and summer of that year, culminating in Tvardovskii's removal from office (August 11, 1954).

followed in 1958 by the creation of the Writers' Union of the Russian Federation. This period

witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of Soviet literary journals: in 1955, *Neva, Iunost'*

(Youth), Druzhba narodov (Friendship of Peoples), Inostrannaia literatura (Foreign Literature);

in 1956, *Nash sovremennik (Our Contemporary)* and *Molodaia gvardiia (Young Guard)*; in

1957, *Ural*, *Voprosy literatury (Literary Studies)*; and, in 1958, *Russkaia literatura (Russian*

Literature). Finally, the second literary Thaw revived literary almanacs. Their primary

significance for the cultural politics of the era was, first, the looser control of censorship over

that type of publication and, second, the fact that the initiative for the almanacs' publication came

from the writers themselves and not from the Party or a state-owned publishing house. In 1955

an annual almanac titled *Den' poezii (Day of Poetry)* took off and in 1955-56 two issues of the

almanac *Literary Moscow* appeared.[60]

The major literary text published in the Soviet Union during this period was Vladimir

Dudintsev's *Ne khlebom edinym (Not By Bread Alone)* (*Novyi Mir* 8-10 [1956]). Discussions

around this novel about an engineer (a creative individual) fighting the Soviet scientific

establishment set the atmosphere for the year. These discussions often led to systemic criticism,

but usually limited themselves to the issue of improving Soviet society in accordance with the

new values. The Gospel motifs of Dudintsev's novel are superficial, but significant within the

atmosphere of an atheistic state. In addition, the comparison of the protagonist with Christ and

the telling title of the novel refer to an oppositional model—Old vs. New Testament—as a poetic

allegory of the discrepancy between Stalinism and the humanized totalitarianism of the Thaw.

The publication in Western Europe (1957) of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* —another novel rich

---

[60] The third issue of *Literary Moscow* was banned.

in Gospel motifs—prompted vilification of the author and his work, and introduced another freeze in Russia's literary life.

The major event of cine-Thaw was *Cranes Are Flying* (Kalatozov 1957). Anninskii even argues that this film inaugurated the Thaw: "Everything started with *Cranes*" (8). The Liehms note that the film is primarily a reprisal of the avant-garde of the 1920s (200). Although this is in part true, this film became a real code breaker not because of its flaccid Constructivism, but because it places family melodrama *à la russe* (with the fallen female protagonist and the tragic ending) at the center of Soviet cinema's genre system. Family melodrama became the perfect vessel for the values of the era.

In the Russian film industry, the mid-1950s were a time of dramatic increase in film production (9 films in 1951, 24 in 1952, 45 in 1953, 51 in 1954, 75 in 1955, 104 in 1956 [Zemlianukhin 6]). Ivan Pyr'ev, director of Mosfilm Studio (October 1954-December 1956), was one of the major administrators behind this growth. More importantly, he hired and promoted most of the young directors of the era. Grigorii Chukhrai, Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov, El'dar Riazanov, and many others became directors to a large extent thanks to Pyr'ev's entrepreneurial talent. He was also instrumental in the creation of the Two Year School for Film Directors at Mosfilm Studios (in 1956/57), which trained many directors of the late Soviet period, among them Georgii Daneliia, Sergei Mikaelian, Igor' Talankin, and Sergei Tumanov (Iurenev 62).

Pyr'ev also was the driving force behind the Organizing Committee of the Filmmakers' Union (1957-65). As the state's tool for controlling filmmakers, this organization resembled the Writers' Union. However, Pyr'ev, Romm, Iurenev, and others conceived of their union as an organization to protect filmmakers' interests from the state (Taylor 143-44). The creation of the

Filmmakers' Union was a quintessentially Thaw gesture, replicating Stalinist institutional models and practices in order to negotiate power with state and party authorities.

The work of the Filmmakers' Union expanded Pyr'ev's plans to create a new film community, which he had started at Mosfilm. The Union, for example, was instrumental in establishing the Bureau for the Propaganda of Soviet Film Art, the organization in charge of making film accessible to the millions. From the late 1950s, Mosfilm was also involved in instituting the Day of Film (*Den' kino*) in Moscow. The first Day was observed on September 7th, 1958, and the practice of commemorating this event lasted through most of the Thaw.

As one can easily see, cine-Thaw does not fit neatly into the frame of the literary or the political Thaw. *Cranes* was released in 1957, the year of the attacks on Pasternak for publishing his novel abroad and on Konstantin Simonov for allowing Dudintsev's novel to be published in *Novyi mir*. Such important Thaw films as *Ballad of a Soldier* (Chukhrai 1959) and *Fate of a Man* (Bondarchuk 1959) appeared during the freeze in literary life. The Organizing Committee of the Union was established in 1957, and in 1958 the Central Committee abolished the 1948 denunciation of formalism in art: *Iskusstvo kino* reprinted on the first page of its July 1958 issue the resolution revoking Zhdanov's infamous decree (Woll 64).

Although analogies with political history might be tempting, to discuss changes in artistic production, one, first, has to look at the conditions of production and the tropes via which various media articulated the cultural values of the era. Both the tropes and the conditions of cultural production started changing in the late Stalin period, before the leader's death. For example, the decision to increase film production (to end the cine-anemia [malokartin'e] associated with the late 1940s-early 50s) was announced at the Nineteenth Party Congress of 1952, with Stalin chairing the proceedings. In the literary sphere, anti-monumentalism marked

the war prose of Viktor Nekrasov and the rural sketches of Valentin Ovechkin in the late 1940s. The most important point here is not even that perceptible changes in the rhetoric of Soviet cutlure preceded March 1953, but that these changes were part of the general evolution of Soviet culture. Literary and cinema critics usually describe the 1950s as the renunciation of the Stalinist past. Stalinism and Thaw, however, are, rather, two modifications of the same cultural model. Their shared tropes—positive hero, family, war—confirm this fact. The rhetorical changes, usually associated with Stalin's death, entered literature in the late 1940s (Pasternak began work on his novel in 1945, Nekrasov published *Stalingrad* in 1946). In film, the changes appeared in the early 1950s.

Film Thaw in general lagged behind the literary Thaw. The height of cine-Thaw spanned the five years from 1957 to 1962, while literature experienced three thaws: that of 1954, of 1956, and of 1960-62. The major events of the third literary Thaw were the appearance of Evgenii Evtushenko's political poetry—"Babii Iar" (1961) and "The Heirs of Stalin" (1962) (the former is the first poem to treat Russian anti-semitism since Stalin's persecution of Jews)--, and the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962).

The major events of cine-Thaw during the early 1960s became the films of Andrei Tarkovskii (*Ivan's Childhood* [1962]) and Marlen Khutsiev (*Lenin's Guard* [1962]). The fate of the latter also signalled a tightening of control over culture. Nikita Khrushchev criticized the film for disrupting the hierarchy of the Stalinist family, since at film's end the paternal figure is unable to answer his son's Hamletian questions—a dangerous transgression, according to Khrushchev (176-81).

The last literary Thaw also saw the rise of youth prose, in particular Vasilii Aksenov's fiction. These works also underwent a lot of official criticism, but for a different reason: the

ironic mode of youth prose became the major target of disapproval. I maintain that the rise of irony as a sustainable discourse in the culture signaled the end of the Thaw. Cultural producers did not attempt to negotiate meaning or improve upon fundameantal tropes but, rather, distanced themselves from them via irony.

The political demarcation of the end of the Thaw likewise is a tempting but misleading project when one looks at the era's cultural texts. Does the Thaw end in December 1962, when Khrushchev attacks non-conformist artists and defines abstractionist artists as faggots—and their works as crap? Does the political Thaw end when Khrushchev is voted out of office in October 1964? This might be a turning point for Russia's political history, but hardly for its cultural history. The Soviet intelligentsia repeatedly claims that the Thaw ended under the tracks of the Soviet tanks that invaded Prague in 1968. While this is a very graphic image, surely its relation to cultural production is more mediated. The Thaw ended when totalitarian tropes started decomposing not from direct attacks on Stalinism in terms aesthetically resembling those of Stalinist art, but from the ambiguity of artistic irony. In literature, youth prose introduced the virus of irony, while in film that irony originated in the genres of ironic comedy and melodrama of the 1960s. Whereas the Thaw in literature ended in the early to mid-1960s, in film it lasted until the early 1970s.[61]

---

[61] Nancy Condee links the end of the cine-Thaw with the dismantling of the Exprimental Creative Studio of Grigorii Chukhrai, who tried to introduce new economic methods into filmmaking (169). The Studio (established in 1963) got into political trouble when its film commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *The Beginning of the Unknown Era* (1967), was shelved. The studio was officially closed in 1972 (Lawton 76-78). Condee's comment is of prime importance because it observes the parallelism in the shifting of economic and aesthetic practices of the era.

The following study argues that while Thaw cultural producers believed that they had abandoned Stalinist cultural practices, their works continued to generate the major tropes of Stalinist culture: the positive hero, and family and war tropes. In this respect the cultural Thaw of the 1950s and 60s merely reworked Stalinist artistic practices. I use literary and cinematic texts to examine how fundamental tropes of Soviet culture were reinstantiated in these two media.

Chapter Two discusses the instantiations of the positive hero in Thaw literature and film. As case studies I use Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) and Grigorii Kozintsev's film adaptation of *Hamlet* (1964). Though both texts are considered "beyond" classical socialist realist aesthetics, I contend that they feed on major Stalinist tropes and dialogize and elaborate the Stalinist canon. The positive hero remains the major trope for constructing individual, and, above all, masculine, identity. The narrative of maturation into true consciousness remains central for the Thaw novel and film. The fact that the protagonists are ostentatiously non-Soviet does not change much in the discursive practices of Soviet culture and has more to do with the interests of the intelligentsia, who negotiated intellectual capital with the party elite.

The third chapter examines the ways Thaw culture redefines the family and war tropes in trench prose and film melodrama. The family trope is central for constructing Soviet national identity. The war trope represents the culture's mode of existence, casting Soviet values in confrontation with non-Soviet ones: non-Soviet natural laws, the elemental forces of market economy, and the spontaneous and irrational forces of human nature. Trench prose emerged as an unheroic and anti-monumental way of representing the Great Patriotic War in response to the bombast of its Stalin era representations. Viktor Nekrasov's short novel *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1947)—a model of trench prose—was published before Stalin's death under the title

Stalingrad and received the Stalin Prize. Thaw renditions of fundamental tropes were not completely alien to earlier Soviet culture: the new variants of the tropes stem from those established during the 1930s and 40s.

The central cinematic genre of the Thaw was family melodrama. My analysis of an exemplar of this genre, Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* (1957), focuses on Kalatozov's recycling of the family and war tropes in a story of betrayal and redemption. National identity loses its monumental and patriarchal overtones and is projected on the more traditional feminine figure, who functions as a symbol of Russia. The female protagonist, Veronika, incarnates in her personal story the sufferings and salvation of the nation. In *Cranes* the war trope stops reiterating the confrontation between Soviet "us" and non-Soviet "them." No longer external to the Soviet system, evil becomes part of the Soviet "us": Veronika is raped by her stepbrother, who later betrays her.

The fourth chapter focuses on the ironizing of the major Soviet tropes in Soviet culture of the 1960s. My case studies consist of Vasilii Aksenov's short novel *Ticket to the Stars* (1961) and El'dar Riazanov's film *Beware of a Car* (1966). Irony, as one of the major taboos of socialist realism, was absent during Stalinism and early Thaw culture. In the 1960s, however, ironic distancing of major Soviet tropes became the staple of so-called youth prose, particularly that of Anatolii Gladilin, Vladimir Voinovich, and Aksenov. In film a similar trend manifested itself in the ironic films of Georgii Daneliia and El'dar Riazanov. I examine each text from the viewpoint of its inner system of values and in the context of the era's cultural politics.

Chapter Three. In Search of the Lost Positive Hero: Case Studies of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and Kozintsev's Film Adaptation of *Hamlet*

1. Poet-Prophet of Sincerity: Doctor Zhivago as the New Positive Hero.

> The single utopia of the classical avant-garde and Stalinism has
>
> been replaced by the myriad of private, individual utopias. (Groys
>
> 1992, 78)

Thaw culture recycled the key trope of Stalinist art—the positive hero—to promote new values: anti-monumentalism, domesticity, and individuality. In the 1950s the new heroes appeared, first of all, in literature, which traditionally served as the discourse legitimizing new values in Russian culture. The positive heroes of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1945-55), Il'ia Erenburg's *Thaw* (1954-56), and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) favor intellectuals who come into conflict with their community. Their major gift—and sin, in the eyes of their coercive community—is their creativity (technical in *Thaw* and *Not by Bread Alone*, artistic in *Thaw,* and poetic in *Doctor Zhivago*), which enables them, and especially Dr. Zhivago, to prophesy.

In addition to being a creative individual, the Thaw positive hero is usually sensitive, emotionally-driven, and sincere in his heart and tears. Such neo-sentimentalist virtues are usually combined with the protagonist's status of social victim. Positive heroes of the Thaw lack either father or both parents. Iurii Zhivago, for example, is an orphan—literally and metaphorically—abused by society through much of his life. Lacking the nuclear family in their childhood, such heroes seldom form a stable nuclear family when they grow up. The protagonist manifests his spontaneity and authenticity in socially illegitimate romance, often adultery. Romance emphasizes victimhood through separation, creative inspiration, and emotional excess.

Not only did Thaw novels with the new positive hero at their center represent the conflict of the protagonist with his community, but the appearance of these works usually prompted

conflict between the author/cultural producer and the mainstream culture. Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* is arguably the best-known 1950s novel that recycled the trope of the positive hero to present the values of the Thaw.[62] The ensuing "Pasternak affair," in turn, became the most publicized scandal of the era. For the Russian intelligentsia, the writer became a model of a victimized writer-messiah to be emulated.

---

[62] Until fairly recently, critics usually did not discuss Pasternak's novel as the phenomenon of Thaw culture because the novel was written in part during Stalin regime and because its so-called profound philosophical content exceeds the shallow cultural politics of early destalinization. Scholars tended to pay more attention to the political context of the novel. The "Pasternak affair"—the scandal around publication of Pasternak's novel abroad and the attempt to award him the Nobel Prize in 1958—marked one of the major freezes during Khrushchev's Thaw.

Approaching Pasternak's novel as a great book (Deming Brown, Conquest, Mathewson) that stands out among the mediocre writing of the era signals, at least for me, an attempt to disguise the reasons for the novel's canonization. The major reason seems to originate in the politics of both the era and the field, rather than in the aesthetic value of the novel. Slavic Studies used to be, and still remains to a large extent, Cold War Studies and any work causing a political stir in Russia often receives special attention in the profession for political rather than aesthetic reasons. The novel, however, exceeds the problematics of the Thaw in a different way: *Doctor Zhivago* serves as the bridge text between Stalinist culture of the 1940s and the culture of the 1950s.

The novel shares with Stalinist art a belief in the artist-demiurge and his power to transform life in accordance with aesthetic laws. Pasternak's utopian Christian optimism became part and parcel of Soviet culture of the late Stalin era and further developed during the Thaw. In this respect the Pasternak affair became a part of the author's artistic creation. The author used his aesthetic creation to participate in the cultural politics of the 1940s and 50s. Recently, such scholars as Lazar Fleishman and Christopher Barnes have examined more closely the place of the novel and its genesis in Stalinist and Thaw culture.

1.1. Uses of Cultural Heritage in Thaw Culture

Boris Groys contends that one of the distinct features of Stalinist culture, as opposed to avant-garde culture, was the incorporation of the so-called progressive cultural heritage into the utopian project of totally transforming life according to the politico-aesthetic method of socialist realism (37). Thaw culture, in its attitude toward cultural heritage, continued the practices of Stalinist culture. The change of cultural values in the early fifties, accelerated by Stalin's death in 1953, manifested itself in the redefinion of what in the cultural heritage was considered progressive and reactionary. Specifically, such values as the cult of the individual, domesticity, and anti-monumentalism led to the integration of sentimentalist and romantic authors, texts, and devices into the canon of progressive culture**.**

The neo-romantic features of Pasternak's novel are the result of a failed modernist project and a reappraisal of the Stalinist experience. Cultural producers such as Pasternak revived such values as the cult of the creative individual, using neo-Romantic narrative modes: lyrical poetry and a prose narrative about an artist's life.[63] The Thaw's timid innovativeness produced neo-

---

[63] The indirect reference in the novel to the Russian avant-garde project is the life of Antipov-Strel'nikov, who attempts to play God and give his version of justice to people. He ends up as the prime executioner of the Revolution, and eventually commits suicide, avoiding his own execution. Olga Ivinskaia (187-88) and, in part, Bethea argue that in Strel'nikov's biography Pasternak tried to reflect the "real life-fate of Vladimir Maiakovskii"— Russia's leading Futurist poet, sincerely commited to revolutionary and avant-garde values:

> In this regard, the "iron inner bearing" that Pasternak associated with Maiakovskii, the various "commandments and forms of nobility, the feeling of obligation which did not allow him to be otherwise—less handsome, less witty, less talented" (Avtobiograficheskii ocherk 39—40)— seem nearly identical to the terms used to describe the doomed commissar. (Bethea 248).

In the novel Lara characterizes Antipov-Strel'nikov as a man of "immense integrity" (1958 396).

romantic characters, narratives, tropes, settings, and modes of cultural behavior.[64] Accordingly, *Doctor Zhivago* rejects both the radical experimentation of the fragmented, esoteric modernist novel and the formulas of the Stalin era socialist realist novel. Within the artistic system of Pasternak's novel[65] these two cultural trends constitute the Scylla and Charybdis between which

---

Pasternak's indirect rendition of Maiakovskii's suicide obviously has very little to do with the so-called real reasons for the poet's death. Maiakovskii's suicide produced numerous narratives in Russian culture and Slavic studies. They vary from biographic explanations—suicide as the denoument of the Briks-Maiakovskii love triangle (Brown, Erlich)—to politicized tales of poet-victim/accomplice of Stalinism/Bolshevism (Karabchievskii), to linking Maiakovskii's death to the twentieth-century European tradition of the death of an author (Boym).

[64] See, for example, the cult of friendship among Thaw cultural producers—the Lianozovo group, the Leningrad school of poets and prose writers, Mikhail Romm's workshop for young directors—similar to the literary and artistic groups of the Romantics. Thaw revived the tradition of literary miscellanies, which originated in Romantic literary life, and extended this tradition into film. Thaw culture reanimated the cult of a lyrical and civic poet. The cultural geography of the Thaw is parallel to the cultural geography of the Romantic age: interest in the exotic, special attention to natural (virgin lands, Siberian forests) and cultural (especially, Westernized Baltic republics) frontiers. Thaw culture also favors narratives about protagonists escaping from corrupt civilization, so characteristic of the Romantic tradition.

[65] Pasternak projects his aesthetic principles onto the poetic tastes of Doctor Zhivago. Disgust with the Soviet intelligentsia's middle-brow tastes distinguishes Iurii Zhivago from the Russian intellectuals who are his contemporaries:

> Both Gordon and Dudorov moved among cultured academicians, they spent their lives among good books, good thinkers, good composers and good music . . . and they did not know that the misfortune of having average taste is a great deal worse than the misfortune of having no taste at all. (1958 481)

Zhivago also rejects the ostentatious innovativeness of modernism, seeking, instead, a less obvious freshness of

Pasternak negotiates the identity of his own text: a moderate revival of literary experimentation through neo-Romantic literary conventions, in order to articulate the value of the individual. Pasternak's novel reflects the period's quest for an alternative set of conventions and values, epitomized in the new positive hero.

The high culture, neo-Romantic models in the novel (Faust, Hamlet), however, did not allay the populist anxieties of the mature Pasternak, who wanted to make his novel "dokhodchivyi" [accessible] (Rylkova 1) to everyone. As the major mode of accessibility, Pasternak chose the lyric intensification of feelings, externally represented through tears, exclamations, and other expressive devices. Such a "sensitive" mode of artistic representation was also in tune with the new values of the Thaw, above all, its cult of the individual and his emotions.

To perform long-repressed emotions, Pasternak employed some familiar melodramatic devices in the structure of the major character (the hyper-sensitive victimized protagonist-orphan), choice of language (high degree of emotionalism, frequent references to tears or their "natural" surrogates [rain, melting snow], the pathetic fallacy), and plot structure (seduction of a virgin, destruction of a family).

As Peter Brooks' seminal study argues, the melodramatic mode of writing, with its excessive emotionality, extreme situations, and so forth, enabled the incorporation of fragments of traditional religious mythology in order to articulate the "moral occult," that is, the spiritual values in a culture devoid of traditionally understood religious ritual. Brooks defines the "moral

---

style:

> It had been the dream of his life to write with [an] originality so discreet, so well concealed, as to be unnoticeable in its disguise of current and customary forms; all his life he had struggled for a style so restrained, so unpretentious that the reader or the hearer would fully understand the meaning without realizing how he assimilated it. He had striven constantly for an unostentatious style. (1958 440)

occult" as "the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality" (5). The everyday reveals the miraculous and metaphysical residing beneath its mundane surface. Zhivago's uncle, Nikolai Nikolaevich, defines the textual "moral occult" as "newly understood Christianity" (67). More precisely, Pasternak uses the fragments of Christian dogma and imagery to work out the values of the Thaw.[66]

To locate and articulate the newly rediscovered moral occult Pasternak's novel polemicizes with the conventions of its evolutionary predecessor: the Stalinist novel.[67] Indeed, *Doctor Zhivago* redefines four main devices of the Stalinist novel: the protagonist, the Manichean binarism of all aspects of the text, the teleological linearity of the plot, and the omniscience of the third-person narrator. Rather than completely dispensing with any of these categories, *Doctor Zhivago* recycles them, giving each a new meaning and function. Pasternak resurrects the positive hero (Bethea 232, Mathewson 264-274), through whom the novel

---

[66] Pasternak's novel, as opposed to melodrama in non-totalitarian societies, responds not only to the secularization of culture, but also to the double failure of the sacred. First, the melodramatic in the novel attempts to redeem a secular culture devoid of the traditional God. Second, the novel attempts via emotional excess to redeem a culture that failed to establish its Communist utopia.

[67] Critical interrogations of Pasternak's novel usually eschew any dialogue between Pasternak's text and the Soviet novel. The great poet's novel, according the accounts from the 1960s and 70s (Deming Brown, Conquest, Mathewson), marked a complete break with the hackwork of Stalinist cultural producers. Instead, in the view of these critics, the great book traced its noble pedigree to Shakespeare and Goethe, Tolstoi and Pushkin. Yet a close reading of the novel shows that it is, rather, engaged in confrontational dialogue with Stalinist newspeak, especially with the Soviet novel as its main artistic form. One of the few Pasternak scholars who actually points out the polemic of the novel's discourse with the conventions of socialist realist discourse is Lazar Fleishman: "[The] radical departure from the Soviet literary canon involved the novel's protagonist. Iurii Zhivago was a passive, unheroic hero, anemic in the "battle for ideals" and immersed in a private world" (278). See also Galia Rylkova's discussion of *Doctor Zhivago's* links with Stalinist literature.

articulates the dominant values of the Thaw. The uses of cultural heritage, however, serve the same utopian project of total transformation of reality according to artistic laws. Stalinist radical utopianism survives in a slightly mutated form in Pasternak's novel. The best proof to this is the way the writer's aesthetic project turned in a political *cause célèbre*. The novel became famous not so much for its powers of artistic contemplation, but for its effect on external reality. The novel transformed the boundaries of the permissible in Soviet culture.

1.2. Iurii Zhivago as a New Positive Hero

Iurii Andreevich Zhivago is a creative individual, an emotional and sensitive person--not an industrial worker or engineer, but an orphan-victim of Russia's ruthless modernization. According to the novel, the Soviet/Stalinist project, distilled in its own positive hero, is evil almost from its inception.[68] Zhivago constitutes an alternative (anti-Stalinist) model hero: he is confronted with a number of settings—numerous military conflicts--and communities--military

---

[68] Zhivago "praises" the Revolution only on its first day, as a radical surgery that is useful for extirpating the unhealthy aspects of the old:

> Kakaia velikolepnaia khirurgiia! Vziat' i razom artisticheski vyrezat' starye voniuchie iazvy! . . . v tom, chto eto tak bez strakha dovedeno do kontsa, est' chto-to natsional'no blizkoe, izdavna znakomoe. Chto-to ot bezogovorochnoi svetonosnosti Pushkina, ot neviliaiushchei vernosti faktam Tolstogo. (1990 193—194)
>
> What splendid surgery! You take a knife and with one masterful stroke you cut out all the old stinking ulcers . . . This fearlessness, this way of seeing the thing through to the end, has a familiar national look about it. It has something of Pushkin's uncompromising clarity and of Tolstoi's unwavering faithfulness to the facts. (1958 194-95)

Yet revolutionary forces, according to Zhivago, are incapable of creating anything genuinely new.

units and professional community— characteristic of Stalinist narratives, but his choices are very different from those available to the Stalinist positive hero. Although Zhivago participates in both wars in which Russia was involved at the time—the First World War and the ensuing Civil War—he never kills people, but saves lives. Stalinist positive heroes, in contrast, are either warriors (see, for example, Nevskii, Kutuzov, etc.) or former warriors (the protagonists of Petr Pavlenko's *Happiness* or Semen Babaevskii's *Cavalier of the Gold Star*). Whereas these predecessors shed others' blood, Iurii spills only his own, for the sake of others (cf. his wounding at the front). He thereby enacts an imitation of Christ, paradigmatic for Russian culture since the Life of St. Boris and Gleb and reprised by Christ-like characters populating Thaw film (Prince Lev Myshkin, Hamlet, Iurii Detochkin, and Andrei Rublev).[69]

Many scholars also have observed the metaphorical connection between Zhivago's first name, Iurii, and St. George the Dragonslayer, a prominent Russian saint, the defender of Moscow/Russia, and a central figure in Russian folklore (Bethea [265-66], Bodin [47-66], Senderovich). In the novel, Iurii retains the qualities of a warrior only in the internal metaphysical world of his poetic imagination (Bethea 259). He envisions George the Dragonslayer at his Varykino house, a home symbolizing the internal world of his creativity and emphasizing the primacy of the domestic/private in the protagonist's life. Later this warrior reappears in Zhivago's ballad "Fairy Tale" (522-24). If in the physical world Iurii Zhivago's

---

[69] Prince Lev Myshkin is the protagonist of Dostoevskii's *Idiot* (1868) and of Ivan Pyr'ev's screen adaptation of the novel (1957). Grigorii Kozintsev made a film adaptation of *Hamlet* (1964). Iurii Detochkin is the protagonist of El'dar Riazanov's film-comedy *Beregis' avtomobilia* (*Beware of the Car*) (1966). Andrei Rublev is the protagonist of Andrei Tarkovskii's eponymous film (1966). See also Susan Sontag's discussion of the artist as a surrogate Christ and "the paradigm of the cross" (47) in her essay "The Artist as an Exemplary Sufferer."

actions run counter to those typical of potentially positive Red warriors, then in the world of his imagination Zhivago retains the qualities of a warrior--one, however, who defends the sovereignty of personal feelings rather than a nation, as do Stalinist warriors.

In addition to being a warrior, the protagonist of Pasternak's novel is also an artist who can restore the lost harmony of the world in his texts. In fact, the whole novel, following the life of the protagonist, becomes a narrative about poetic genesis as a means of restoring the harmony destroyed by those who imitated and manipulated art and life for their political ends.

The novel redefines the figure of a poet: he is not the active maker of new life in the literal sense of the word. Zhivago, rather, contemplates life, creates the new era within himself through his poetry. This poetry, in turn, like Christ's parables, about which his uncle teaches him in his childhood, disseminates his ideas. The Russian tradition of the kenotic representations of Jesus Christ contributes to the novel's construction of this internalized demiurgic life. After Zhivago's death, a book of his poetry ushers in the new age in the novel. His friends, Dudorov and Gordon, read Zhivago's poems near an open window as they look out upon a Moscow now resurrected as a "holy city" (510). With the disintegration of the Stalinist/Roman utopia, Moscow becomes the city blessed by neo-Christian spirituality.[70]

---

[70] The conclusion of the novel links it to the myth of Moscow as the apocalyptic city of the Third Rome. This myth may be traced back to the fifteenth-century "Tale of the White Cowl." The title refers to the holy cowl of the Pope, which traveled from Rome to Byzantium, and finally ended up in Russia, confirming the special destiny of the country. Later in the sixteenth century, the monk Philotheus (1500-1540) formulated the theory of Moscow as the Third Rome (Zenkovskii 323).

The novel's ending, especially calling the renewed Moscow the "holy city," also links the novel with *The Revelation of John*, which ends with the prophecy of new life and a resurrected Jerusalem—a New one instead of the sinful one—"the tree of life and the Holy City, which are described in this book" (Revelation 1575).

The novel's focus on the poetic, creative personality manifest itself not only in the centrality of the poet's figure in the work. Even when Zhivago is not the focus of the narrative[71], the metaphoric language reminds the reader that poetic creation, which Zhivago exemplifies, is the heartbeat of the novel.

Pasternak's narrative recycles the key Stalinist trope of the positive hero into the tale of a poet whose individual life is a miraculous simultaneity of his own, Christ's, Hamlet's, and everyone's else experience.[72] Zhivago, as poet, embraces and redefines the whole universe by the great ordinariness of his life.[73]

---

[71] For example, Zhivago is completely absent in part ten of the novel, "Na bol'shoi doroge" ("The Highway").

[72] Eleanor Rowe contends that Pasternak's work on the translation of Shakespeare's tragedy served as a major foundation for the creation of his novel's protagonist. Anticipating Zhivago, Hamlet is a Christ-like self-sacrificial hero who gives up his will to fulfill the will "of him that sent him." In the words of Pasternak: "Hamlet is not a drama of weakness, but of duty and self-denial" (cited in Rowe 148).

[73] Zhivago finds the style of "great ordinariness" in literature in the works of Pushkin and Chekhov, and distinguishes it in his diary as a feature of Russianness:

> Skazochno tol'ko riadovoe . . . Izo vsego russkogo ia teper' bol'she vsego liubliu russkuiu detskost' Pushkina i Chekhova, ikh zastenchivuiu neozabochennost' naschet takikh gromkikh veshchei, kak konechnye tseli chelovechestva i ikh sobstvennoe spasenie. Vo vsem etom khorosho razbiralis' i oni, no kuda im bylo do takikh neskromnostei! (1990 282—283)
>
> Only the familiar transformed by genius is truly great . . . What I have come to like best in the whole of Russian literature is the childlike Russian quality of Pushkin and Chekhov, their modest reticence in such high-sounding matters as the ultimate purpose of mankind or their own salvation. It isn't that they did not think about these things, and to good effect, but to talk about such things seemed to them pretentious, presumptuous. (1958 285)

I vot v zaval etoi mramornoi i zolotoi bezvkusitsy prishel etot legkii i odetyi v

siianie, podcherknuto chelovecheskii, namerenno provinstial'nyi, galileiskii, i s

etoi minuty narody i bogi prekratilis', i nachalsia chelovek, chelovek-plotnik,

chelovek-pakhar', chelovek-pastukh v stade ovets na zakhode solntsa, chelovek,

ni kapel'ki ne zvuchashchii gordo, chelovek blagodarno raznesennyi po vsem

kolybel'nym pesniam materei i po vsem kartinnym galereiam mira. (1990 46)

And then, into this tasteless heap of gold and marble, He came, light and clothed

in an aura, emphatically human, deliberately provincial, Galilean, and at that

moment gods and nations ceased to be and man came into being—man the

carpenter, man the plowman, man the shepherd with his flock of sheep at sunset,

man who does not sound in the least proud, man thankfully celebrated in all the

cradle songs and in all picture galleries the world over. (Pasternak 1958 43)

The life of the protagonist colonizes and reconciles the polar spaces avoided by Stalinist novels:

those of the ordinary and the metaphysical.

    Symbolic events that echo the life of Christ and Hamlet constantly resurface in Zhivago's

ordinary life. Zhivago rediscovers the spiritual values "masked by . . . surface reality" (Brooks

5). His life and especially his posthumous poems overtly connect Zhivago's life with this

rediscovered, newly understood Christianity (67). Iurii Zhivago is not only a poet prophet, but

---

Stephen Harris argues that a similar significant simplicity is the distinctive feature of biblical wisdom literature:

"The greatest wisdom literature, however, is based on the author's profound reflections on the significance of

ordinary life, with its unequal distribution of good and evil fortune, unexpected calamities, and the ambiguity of its

ethical 'message' " (165). Harris refers primarily to "The Book of Job." Pasternak's novel obviously aspires to the

status of wisdom writing.

also the poet of the "moral occult," able to reveal the spiritual in mundane, everyday life.

The protagonist, as well as his children, becomes an orphaned child of Russia—one of the "children of Russia's terrible years" (1958, 518). The story of Zhivago's life, in turn, becomes the story of a violated childhood in the course of Russia's revolution and modernization. The melodrama of such a Dickensian protagonist enters Russian culture with the ambiguous fruits of modernization.

On the surface, Zhivago's life consists mostly of losses and defeats. The work opens with the death of both his parents. In the course of the novel Zhivago is separated from all of his three families[74]: those he establishes with his first wife, Tonia, with his major love, Lara, and with his last wife, Marina. The world where Zhivago triumphs, however, is the inner world of his emotions and his language, which conveys a Neo-Christian morality and sincere emotions. Zhivago—as well as his friends (Lara, Antipov, Dudorov, and Gordon)--remains a victim of the novel's villains, above all, Komarovskii and Liverii. The suffering "children of Russia's terrible years" triumph in the final judgement, through the promise of salvation, and the consolation in Zhivago's poems, which conclude the novel.

Zhivago is not only a victim, but also a hero of extreme sensitivity, which Pasternak emphasizes through Zhivago's tears. These tears are both the visible signs of sincerity and the catalysts to spiritual and miraculous events in the novel. When Zhivago falls sick, he cries from self-compassion and these tears inexplicably conjure up first the words of a Church Slavonic

---

[74] The three marriages of Zhivago are part of Pasternak's use of Christian numerology.

prayer, then Lara, who heals Zhivago[75]:

> V slezakh ot zhalosti k sebe on bezzvuchnym shepotom roptal na nebo, zachem
>
> ono otvernulos' ot nego i ostavilo ego. "Vsiakuiu otrinum mia esi ot litsa Tvoego,
>
> svete nezakhodimyi, i pokryla mia est' chuzhdaia t'ma okaiannogo!" I vdrug on
>
> ponial, chto on ne grezit i eto polneishaia pravda, chto on razdet, i umyt … i chto,
>
> meshaia svoi volosy s ego volosami i ego slezy so svoimi, s nim vmeste plachet
>
> … Lara. (1990 389)
>
> Crying with self-pity, he complained in a soundless whisper that Heaven had
>
> abandoned him. "Why hast Thou cast me off, O Light everlasting, and cast me
>
> down into the darkness of hell?" Suddenly he realized that he was not delirious,
>
> that he no longer had his clothes on, that he had been washed … and that …
>
> leaning over him, her hair mingling with his and her tears falling with his own,
>
> was Lara. (1958 394)

Lara's tears and hair in the prose part of the novel overlap with Zhivago's second poem about
Maria Magdalena:

> Nogi ia tvoi v podol uperla,
>
> Ikh slezami oblila, Isus,
>
> Nitkoi bus ikh obmotala s gorla,
>
> V volosy zaryla, kak v burnus. (1990 537)
>
> I have set Thy feet upon my lap,
>
> I have poured my tears over them, Jesus;

---

[75] In the gospels the imagery of fluidity is associated with Jesus: e. g., he refers to "the waters of life," turns water into wine; and at the Last Supper wine signifies his blood.

I have entwined them with the string of beads from around my neck,

I have buried them in my hair, as in the folds of a burnous. (1958, 556)

Although Zhivago hardly succeeds in keeping his immediate family intact, he constantly longs for family life and domestic happiness. In the novel this nostalgia for domesticity exists in two forms. First, the protagonist, himself an orphan, fails to create his own family because Russia's cataclysmic history constantly disrupts the possibility of a stable happiness. The Great War and then the Civil War separate Iurii from his first wife, Tonia. The Civil War also separates Iurii from Lara. In his conversation with Liverii, the leader of the Red guerillas, Zhivago defines the destruction of the family as the major crime against life committed by the Revolution and the Civil War:

> "Navernoe, vy voobrazhaete, chto dlia menia net luchshego mesta na svete, chem vash lager' i vashe obshchestvo. Navernoe, ia eshche dolzhen blagoslovliat' vas i spasibo vam govorit' za svoiu nevoliu, za to, chto vy osvobodili menia ot sem'i, ot syna, ot doma, oto vsego, chto mne dorogo i chem ia zhiv." (1990, 335)
>
> I suppose you think I can't imagine anything in the world more pleasant than your camp and your company. I suppose I have to bless you for keeping me a prisoner and thank you for liberating me from my wife, my son, my home, my work, from everything I hold dear. (1958 339)

Second, Pasternak relegates family happiness to the pre-revolutionary past. The incarnation of the vanished idyll are the families of the Moscow intelligentsia: the Sventitskiis (literally, the Family of Light and Sacredness) and the Gromekos. The novel replaces the radiant future of socialist realist utopias with elegiac reminiscences of the the Paradise Lost incarnated in the families of Russia's intelligentsia. The section titled "Christmas Tree at the Sventitskiis" functions simultaneously as the celebration and the end of this idyll, about the resurrection of

which Zhivago can only dream in the novel.

The Thaw positive hero combines the features of a sentimental hero with those of a neo-Romantic. The defining features of the former include hypersensitivity, emotional intimacy, tears as an outlet for emotions, the identity of the abused orphan, a life full of losses, and a longing for domesticity. Zhivago's neo-romantic characteristics are the centrality of a creative poetic personality, the value of the hero's private world, withdrawal from the realm of action into the realm of the irrational, imaginary, and miraculous; and a belief in the interconnectedness of the worlds of nature and culture. The new positive hero emerges as the antagonist of the Stalinist positive hero. The aesthetics of both cultural systems, however, require the centrality of the model character.

1.3. The Positive Hero: Redefining The Manicheanism of Character System, Language, and Space

Pasternak's novel reexamines the Manicheanism of Stalinist culture, which cast life as the opposition between "us" and "them." If the late Stalinist novel isolated "us" from "them" in the idyllic chronotope of kolkhoz life (*Cavalier of the Gold Star*), then Thaw novels started locating evil within "us," first in rural or urban settings, and later in psychic and metaphysical space. Moreover, the "manichaeistic struggle between good and evil" (Brooks 59) stopped being an issue resolved in fatal battles between monumental heroes and universal forces of evil--Stalin vs. Hitler in Mikhail Chaureli's film *Fall of Berlin* (1949), Peter the Great vs. foreign invaders in Alexei Tolstoi's endless novel *Peter the First* (1929-45). Instead, the struggle became everyman's inner dilemma urging a voluntary moral choice.

In this respect, Manicheanism does not disappear from Thaw texts such as *Doctor Zhivago*. Rather, it acquires both personal and metaphysical dimensions. Each major character

118

in the novel—the positive ones, such as Zhivago, Lara, and also their foil, Antipov— has to make his/her free moral decision.[76] The internalized struggle between good and evil articulates itself in the struggle of authentic and fake discourses. Among the fake, the conventions of the socialist realist novel are the prime suspects.

In her conversation with Iurii, Lara dismisses the simplistic binarism of Soviet novels as reductive and incommensurate with life: "Eto ved' tol'ko v plokhikh knizhkakh zhivushchie razdeleny na dva lageria i ne soprikasaiutsia" (1990 296) "It's only in mediocre books that people are divided into two camps and have nothing to do with each other" (1958 298). She equates the unambiguousness and goal-orientedness of the protagonists in these narratives with non-entity: "kakim nepopravimym nichtozhestvom nado byt', chtoby igrat' v zhizni tol'ko odnu rol', zanimat' odno lish' mesto v obshchestve, znachit' vsegda odno i to zhe!" (1990 296), "Don't you think you'd have to be a hopeless nonentity to play only one role all your life, to have only one place in the society, always to stand for the same thing? (1958 298).

Iurii and the main narrator of *Doctor Zhivago* likewise present the characteristic discourse of the Soviet novel (as well as the larger context of Soviet newspeak) as an alien entity. The narrator distances himself from Soviet clichés by such phrases as "kak seichas by skazali" (253) "as it would have been called in those days"; "intelligentsiia … stala govorit'" (467) "the

---

[76] Pasha Antipov is a victim of this paradox of life. The redefinition of the opposition between "us" and "them" leads to a redefinition of the cultural opposition between the positive hero and his foil, and eventually to a reevaluation of binarism as a principle for explaining life in Soviet culture. In *Doctor Zhivago* the protagonist's major foil, Pasha Antipov, is not only a villain guilty of heinous acts, but also a tragic victim of the misperception of his own life.

intelligentsia started saying …" He protects his ears and tongue from such brainwashing demagogy, and his attitude parallels Iurii's in the latter's denunciations of the Soviet intelligentsia's approval of its own moral enslavement:

> Nesvobodnyi chelovek vsegda idealiziruet svoiu nevoliu. Tak bylo v srednie veka, na etom vsegda igrali iezuity. Iurii Andreevich ne vynosil politicheskogo mistitsizma sovetskoi intelligentsii, togo, chto bylo ee vysshim dostizheniem ili kak togda by skazali—dukhovnym potolkom epokhi. (1990 475)
>
> Men who are not free, he thought, always idealize their bondage. So it was in the Middle Ages, and later the Jesuits always exploited this human trait. Zhivago could not bear the political mysticism of the Soviet intelligentsia, though it was the very thing they regarded as their highest achievement, or as it would have been called in those days, "the spiritual ceiling of the age." (1958 482)

Among the numerous clichés of Soviet life the most threatening and perilous is the positive hero. Lara and Iurii share an alienation from this true villain of Pasternak's novel: "Im oboim bylo odinakovo nemilo vse fatal'no tipicheskoe v sovremennom cheloveke, ego zauchennaia vostorzhennost', kriklivaia pripodniatost'" (1990 390). "They were both equally repelled by what was tragically typical of modern man, his textbook admirations, his shrill enthusiasms" (1958 395). Every word in this passage offers "decrowning" synonyms for Soviet clichés, which official discourses used in describing the Soviet positive hero. "Tipicheskoe" constitutes the catchword of Soviet literary criticism and stands for compliance with the official line of Soviet ideological doctrine.[77] "Fatal'no tipicheskoe" stands for "goal-orientedness," that

---

[77] Boris Groys refers to "the typical" as a key concept of socialist realist discourse. The typical is "that which has not yet come into being but which should be created" (1992 51). Groys contends that "the typical" underlies the

is, the historical determinism of the Soviet vision of history, into which is programmed "the iron necessity" of the Communist future. "Kriklivaia pripodniatost'" stands for mandatory Soviet optimism.

To describe conformist producers of Stalinist culture (that is, the Soviet intelligentsia), Pasternak uses an intricate spatial metaphor, which in turn also rephrases Soviet newspeak. According to the official ideological idiom, the intelligentsia occupied the "prosloika" (layer) between two classes: that of workers and that of collectivized peasants. Iurii's friend Gordon, who succumbs to conformism, lives in a room that has been created by making an intermediate second floor between the floors of an originally two-story building. This spatial layer with a window on the floor level realizes the metaphor of "prosloika," while simultaneously functioning as a metaphor for the voluntary intellectual unfreedom of Russian intellectuals. In this room another conformist-intellectual, Dudorov, explains that the camps are an ideal place for moral growth[78]:

> Dudorov nedavno otbyl srok pervoi svoei ssylki . . . On govoril, chto dovody obvineniia … i v osobennosti sobesedovanie s glazu na glaz so sledovatelem provetrili emu mozgi i politicheski perevospitali, chto u nego otkrylis' na mnogoe glaza, chto kak chelovek on vyros. (1990 474-75)

principle of party-mindedness: "the portrayal of the typical refers to the visual realization of still-emerging party objectives, the ability to intuit new currents among the party leadership" (51).

[78] While Dudorov identifies brainwashing with "moral growth," Solzhenitsyn in *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich)* (1962) and *V kruge pervom [The First Circle]* (1968), and Siniavskii in *Golos iz khora, [A Voice from the Chorus]* (1976) dialogize Dudorov's understanding of concentration camps' function. For both Solzhenitsyn and Siniavskii, camp was the only place in Russia where an individual could express oneself freely because he had nothing to lose.

> Dudorov had recently come back from his first deportation . . . he said that the
> arguments of prosecution … and particularly his private talks with the examining
> judge had "aired" his brains, reeducated him politically, opened his eyes to many
> things he had not seen before, and made him more mature as a person. (1958
> 481-82)

While Gordon and Dudorov thrive in the room between two floors, the incorruptible Zhivago, of course, almost suffocates.

Soviet discourse, defined in the novel as akin to social Darwinism (342) and Marxism of Stalinist vintage (257)[79], is the source of epidemic mimicry and falsehood. The phenomenon is so threatening that Doctor Zhivago devotes his life to studying it and curing its victims and sufferers. According to Zhivago, the ability of the organism to adjust to its environment is indispensable in nature, but in culture it symptomatizes a lack of originality, independence, and personal opinion. Iurii and Lara detect in social mimicry—i. e., conformism—the major source of Russia's social disasters:

> Glavnoi bedoi, kornem budushchego zla byla utrata very v tsenu sobstvennogo
> mneniia. Voobrazili, chto vremia, kogda sledovali vnusheniiam nravstvennogo
> chut'ia, minovalo, chto teper' nado pet' s obshchego golosa i zhit' chuzhimi,
> vsem naviazannymi predstavleniiami. (1990 398)

---

[79] Marxism has no variations in Pasternak's novel. It is an aggressive theory, a narcotic, to which many people get addicted. Liverii is the literal realization of this metaphor: Zhivago calls him "a damn cocaine-addict" (1990 336). Pasternak's novel recycles the Marxian saying, which turned into a notorious Soviet cliché: "religion is the opium for the people."

> The main misfortune, the root of all evil to come, was the loss of confidence in
> the value of one's own opinion. People imagined that it was out of date to follow
> their own moral sense, that they must all sing in chorus, and live by other people's
> notions, notions that were being crammed down everybody's throat. (1958 404)

Pasha Antipov's talent of mimicry serves as the anthropomorphic incarnation of this scourge of modernity. According to Lara and Iurii, lies and a lack of originality are overlapping concepts, and the discourse based on these anti-values has led to the butchery of the Civil War (1918-22) and Soviet rule.

Several discourses in the novel counter the dead word of Soviet discourse. At least three interweaving discursive traditions provide alternatives to the inert idiom of Soviet Neo-Roman culture: first, the Word of the Gospel, existing both in the tradition of the cultural elite and in folk idioms; second, folklore itself, which is miraculously connected with the word of Christianity in the novel; and third, the unique discourse of the poet, Iurii Zhivago, which is a synthesis of world culture in both its elite and popular versions.

This multiplicity of discourses neither destabilizes nor cancels a perceptible hierarchy of discourses in the novel, for location within that hierarchy manifestly depends on the ability of a given discourse to preserve historical memory. This memory is personal and emotionally charged. The originator of history as the home for humanity is, according to both Zhivago and Vedeniapin, Jesus Christ. Soviet discourse, obviously, is the direct polar opposite of such personal and emotional memory. It is, in fact, the discourse of oblivion. Pasha Antipov, its major victim, loses his Christian name (Paul) and becomes Strel'nikov (The Shooter). Tania Bezocheredeva, the daughter of Lara and Zhivago, grows up an orphan without remembering who her real parents are.

Folk discourse, associated with the female narrators Kubarikha, Sima, and Tania, is synonymous with intuitive memory. The discourse of intellectuals consciously preserves the Christian tradition. Its narrators are male and belong to the educated class: Aleksandr Gromeko, Nikolai Nikolaevich Vedeniapin (the one who knows, *vedaet* [Gillespie 119]), and, above all,

Iurii Zhivago. Finally, poetic discourse focuses not only on the preservation of tradition, but also, and primarily, on its metaphorical interconnectedness. That is why Iurii, as a poet, is the most creative and powerful character in the text: he, like Kozintsev's Hamlet, sees what others cannot see. This metaphysical "super" vision expresses itself as an extraordinary talent for diagnosis in Zhivago's other, life-preserving profession of doctor.

What Zhivago sees exceeds the vision of the people who fight in the Civil War and destroy the harmony of God's word. In the episode where Dr. Zhivago tries to save the lives of both a Red soldier and his White enemy, Iurii discovers an amulet with a handwritten version of Psalm 91 in folk idiom around the neck of a Red commoner, while a White cadet from the middle class has exactly the same text but in a printed, bookish Old Church Slavonic form: "Eto byl tot zhe devianostyi psalom, no v pechatnom vide i vo vsei slavianskoi podlinnosti" (1990 332). "It was the same Ninety-first Psalm but this time printed in its full and original Slavonic text" (1958 336).

Unfortunately, Zhivago is the unique solitary, the only one who sees the suicidal blindness of his contemporaries, and tries through his writing to reconcile these two lines of human/Christian history: the one preserved by the elite "vo vsei svoei slavianskoi podlinnosti" (332), and the one preserved intuitively by the common folk. These two versions of Christianity correspond to two narratives of world history in the novel. During his youth, Iurii hears the first one from his uncle Nikolai Nikolaevich, a former monk and an apparently "true" intelligent. According to Nikolai Nikolaevich, there have been two eras in the life of humanity: the age of the Roman empire—of emperors, their monumental arrogance and faceless armies and crowds— and the era of the free individual, when the major value became the independent human personality. This era, also known as human history, started with Jesus Christ (46). Iurii overhears the second version of human history in Iuriatin toward the end of his life. A common Russian woman, Sima, who speaks substandard Russian, tells the same story about humanity's fate (406). Two "valid" and "validating" discourses in the novel authenticate Zhivago's and Pasternak's conviction of what is primary in life.

Both these miraculously similar versions of world history form a textual frame around the story about Psalm 91, where Iurii discovers that the elite and the common people share the same beliefs but continue fighting each other. It is the intellectual elite, however, that preserves the most precise version of human history ushered in by Jesus Christ (332). Iurii's uncle is a former monk, hence attuned to the tradition of *Christi imitatio*. Genuine intelligentsia families have surnames with ancient, time-tested Church Slavonic roots in them: the Zhivagos and the Sventitskiis.[80] In short, the poet and the intelligentsia as the chosen caste are destined to heal the split within God's Word, the loss of sacredness in the world.

In addition to popular renditions of the Bible, Pasternak's novel also incorporates the whole range of pseudo- and genuine folklore texts, as well as intertextual links to folklore texts. The main source of these texts is Kubarikha, who sings a folksong about a rowantree and with her magic words heals both people and lifestock. In her stories Iurii detects historical narratives as well as Russian medieval chronicles (1990 362). What at first appears as different discursive modes ultimately reduces to a perceived distinction along class and gender lines: common folk and women simply "feel" history, whereas the male intelligentsia rationally expresses its awareness of historical memory.[81]

In her occupation and gifts Kubarikha is a diminished female double of Doctor Zhivago, who admits, albeit ironically, that Kubarikha is his competitor. As a witch doctor, she provides

---

[80] The Church-Slavonic <en> in Sventitskii corresponds to Russian <ia> in Sviatoi (Saint). The Russian version of Sventitskiis would be Sviatitskiis—that is, the Sacred People. Iurii Zhivago also carries the authentic Church Slavonic tradition in the genitive (sic!) singular inflection of his last name: *ago*.

[81] If in *Doctor Zhivago* the intelligentsia is male while commoners are females, then in many other Thaw texts, and especially in films, working class people tend to be male, while intellectuals are either females or effeminate males. See, for example, Iosif Kheifits's *Bol'shaia sem'ia (Big Family)* (1954) or Marlen Khutsiev's *Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse (Spring on Zarechnaia Street)* (1956).

an alternative version of medicine. As a fortune-teller, she is a folk prophet, whose song about the rowantree predicts Iurii's encounter with Lara and explains the apocalyptic meaning of the Red banner over Russia (1990 361).

Folklore as popular memory/history is not a domain exclusive to the common people, who preserve history in their hearts (1990 504). The family of true intellectuals in the novel, the Gromekos, to whom Iurii's first wife, Tonia, belongs, also nurtures its own version of folklore: family legends. These legends surround Varykino, the miraculous and metaphysical space where Iurii writes his best poems (1990 266).

Finally, the idiom of folk legend returns at the very end of the novel in the form of the *skaz* about the life of Zhivago's last daughter, Tania Bezocheredeva. In this passage the narrator, Tania, becomes a bio-cultural synthesis of both the intelligentsia and the people. By birth she belongs to the intelligentsia, inasmuch as her father is Iurii ("Budto ne iz prostykh ia, skazyvali" [1990 504]). By upbringing, however, Tania belongs to the common folk, for she grew up in a peasant family. Tania closes the novel with her popular legend (the intersection of national and family folklore) about the tragic end of her adoptive family (1990 504-09).[82]

Peter Brooks's discussion of the melodramatic mode in prose writing elucidates the style

---

[82] [21] Tania's story combines folklore devices—links such as "dolgo li korotko li" (506),—with the icons of modernity represented in a fairy-tale aura:

> slyshu ia, stalo byt', snizu menia znakomyi parovoz zovet . . . Nuzhli, dumaiu, i ia vmeste s tetei Marfushei ne v svoem ume, chto so mnoi vsiakaia zhivaia tvar', vsiakaia mashina besslovesnaia iasnym russkim iazykom govorit? (1990 508)
>
> Well, I heard this engine I knew, calling me from below. I listened and my heart leapt. Am I off my head, I wondered, like Auntie Marfa, that every living beast and every dumb engine speaks to me in plain Russian? (1958 517)

of Tania's final story:

> Even though the novel has no literal music, the connotation of the word melodrama remains relevant. The emotional drama needs the desemanticized language of music, its evocation of the "ineffable," its tones and registers. Style, thematic structuring, modulations of tone and rhythm and voice—musical patterning in the metaphorical sense—are called upon to invest plot with some of the inexorability and necessity that in pre-modern literature derived from the substratum of myth. (Brooks 60)

Tania's story is a stylized, pseudo-folk "horror tale" narrated in rhythmical prose based on the spoken word, i.e., *skaz*. Its links with folklore lend this story the connotations of a terrifying parable about the horrors of Russian twentieth-century history. Gordon and Dudorov, after listening to Tania, conclude:

> Tak bylo uzhe neskol'ko raz v istorii. Zadumannoe ideal'no . . . grubelo, oveshchestvlialos'. Tak Gretsiia stala Rimom, tak russkoe prosveshchenie stalo russkoi revoliutsiei. Voz'mi ty eto blokovskoe "My, deti strashnykh let Rossii," i srazu uvidish' razlichie epokh. Kogda Blok govoril eto, eto nado bylo ponimat' v perenosnom smysle . . . I deti byli ne deti, a syny, detishcha, intelligentsiia, i strakhi byli ne strashny . . . A teper' perenosnoe stalo bukval'nym, i deti—deti, i strakhi strashny, vot v chem raznitsa. (1990 509—510).

> It has often happened in history that a lofty ideal has degenerated into crude materialism. Thus Greece gave way to Rome, and the Russian Enlightenment has become the Russian Revolution. There is a great difference between the two periods. Blok says somewhere: "We, the children of Russia's terrible years." Blok meant it in a metaphorical, figurative sense. The children were not the children, but the sons, the heirs, the intelligentsia, and the terrors were not terrible

127

. . . Now the metaphorical has become literal, children are children and the terrors are terrible, there you have a difference. (1958 518)

Tania's biography includes such features of melodramatic narrative listed by Brooks as strong emotionalism, moral schematization, extreme states of being, overt villainy, persecution of good, the final reward of virtue, inflated extravagant expression … and breathtaking peripety (58). Indeed, Tania uses a wealth of emotional interjections ("oi, batiushki svety, dorogie tovarishchi!" [1990 507], "Oh God in Heaven, dear comrades!" [1958 515], "oi batiushki … vsego-to ia v zhizni navidalas'-naterpelas'" [1990 508], "Oh, God in heaven, need I tell you how I felt!" [1958 516]). She describes her feelings during the emotionally extreme situation of the slaughter of her adopted family. For all of her sufferings she will be rewarded with the protection of Evgraf—the guardian angel of the Zhivagos. The story is told in a highly stylized, folksy mode. And, finally, the narrative exploits the "breathtaking peripety" of a murder story.

Both the placement of Tania's story at the end of the novel and the story's affective and linguistic excesses suggest that in Pasternak's novel emotionally charged modes of writing and living are the true healers of all discursive lacerations, the way to express the spiritual in a desacralized world. Zhivago, with his creative life-giving power, becomes the major agent of this expressive discourse, which assumes two distinct but interconnected forms: children and poetic lines.

Iurii's children are the material realization of his creativity, while poetry is the ideal realization of his spiritual fertility. In both creations the poet synthesizes popular and elite culture. Iurii has a son, Alexander, and a daughter, Maria, from his first wife, the daughter of a university professor, Aleksandr Gromeko. He also has two daughters, Kapa and Klasha, from his second, working-class wife, Marina, the daughter of Iurii's janitor Markel, who defines her

relationship to Iurii by calling her Marina-the-Intercessor ("Marina zastupnitsa" [471]).

Finally, Iurii is responsible for the key biological and ideological conception in the novel: Lara's daughter Tania. As argued above, Tania is the product of the symbiosis between the intellectual elite and the common folk. In short, Iurii's discourse is, quite literally, phallogocentric: he realizes the Russian intelligentsia's wet dream of merging with its own people both with his phallus, which produces offspring, and with his logos, which yields poems.

Children, however, are just a prelude to Iurii's poetic discourse, which holds pride of place in the novel as the most important form of the life-giving word. The distinctive feature of this discourse is its focus on its own genesis, or, as Lazar Fleishman points out, Pasternak wrote "a novel about a novel" (311). The title of the novel reiterates in the name of the protagonist this very concept of life as generated through the poetic word: the Church Slavonic genitive singular of *zhivoi*: *Zhivago*.

The most significant quality of Iurii's poetic discourse is its "obraznost'" (468). This word itself is extremely ambiguous in Russian: it signifies poetic metaphorism and echoes the Russian synonym for the word "icon": "obraz." The four most important metaphors of Zhivago's poetic diction are "cross," "candle," "window," and "eye" ("ability to see"). All metaphors, and especially these four, constantly intersect in the text. And, as the novel's prime poet, Zhivago "naturally" turns the readers' attention to these miraculous intersections of meanings, fates, and events.

Because of the strong Christian motifs in the novel, the most important intersection of meanings becomes the metaphor of the cross. In the opening scenes, the cross covers the face of Iurii's father after he commits suicide (18). Cross and candle intersect in the novel's poems.

The miraculous intersection of characters' fates evokes the paradigm of the cross on the

level of setting and character structure. In the novel's third part, "Elka u Sventitskikh," for example, characters' gazes miraculously intersect during Christmas celebrations. Lara and Pasha look at a candle in his room while Iurii passes by in the street and sees the same candle in the window. The candlelight, in turn, intersects with Iurii's glance: "Skvoz' etu skvazhinu prosvechival ogon' svechi, pronikavshiii na ulitsu pochti s soznatel'nost'iu vzgliada, tochno plamia podsmatrivalo . . . i kogo-to podzhidalo" (1990 82 emphasis added), "The light seemed to look into the street almost consciously, as if it were watching . . . and waiting for someone" (1958 81, emphasis added). The spatial intersection of the characters' glances and bodies foreshadows the crossing of plotlines later in the novel: of the lives of Lara and Iurii, of Strel'nikov and Iurii.[83]

Iurii's journey to the Sventitiskiis contains a philosophically weighty intertextual intersection. En route Iurii thinks about his article on Blok. He changes his initial plan to write the article because he finds objectified scholarly discourse too weak to convey his experiences. Instead, he refers to the artistic representations of Christmas, abandoning his scholarly project:

> Vdrug Iura podumal, chto Blok—eto iavlenie Rozhdestva vo vsekh oblastiakh russkoi zhizni … On podumal, chto nikakoi stat'i o Bloke ne nado, a prosto nado napisat' russkoe poklonenie volkhvov, kak u gollandtsev … "Svecha gorela na stole. Svecha gorela …"—sheptal Iura pro sebia nachalo chego-to smutnogo, neoformivshegosia. (1990 82)

> It suddenly occurred to Iura that Blok reflected the Christmas spirit in all domains of Russian life … There was no need to write an article on Blok, he thought, all

---

[83] In this part one can also find infinite intersections of meanings between the words "fire" and "ice," "fire" and "glance," "light" and "sacredness" (cf. "Elka u Sventitskikh": *svet* and *sviat*).

you had to do was to paint a Russian version of a Dutch Adoration of the Magi …

"A candle burned on the table, a candle burned …," he whispered to himself—the

beginning of something confused, formless. (1958 80—81)

The repeated intersection of texts (gospels, Blok's poetry, Dutch Renaissance [sic!] painting),

together with the intersection of word-meanings and characters' glances/fates, contributes to the

ultimate creation of the novel—the polysemous poetic word. The line "Svecha gorela na stole,

svecha gorela" is later reiterated several times in one of the major novel's poems: "Zimniaia

noch'." It is also probably the best remembered line both in the poem and in the whole novel.

According to the metaphoric economy of Pasternak's text, the "shadows of crossed arms, of

crossed legs—of crossed destiny" (1958 542) in the prose part of the novel become resurrected

in the poetic Logos.

The discourse of the poet, though metaphorical, is comprehensible to everyone. Indeed,

the main narrator describes Iurii's works as accessible but original and never condescendingly

simplified in their presentation of material:

raboty izlozheny byli dostupno, v razgovornoi forme, dalekoi, odnako, ot tselei,

kotorye staviat sebe populiarizatory, potomu chto zakliuchali v sebe mneniia

spornye … no <u>vsegda zhivye, original'nye</u>." (1990 468, emphasis added)

The works were written in an easy conversational style but were anything but

works of popularization, since they advanced opinions that were controversial …

though <u>always lively and original</u>. (1958 474, emphais added)

At the begining of the novel, this quality of Zhivago's discourse is foreshadowed by uncle

Nikolai's interpretation of Christianity. He teaches Iurii that what is most important in the

Gospels is "to, chto Khristos govorit pritchami iz byta, poiasniaia istinu svetom povsednevnosti"

(1990 45), "that Christ speaks in parables taken from life, that He explains the truth in terms of everyday reality" (1958 42). Like Zhivago's poetry, the parable is accessible but complex and multi-faceted in its meaning.[84]

The accessibility that Pasternak so valued in his novel is linked to another important feature of Iurii's poetic word: the confirmation of its sincerity and sensitivity by the tears accompanying it. Its emotional authenticity enables the poetic word to remain in people's memory. In the novel, the words of the poet survive above all in the memory of Lara, the emblem of Russia: "Kazalos', imenno eti mokrye ot slez slova sami slipalis' v ee [Lara's] laskovyi i bystryi lepet, kak shelestit veter shelkovistoi i vlazhnoi listvoi, sputannoi teplym dozhdem" (1990, 494). "It was these tears that seemed to hold her words together in a tender, quick whispering, like the rustling of silky leaves in a warm, windy rain" (1958 502). The episodes describing Lara and Zhivago's conversations are extremely sentimental, emotionally intense, and bathed in the characters' tears or cast in pathetic fallacies. Nature sheds its tears in tune with the highly emotional states of the characters, whose strong love is constantly threatened by the unholy forces of modernity's cataclysms. After Lara is seduced by Komarovskii, she cries together with the rain behind the window:

> Teper' ona . . . padshaia. Ona—zhenshchina iz frantsuzskogo romana . . . Gospodi kak eto moglo sluchitsia! . . . Za oknom lepetali kapli . . . Lara ne podnimala golovy. U nee vsdragivali plechi. Ona plakala. (1990, 47—48).
> Now she was … a fallen woman. She was a woman out of a French novel … O God, O God, how did it happen? … Outside the window the water drops plopped

---

84 The other major cultural producer of the Thaw who loved to speak in parables was Nikita Khrushchev.

on and on … Lara did not raise her head. Her shoulders quivered. She was

weeping. (1958, 45)

Melodramatic exclamations and mentions of French novels about fallen women are followed by

the tears of the fallen woman herself. The moment of melodramatic excess marks the moment of

poetic genesis: tears intersect with rain drops. The miracle of poetic creation revives the moral

occult of poetry in the world, where the sacred seems to be replaced by the bestiality of

Komarovskii.

An even more graphic example of the revival of the spiritual through melodramatic

excess appears in part thirteen of the novel: "Opposite the House of Sculptures," in which

Zhivago returns to Lara's house. His tears first link the protagonist with Heaven: "Ne sam on, a

chto-to bolee obshchee, chem on sam, rydalo i plakalo v nem nezhnymi i svetlymi,

svetiashchimisia v temnote, kak fosfor, slovami. I vmeste so svoei plakavshei dushoi plakal on

sam" (1990 388). "It was not he but something greater than himself that wept and sobbed in

him, and shone in the darkness with bright, phosphorescent words. And with weeping soul, he

too wept" (1958 394). When Zhivago (like Christ on the cross) cries and thinks that God has

forsaken him, his tears bring about life's miraculous change for the better. Lara appears, saves

his life, and gives him the best days of his life (1990 389). The melodramatic tone of many

highly metaphorical prose passages in Pasternak's novel reflects an attempt to find an emotional

release for the repressed (personal, emotional, and irrational), to bring it home to everyone:

"accessibility was one of the key assets that Pasternak sought for in his … novel" (Rylkova 1).

Melodramatic exclamations, extreme situations, emotional states, and tears as explicit

signs of feelings usually accompany the words of sincere characters. In a poetic comment on his

novel ("Nobel Prize" [1959]), Pasternak pointed out that he considered his major achievement

the fact that he induced the whole world to weep over the Beauty of his beloved motherland: "Ia ves' mir zastavil plakat' nad krasoi zemli moei" (1989 128) "I made the whole world weep over my beautiful land" (cited in Conquest 101). The tears shed by the whole world confirmed the values promoted by the Thaw intelligentsia. The conflict of discourses in which a petrified, reason-driven absence of ambiguity clashed with sensitive metaphorism was a major mode for promoting new values.[85]

---

[85] In Pasternak's novel the shift in focus from the binary opposition between "positive us" and "villainous them" to the conflict of authentic and fake discourses in "our" language is replicated by the changes in the uses of space. Unlike Stalinist narratives, in which space is normally represented as an isolated territory invaded and transformed into an industrial paradise, Pasternak's novel internalizes space. Space stands for the characters' consciousness, psychological state, intellectual and creative freedom. Characters' rooms are domestic spaces, metaphorically commenting on their state of mind. Compare, for example, the rooms where Iurii writes his poems in Varykino and at Kamergerskii Lane with Gordon's "interlevel" room at the end of the novel:

> To Iurii Andreevich the room was more than a place for work, more than his study. At this time of devouring activity . . . his plans and ideas . . . floated in the air like apparitions—as unfinished pictures stand with their faces to the walls in a painter's studio—his living room was to him a banqueting room of the spirit, a cupboard of mad dreams, a storeroom of revelations. (1958 487)

The poet's treasury of revelations is juxtaposed in the novel to the mid-floor space of Gordon's room. In her study of the Stalinist intelligentsia's reading tastes, Vera Duhnam argues that the intelligentsia's middle-brow tastes indicate the emergence of a Soviet middle class, to which the Soviet leadership offered the opportunity to share its power, privileges, and relatively prosperous life style.

Non-domestic space also becomes a complex signifier, focused on its metaphorical energy. It emphasizes the ability of objects, words, and people to transform/convert. Moscow is neither the city of death and revolution nor of Christ the Savior's Cathedral: it combines both sides of existence. Similarly, if at the beginning of the novel, Rome is associated with the spirit of Empire ("Rim byl tolkuchkoiu bogov i zavoevannykh narodov . . . svinstvom, zakhlestnuvshimsia vokrug sebia troinym uzlom, kak zavorot kishok" [1990 46] "Rome was was a flea market of

borrowed gods and conquered peoples . . . a mass of filth convoluted in a tripe knot as in an intestinal obstruction"

[1958 43]), by novel's end Moscow is called a sacred city, the Third Rome.

The metaphor of the Roman Empire is merged with the metaphor of the resurrection of life in Moscow-Third Rome, the new city of Jesus, "kotoryi ne zvuchit gordo" (1990 46), "that does not sound in the least proud" (1958 43). At the center of all these spatial transformations is the miracle of conversion. The conversion narrative, incidentally, is one of the two major narrative types in the New Testament; the second is apocalyptic narrative.

2. Bringing Up "Engineers of Human Souls" in the Thaw: Recycling Stalinist Patterns of Cultural Behavior in the Pasternak Affair

If the maturation of the positive hero is, according to Katerina Clark, the core of the Soviet novel's masterplot, then the maturation of the cultural producer under the Party's supervision is the master ritual of Soviet cultural politics. In the late 1940s the most prominent mentor, who helped writers "to correct their mistakes," was Andrei Zhdanov, while his two major advisees were a lyrical poet, Anna Akhmatova, and a survivor of the 1920s ornamental tradition, Mikhail Zoshchenko. In many cases it was not the impersonal party that served as the mentor for writers. Specific mentors patronized individual writers, creating such "couples" as Bukharin and Mandelshtam, and Ezhov and Babel'. The deaths of both writers are at least partly explained by their mentors' demise.

Pil'niak and Fadeev provide the best-known instances of the Soviet writer's maturation under Party guidance. Pil'niak published the first version of *Mahogany* in Berlin's pro-Soviet publishing house Petropolis (1929). After severe criticism in the Soviet press, Pilniak recanted, reworked the text of the novella, and published the "corrected" version in 1930 in the Soviet Union. Fadeev's novel *Young Guard* (1945) underwent a similar rewriting after it was lambasted for a lack of party-mindedness. By the late 1930s, the ritual of a writer's learning from his mistakes had evolved into a consistent formula, involving four stages: first, the writer commits a mistake (publishes/submits for publication an "incorrect version" of the text, or publishes his text abroad, or both); second, he is criticized, usually, in the press; third, the writer publicly acknowledges his mistakes; and, fourth, he finally reissues the corrected version of his text.

The Pasternak affair was the first post-Stalinist cultural scandal that disrupted the common order of things in reeducating cultural producers. True to the Thaw's refashioning of totalitarian tropes for the purposes of articulating new values, Pasternak and those who tried to

reeducate their confused colleague recast each of the stages according to new "norms."

First, Pasternak used the rejection of the novel by *Novyi mir* (September 1956) not for reworking the text, but for resubmitting it—to a Western publisher. The Western publisher, Feltrinelli, always appears in both Soviet and Western stories of the Pasternak affair as an Italian Communist (!). The use of the signifier "communist" here is a typical Thaw phenomenon, insofar as an old designation stands for a new meaning. A *tamizdat* transaction between a "dissident" and a Western publisher uses Feltrinelli's party membership as both a smoke screen and a face saver for Soviet authorities. They cannot be too strict with Pasternak if he handed his masterpiece to a communist entrepreneur.

The critical reaction of Soviet authorities also may be described as the usage of old signifiers, the meaning of which has been altered. First, after the Soviets' failed attempts to stop the publication of the novel, the official overseers of Soviet culture decided to keep silent about its appearance in the West. Second, when the "incorrect text," that is, the text rejected by the Soviet publisher, gained a threatening and, moreover, worldwide authority (received a Nobel Prize), the authorities attacked Pasternak directly.[86]

The third stage of the canonical "improvement" of a Soviet writer was also reenacted in a highly ambiguous two-part procedure. Pasternak did not publicly repent the alleged crime of slandering the Soviet people, its intelligentsia, and the revolution, but focused on misreadings of both his behavior and his text. In his cablegram rejecting the Nobel Prize, he wrote that he did so because of the meaning that the community to which he belonged had attributed to the event: "In view of the meaning given to this honor in the community to which I belong, I should abstain from the undeserved prize" (*NYT* October 30, 1958). In a letter published in *Pravda* on

---

[86] A detailed account of the Pasternak affair may be found in Robert Conquest's *Pasternak Affair: Courage of Genius*, in Lazar Fleishman's *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics* (273—300), and in Christopher Barnes' *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography. Volume 2* (321-41).

November 6, 1958, Pasternak wrote that the intention of his text had nothing to do with the reading that had been superimposed on it.[87]

> I never had any intention to harm my State or my people. The Editorial Board of
> *Novy Mir* warned me that the novel might be understood by the readers as a work
> directed against the October Revolution and the foundations of the Soviet system.
> I did not appreciate it and I regret it now. (cited in Conquest 179-80)

Finally, the fourth stage of the ritual reeducation underwent a complete inversion. At an earlier stage of the scandal, without any acknowledgment of his mistakes, Pasternak had reversed the usual authorities-author relations by taking the initiative in offering the authorities an ambiguous compromise. After the publication of the novel in the West (1957), he proposed to publish a censored version of the novel in Russia, not corrected by the author (!), by analogy with the publication history of Tolstoi's *Resurrection* in tsarist Russia (Fleishman 286). Although the writer's proposal was apparently serious, the glaring irony of such an offer to the authorities of a socialist republic that had overthrown tsarism in Russia could not pass unnoticed. Even under tremendous pressure from the authorities, Pasternak never considered rewriting (that is, "improving") his novel. He never produced a new and, from the Soviet point of view, correct version of the novel.

The denouement of the Pasternak affair is even more ambiguous than some of the authorities' reactions to Pasternak's publications and award. By spring 1959, the writer's name had reappeared on the posters of Moscow theaters, where his translations of Shakespeare and Schiller had been staged (Fleishman 307). This modification in the authorities' attitude toward the writer may be explained by the fluctuating nature of cultural politics during the Thaw, for

---

[87] According to Fleishman, Pasternak's repentance letter was written by Ivinskaia and Polikarpov, and only later signed by the incorruptible writer. For Russian intellectuals it was very important that Pasternak had not written the letter, that is, had not compromised with the officials.

which climatological metaphors are the most appropriate. After applying a muddled version of the writer's reeducation to Pasternak, the cultural authorities took a less carnivorous approach to the writer because of the changing climate in international affairs, as well as a growing uncertainty about how to handle such situations in light of the new cultural values. The assertion of creative individuality (in both writing and publishing an original account of Russia's turbulent history) was part and parcel of the intelligentia's values, while the choral vilification of the individual corresponded to an old rhetoric, to which not only the authorities but also a part of the intelligentsia subscribed. Eventually the authorities were pacified by Pasternak's ambiguous cablegram, while he had to be satisfied by his ambiguous semi-rehabilitation in Soviet culture. If not his original works, then at least his translations once again became available. Prohibited as a novelist till perestroika[88], Pasternak as poet and translator was published and staged.[89]

If the authorities tried to follow Stalinist patterns in their criticism of Pasternak's behavior, then Pasternak demonstrated by his gestures the value of an individual's choice and point of view. He submitted the novel to Feltrinelli without and against the authorities' approval. When the authorities, while criticizing the novel, offered the official point of view on the novel, Pasternak challenged their reading by his own, asserting the heretical idea that the official reading might be erroneous. Thaw values appear in the Pasternak affair within the framework of the Stalinist ritual of a writer's reeducation. The ritual, however, is used to articulate completely different values from those of the Stalinist era. For the Thaw generation, Pasternak became the symbol of non-conformism, independent creativity, and the intellectual's capacity for self-

---

[88] In 1988, *Novyi Mir* published the novel for Soviet readers.

[89] Ironically, one of Pasternak's chief torturers, Aleksei Surkov (1899-1983), lost his position as the head of the Writers' Union partly because he had mishandled the Nobel Prize scandal (Fleishman 306-307). In this unusual case a cultural supervisor from the Union of Writers shared punishment with his victim. On Surkov's role in the Nobel Prize affair see also Barnes (345, 352, 358).

sacrifice.

Pasternak also created a new type of Soviet cultural producer, one who is simultaneously Soviet and anti-Soviet. In other words, the writer internalized in his persona a cultural producer belonging to the Soviet "us" and the Anti-Soviet "them." Thus by the late 1950s one did not have to go abroad to become an anti-Soviet émigré. It was possible to emigrate inside Soviet culture. Many of the writers who vilified Pasternak called him "an internal émigré" and proposed that he be exiled abroad. Such an exile, however, was not common for Thaw cultural behavior. Only during the stagnation era, when official culture partly returned to the model of "us" vs. "them," did the authorities start to expel dissidents abroad, as illustrated by the cases of Brodsky and Solzhenitsyn.

Pasternak's model (that of both Soviet and anti- or not-quite Soviet writer) was repeated by some cultural producers during the Thaw. The poets Evgenii Evtushenko (1933-) and Andrei Voznesenskii (1933-) offer probably the most prominent instances of such accommodation. Evtushenko's autobiography, published in France, was criticized and remained beyond the reach of the Soviet reader, while his poetry was available to them. This type of ambiguous cultural producer (serving both "us" and "them") became even more widespread during stagnation, when authorities allowed several Soviet writers to publish their more controversial writing in the West and less controversial ones in Russia. Among those, the best known are Andrei Bitov, Fazil Iskander, and Bulat Okudzhava.[90]

While the compromises between the authorities and the writer in the Pasternak affair subsequently became a productive model of cultural behavior for stagnation-era authors, during the Thaw, intellectuals were above all fascinated by Pasternak's non-conformism. He, who belonged to the upper crust of the Soviet *priviligentsiia*, abandoned his comfortable life in quest

---

[90] See also the two versions of Gromyko's memoirs (for Russia and for the West), and Roy Medvedev's writing published in the West in the 1970s.

of truth. This sacrificial pattern of behavior became very popular among Soviet cultural

producers of the late Thaw, many of whom ended up in emigration during the Brezhnev era.

Aleksandr Galich and Andrei Siniavskii are probably the two most prominent cultural producers

who followed Pasternak's example. The poet Voznesenskii designed visual poems dedicated to

Pasternak and his role in Russian culture as late as in the 1990s (Figure 4).

Tracing its genealogy to the eponymous poem from *Doctor Zhivago*, Kozintsev's film adaptation

of *Hamlet* became one of the key cinematic works celebrating the rebellion of the Russian

intelligentsia against the Soviet Elsinore.

3. Conflicts in Kozintsev's *Hamlet* and its Conflictless Functioning in Soviet Culture

> Olivier had cut what most interested me: the theme of the state
>
> …*Hamlet* is often staged in contemporary dress, while the
>
> productions evoke the life of former times. It should be played in
>
> costumes of the sixteenth century, but suggest contemporary
>
> history.
>
> —Kozintsev 1983, 74-75

In the late 1950s-1960s the quest for a new positive hero gradually shifted from literature to film. Literature focused on language itself instead of providing anthropomorphic models for imitation. Youth prose, for example, developed new forms of narration (irony, parody of official language). Neo-modernist writing, such as, for example, Siniavskii's, focused on fragmented and ambiguous forms of verbal representation. Film of the 1960s, however, continued producing models of positive heroes. Among the best-known are *Nine Days of One Year* (Romm 1961), *Lenin's Guard* (Khutsiev 1962-64), *Hamlet* (Kozintsev 1964), *Andrei Rublev* (Tarkovskii 1966), and *Your Contemporary* (Raizman 1967), and *Pirosmani* (Shengelaia 1969).

Although the most controversial and extensively discussed film of the early 1960s is *Lenin's Guard*[91], my focus is on *Hamlet* precisely because this film openly aknowledged its link to Pasternak's scandalous novel[92], but did not provoke any overt controversy. On the contrary,

---

[91] Nikita Khrushchev personally lambasted the film and assigned Sergei Gerasimov (1906-85), an older film director, to help Khutsiev reedit the whole film (Martin 37).

[92] Among the first credits listed for the film on screen is the name of the "dissident" translator (Boris Pasternak). Such a combination—Hamlet, Pasternak—immediately reminded any Russian intelligent of the first poem in Dr. Zhivago's cycle, "Hamlet."

various international domestic awards, including the Lenin Prize, were heaped on the film throughout the 1960s. The new model of a positive hero-intellectual escaped the criticism faced by many books published in the 1950s, especially *Doctor Zhivago*. My analysis of the film's structure and its function in Russian culture of the 1960s tries to explain the paradox of *Hamlet*'s "conflictlessness" within Soviet culture.

3.1. Warriors of Privacy

Kozintsev's films of the Thaw, as evidenced in their titles--*Don Quixote* and *Hamlet*[93]-- highlight the issue of the new protagonist, who is in tune with the new cultural values: emotions instead of reason and the creative individual instead of the obedient collective. The quest for privacy became the sign of the new hero. As the titles of the films signal, however, several discursive practices of Stalinist art remain little changed. The films bear the names of the works' positive heroes, who, moreover, are warriors.

Kozintsev's films, as well as Pasternak's novel, changed the meaning of the Stalinist warrior. Instead of fighting a war against an external enemy, Thaw warriors defend their internal world. Pasternak's Iurii Zhivago turns into St. George only in his fantasy and poetry: "Iurii Andreevich stal v toi zhe liricheskoi manere izlagat' legendu o Egorii Khrabrom … Georgii Pobedonosets skakal na kone po … stepi … Iurii pisal s likhoradochnoi toroplivost'iu, edva uspevaia zapisyvat' slova i strochki" (1990 435). "Iurii Andreevich began to write down the legend of St. George and the dragon in the same lyrical maner … St. George was galloping over the boundless expanse of the steppe … Iurii wrote in a feverish hurry, scarcely able to keep up with the words as they poured out" (1958 441). Hamlet defends the integrity of his inner world

---

[93] Rowe notes that Kozintsev staged a production of *Hamlet* a year after Stalin's death. The director used Pasternak's translation of the famous play (152).

by articulating his thoughts in soliloquies. The spectators hear Hamlet's monologues, but the other characters have no access to Hamlet's thoughts and sufferings.

Thaw warriors also became defenders of privacy, non-conformity, and individual uniqueness. In the structure of these new positive heroes-warriors, the new cultural values intertwine with old discursive strategies. Such a combination determines the metaphorical use of totalitarian tropes in Thaw culture texts, and films in particular. With the aid of these discursive practices, Kozintsev's films reenact the central conflict between the private unique world of his protagonist-warrior and the oppressive state.

Kozintsev's Thaw heroes fight for the status quo of their internal world, upon which the external world unremittingly infringes. In *Hamlet*, this private world is housed in the human body of the warrior and the world of nature beyond the stone world of the social. Claudius and his Elsinore represent the forces that destroy all privacy, here as in *Doctor Zhivago*, being synonymous with the inviolable self: "The architecture of Elsinore—not walls, but ears belonging to the walls" (Kozintsev 1973, 70). The following analysis of the film focuses on four registers of the new positive hero's representation: visuals, sound, narrative, and intertextuality. This order of analysis will help to distinguish the medium's specific ways of representing the new positive hero, and then to focus on the peculiarities of plot and intertext, which to some extent reflect the plot and intertext of the literary texts of the time, in particular Pasternak's novel.[94]

---

[94] I follow in part McFarlane's approach to cinematic adaptations of literary texts. McFarlane discusses film as a synthetic form of narration: several modes of narration are involved in cinematic enunciation. Among them he distinguishes four major ones: visual (frame, editing), linguistic (words of characters, intertitles, etc.), non-verbal sound (musical soundtrack), and intertextual links. The last aspect of narration is especially important for cinematic adaptations of fictional and dramatic texts (McFarlane 28-29).

On the level of visual structure, Kozintsev's major device for representing Hamlet consists of gradual shifts from long shots of Elsinore and its interior to extreme close-ups of the protagonist, accompanied by the sound of his internal monologues. The juxtaposition of close ups and long shots and the transition from the darkness of Elsinore's enclosing stones to the shots of the prince's blonde head, infinite sky and sea, constitutes the main rhythm of the film's mise-en-scène. For example, the first part of the film, which may be called the "mourning of hypocrites," starts inside the castle, whose claustrophobic space becomes associated with the fake, histrionic mourning it encloses. The first part ends outside the castle (the Ghost scene), with close-ups of Hamlet's head, the sky, and sea--all associated with his authentic sufferings. A similar shift from shots depicting the stone interior of the castle to shots of Hamlet's head, sky, and sea conclude the film. After the duel that takes place inside the castle, Hamlet walks out of Elsinore toward the sky and the seashore (Figure 5).
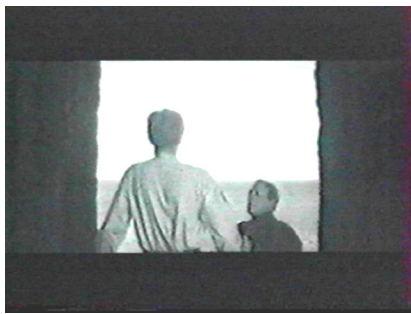
Figure 5.

The opposition between the public space of Elsinore and the private space of Hamlet's soul is also mirrored in the types of materials associated with the castle and the prince. The dead, static, and dark matter of Elsinore is stone. The entrapping, paranoidal space of the castle evokes Ivan's Kremlin in the second part of *Ivan the Terrible,* the film in many respects

145

anticipating the mise-en-scene of Kozintsev's film. *Hamlet* begins with the stone walls and the jaw-like gates of Elsinore, which entrap the living soul and flesh of the protagonist.[95]

Stone is not limited to the material of the castle's walls. As Claudius turns the living characters (Polonius, Ophelia, Gertrude, Laertes, both Hamlets) into corpses, an increasing number of Claudius' stone busts gradually replace the humans inside the castle. The second part of the film, after Polonius' death, opens with a shot of Claudius' bust and two stone lions (Figure 6). They symbolize "the stone heart" and bestiality of the ruler. In the shots preceding the sword-fight episode, the spectator is haunted by the stone representations of Claudius (Figure 7).[96]

---

[95] In a personal interview, Maia Turovskaia told me that at a preliminary stage of his work on the film, Kozintsev considered using Tyshler's design of a wooden Elsinore. Later the director rejected this unconventional design for the more recognizable one of a medieval stone castle.

See also in Kozintsev's *Hamlet* the reference to the Minotaur's labyrinth. During the queen's wedding, Minotaur-like figures dance around Gertrude and Claudius. In addition, Kozintsev in his notes on the film emphasizes that Claudius should resemble a bull in the concluding scene: "The image of a bullfight. Claudius an enormous, heavy mass. Hamlet slim, graceful" (Kozintsev 1973, 71).

[96] This is a thinly veiled reference to the proliferation in Russia of Stalin's monuments during the mass purges. In connection with this frame Lucy Fischer notes that Kozintsev's use of lions is the inversion of the famous scene from *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), in which Eisenstein animates stone lions—the symbols of revolutionary rage.
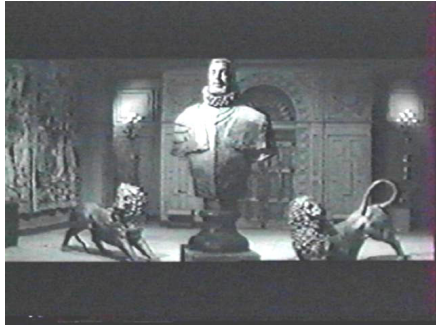
Figure 6.

Figure 7.

Stone in connection with Claudius appears in the film as a metaphor for spiritual petrification. To this spiritual death is opposed the death of the prince: his death as a final sacrifice enables him to move out of the imprisoning tomb of the castle.

Whereas Claudius appears as the petrified stasis of state power, the materials associated with Hamlet are united by one quality: they are in constant motion and consist of water (sea waves), fire, and air, moved by the wind. The film links these substances through their tonal shading. In the black and white film fire, the foam of the waves, and the sky (linked with air) mirror Hamlet's blonde hair and white skin, the colors of purity.

The juxtaposition of light and darkness foregrounds the opposition between the prince and Elsinore throughout the film. *Hamlet* opens and closes with a shot of the sea covered by the dark shadow of the castle (Figure 8).
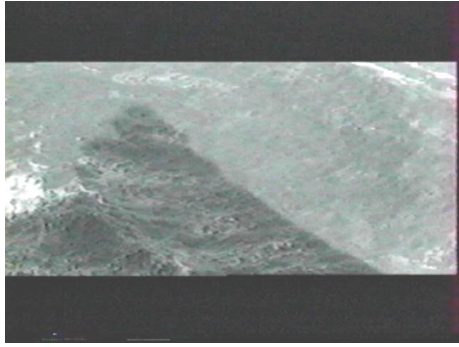
Figure 8.

This frame, with its metaphysical connotations, captures the fate of the protagonist, who spends his life on the threshold of these two mutually exclusive worlds: that of the sea of light and that of the castle of darkness. The war between light and darkness is the film's dominant way of representing its main characters. The gradual darkening of Ophelia's dresses, for example, adumbrates her insanity and death.[97] Dark shadows and clothes also wrap Laertes, emphasizing his transformation into a toy of Claudius' intrigues against Hamlet.

Kozintsev makes the transition from black to white the organizing principle of Hamlet's visual representation. In the opening shots of the film, Hamlet wears dark clothes, only his head and face showing white. After the trip to England he appears in a light monk's cassock, and in the final sword-fight scene, Hamlet takes off his black jacket, to remain in a white shirt. Its radiant purity becomes emphasized against the background of Elsinore's stone walls.

The power of light, consistently associated with Hamlet, is also reiterated in the visual metaphors of illumination in the film: torches, fireplaces, lamps. The shot with a torch on the wall of Elsinore opens both parts of the film, and closes it (Figure 9).

---

[97] Kozintsev's film only Ophelia's insanity and imminent suicide allow her to shift back to the white dresses she wears at the beginning of the film. Her grave is the only asylum she can find from the ubiquitous power of Elsinore.
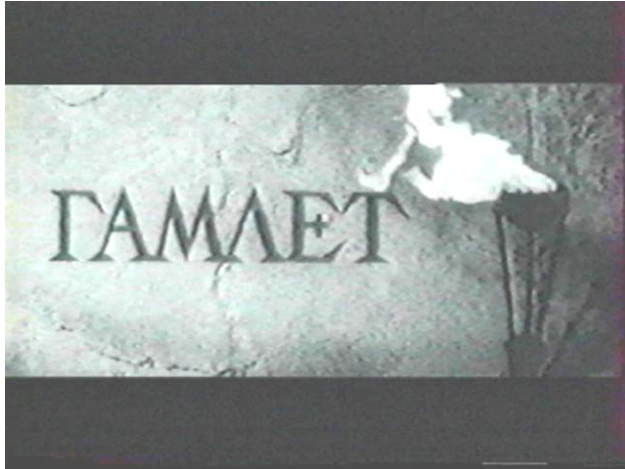
Figure 9.

This shot is also mirrored in the numerous shots throughout the film of Hamlet in a white shirt projected against the walls of Elsinore.[98] In addition, the prince uses the torch, quite literally, to open the doors of Elsinore, e.g., after the death of Polonius, the doors to the king's room.[99]

On the one hand, the lamp fire, accompanied by the offscreen voice of Hamlet's father, burns Claudius' letter, which contains orders to behead Hamlet. On the other hand, the absence of light is precisely what Claudius experiences after viewing "Murther of Gonzago." The king runs away from the performance, shouting: "Ognia! Ognia!" ("Light! Light!"). Illumination of "truth" through the artistic word, as orchestrated by Hamlet, deprives the King of the ability "to see his way" in both the literal and figurative meanings of the phrase.

The juxtaposition of tonal shadings and materials in the film is paralleled by the patterns of movement within it. As a whole, they likewise serve to communicate the contrast between the prince's private world and Elsinore, epitomizing, in Kozintsev's words, "the ominous power of

---

[98] [37]   The same contrast between the whiteness of Hamlet and the darkness of Elsinore constitutes the color pattern of the film poster for Kozintsev's film.

[99] Prometheanism became a cultural paradigm in Russia with the age of modernity. James Billington defines prometheanism as "the belief that man—when fully aware of his true powers—is capable of totally transforming the world in which he lives" (478).

state" (Kozintsev 1973 75). The motion of the protagonist repeatedly follows the same pattern: from inside Elsinore to the outside world, to the seashore, with its crashing waves. Hamlet's inner world rejects the stone labyrinth of the castle for the elements of nature: sea, sky, fire, and soil. All of them acquire metaphysical meaning and are associated with the prince's heavenly father. Hamlet can communicate with his father through fire, water, air, and soil in times of need. See, for example, the episode on the ship when the fire in the lamp is linked to his father's whisper, reminding Hamlet of his duty. He hears his father's voice, realizes that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are carrying a death-sentence letter to England, and replaces it with a death-sentence to be delivered to his friends/spies. Likewise, wind, together with the musical theme of the Ghost, enters Elsinore in the scene of Hamlet's talk with his mother. Soil, the fourth natural element, is opposed in the film to the deadening stone of Elsinore. Soil, the flesh of the Earth, is omnipresent in the famous graveyard scene when Hamlet acquires insight into the meaning of life and death.

The inside/outside pattern of motion in the main segments of the film is mirrored in the metaphorical uses of doors and gates. Hamlet opening the doors of Elsinore evokes truth and personal freedom, as in the episode when he visits his mother after the performance. The numerous doors that the prince opens serve as a foreshadowing of his sincere conversation with her. Similarly, in the segment depicting Hamlet's conversation with Claudius after Polonius' death, the prince opens the door of the king's room with his torch (Figure 10).

Figure 10.

150

Claudius, by contrast, closes gates, doors, and all possibilities for personal freedom. The film

opens with shots of Elsinore's gates, which snap shut like a monster's jaws (Figure 11).[100]
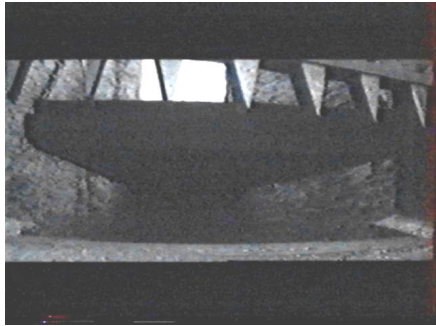
Figure 11

Elsinore's gate closing like gigantic jaws at the beginning of the film evokes medieval and

Renaissance imagery of the Throat of Hell. See, for example, *The Last Judgement* or *Dulle Griet*

(Mad Meg) by Pieter Breughel the Elder (Figure 12)

Figure 12. Pieter Breugel the Elder. *Mad Meg* (1562)*. <http://www.abcgallery.com/B/bruegel/bruegel.html>
Accessed December 24, 2000.

Similarly, the door closes like a mousetrap behind Laertes when Claudius makes him a tool in

---

[100]   See also the discussion of the Throat of Hell in De Givry's *Picture Museum of Sorcery, Magic, and Alchemy*.

his intrigues against Hamlet.[101]

     If in general the dynamic pattern of the film's protagonist is from inside Elsinore to outside its confinement, within this opposition Kozintsev establishes an important difference between the protagonist's motion within the walls of the castle and outside of them. Inside Elsinore, Kozintsev underscores the prince's constant mobility with the stasis of the background: guards, immobile courtiers, and human figures depicted on paintings. See, for example, Hamlet's progress through the ballroom in the course of "O that this too too solid flesh would melt" monologue.

     Outside the castle walls, Hamlet's body loses some of its Elsinoric mobility, but the camera shows the incessant movement of his glance upward toward the sky. In three key episodes of the film these heavenward movements are linked to the image of a cross. The scene with the Ghost opens with the prince standing against a cross-like support (Figure 13) and ends with the following sequence of shots: the Ghost's eyes above Hamlet (Figure 14), Hamlet's eyes looking up at both his father and the sky (Figure 15), a cloud in the shape of a head with eye-like holes, through which one can see the sky (Figure 16).

Figure 13.

---

[101] For a discussion of the visual representations of motion and stasis in Kozintsev's *Hamlet,* see also Buchman (44-51).

152

Figure 14.

Figure 15.

Figure 16.

Then the camera cuts back to the prince's eyes, shifts to a long panning shot of the sea and sky,

and finally cuts abruptly to a shot of a vertical wall blocking half of the sea and sky panorama. At the bottom of this wall lies Hamlet.

Similarly, the visual shift from the ground up into the sky serves as the bridge between Ophelia's suicide and the episode with the gravedigger. Hamlet, in a monk's cassock, stands on a high cliff at the seashore, while a seagull, to the accompaniment of Ophelia's musical theme, disappears in the sky. Finally, the visual progression up to the sky reappears at the end of the film, where long shots of sea and sky follow Hamlet's death. The soldiers make a cross out of their swords, place a banner with a cross on them, and take the prince's body on these multiple crosses out of the castle (Figure 17 and 18).[102]

---

[102] The image of the cross is also incorporated in the title of the film. The word GAMLET has an unusual representation of the Russian E, with a cross instead of the traditional middle stroke. Kozintsev's film also transforms the sword into a cross. Compare this device with the reverse metamorphosis in Andrei Siniavskii's *Trial Begins* (1960). While digging holes in a concetration camp, Rabinovich finds a crucifiction transformed into a dagger.

> It was a dagger, eaten away by rust and with a handle shaped like a crucifix.
>
> "How do you like that?" asked Rabinovich again. "A nice place they found for God—the handle of a deadly weapon. Are you going to deny it? God was the end and they turned him into the means—a handle. And the dagger was the means and became the end. They changed places." (Tertz 125)

Figure 17.
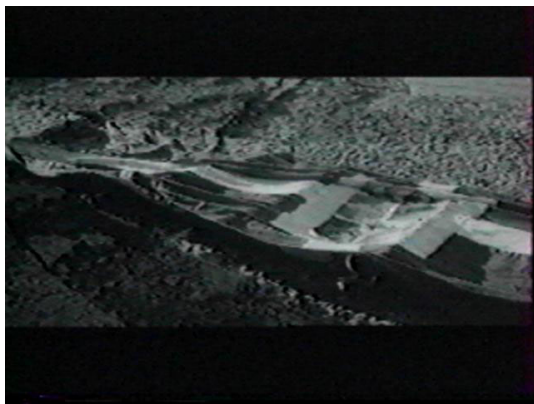
Figure 18.

If the prince's mobility from inside to the outside of Elsinore signifies liberation from the oppressive social, the upward mobility of the camera outside Elsinore evokes ascension from the earthly to the spiritual world.

In the representation of the protagonist, the visual devices of *Hamlet* invert the canonical visual representations of the great leader-warrior in Stalinist cinema. The space of the castle in the latter is associated with the chronotope of the monolithic nation as fortress. See, for

example, the fortress of Novgorod in Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskii* (1938).[103] In films about

Stalin, the heart of the nation is located within the walls of the Kremlin, which the great leader

inhabits.[104] The leader-warrior defends his fortress from external enemies and especially from

internal traitors. The internal world of totalitarian art is the nation inside the fortress, transparent

to its leader and devoid of all the ambiguities of individual experience. In this semiotic system

Hamlet would be the first candidate for the purges.

3.3. Sounds of Tragedy

On the level of the film's sound, the conflict between Hamlet and his environment is

reiterated through two oppositions. The first is between Hamlet's internal voice and the corrupt

public word of Claudius and his court. The second is between the music heard and enjoyed by

Claudius' court and the one that is accessible only to Hamlet.

The first word spoken in the film is the herald's announcement of the wedding. This

loud, public word of the lie besieges Hamlet's inner monologues, but cannot violate their

integrity. Hamlet's enemies and friends/informers cannot hear Hamlet's soliloquies because he

never opens his mouth while experiencing them inwardly on screen. The camera shows Hamlet

with mouth closed, while the off-screen voice of the actor pronounces the lines of the

monologues. Kozintsev emphasizes in his notes on the film: "Monologues … are not speeches

---

[103] *The Unforgettable 1919* in terms of plot structure owes a lot to *Alexander Nevskii*. In both films the small

fortress defending the big one is taken by the enemies because of betrayal, but the big fortress fights back under the

leadership of a great warrior.

[104] In *The Unforgettable 1919* one of the fortresses is literally linked to Stalin. The man of steel travels around the

country in an armored train. In Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* Stalin's highly fortified residence becomes the place

of the dictator's self-isolation—his own jail.

but currents of thought. The inner world of the man becomes audible. From the chaos of sensation, ideas are formed. They are still in movement; no sediment has formed" (Kozintsev 1966, 230). To protect the world of his thoughts, Hamlet never reveals them even to his only friend, Horatio. The prince ensures that no one "plays him" as one would the flute, with which he ironically analogizes Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet is the only instrument that is out of tune with the Elsinore orchestra, conducted by Claudius. The scene with a recorder/pipe was central for Kozintsev and Russian film critics who reviewed the film (Act III, ii).[105]

The protagonist's inner thoughts, which nobody but he can hear, are parallel to the words of Hamlet's father, which may be heard only by the protagonist. The ghost-king relays the story of his own murder even more quietly than Hamlet "delivers" his monologues, which the spectator hears at a low volume. The Ghost whispers his words and does so only to one person—Hamlet. Later in the film, in the episodes in Gertrude's bedroom and in the ship's cabin, once again only Hamlet registers his father's presence and comments.

The device of "thoughtover," by analogy with the authority of the voice-over, gives a special discursive power in the film to the sole individual in possession of it—Hamlet. Only he has independence of thoughts and words to express them. The same gift of independent thought "preserves" Iurii Zhivago as an individual at the end of Pasternak's novel. As opposed to his reeducated friends Gordon and Dudorov (cf. *dudka* in Russian is a pipe), Zhivago articulates his own original ideas and judgments about his time, as opposed to his friends' conformist discourse.

Thoughtover as a sound device mirrors the major discursive strategies of Thaw culture: the metaphorical recycling of the Stalinist canon and internalization of externals. Like the omniscient voice-over of Stalinist films, the thoughtover in *Hamlet* hovers above the soulless

---

[105] The most thorough contemporary response to Kozintsev's film is Maia Turovakaia's article "Shakespeare and We."

bodies of Elsinore; the thought-over also has asynchronic relations with the work of speech organs— that is, it is beyond and "above" the material world.

The thought-over in *Hamlet* not only echoes the Stalinist voice-over, but also redefines the nature and function of the immaterial voice. The thoughtover is an internal voice manifesting an individual's authority. Furthermore, the thoughtover does not strive to explain and rule the whole world, but, rather, tries to make sense of Hamlet's unique inner microworld.

The second opposition in the structure of the film's sound is between the musical themes of Elsinore and those specific to the prince. The walls of Elsinore divide the musical themes linked to the world of the prince and the musical themes of the castle. The themes of war marches and court music sound within the castle walls. The musical themes associated with the world of Elsinore are either loud and uplifting (trumpets at the wedding, a march in honor of the troops going to war) or full of artificial, lifeless repetition. For example, upon first appearing on the screen, Ophelia performs a mechanical Zombie-like dance that follows a mesmerizing repetitive melody. In the next sequences everyone—Polonius, Laertes, even Hamlet—makes Ophelia a pipe for his melodies and a puppet for his intrigues.[106] The repetitive melody, in which flutes dominate, also accompanies the motion of the court, with Claudius at its head, to the place of "The Mousetrap's" performance.

The two musical themes outside Elsinore are accessible only to Hamlet's ears: the first is

---

[106] Kozintsev asked Shostakovich to compose Ophelia's dance in a style "denaturalizing" and deforming her feelings and instincts:

> Dear Dmitri Dmitrievich!
>
> May I beg you to compose a short number?—"The Dance of Ophelia," . . . We want to show how they denaturalize the girl . . . a sweet girl, half a child, whom they turn into a doll—a mechanical plaything with artificial movements, a memorized smile, and the like. They force her to renounce love and to look for a dirty trick in everything. This, essentially, is the cause of her madness.
>
> (1966 255-56)

the low-key theme of the ghost, the second is the major theme of the tragedy. According to the

film's privileging of interiorization, although the latter theme is louder than the loudest Elsinoric

march, paradoxically, only Hamlet hears the sounds of tragedy from beginning to end.

The tragic theme is echoed by the sound of clock bells, which both open and close the

film and ring out in the key episode of Hamlet's meeting with the ghost. According to

Kozintsev, the summons of trumpets in the main theme of the film should sound like "nabat,

probuzhdaiushchii sovest'" (1983, 353)—the inner voice of conscience.   In the film Hamlet calls

this tocsin-like sound the "voice of [his] fate."[107]

If Elsinore's music is artificial, then the music accessible only to Hamlet is emphatically

"natural." Both the theme of tragedy and that of the ghost are linked to the sounds of nature:

wind and sea waves crashing at the walls of Elsinore. For example, the monologue "O, what a

rogue and peasant slave am I!" (1159) ends with the film's articulation of the tragedy theme and

shots of waves breaking against the cliffs. At the end of the scene at Gertrude's closet (Act III,

iv), motifs from the ghost's theme accompany the shots of the curtains stirred by a gust of fresh

air.

The oppositions within the sound structure of the film sonically emphasize the major

conflict of the film: between the private world of the prince and "the ominous power of the state"

(Kozintsev 1973, 75). While the corrupt word and music of Elsinore try to penetrate Hamlet's

internal voice, the external music of tragedy—bells and waves—summon him to stand against "a

sea of troubles" (1160).

The sound structure of the film thus creates an unstable balance of two systems:

---

[107] In *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* Kozintsev echoes Hamlet's words: "Vot pochemu dlia nas smysl tragedii

Shekspira ne v tom, chto geroi bezdeistven, a v tom, chto ona sama pobuzhdaet liudei k deistviiu—ona nabat,

probuzhdaiushchii sovest'" (1983 353). "That is why for us the meaning of the tragedy is not the protagonist's

passivity, but the fact that the tragedy itself makes people act, the tragedy is the tocsin-bell, awakening people's

conscience" (Translation mine).

Elsinore's public sound besieges Hamlet's private world, while that world, together with the sounds of history and nature, envelops the sounds of Elsinore. The musical theme of tragedy and clock bells, which are part of the main sound structure, conclude the film.

3.4. The Plot of The Tragedy

The conflict between individual personality and a hostile oppressive community in Kozintsev's *Hamlet* raises two questions about the narrative strategies of the film. First, how are Stalinist narrative conventions redefined in this text? Second, what narrative conventions replace them in the spheres of the protagonist, cast, and plot development?

Kozintsev's *Hamlet* adds two new dimensions to the socialist realist master plot. First, the production/military assignment characteristic of Stalinist narratives is transformed into the protagonist's spiritual, heavenly mission, which is to restore justice on Earth. Second, the protagonist's maturation loses most of its external material signifiers (mentor, fulfillment of military or production assignment) and becomes a process simultaneously inner and metaphysical. The protagonist's actions are determined not so much by the social environment, but by his inner world or the world of nature encompassing Elsinore. The spiritual assignment that Hamlet receives from his spiritual father is linked, through editing, to shots of the infinite sea and sky outside the castle.

Hamlet's maturation is also of a sort different from that in socialist realist novels/films. Whereas the latter entails taming one's spontaneity and acquiring new Marxist consciousness, Hamlet's coming of age is closer to the maturation of Zhivago as a poet-philosopher: Hamlet's will and power grow with his maturation as an independent thinker. The prince's consciousness, his ideals, have been shaped by his education in Wittenberg, which for Kozintsev is both the capital

of the European Renaissance and the city of youthful ideals.[108] In the film, the ideals of

Wittenberg embrace, first of all, the world of sincere human relations, epitomized in Hamlet's

friendship with Horatio. These ideals, however, must undergo a test by a hostile environment,

by Elsinore, which is a prison.[109] Hence the maturation of the protagonist's will now requires a

struggle to remain true to itself, while he follows his fate in the intestinal labyrinth of Elsinore.

In Kozintsev's film, as in Pasternak's novel, the maturation of Hamlet's will is inseparable

from his maturation as a thinker and verbal artist.   As opposed to the values of socialist realist

novels/films, where a protagonist's maturation ends as soon as he discovers Marxism (Gorky's

Mother [1906]) or tames his spontaneity (the Vasil'ev brothers' *Chapaev* [1934], Kalatozov's

Chkalov [1941]), in Kozintsev's film, thinking is an unfinalizable process.[110] As Kozintsev

---

[108] According to Kozintsev, Wittenberg for Shakespeare's contemporaries was the symbol of Renaissance science:

"etot universitet byl dlia sovremennikov Shekspira v kakoi-to mere legendarnym, kak by simvolom nauki

Vozrozhdeniia" (1983 338) "For Shakespeare's contemporaries this university was a legend: it was the symbol of

Renaissance science" (translation mine). Science in Kozintsev's book also means humanism.

[109] Kozintsev (together with Iutkevich and Trauberg) was the cofounder of the 1920s theater and film group FEKS

(Factory of the Eccentric Actor). Eccentrism for FEKS meant taking an ordinary object and putting it in an unusual

environment (Nedobrovo 9). In *Hamlet,* Kozintsev revamps this device: in the center of the film is the protagonist

who was brought up in the humanist environment of a Renaissance university and then thrown into the hellish jaws

of Elsinore. For a detailed discussion of FEKS group history and cine-aesthetics see the monographs by Oksana

Bulgakowa (1996) and Bernadette Poliwoda (1994).

[110] "Unfinalizability" is a key concept in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel. The ongoing dialogue of points of

view distinguishes novelistic from epic discourse, where the point of view is single and distanced, and the discourse

is monologic. "The destruction of the epic distance and the transferral of the image of an individual from the

emphasizes in the director's notes on the film:

> The inner monologue is especially interesting if the image of the exploding force
> of thought dangerous to Claudius succeeds. The spies have been ordered to
> watch, not to lose the dangerous man from sight. But Hamlet, unhurriedly, his
> face calm, walks around the room. The camera [moves] closer; we hear the
> words, the thoughts—but the spy listening at the door does not hear anything . . .
> Hamlet is thinking. This is what is most dangerous. (Kozintsev 1973, 78-79)

The maturation of Hamlet's will manifests itself in the increasing power of his word. With his word he fights Elsinoric discourse, a world of lies. Kozintsev first introduces this motif of "the war of the words" through the shot of the closing gates of Elsinore, which resemble the closing jaws of Hell. In the sequence following the "clamped" jaws of Elsinore, the spectator sees Hamlet, his mouth closed: these contrasting visual images of containment—imposed social control/imprisonment vs. self-control/privacy—emphasize the base mendacity of Elsinoric official pronouncements and "the higher truths" discovered and articulated by Hamlet in the course of the film.

As opposed to the obedient silence of Claudius' ministers, Hamlet's silence is akin to the creative silence of Zhivago, which the latter opposes to the compulsive political rhetoric of his contemporaries.

> O kak khochetsia inogda iz bezdarno-vozvyshennogo, besprosvetnogo
> chelovecheskogo slovogovoreniia v kazhushcheesia bezmolvie prirody, v
> katorzhnoe bezzvuchie dolgogo upornogo truda . . . istinnoi muzyki i

---

distanced plane to the zone of contact with the inconclusive events of the present … result in the radical restructuring of the image in the novel" (Bakhtin 1984, 35).

nemeiushchego ot polnoty dushi tikhogo serdechnogo prikosnoveniia" (1990 139,

emphasis mine).

Oh, how one wishes sometmes to escape from the meaningless dullness of human

eloquence, from all those sublime phrases, to take refuge in nature, apparently so

inarticulate, or in the worldlessness of long, grinding labor . . . of true music, or of

a human understanding rendered speechless by emotion! (1958 139)

Hamlet, like Zhivago, is a poet in his inner monologues. The highly metaphorized poetic inner monologues of the protagonist in Pasternak's novel, especially those devoted to Lara, are similar in their function within the text (to represent freedom of spirit, authenticity of feelings) to the soliloquies of Hamlet in the film. Iurii Zhivago composes his prose love poetry in his thoughts and then transforms it into its versified written variant.

Kozintsev's Hamlet in Pasternak' translation is likewise the author not only of poetic thoughts, but also of love lyrics addressed to Ophelia. In the film she reads the lines accompanying Hamlet's portrait, which he apparently gave her as a gift:

Ne ver' dnevnomu svetu.

Ne ver' zvezde nochei.

Ne ver', chto pravda gde-to,

A ver' liubvi moei.

Do not trust the daylight.

Do not trust the nigh star.

Do not trust that truth is somewhere,

But trust my love.

Despite many parallels between these two models of the positive hero, they are different in the

163

way they reenact their sincere feelings. The 1950s' Zhivago shows his feelings overtly: primarily

through tears in front of Lara. The very visibility of his tears is the condition, the proof of his

sincerity. Hamlet cannot afford the luxury of a public performance for two reasons. First, he

cannot show directly to anybody that he knows the secret of the murder because he might be

killed. Second, public reenactment of grief, such as Gertrude's tears and the words of mourning

pronounced by Claudius, is nothing but hypocrisy in the debased world of Elsinore. Authentic

feelings cannot be expressed visibly or audibly. Kozintsev's Hamlet internalizes his feelings and

thoughts much deeper then do the sincere characters of the 1950s. He is not externally

sentimental but internally bitter, desperate, and emotionally suffering.

The only overt expression of Hamlet's feelings in the film is that mediated by his art of writing,

directing and acting. The prince directs "The Murther of Gonzago" and incorporates his own text into

the play. Especially in this performance, but also throughout the film, Hamlet's word constitutes his

chief weapon. His major device is double-voicing the words and parrying the rapier thrusts aimed

against him, turning them against his enemies.

The play directed by Hamlet becomes a mirror refracting the crime and the lies within Elsinore.

With ironic remarks serving as a chorus in the play's performance (Act III, II), Hamlet manipulates the

show to expose Claudius. Hamlet's comments, together with the play, make Claudius retreat from the

open air and the torches around the stage into the darkness of the castle. Moreover, in the film the play's

second title, "Mousetrap," dialogizes the opening shots of the film, where Elsinore's gates close like a

giant mousetrap behind the prince. Through the play within a play, Hamlet's art makes a trap for his

enemy within the walls of his (Hamlet's) prison.

Additional forms of "parrying" in the film include Hamlet's use of ironical discourse in the guise

of ostensibly insane ramblings to transform Polonius' clumsy spying into the chamberlain's own self-

exposure; Hamlet's rewriting of the letter that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carry to England, replacing

the prince's death sentence with the beheading of his planned executioners; and, finally, Hamlet's turning

the poisoned rapier with which the King had plotted to kill the prince against the King himself. Both the

word and the sword turn against the one who tries to use them violently. In this respect Hamlet's

wielding of word and sword in the film constitutes a quote from the final shots of the Stalinist cinematic "blockbuster," Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskii*, in which soldiers form ranks behind the intertitle: "Kto s mechom k nam pridet ot mecha i pogibnet" (Figure 19, 20, 21, and 22).

Figure 19. Whosoever comes against us with the sword …

Figure 20. Will perish by the sword.

Figure 21. Such is the law
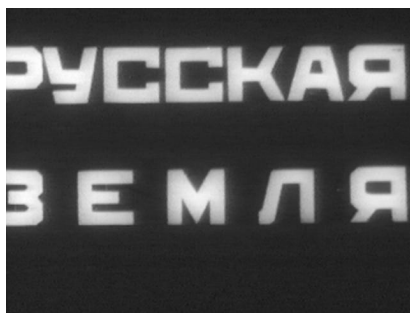
Figure 22. of the Russian Land

The steadily increasing power of the prince's word reaches its apogee at the end of the first part of the film, when Hamlet stages the "Murther of Gonzago."   The art of the street actors exposes the darkness of Elsinore, forcing the king to take refuge in the castle. In the second part of the film, Hamlet has to put on the cassock of a *Christi imitatio* figure and translate the words of his inner monologues and the play into deed. This shift from verbal to "virile" leads to the plot's tragic denouement, as Hamlet dies to save everyone from the rule of Elsinore.

3.5. Coherence and Transparency: The Protagonist and His Plot

Vladimir Nedobrovo maintains that a Romantic drama plot-structure is characteristic of early FEKS works, in particular those of Kozintsev and Trauberg's films of the 1920s. Nedobrovo compares the plots of German and Russian romantic plays from the first part of the nineteenth century with the plot structure of FEKS films and points out that centered climax and tragic denouement are their distinctive shared features.[111]

One can see the traces of such a plot structure in Kozintsev's film adaptations of

---

[111] Nedobrovo writes in his monograph about FEKS filmmakers: "When one examines FEKS stylistic devices, one discovers their similarity to the stylistic devices of Russian Romantic school of the 1820s—40s … Freitag argued that [Romantic] drama consists of 1) introduction, 2) a rise in action, 3) climax, 4) fall or turn, 5) catastrophe" (59-60, translation mine).

166

Renaissance classics. However, in his late works, and *Hamlet* in particular, Kozintsev avoids

two important elements of Romantic drama: fragmented plot structure and the ambiguity of

visual and sonic language. Unlike in FEKS films, the devices of Romantic drama in *Hamlet* are

integrated into a coherent goal-oriented plot, familiar from socialist realist canonical texts. The

assignment set by his father propels Hamlet's behavior through the film. His father's voice, as

well as the tolling of the clock's bells, regularly sounds in the film, reminding Hamlet of his

mission. In addition, the paradigm of the cross, evoking Gospel motifs, adds to the teleological

coherence of the plot structure. In terms of visual metaphors, the film is about the destruction of

the cross and its restoration: the cross appears at Hamlet's meeting with his father, reappears in

broken form at Ophelia's funeral (Fgure 23), and finally gains central status after Hamlet's death

at film's end.

Figure 23.

The coherence of the plot is mirrored in the transparency of the characters.

Shakespeare's Hamlet stages the "Mouse-Trap" to verify the Ghost's words:

> If his occulted guilt
>
> Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
>
> It is a damned ghost that we have seen,

>   And my imaginations are as foul

>   As Vulcan's stithy. (1162)

The film's Hamlet, in contrast, has no doubts that the ghost is his father. Hamlet stages the play not to allay any suspicions about the ghost's identity, but to expose to public view the crime, known only to its perpetrator and the victim's son.

Hamlet's relations with Ophelia likewise reveal the protagonist's transparency. Among many possible readings of these relations Kozintsev chooses to juxtapose the sacredness of private feelings shared by two lovers to the public abuse of them. When Claudius and Polonius eavesdrop on Hamlet's conversation with Ophelia, the prince starts by speaking of his love to Ophelia in a very low voice, and then suddenly bursts into loud speech as he sends Ophelia to a nunnery. The spies hear only the second part of the conversation. For the spectator, however, Hamlet is absolutely transparent as a fighter for human dignity and justice, and here as a sincere lover. Opaque as Hamlet appears to the other film characters, there are no dark corners in the Soviet Hamlet that elude the spectators' ears or eyes.

Kozintsev's choice and treatment of the source of adaptation for his 1960s film differs significanty from his FEKS experiments with materials adapted for the stage and screen. First, FEKS were interested in the grotesque, and Gogol's works served as ideal material for their experiments (as evidenced in the stage production of "Zhenit'ba" [*Marriage* 1922] and the film *Shinel'* [*Overcoat* 1926]). Second, neither Kozintsev and Trauberg, nor their scriptwriter for "Overcoat," Iurii Tynianov, tried to preserve the original fabula or to uncover the so-called true essence of Gogol's writing. Without much hesitation, the authors, or, as they called themselves, "the machinists of production," put timid Akakii Akakievich, who in Gogol's original was afraid even to look at females, into bed with a woman whom Akakii meets on Nevskii Avenue.

In his director's notes, Kozintsev raises the issue of rendering the "true essence" of Shakespeare's tragedy through the cinematic medium. Technically, in the case of *Hamlet,* for Kozintsev the true essence meant incorporating some devices of FEKS experimental films into a

much more coherent and less ambiguous plot and character structure. Kozintsev's adaptation of the tragedy is a text that Andreas Huyssen would call an avant-garde that has lost its subversive power of alternative culture, and was absorbed into the high culture canon.[112] For his rendition of Shakespeare's tragedy, Kozintsev blended some of his early FEKS discursive practices (use of street actors for staging the "Mousetrap," unusual high and low camera angles, fast cutting from extreme close-ups to extreme long shots) with the production's high culture source, to create an unambiguous, cause-effect coherent plot structure with a new positive hero, warrior and artist, at its center.

---

[112] Andreas Huyssen distinguishes the avant-garde from modernism because, according to him, "historical avant-garde aimed at developing an alternative relationship between high art and mass culture and thus should be distinguished from modernism, which for the most part insisted on the inherent hostility between high and low" (viii). Huyssen argues that the discourse of the Great Divide between high art and mass culture is dominant during the last decades of the nineteenth century and during the two decades after World War II (viii). This is the time when the avant-garde stops being the alternative other culture and becomes part and parcel of high art discourse.

4. The Conflictless Reception of *Hamlet*: Film Adaptation as a Safe Vehicle for Unsafe Conduct

> No matter how much we try to recreate the world of the
> English or the Danes, the film, if successful, will be
> Russian. As far back as the times of Belinskii and Gertsen,
> we have had our Hamlet.
> —Grigorii Kozintsev (1973, 77)
> Shakespeare's characters are the descendants of . . . epic
> heroes. Their difference from them is that they are heroes
> who act in radically more complicated life circumstances.
> —Aleksandr Anikst 234

If the intrinsic structure of Kozintsev's film explicitly confronts Stalinist values, then the intertextual links of the film create the structure that allows the film to avoid the fate of Pasternak's novel. Intertextual links in Kozintsev's adaptation of *Hamlet* fall into three major groups: the film's links with the Soviet cult of Shakespeare during the Thaw; its ties with the conventions of Soviet anniversary celebration rituals in literature and film; its interaction with the discursive economy of the Pasternak cult—specifically, Kozintsev's choice of translation, and the mirroring of the Pasternak affair in the plot structure of the film. The interplay between *Hamlet* and its intertexts recycles Stalinist cultural gestures, while foregrounding the new values.

In the 1960s the use of film adaptation to present a new model of a positive hero not only promoted new values, but also served as a smoke screen against more aggressive censorship. A script based on Shakespeare's text did not have to undergo as severe a censorship process as did an original contemporary script. An analysis of *Hamlet's* intertextual links and its functioning in

1960s culture helps to answer the question: what were the era's appropriate ways to articulate the intelligentsia's new values without entering into conflict with the authorities?

The cult of Shakespeare in Thaw culture may be partly explained by the set of meanings Russian culture associates with this signifier. Although the first recastings of Shakespeare's plays appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century (Sumarokov's *Hamlet* [1747])[113], it was the Russian Romantics who elevated Shakespeare to the status of a cult figure and adopted his texts as models for emulation. Aleksandr Pushkin, for example, believed that he wrote his best-known play, *Boris Godunov*, following the conventions of William Shakespeare: "*Boris Godunov* … was the result of his study of the man he came to call 'our father Shakespeare.' In honor of Shakespeare, Pushkin dispensed with the unities of time, space, and . . . action" (Karlinsky 322). The Russian Romantics, and Pushkin in particular, used Shakespeare to promote a new set of literary conventions and cultural values. Reference to the Shakespearian style of play-writing in the case of *Boris Godunov* (1825) actually meant the abandonment of neo-classicist conventions in drama.[114]

---

[113] Russians knew Shakespeare through his remakes by French neo-classics. In particular, Aleksandr Sumarokov's evaluation of Shakespeare—"angliiskii tragik i komik, v kotorom i ochen' khudova i chrezvychaino khorosheva ochen' mnogo" (cited in Levin 10)—is influenced by Voltaire's point of view on the Bard, which he expressed in his *Lettres philosophiques* (1734): "Shakespeare was a genius full of strength and fertility, of the natural and the sublime, without one slightest inkling of good taste, and without the least knowledge of the rules" (cited in Furst 7). Inspired by Voltaire, French playwrights improved Shakespeare by squeezing his plays into the neo-classical three unities. For a general discussion of the early uses of Shakespeare's plays in Russia see Rowe (1-27).

[114] It was a question of relinquishing the eighteenth-century prejudices against Shakespeare that Pushkin inherited from La Harpe and Voltaire in favor of the more up-to-date French view of Shakespeare brought about by the critical writings of Mme de Staël and the commentary of

Cultural producers of the Thaw employed neo-Romantic conventions as a discursive strategy to articulate the new values of the era. For this purpose Shakespeare was the most appropriate cultural icon because in the Soviet culture of the 1950s-60s the Bard belonged to the realm of those icons shared by the East and the West, by high intelligentsia culture and the official canon. Unlike John Steinbeck or André Gide, for example, Shakespeare had not made any critical remarks about the Soviet Union. So the Bard, according to Soviet critics, articulated not a set of principles uniquely pertinent to the Western or the Eastern bloc, but rather, universal values: "In his works Shakespeare reflects everything that constitutes human existence in various eras with such a degree of typicality that it renders the values shared by all of humanity" (Anikst 233, translation mine). Thus, by adapting Shakespearian texts Soviet culture could reenact through them the politics of "peaceful coexistence" proclaimed by Nikita Khrushchev.[115]

The Thaw produced more adaptations of Shakespeare than any other period of Soviet culture. Only the Romantic era competed with the Thaw in its attention to Shakespeare's work. As Turovskaia demonstrated in her 1964 article, "Shakespeare and We," the tragedy of the Prince of Denmark became paradigmatic for the theater of the era. Thaw film directors produced

---

François Guizot and Amedée Pichot in their revised 1821 edition of Pierre Letourneur's old translations, originally published in 1770. *Mais quel homme que ce Schakespeare! [sic!] Je n'en reviens pas. Comme Byron le tragique est mesquin devant lui!"* Pushkin wrote to his friend Nikolai Raevskii in July of 1825. (cited in Karlinsky 321)

[115] Khrushchev, however, always pointed out that "peaceful coexistence" with the West for him never meant ideological harmony: "We never tried to hide the fact that we called and continue to call for an open war of ideas. The modern world is defined by the ruthless fight of two ideologies—socialist and bourgeois—and it is impossible to remain neutral in this fight" (Khrushchev 47, Translation mine).

at least three major film adaptations of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies: *Twelfth Night* (Frid 1955), *Othello* (Iutkevich 1955)[116], *Hamlet*.[117] Many other Thaw films used Shakespeare's works in more mediated fashion: characters either extensively quoted his works or staged them in the course of a given film (*Good Bye, Doves* [Segel 1960], *Beware of the Car* [Riazanov 1966]).

The Thaw witnessed the publication of the complete translation of Shakespeare's works. Pasternak and Lozinskii were the two major translators of the Bard for this generation. Moreover, Pasternak also wrote his poem " Hamlet," which eventually appeared in his "notorious" novel, *Doctor Zhivago*—a text rich in numerous allusions to the structure of Shakespearian tragedies (Bethea 257) and in direct references, especially to *Hamlet*.

Thaw literary and cultural historians also produced a considerable volume of scholarly publications devoted to the place of Shakespeare in both world and Russian culture. These included the miscellany *Shekspirovskii sbornik*[118] and books on the role of Shakespeare in Russian culture.[119] Not only Shakespeare, but also his contemporaries-playwrights became

---

[116] Sergei Iutkevich (1904-85) started in the 1920s as a member of the FEKS group, together with Kozintsev and Trauberg. His best-known later films include an adaptation of Shakespare's *Othello* (1955) and films about Lenin: *Rasskazy o Lenine* (*Stories about Lenin*) (1957), *Lenin v Pol'she* (*Lenin in Poland*) (1966), *Lenin v Parizhe* (*Lenin in Paris*) (1981).

[117] Kozintsev also made *King Lear* (1970). Although chronologically this film belongs to the Stagnation era, the issues raised in it link it to the Thaw series of Shakespearian adaptations.

[118] Pasternak published his "Zamechaniia k perevodam Shekspira" in the miscellany *Literary Moscow* (1956).

[119] Among the scholarly works on Shakespeare published during the Thaw are Alekseev's *Shekspir i russkaia kul'tura*, Kozintsev's *Shekspir nash sovremennik*, and Samarin's *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union, a Collection of Articles*.

objects of study and admiration. Alexander Smirnov published a collection of plays by

Shakespeare's contemporaries, thereby unwittingly punning on the title of Kozintsev's book:

Shakespeare—Our Contemporary.

Kozintsev's monograph about Shakespeare is one of the most influential books on

Shakespeare's place in Thaw culture. The book had two print runs within five years (1962,

1966), and Russian journals and newspapers from 1953 till 1967 carried excerpts from it. Under

the title *Shakespeare: Time and Conscience*, the book was published in the United States (1966)

and Great Britain (1967).[120]

Kozintsev's study tried to define the major values that Shakespeare and his dramas came

to identify for Russian intellectuals in the post-Stalinist era. Almost half of the book is devoted

to *Hamlet*--the structure of the character, stage productions, and Kozintsev's own film director's

notes. According to Kozintsev, the foremost value in Shakespeare's tragedy lies in its asserting

the integrity of the human personality. This is the meaning of the flute episode, which, in

Kozintsev's estimation, constitutes the most important scene in the tragedy (1983, 400).

This cult of a creative, non-conformist individual comprises the core of *Hamlet* and of the

Thaw's recasting of the positive hero. The positive hero is the major device of Stalinist art, its

main stock character, or, as Kozintsev pejoratively branded him, "figurant millionnykh

massovok" (1983, 408) "an anonymous figure in a faceless crowd." The new positive hero is a

subject of representation whose inner world is bigger than the space of Elsinore. This new hero

is both a warrior (1983, 399) and a poet in this world (1983, 420). Elsinore's inner conflict with

Hamlet, according to Kozintsev, is a metaphor for the battle with one's conscience, and, he notes

---

[120] Kozintsev's book could not be published in the West under the title *Shakespeare: Our Contemporary* because the
Polish scholar Jan Kott had published his book under the same title in 1965.

further: "v etom plane i Klavdii, i Gertruda, i Laert . . . stradaiut 'gamletizmom'" (1983, 398), "in this respect, Claudius, Gertrude, and Laertes . . . all suffer from Hamletism, too" (translation mine).

In Kozintsev's view, the real individual, as Shakespeare represents him/her in *Hamlet*, is the individual of authentic inner feelings. Such figures of sincerity have no visible, exteriorized emotional excess, as exemplified in Gertrude's mourning over her first husband or Laertes' melodramatic sufferings at Ophelia's grave. True emotions are understated and contained within one's body and soul.[121]

In the film the battles within each character are commensurable with, and even more important than, the battles and intrigues of the external world:

> Ekran dolzhen pokazat' gromadu istorii, sud'bu cheloveka, reshivshego pogovorit' s epokhoi na ravnykh, a ne byt' bezmolvnym figurantom v ee millionnykh massovkakh. (1983 408)
>
> The screen should show the full scale of history, the fate of the person who's decided to speak with the epoch on equal terms and not to be an anonymous figure in a faceless crowd. (Translation mine)

Indeed, in Kozintsev's *Hamlet*, the scale and cult of the protagonist's poetic personality is comparable to the monumental scale of Elsinore. When visually juxtaposed, as in the scene of Ophelia's funeral, they are equal in size.

---

[121] For Kozintsev authenticity is synonymous with understatement. His biggest concern is that *Hamlet* not be trivialized into a costume drama: "Tol'ko vnutrenniaia sila, sovremennaia glubina myslei i chuvstv mozhet preodolet' 'kostiumnyi fil'm'—velichaishuiu gnus' iz vsekh rodov kino" (432) "Only inner strength, modern depth of thoughts and feelings can overcome 'a costume film'—the most disgusting film genre" (translation mine).

Viktor Eisymont uses a similar device in his film adaptation of Rozov's *V dobryi chas* (*Best of Luck!)* (1956). The film's protagonist at the moment of his major failure and suffering is as big as Stalinist skyscrapers and even Kremlin towers (compare Hamlet on Figures 24 and Esymont's character on Figures 25 and 26).

Figure 24.

Figure 25.

Figure 26.

The new positive hero, despite all his spirituality and humane inner world, still remains an

inhabitant of the Stalinist Jurassic Park. In this respect, it is symptomatic that the genre

Kozintsev finds adequate for a comparison with his screen *Hamlet* is the novel, in which the

protagonist is bigger than life. The closest cultural example for Kozintsev, of course, is the

socialist realist novel:

> Gamlet ne tol'ko p'esa, no i roman. Sam <u>masshtab myshleniia geroia</u> neotdelim ot
>
> kartiny "<u>gromadno</u>-nesushcheisia zhizni" (Gogol'), izobrazhennoi v tragedii.
>
> <u>Shirota okhvata epokhi</u> i glubina psikhologicheskogo issledovaniia—takoi splav
>
> opredeliaet roman. (1983, 393 emphasis added)
>
> Hamlet is not only a play, it is also a novel. The very scale of the protagonist's
>
> thoughts is inseparable from "the enromous dynamism of life" (Gogol'), which is
>
> reflected in the tragedy. The breadth of the era's representation and the depth of
>
> psychological investigation are the composite parts defining the novel.
>
> (translation mine)

Foremost example of the protagonist who combines intertextual links with Shakespeare's

Hamlet and the monumental scale of the Stalinist hero is Iurii Zhivago. His creative life,

following the "miraculous" paradigm of Christ's life, actually transcends the earthly grandeur of

socialist realist positive heroes The Thaw's quest for an alternative positive hero could not shake

off Stalinist monumentalism because it was part and parcel of the Soviet positive hero's cultural

code.

Both Pasternak and Kozintsev attempted to rehabilitate privacy and human feelings (as

opposed to publicly proclaimed Soviet political commitment) by creating counter-Stalinist

monumental novels and films about the lives of protagonists who were exemplary *vis-à-vis* the

new cultural values. For Thaw cultural producers, and Kozintsev and Pasternak in particular,

utilizing the Romantic myth of Shakespeare as a mode of destalinization meant abandoning the

Stalinist valorization of the leader's "rational omniscience," the obedient militarized collective,

and the primacy of public space. Yet this mode of destalinization also necessitated the creation

of a monumental counter-myth: namely, the notion that high culture spreads eternal spiritual

grace that can overshadow the ideological myths of the Soviet political elite. The master-agent

of such a myth of high culture was the creative protagonist with a high culture pedigree.

> U zerkala klassicheskogo iskusstva osobaia . . taina: ono kak-by dvizhetsia vmeste so
>
> stoletiiami … Polnym zvonom prodolzhaiut zvenet' slova Shekspira … Teplo pronikaet
>
> v serdtsa liudei, blagorodnyi gnev probuzhdaet sovest'. Narod otkryvaet v
>
> shekspirovskikh tragediiakh istinnoe litso doblesti i istinnoe—nizosti. Kazhetsia, chto
>
> proizvedeniia napisany blizkim nam chelovekom, nashim sovremennikom. (Kozintsev
>
> 1983, 182)
>
> The mirror of classic art has its own secret … its works seem to accompany the
>
> advance of the centuries … Shakespeare's words still ring … People are improved and
>
> cleansed by the poetry, their hearts penetrated by its warmth, their consciences stirred
>
> by its noble anger. In Shakespeare's tragedies, they discover the unmasked face of
>
> Virtue and of Scorn. His plays seem to be written by someone close to us, by a man of
>
> our time. (Kozintsev 1966 1)

So-called classical high culture (with Shakespeare as one of its major signifiers) became the

intelligentsia's code of grace, alternative, and hostility to Stalinist law.[122] Culture's apologia for

---

[122]   The juxtaposition of law and true divine grace, which comes from Ilarion's "Sermon on Law and Grace"—one

of the first East Slavic early texts—resurfaces as an example from medieval writing in Lotman's lectures on

structuralist poetics and in his monograph *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta* (1970).

Stalinism was denounced as non-culture. The new positive heroes, such as Zhivago or Hamlet, became vessels carrying the "special mystery of classical art" (Kozintsev 1983, 182) and disseminating the word of divine truth, wrenched from the bottom of their hearts, amidst the filth and baseness of Soviet-style Elsinores.

As part of the Shakespeare cult industry, Kozintsev's *Hamlet* recycles one of the key conventions of Soviet culture: the celebration of political anniversaries. The film was made for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. By the mid-1950s the celebration of anniversaries of the Revolution and of the birthdays of leaders, initiated in 1917, had become solidly entrenched as major Soviet holiday events. Cultural producers prepared special works for these events that would correspond to the grandeur of the jubilees: artists and theater directors staged pageants that reenacted the storming of the Winter Palace[123] and annual parades devoted to the anniversary of the Revolution; poets, playwrights, and writers devoted their panegyrics to the great leader (Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, etc.) and the Revolution that opened Russia's new era.

Cinematographers regularly created masterpieces for the Seventh of Novemeber (The Revolution Day): *End of St. Petersburg* (Pudovkin 1927), *Lenin in October* (Romm 1937), *The Vow*

---

[123] For a detailed discussion see James Von Geldern's *Festivals of the Revolution,1917-1920*.

(Chiaureli 1946), *The Communist* (Raizman 1957), *Your Contemporary* (Raizman 1967).[124] Late

Stalinism also introduced a new genre—the film marking the current leader's birthday, of which *The*

Fall of Berlin (Chiaureli 1949) is the best-known example. The Thaw, with its interest in sincerity and

immediate experience, produced a syrupy documentary titled *Nash Nikita Sergeevich* (director 1963),

devoted to the leader's seventieth birthday. Literary journals published special issues entirely devoted

to a given Soviet leader's birthday. The December 1949 issue of *Novyi mir* opens with the following

dedication: "Vozhdiu narodov I. V. Stalinu v den' ego semidesiatiletiia. Stikhi poetov shestnadtsati

sovetskikh respublik i stran narodnoi demokratii" (*Novyi mir* 12, 1), "To the Leader of Nations J. V.

Stalin at the Day of his Seventieth Anniversary. Verses from Poets of the Sixteen Soviet Republics

and the Countries of People's Democracy." The table of contents is accompanied by a reproduction of

Stalin's portrait, *Morning of Our Motherland,* painted by the Stalin Prize laureate Fedor Shurpin

(Figure 27).

---

[124] Creating an anniversary film was by no means an easy and safe endeavor. The inability or unwillingness to

"portray the still emerging party objectives" (Groys 1992, 51) led to disastrous consequences. Eisenstein's

anniversary film *October* was released only in 1928 because the censors made the director cut out all the episodes

with Trotskii (Leyda 238-39). The film *Beginning of an Unknown Era* (Shepit'ko and Smirnov 1967) was made for

the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution and was immediately shelved, to remain unviewed for the next

twenty years. The scandal around the film also was used as an excuse for the closing of Grigorii Chukhrai's

Experimental Creative Studio (ECS). The Studio (established in 1963) was one of the Thaw's successful

economical experiments, abandoned during the Brezhnev era. The failure to produce a party-minded anniversary

text became one of the excuses to end the economical Thaw in film industry (Lawton 78).
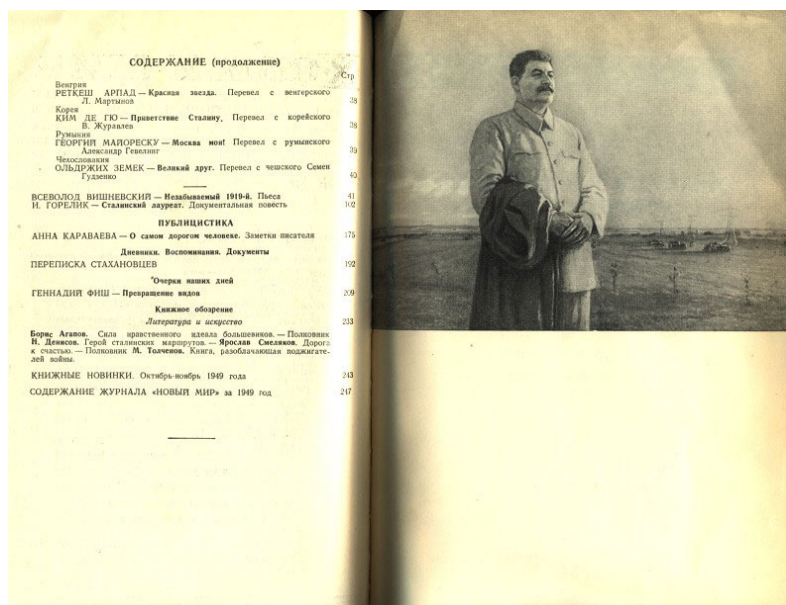
Figure 27.

In response to this outburst of love, in 1949 the profoundly touched Soviet leader closed the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (the second largest collection of Western art in Russia), and converted the building into the Museum of Gifts to Stalin (Golomshtok 141).

During the Thaw, the Russian intelligentsia used the anniversary celebration ritual to promote its own values. The 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday in April 1964 became an event appropriated by Russian intellectuals to redefine the meaning of the celebration as a cultural gesture. Among the cultural texts devoted to Shakespeare's jubilee, two of the most representative are the April issue of *Novyi mir*, with an article devoted to Shakespeare's birthday, and Kozintsev's film, released later the same year.

Since April in the Soviet Union was the month marked by Lenin's birthday, April issues of Soviet monthly magazines and journals, especially the first pages, usually featured Leniniana. As the December 1949 issue of *Novyi mir* devoted to Stalin's seventieth birthday illustrates, homogeneity was the ruling principle in such anniversary issues. If the journal is devoted to the

leader of the people, then no other event or jubilee should be celebrated on the journal's pages.

The Thaw somewhat loosened this rigid rule. Other anniversaries were permitted to "coexist peacefully" with the jubilee of the Revolution or the leader, so long as they were related to or subsumed by the major event. So, for example, in the April 1963 issue of *Novyi mir* the materials on the eightieth anniversary of the poet Dem'an Bednyi, who knew and worked with Lenin, become thematically linked to the central poems about Lenin. In this respect the April 1964 issue of *Novyi mir* stands out as a real anomaly. On the one hand, it opens with an article by the editorial board titled "Po leninskomu puti" ("Following Leninist Ways"), which expresses "an ocean of popular love for Lenin" (5) and projects it metonymically onto Khrushchev (10). According to the article, Lenin is alive in Khrushchev and the Communist Party. On the other hand, the issue juxtaposes this panegyric to Soviet politics and its hagiographers with an essay, "O sisteme Shekspira. K 400-letiiu so dnia ego rozhdeniia" ("About Shakespeare's System. On the 400th Anniversary of His Birthday") by Aleksandr Anikst. According to Anikst, the mature Shakespeare served not the state, but his people: "Shakespeare was free from flattery and servility to the authorities and never arrogant . . . with the common people" (237, translation mine). The people, Anikst argues, understood and appreciated Shakespeare's work because of their instinct for good art: "chut'e pomozhet narodu uvidet' pravdu bol'shogo iskusstva i ego podlinnuiu krasotu" ("natural instinct will help the common people to see the truth of authentic art and its real beauty") (237).[125]

In addition, Anikst's Shakespeare is the great universal writer because he did not hesitate to embrace the genre of tragedy—a genre that reveals, according to the article, the worst crimes

---

[125] Anikst believes in a real *narod,* invented by German Romantics, borrowed for its rhetoric by the Russian populist intelligentsia.

of humanity:

> Fear of the tragic is a typical feature of philistinism . . . The philistine believes
> that individual miseries are not the object of artistic representation. If you point
> out to him, however, that sufferings and victims are so numerous that it's
> impossible to consider them an accident, the philistine will answer you that one
> should not pick at one's wounds. (238 translation mine)

Under the guise of Shakespeare scholarship, Anikst attacks the enemies of destalinization. His elevation of Shakespeare to universal status evokes Dostoevskii's speech about Pushkin as a universal author at the opening of Pushkin's monument in Moscow in 1880. Since the 1930s Pushkin was an official poet of the Stalinist canon and Dostoevskii was not published in Russia during Stalin times. Anikst makes a highly complex cultural gesture by evoking Dostoevskii's speech: on the one hand, he promotes Shakespeare as a cult figure incarnating new values, on the other hand, the critic renegotiates Pushkin as a poet associated with Thaw values, rather than a poet-laureate of Stalinist literature.[126]

Finally, for Anikst, Shakespeare manifested his universal qualities by combining an interest in tragedy with a talent for humor and comedy. His laughter, as opposed to that of satire, is not teleological. Instead, it vouchsafes an individual inner freedom, liberating him/her from the goal-orientedness of serious monological cultural genres.[127]

---

[126] For a detailed discussion of Aleksandr Pushkin's Anniversary celebration in 1880 see Marcus Levitt's monograph *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*.

[127] A useful juxtaposition of serious versus serio-comic genres belongs to Mikhail Bakhtin: "In all genres of the serio-comical, to be sure, there is a strong rhetorical element, but in the atmosphere of joyful relativity characteristic of a carnival sense of the world this element is fundamentally changed: there is a weakening of its one-sided

Shakespeare's virtues, Anikst contends, are genetically inherited by Russian intellectuals. In the essay he points to a continuity of "spiritual breeding" by quoting Pushkin's comments on "our father Shakespeare" (236).[128] Thus Russian intellectuals, obviously, become the children of Aleksandr Pushkin and the grandchildren of Shakespeare. Anikst, being true to Thaw cultural gestures, eventually asserts the values of the Thaw—creativity and individual freedom—by recycling Stalinist famous slogan—"Lenin zhil, Lenin zhiv, Lenin budet zhit'," "Lenin lived, is alive, and will live forever"—in the final remarks of his essay: "I think that the major secret consists of one thing: Shakespeare's heroes are free people. Shakespeare is alive and will live forever as an artist because his ideal is a free man freely expressing his essence" (241, translation mine).

Kozintsev's *Hamlet*, released in 1964, also enacted the paradigm of celebratory text and worked against the background of the established Stalinist canon. The general goal of Stalinist era anniversary films was to tell a story about *bona fide* existing leaders (above all, Stalin). These cinematic biographies were utopian accounts about the "creators of a new reality" who

---

rhetorical seriousness, its rationaity, its singular meaning, its dogmatism" (Bakhtin 1984 107).

[128] The rhetoric of paternity used by the Thaw intelligentsia is a device borrowed from Stalinist discourse. Vladimir Padunov suggested to me that Thaw culture rehabilitates Viktor Shklovskii's formalist notion of literary evolution as succession from "uncle to nephew" precisely at the time when political succession in the Soviet Union can no longer be defined in terms of " father to son." Lenin as the father of the Soviet Revolution passing his baton to his heir/son Stalin as the father of nations is a chain of direct succession that is broken by Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin. This endangers the legitimacy of Khrushchev's ascension to the throne and leads to a shift in the tropes of political discourse. Specifically, intelligentsia claims to be the legitimate heir of the betrayed father and the current king is considered to be an impostor.

during their life helped the nation move closer to the communist end of history. Thaw anniversary films provide more diverse and less crude narrative models. For example, in *The Communist,* the narrative is presented in the first person: a son tells the story of his non-heroic and very humane father, communist Gubanov, relayed to the son by his mother. In 1962 El'dar Riazanov made a film, *A Hussar's Ballad,* to mark the 150th anniversary of the Russian army victory over Napoleon. In this case the anniversary narrative assumes the stylized stance of a musical comedy. In *Hamlet,* the subjective visual and sonic world of the protagonist is radically more revealing about the true state of affairs in Denmark than are the ostensibly impersonal long shots of peace and orderliness within Claudius' court. What Hamlet sees and hears, as well as how he looks and behaves, defines the tragic dimension of the film, while the rest of Elsinore tries to ignore the frightening truth.

During Stalinism the setting of the anniversary film had two main temporal and spatial requirements: first, it marked a key moment in Soviet history, and, second, the action took place in the central cities of Russia, in Petrograd (*Lenin in October*) or Moscow (*The Fall of Berlin*) and *The Unforgettable 1919* (Petrograd and Moscow). With the Thaw, the setting shifted to spaces marginal to Soviet centers: provincial Zagory (literally, Behind the Mountains) in *The Communist*, provincial Ukraine in *How the Steel was Tempered*, provincial sixteenth-century Spain in *Don* Quixote (1957) and sixteenth-century Denmark in *Hamlet* (1964). In Thaw literature and film, the center of political power (usually urban) becomes the source of corruption. The protagonist finds an alternative spiritual center either in Heaven or in the remote areas of the Soviet Union, which are not yet corrupted by civilization.

Among the preserved features of the Stalinist canon in *Hamlet* are the monumentalism of the protagonist and his omniscience, handed down by his father at the very beginning of the film.

Just like Lenin and Stalin, Kozintsev's Hamlet is also surrounded by both popular love and spies. The people's love, as Claudius explains to Laertes, is the reason he, the king, cannot get rid of the dangerous trouble-maker.[129]

Yet the Soviet Hamlet also has many features that distinguish him from the protagonists of Stalinist anniversary films. Unlike Lenin or Stalin, Hamlet is not eternal but (at least, physically) mortal. In addition, he is not the leader of a great historical reality but a fictional personage, who comes not from Russian but from world (i.e., Western) culture. Finally, he is associated with a different set of substance-metaphors: not with bronze, steel, and granite, but with such organic, fluid matter as sea waves, wind, and fire.

The intelligentsia's romance with Shakespeare, and specifically Hamlet affected the official cult of Lenin. Evgenii Margolit argues that Thaw era films about Lenin referred directly or indirectly to the Prince of Denmark, with the intelligentsia in the role of the Prince. In the context of Soviet culture Lenin becomes the humane and murdered father, Stalin transforms from the canonical heir of Lenin into the usurper of Lenin's power, and the intelligentsia plays Hamlet's role—the legitimate heir of Lenin's humanity in moral opposition to the Elsinore of its time. In this context the double anniversary issue of *Novyi mir* signals two things: on the level of cultural politics, it registers the increasing renegotiation of power between intellectual and political elites, while on the level of discursive practices it resorts to the common Thaw device of

---

[129] The Russian intelligentsia always emphasized that its positive heroes were also loved by the common people. According to the intelligentsia's accounts, for example, the death of Pasternak was a tragedy not only for intellectuals: the anonymous masses placed leaflets in suburban Moscow trains, announcing the great loss for all Russian people (Altshuller and Dryzhakova 53, Ivinskaia 329).

recycling Stalinist cultural gestures in order to articulate new values.[130]

The recycling of the anniversary film canon is the organizing principle not only in the representation of the protagonist, but also in the whole structure of the film. On the one hand, Kozintsev abandons some anniversary film features: in tune with Thaw film *topoi*, he does not use color as a means of lacquering reality. On the other hand, he observes the convention of the two-part anniversary film.

In Soviet culture the two-part film signified the importance of the issue raised by the film to state cultural politics: "Dve serii v kino v te gody razreshali, lish' kogda postanovshchik khotel otrazit' kakuiu-nibud' krupnuiu, global'nuiu problemu;" "At that time two-part films were permissible only when directors wanted to present some big global problem" (Riazanov 208). Under Stalin, only anniversary films consisted of two or more parts. Mikhail Romm made the two-film sequence *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918*; Mikhail Chiaureli made the two-part *Fall of Berlin* (1949) for Stalin's seventieth birthday.

During the Thaw, Sergei Gerasimov made a four-part adaptation of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1957-58), devoted to the revolution's fortieth anniversary celebration. *Hamlet* was the first two-part film that did not treat the October Revolution or the Great Patriotic War. It was a monumental Shakespeare anniversary film, inscribing the new cultural values of the intelligentsia. As a general of the Russian film industry, with Shakespeare as co-author,

---

[130] Evgenii Margolit refers to Pasternak's translation of Hamlet's words about his father as "On chelovek byl v polnom smysle slova" "He was a human in the full sense of the word." Margolit points out that this celebration of humanity in the translation canonical for the Thaw generation evokes Maiakovskii's (Pasternak's favorite poet) characterization of Lenin as "samyi chelovechnyi chelovek" ("the most humane among humans").

Kozintsev was allowed to promote the new cultural values in his adaptation of *Hamlet*.[131]

As an anniversary film that celebrates the values of the intelligentsia rather than the official line, *Hamlet* raises the question of the film's relationship to the intelligentsia's major cult of the period: the cult of Pasternak. The film is linked to this cultural phenomenon in two ways. First, Kozintsev chose the poet's translation of the tragedy for his film adaptation. Second, the status of Kozintsev in the film industry, as one of the few survivors of the Russian avant-garde, was similar to Pasternak's status in literature.[132]

The choice of translation is important for a discussion of the film's intertextual links for two reasons. First, the fact that Kozintsev addressed the values of the Thaw through the adaptation of Shakespeare's translation protected him from censorship attacks. Kozintsev relied on Shakespeare's tragedy in a way similar to Pasternak's or Akhmatova's dependence on translations throughout the Stalinist era: when their original works were not publishable, they

---

[131] When Marlen Khutsiev, approximately at the same time, tried to repeat a similar project—a two-part film about a young contemporary man in search of his life's meaning (*Lenin's Guard* [1962-65]), Khrushchev personally banned the film. The leader was particularly upset at the episode in which the protagonist encounters the ghost of his father, who was killed during World War II. Khutsiev's father-ghost cannot explain to the son how to live because when he died he was younger than his son. Khrushchev was outraged at such an ending. According to him, the fathers always know how the sons should live. For a discussion of this cultural conflict see Josephine Woll's *Real Images* (146-47).

[132] Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* is also an anniversary text: it was published in Italy in 1957, when the Soviets were celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. It is also significant that the authorities did not prosecute the writer immediately (so as not to spoil the anniversary celebrations), but waited and vilified him the following year.

escaped into translations as a source of material and creative life. Second, Kozintsev chose

Pasternak's version of *Hamlet* because of the poet's philosophy of translation: for Pasternak to

translate *Hamlet* or *Faust* meant to write about himself and his own values and ideas while

utilizing the texts as safe vehicles for his unsafe conduct.[133] In the case of *Hamlet*, Kozintsev

had a choice between the more exact and archaic translation by Lozinskii and Pasternak's more

contemporary and topical version. The latter made Shakespeare "our contemporary" for

Kozintsev.[134]

Finally, the choice of Pasternak's translation pointed to the parallelism between the Nobel

Prize scandal and the situation within the text. The confrontation of the prince-poet-director with

Elsinore in the film mirrors the confrontation of *Hamlet's* translator with the artistic and political

Elsinore of his time. Kozintsev's *Hamlet* is one of the very few films in which the name of the

translator appears directly under the film's title, before the standard list of the cast (Figure 28),

thereby linking the poet's name with the protagonist of the film.

---

[133] In his letter to Elena Orlovskaia, Pasternak writes about his translation of Goethe's *Faust*: "I translated the first

part of *Faust* so quickly and so easily because at that time everything in my life was happening just as in *Faust*; I

translated it with the "my heart's blood" and greatly feared for this new blood lest the last scene be repeated" (cited

in Fleishman 256, translation adjusted for fluency).

[134] For *Don Quixote* (1957) Kozintsev relied on a script by Evgenii Shvarts, who, like Pasternak, appropriated

masterpieces of world literature to express the values of the time.

Figure 28.

The juxtaposition of these two names had special significance for the intelligentsia in 1964, several years after the Nobel Prize scandal and the poet's death from a heart attack in 1960. That death is also indirectly present in the film: the final shots of soldiers carrying the body of the prince evoke photographs from Pasternak's funeral, at which Russian writers and critics carried the casket with the poet's body (Figures 29 and 30).

Figure 29. Hamlet's funeral

Figure 30. Pasternak's funeral

During the Thaw, the positive hero remains the focus of both novels and films. As opposed to the Stalinist positive hero, however, he is not the main device of the text, but, rather, its main subject of representation: individualized, sensitive, and creative. In the 1950s the protagonist's sensitivity and his ability to perform it through tears is of primary importance (Zhivago, sensitive protagonists of Erenburg's *Thaw* and Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone*), while in the 1960s visible hypersensitivity is read as a sign of hypocrisy (displayed mourning in *Hamlet*). The positive hero, paradoxically, becomes more internalized and yet more aggressive. Hamlet has to "take up arms" against Elsinore, while Zhivago, a man of reflection rather than action, merely protects his integrity through discourse.

As a recycled Stalinist device, the positive hero plays a central role in 1950s' literature. In the 1960s, however, the positive hero, as a textual dominanta, becomes more important for film rather than for literature, which focuses on such dominantas as narrative stance (youth prose), verbal ambiguity and play (the works of Siniavskii and Daniel'). Both case studies, however, show that the recycling of textual models familiar from the Stalinist canon (the novel about a positive hero, the anniversary film about the great leader) remains the key cultural gesture of the Thaw. Cultural producers of the time still believe that old devices-above all--the positive hero—can adequately express the new values.

Chapter Four. Redefining Tropes of War and the Family in Thaw Literature and Film.

> If the notion of the family is conceived of flexibly, the family can
>
> be said to represent melodrama's true subject, making the family
>
> melodrama a genre, where all other films are only to a greater or
>
> lesser degree melodramatic
>
> —Robert Lang 49

1. War and Family Tropes in Stalinist and Thaw Culture

In addition to the trope of the positive hero, cultural producers of the Thaw inherited from Stalinism: trope of the family, as the symbolic representation of Soviet society, and war as the symbolic representation of society's primary mode of existence. In her work on the Soviet novel, Katerina Clark demonstrates the centrality of the war and family tropes for Stalinist culture. One of the instantiations of the Stalinist war trope represents progressive socialist state's subordination of the elemental forces of nature to human necessity and reason. This particulat instantiation of the war trope was dominant for a period of time in Soviet cultural production. Capitalism and its agents—the implied "them" of Stalinist culture--are conceived as a part of these forces. By extension, then, the militaristic resolution of the conflict between capitalism's "them" and the Soviet Union's "us" becomes part of this war on nature. At the same time, the trope of the Great Family invokes the basic social structure of the Stalinist state. The master narratives of the Soviet novel and Soviet film make central the vertical bond between the positive hero (the son) and the Party mentor (the father).

While Thaw cultural producers may have disagreed about the meanings of both the war and the family tropes, they shared with Stalinist culture the implementation of these tropes in their

narratives. Thaw literature and film, however, usually depicted the dislocation of an individual from the Great Family: a soldier's return from the front, loss of a father, Stalin's funeral, the juxtaposition of an inner individual experience of the new hero to the histrionic experience of the Stalin-era collective hero. A recurring point of reference within Thaw culture, underscoring this separation anxiety, is Stalin's death. The most often cited examples are the opening chapter of the novel *Battle en Route (Bitva v puti)* by Galina Nikolaeva (1957), describing Stalin's funeral, and the melting ice symbolizing Stalin's death in the film *Clear Sky (Chistoe nebo)* by Grigorii Chukhrai (1961).[135]

Although early post-Stalinist narratives never questioned the centrality of war and family tropes, these narratives attempted to redefine their meaning by reducing the scale of the family unit, making war an experience internal to a small family and a personal experience of the family's members. Most importantly, war as internal crisis became an indispensable part of the Soviet family.

Probably the most important change in the representation of the family trope was a shift to the smaller scale of the immediate family. As the organizing principle of characters' composition, the immediate family complicated the possibility of resolving the opposition of "us" vs. "them" through violence—a mode central for Stalinist culture (Giunter 7). As Schatz notes regarding the family in Hollywood melodrama, "unlike the genres of order, the melodrama's social conflicts and contradictions could not be resolved by violently eliminating one of the opposing forces" (1981 228). The reconstitution and preservation of the nuclear family, which replaces the Great Family touted under Stalinism, becomes the prime goal of Thaw narratives.

---

[135] Chukhrai in his film cites the finale of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926). The reference to this pre-Stalinist film signified a distancing from Stalinist aesthetics and values. About production circumstances of filming this sequence see also Chukhrai's memoirs *Moe kino* (147).

Literature, specifically Viktor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1946) and other examples of "trench prose," initiated the redefinition of the Soviet family at war by establishing a fraternal order of trench soldiers. The centrality of literary forms for the alternative interpretation of the fundamental tropes not only promoted modest changes in discursive practices, but also confirmed the status quo of the established cultural hierarchy, with verbal media at its summit and visual media at the bottom.

The cultural Thaw of the 1950s, however, did not limit itself to verbal forms of representation, actively challenging the exclusionary dominance of verbal cultural forms. Parallel to literary redefinitions of the Great Soviet Family, family melodrama as a cinematic genre developed a new visual language to reimagine both the tropes of war and family. This chapter's main focus is an examination of these tropes in "trench prose" and in family melodrama.[136] The two case studies for my discussion are Nekrasov's *In The Trenches of Stalingrad* and Mikhail Kalatozov's film *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957).

---

[136] In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks argues that melodrama is not just a genre but a mode of representation concerned with the quest for the spiritual in modern post-religious society. Brooks calls this search the "moral occult" of the melodramatic imagination (1991 53). The primary function of melodrama is to evoke pathos—that is, to provide an extreme emotional response, usually sorrow, pity, and sympathy. The conventions of a melodramatic text are designed to fulfill this major function.

Brooks notes that film has not just used melodrama: melodrama is the dominant mode of cinematic representation. Thomas Schatz's *Hollywood Genres* makes a similar argument: "In a certain sense every Hollywood movie might be described as melodramatic" (1981 221). Approaching genre as an industrial rather than academic designation, Stephen Neale notes that it is useless to establish film melodrama as a specific genre because Hollywood referred to all of its films as melodramas. Linda Williams cautiously ascribes the melodramatic imagination to the basic mode of American film, in particular (88).

Critics like Schatz or Thomas Elsaesser, however, note that it is possible to distinguish a genre of Hollywood family melodrama that is based on visual style, narrative and thematic conventions. These conventions

2. War and Family in the Trench Prose and Film.

2.1. Military Unit as a Family

Nekrasov's fictionalized diary, *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*, introduced an alternative to the Great Family: the family of a military unit. The protagonist, Kerzhentsev, is an orphan, who lost his family during the war, and settled into the reconstituted family of a military unit. This new family preserves many features of the Great Family: it is still a military family, that is, an essentailly male community, the ultimate goal of which is to resolve the conflict between the family of "us" and the alien aggressors—the Nazis.

The military unit as a family, however, has many features differentiating it from the Stalinist Great Family. The frontline unit family destabilizes the vertical structure of a Stalinist Family. Kerzhentsev, who becomes the head of the battalion, constantly has to remind his soldiers about his role of a commander because the relations operating in the trenches are those of a male brotherhood, rather than those of subordination and strict hierarchy. The narrative and Kerzhentsev, its focalizer, periodically celebrate the egalitarianism of frontline brotherhood. When Kerzhentsev meets a private from his battalion, Sedykh, in the hospital, he invites him to

include the following: a powerless protagonist-victim (often female, orphaned) (Elsaesser 86), a troubled family (Elsaesser 74, Schatz 1981 226-28, 1991 152—54), a moral polarization of characters (Brooks 53, 60 1991), an externalization of characters' interiority through *mise-en-scène* and music (Elsaesser 84), and a temporality of loss and lateness (Doane 300).

The uses of family melodrama conventions depend on the cultural values of the time, instantiated in visual or verbal devices. During the war years and early 1950s the Soviet film industry produced its own version of family melodrama. The two main variants of family melodrama during this time were the homefront melodrama and the domestic male melodrama, both of which are discussed in this chapter.

share his officer's room. The frontline brotherhood, with its human warmth, forges emotional bonds superior to distinctions in rank.

This brotherhood abandons the rugged cult of the warrior in favor of a domesticated version of the military unit as a family. The indispensable part of such a unit are the men who perform traditionally female functions: carrying out household chores and treating the trenches as a domestic space. Kerzhentsev's orderly, Valega, simultaneously fulfills the roles of surrogate wife and child. The narrator approvingly details the traditionally female tasks that Valega fulfills:

> Kuda by my ni prishli—cherez piat' minut uzhe gotova palatka, uiutnaia,
> udobnaia, obiazatel'no vystlannaia svezhei travoi. Kotelok vsegda sverkaet, kak
> novyi. (1995 18)
>
> Wherever we stop: a cozy, comfortable tent, the floor inevitably covered with
> fresh grass, is ready in five minutes. The mess-kit always shines like new.
> (translation mine)

More importantly, Valega darns Kerzhentsev's socks "almost like a woman" (1995 18).[137] Valega runs Kerzhentsev's military household like a caring spouse, not trusting Kerzhentsev to pack when they are ordered to move.

> On dazhe ne podpustil menia k meshku: "Ia luchshe znaiu, chto vam nuzhno,
> tovarishch leitenant. Proshlyi raz sami ukladyvalis', tak i zubnoi poroshok, i
> pomazok, i stakanchik dlia brit'ia—vse zabyli." (18).

---

[137] The 1962 English translation avoids the homosocial connotations of the original. Valega does not darn Kerzhentsev's socks "almost like a woman" (1995 18); rather, he "darns socks so that you couldn't tell where the hole has been" (1962 25).

He didn't even let me come close to the duffel bag: 'I know better than you what
you need, Comrade Lieutenant. Last time you packed, you forgot everything:
tooth powder, the shaving brush, and the shaving cup." (translation mine)

Valega even enacts marital jealousy, as he responds to the other orderly, Sedykh, who
supposedly pleases Kerzhentsev more. Kerzhentsev, observing the two orderlies arguing about
who prepares a better bed for him, concludes: "Valega revnuet menia k nemu. Eto vidno po
vsemu" (1995 73) "Valega's jealous of my relationship with him. That's obvious."

Kerzhentsev describes his relations with Valega as "nasha sovmestnaia zhizn'" (1995 18)
"our life together," an expression usually reserved in Russian to describe a heterosexual couple's
relations. By the end of the narrative, the reader learns that Valega's real last name is Volegov,
but everyone at the front calls him Valega, a nickname that carries the feminine ending "a" in
Russian.

The orderly's feminine attributes are mixed with infantilizing ones. This mixed
representation of Valega is especially obvious in Kerzhentsev's declaration of love to his orderly.

Malen'kii, kruglogolovyi moi Valega … skol'ko nochei proveli, zavernuvshis' v
odnu plashch-palatku … Privyk ia k tebe, lopoukhomu, chertovski privyk … Net,
ne privyk. Eto ne privychka, eto chto-to drugoe, gorazdo bol'shee. (47—48)
My little roundheaded bunny … we've spent so many nights together under one
cape … I got used to you, incredibly so … No, "got used to" isn't it. It wasn't just
a habit, it was something much greater. (translation mine)

In Russian, "little" and "roundheaded" are usually terms of endearment reserved for children
(Valega, as we learn later, also has childlike handwriting), while sharing a bed is more
appropriate for a wife or a girl friend.

Nekrasov's work also divorces the machine from the family of the military unit. In
Stalinist films and novels the machine was part and parcel of the family: the tanker *Derbent* in
the eponymous work (Iurii Krymov's novel [1938] and the film directed by Aleksandr
Faintsimmer [1940]), the machine gun in *Chapaev* (in Dmitrii Furmanov's novel [1923] and the

film directed by the "Vasil'ev brothers" [1934]), the tractor-tank in Ivan Pyr'ev's musical *Tractor Drivers* (1939), and the plane in such films as *Pilots* (Raizman 1935), *Aerograd* (Dovzhenko 1935) or *Chkalov* (Kalatozov 1941). In Nekrasov's text, the machine always belongs to the Nazis. Their planes and tanks dominate the landscape, causing destruction and death.

When Russians use tanks to attack the Nazis, it creates nothing but confusion. Evoking Leo Tolstoi's disdain for German military planners at the headquarters of the Russian Army in *War and Peace*, the section "Chertova Semerka" ("Damned Number Seven") narrates how the careful plans for and reliance on machine turns an offensive into sheer disaster.[138] The Soviet tank first gets damaged on a mine, and then, in perfect compliance with the logic of Nekrasov's book, becomes a stronghold for the Nazis (1995 239). The tank—the wartime tractor and the favorite machine of Stalinist paintings, films, and literature—becomes, however, hell even for the Nazis. "Germans call the tank *Toteninsel*, 'the island of death,' and send the soldiers over there only as punishment" (1995 248). Narrative resolution is achieved when the Russians find a way to blow up their own "accursed tank" (1995 241). In Nekrasov's work, by comparison with Stalinist narratives, the machine (no matter whether Soviet or Nazi) constantly threatens the life of the characters and the integrity of the military family.

Indeed, the military unit family is threatened not so much by the literal machine, as by the senseless human machine—the chief of staff Abrosimov. The linearity of a cold, unfeeling machine, which is associated in the *Trenches* with the Nazis, is echoed in Abrosimov's appearance: "Serye kholodnye glaza, <u>priamoi</u> kostistyi nos, volosy zachesany pod pilotku … Nemnogo slishkom kholodnye glaza" (99, emphasis added). "Gray cold eyes, a <u>straight</u> beakish nose, hair slicked back under the flight-cap … His eyes a little bit too cold." Eventually,

---

[138] "Chertova semerka" was published only in 1971. Its quarter-century delay was explained in Nekrasov's introduction as simply the result of the hurry to print the rest of the text. Certain incompatibilities with the values of Stalinism in this section, such as the cult of the machine, may also account for the editor's dilatoriness in publishing it.

Abrosimov insists on a frontal attack, which leads to the slaughters of even more members of the unit-family than fall victim to Nazi machines.

Turning Abrosimov into the main villain of the narrative displaces the opposition between "us" and "them," and internalizes it within the military unit of Soviet "us." To purge the family of its inorganic, machine-like member, Nekrasov uses a common device of Stalinist narratives—the show trials. The unit-family indicts Abrosimov, demotes him to a private, and sends him to a penal battalion.[139] Nekrasov divorces the machine, both the mechanical one and the one concealed by human appearance, from the egalitarian military family, from "us."

2.2. Tempering Stalinist Space and Reinventing Time

In the Trenches of Stalingrad altered not only the structure of the Stalinist Great Family, but also its space. The locale in which Kerzhentsev's military unit family exists is emphatically anti-monumental: trenches instead of headquarter bunkers, a small-scale map instead of a map of the entire front. Monumental structures are useless ("peresekaem protivotankovyi rov … vse eto ostaetsia pozadi—gromadnoe, nenuzhnoe, nikem ne ispol'zovannoe"; "We cross an anti-tank ditch … it's now behind us: enormous and useless"), and usually associated with the failures of modernity and technology. One of the characters ironizes over the monumentalism of Western military architecture:

> Vse eti linii Mazhino i Zigfrida so vsemi dotami, betonirovannymi kazematami i podzemnymi tunneliami—vse eto chepukha, nichego krome vreda oni ne prinosiat … Da plevat' ia na nee khotel so vsemi liftami i elektricheskimi poezdami. (261)

---

[139] Frontal attacks, ironically, were the almost exclusive tactics used in penal battalions.

All these Maginot and Siegfrid Lines, with their pillboxes and underground

tunnels, are complete nonsense. They only cause harm . . . They're worth nothing,

with all their elevators and electric trains. (translation mine)

The implied target of this diatribe is the monumentalism of Stalinist culture, which fortified its

borders and placed many of its masterpieces underground. The Moscow Metro, "the most

beautiful metro in the world," is probably the best-known example.

In Nekrasov's work the space of the frontline is not only anti-monumental, but it is also a

domesticated space. High Stalinist art favored the representation of public spaces—battlefields,

strategic maps, monumental headquarters—at the expense of private, domestic ones (Figure 31).

ПОД ВОДИТЕЛЬСТВОМ ВЕЛИКОГО СТАЛИНА—ВПЕРЕД К КОММУНИЗМУ!

Figure 31. B. Berezovskii, M. Solov'ev and I. Shagin. *Under the Leadership of the Great Stalin--Forward to Communism!* (1951). <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~vbonnell/posters.htm> Accessed February 23, 2001

According to Stalinist discourse, during the decisive confrontation between "us" and "them,"

domestic space becomes a refuge for cowards and traitors. Nekrasov creates a space that is

simultaneously public and domestic: he domesticates the frontline. *In the Trenches* starts with

the morning routine of Kerzhentsev and his friend, who lie naked on the riverbank after having

done their laundry. According to Nekrasov, frontline activity consists, first, of household

chores—washing, shaving, doing laundry—and only secondly of attacking, fighting, and killing

thousands of enemies. Nekrasov's work is also unique in abandoning the sanitized landscape of Stalinist culture. He links domesticity at the frontline with descriptions of bodily functions and diseases that foreground the bodily aspects of human nature.

> Zheltukhoi pochti vse boleiut … Protivnaia bolezn'—napadaet inertnost', sonlivost', propadaet appetit. To tut, to tam na snegu vidny krasno-burye sledy mochi (245).

> Almost everyone has hepatitis … It's a lousy disease because it causes inertia, drowsiness, loss of appetite. Occasionally you can see on the snow around the trenches the reddish-brown traces of urine. (translation mine)[140]

The domestication of the trenches is also linked to the non-aggressiveness of the characters. As opposed to Stalinist warriors, Nekrasov's characters almost never attack. Defensive positions allow Nekrasov to show the frontline as a beleaguered household.

> Nachinaem obzhivat'sia v svoei shcheli. Provodim elektrichestvo, gotovim edu na plitki … U Valegi i Sedykh, v ikh uglu, dazhe portret Stalina i dve otkrytki: Odesskii opernyi teatr i reporduktsiia repinskikh "Zaporozhtsev" (1968 79)

> We're starting to domesticate our fox hole: we're getting the electricity connected, fixing some food … In their corner Valega and Sedykh even have a portrait of Stalin and two postcards: the Odessa Opera Theater and a reproduction of Repin's [painting] *Zaporozhian Cossacks.*[141]

---

[140] Such a humanization of the trenches anticipates the explicitness of the domestic and the bodily in the works of Russian women writers, above all, of Liudmila Petrushevskaia.

[141] Il'ia Repin (1844—1930) is the major representative of realism in Russian painting. *Zaporozhian Cossacks* (1891), his famous work, depicts a legendary egalitarian community of seventeenth-century Russian warriors as they dictate a response to the Turkish Sultan, who has ordered them to become his subjects. See reproduction at <http://www.abcgallery.com/R/repin/repin75.html>.

A trench or a foxhole is transformed into a surrogate home.

In the Trenches not only domesticates the locus of the military family, but it also reevaluates the patterns of motion within this space. The text attributes forward, linear motion, in the context of the era associated with Stalinism, either to the Nazis (bomb raids, constant frontal attacks by Nazi tanks and infantry) or to Abrosimov, the character whose murderous orders kill his "own" people. The direct, unbroken line becomes a metaphor for murder.

In order to reach Stalingrad, the city where the Soviet troops will finally defeat the Germans, these troops have to retreat. This backward movement gradually becomes the main spatial and temporal device in post-Stalinist film and literature. Vsevolod Pudovkin named his last film, about a veteran trying to reconstitute his nuclear family, *The Return of Vasilii Bortnikov*. Konstantin Simonov's novel, *The Living and the Dead* (1959)[142] concerns the Soviet Army's retreats of 1941. Grigorii Chukhrai makes backward movement the visual theme of the introductory scene in his *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) and the structural dominanta of the narrative: the protagonist travels back home from the front lines.

Probably the only element of Stalinist space that is not dramatically redefined is the frontline, which continues to serve as the border between "us" and "them." In fact, it is possible to consider Nekrasov's text as a story of the loss and reestablishment of a distinct border between "us" and "them." At the beginning of the narrative, Kerzhentsev is spatially disoriented—"A gde front? Speredi, szadi, sprava, sleva? Sushchestvuet li on?" (1995 20) "Where's the frontline: straight ahead, behind, to the right or to the left?" The narrative leads the characters to the trenches at Stalingrad, beyond which the Nazis are never able to advance.

---

[142] In 1960 Aleksandr Stolper adapted Simonov's novel for the screen.

At the novel's end, Soviet soldiers read a Nazi leaflet that ascribes the Germans' failure to the concrete wall in Stalingrad built at Stalin's order. Ironically, the metaphor of an impenetrable wall is also part and parcel of the Stalinist cultural landscape. One of Nekrasov's characters, however, redefines the Nazi/Stalinist imagery of the wall as border in the spirit of the Thaw.

> Vy [Kerzhentsev (AP)] sozdatel' toi samoi betonnoi steny, kotoroi nemtsy opravdyvaiut svoiu neudachu v Stalingrade … Mnogo li v nei betona? … Von etot Van'ka i Pet'ka …vot etot beton, kotoryi sderzhal nemtsev. (1995 261) You [Kerzhentsev (AP)] created this concrete wall, which the Germans use to justify their failure. But how much concrete is there in it? … Look at Van'ka and Pete … they're the concrete that's stopped the Nazis. (translation mine)

During the Thaw, the metaphor of the wall as the border becomes bifurcated. On the one hand, the spatial representation of the border characteristic of Stalinist discourse is linked, above all, to Nazi propaganda. On the other hand, the emphasis on the border's human component transforms the wall into a metaphor for the perseverance of the human spirit.

In the Trenches of Stalingrad also distorts the polarized symmetry of Stalinist war narratives. Nekrasov's first-person, limited narrative point of view cannot "see" both "us" and the enemies, as can the omniscient narratives of Stalinist texts. The focus is limited to the space of "us," and eventually, even the villain is uncovered among "ours" (Captain Abrosimov).

The work's uneasiness with Stalinist monumentalism manifests itself most graphically in the instability of the book's title. Vsevolod Vishnevskii, the editor of the journal *Znamia*, liked the semi-documentary, first-person micro-level representation of the war's hardships in the trenches of Stalingrad and accepted the work for publication (1946). The experienced editor, however, realized that the absence of epic scale in Nekrasov's work, which takes the Tolstoyan path of depicting war as a daily routine instead of the grand battle, would make the publication

vulnerable to critical attack. He supported the all-encompassing title *Stalingrad*, literally *Stalin-City*, that would make the work more in tune with the epic scale of Stalinist culture.

Yet even with such a formidable title as *Stalingrad*, Nekrasov's work did not escape attacks and accusations. It was criticized for the incompatibility of the epic title with the small scale of the narrative. The omnipotent head of the Writers' Union, Aleksandr Fadeev, lambasted Nekrasov's work for its narrative and ideological myopia.

> Ono-to, konechno, pravdivyi rasskaz i samim uchastnikom napisannyi, no net v nem shiroty okhvata … Vzgliad iz okopa … Dal'she svoego brustvera avtor nichego ne vidit. (Nekrasov 1981 440)
>
> There's no question that the work is truthful and written by a real participant in the battle, but it's too limited in scale … The point of view is from the trench … The author can't see beyond the edge of his trench. (translation mine)

In part as a response to such criticism, the 1948 book edition of Nekrasov's work appeared under the title *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*.[143] In the book version the editors also changed the subtitle: indicating genre of a novel in the journal version, it became a novella (*povest'*) in the book version. The work was never identified as a fictionalized diary because such a subjective genre would be incompatible with the omniscience presupposed by the sole method of Soviet art—socialist realism. Republished in the 1950s several times under the title *In the Trenches of Stalingrad,* the book supplied the rubric for an entire trend in Soviet literature: "trench prose." Its hallmarks were a small-scale setting, often a first-person narrative, a focus on common soldiers' experience of war and on the personal relations among the members of a small military unit.

---

[143] Nekrasov claimed that he was not consulted about the change in title from *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* to *Stalingrad* (1981 439). The publishers protected themselves, anticipating criticism of Nekrasov's work.

Finally, *In the Trenches* questioned the primacy of the chronotopic imagery characteristic of Stalinist culture, especially its concern with the progressive movement forward into the brave new futureland. In Nekrasov's diary, the narrative makes temporal cycles (alternation of day and night, annual cycles) at least as important as totalitarian linearity. This cyclic temporality makes an idyllic chronotope crucial for the setting of the work. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the "idyllic chronotope" as the unity of space determined by "the cyclic rhythmicalness of time" (1981 225), the limiting of life "to a few basic realities, such as love, birth, death, marriage, food and drink" (225)[144], and the "conjoining of human life with the life of nature" (1981 226). In Nekrasov's work, the characters' everyday routine is organized around cyclical time, the highlights of which are shared meals, drinks, tobacco, and the sincere conversations of frontline buddies gathered in an intimate group. The original version of *In the Trenches* ends with these buddies' holding a drinking party to celebrate the end of the battle of Stalingrad. The 1971 edition added the unpublished third part, which concludes with a New Year's meal. The cycles of the communal meal are paralleled by nature's annual cycle. This idyllic time of egalitarian homosocial communality opposes and eventually destroys the teleology of the Nazi invasion.

2.3. "Trench Prose": Critical Responses

Nekrasov's account of the battle of Stalingrad appeared when the cultural policy that promoted witness accounts of war experience was drawing to a close. Evgenii Dobrenko argues that the major function of the authorities' promotion of witness accounts was to present the imperative of maintaining state power and war effort during the war as the personal goal of each citizen:

---

[144] The protagonist of Nekrasov's narrative undergoes a death-birth cycle: he enters the hospital in critical condition and emerges reborn.

Voina rezko izmenila optiku mass; vlast', vsia ee problematika neozhidanno stali

lichnym, v priamom smysle krovnym delom kazhdogo, voprosom zhizni i

smerti" (219).

The war sharply changed the angle of vision of the masses. The problematics of

power, promoted by the authorities, suddenly became personal, literally an issue

of life and death for every person. (translation mine)

The Nazi invasion was a threat both to the Great Soviet Family and to every member of that

family. The war-time propaganda machine facilitated the link between mass consciousness and

the intentions of the authorities, inspired representations of war horrors and travails in texts that

emphasized the immediacy and authenticity of violent experience: witness accounts, journalistic

reports, documentary newsreels, public displays of POWs and destroyed military equipment.

Texts failing to emphasize that they were witness accounts of war horrors were

denounced for their supposed lack of conflict, false romanticization, or varnishing of reality:

"This battle against conflictlessness and varnishing of reality was sanctioned by the authorities,

who tried to bring the masses into a state of affect" (Dobrenko 1993, 242, translation mine).

Dobrenko lists the titles of the articles published in 1943-44—"Ob ukrashatel'stve i

ukrashateliakh" ("About Embellishments and Embellishers"), "'Krasivaia nepravda o voine"

("Beautiful Untruths about War")—that vilified writers who softened the traumatizing effects

and aggressive responses that so-called documentary accounts were supposed to ignite in the

masses.

Party decrees of the time demanded that journalists and writers publish as much material

containing graphic violence as possible: "the atrocities of German fascist beasts … the rape of

women and children … simple written and memorable witness accounts of the occupants'

atrocities" ("On the Work of District Newspapers" cited in Dobrenko 1993, 262). Even violent

rape scenes, taboo during peacetime, became part of official literature. Dobrenko lists examples

from Aleksandr Korneichuk, Aleksei Tolstoi, Wanda Wasilewska (268-73). The object of such

narratives, argues the critic, was to evoke a violent reaction on the part of the reader that could be directed against the external enemy.

When the war ended, the need for witness accounts inspiring hatred against Nazis had passed. Such narratives yielded to the narratives celebrating the party and the state as the organizers of the victory. Critics started denouncing witness accounts of war as overly naturalistic, mistaken in their concept of objectivity, and devoid of a larger perspective. Nekrasov's text, appearing at the end of the war-time factographic trend in cultural politics, received a mixed reception. Although it was awarded the Stalin Prize, critics, especially Boris Solov'ev, severely criticized Nekrasov, above all for focusing on the life of a small military unit and for the absence of the "grand scale" total war.

> V. Nekrasov not only purposely limits his purview, but also makes this limitation a principle that he never violates, under any circumstances. That is why the war is depicted in the novel [sic!] from the point of view of a frontline soldier who seems to have no inkling of the strategic course of the war as a whole, doesn't even think about it. That is why the novel, in which every detail is given in close-up, lacks a long-range, or, as film-makers say, broad perspective [long shot] that would give an idea of the historical significance of the battle of Stalingrad. (Solov'ev 241-42, translation mine)

Three things saved Nekrasov from more serious attacks: the Stalin Prize, his relatively low position in the cultural hierarchy, and his status as a young author. In his critical article Solov'ev refers to him more often as "the young author" than by name. The article implied a familiar and familial pattern of behavior: Nekrasov could thus play the role of the Party's "spontaneous son," acquiring true consciousness in the course of correcting his errors under the guidance of critics and the paternal Party.

The new goals of Soviet cultural politics in the late 1940s were to monumentalize the war, present it as the personal triumph of Stalin's genius. Military hierarchy, a teleological vision of history, the subjection of individual will to the will of the Great Family-nation and the

utopian common goal were supposed to be of primary value, even though the war was officially over.[145]

In the Trenches was rediscovered during Khrushchev's Thaw. "Trench prose," for which Nekrasov's work set a model of sorts, favored an overtly anti-monumental small scale. The most important authors of trench prose were Grigorii Baklanov—*South of the Main Offensive (Iuzhnee glavnogo udara)* (1958), *An Inch of Ground (Piad' zemli)* (1959), *The Dead Should Not Be Shamed (Mertvye sramu ne imut)* (1961)—and Iurii Bondarev, who published his short novel *Last Shots (Poslednie zalpy)* in1959. Some critics also referred to the first part of

---

[145] To articulate the values of late Stalinism, literary critics often devoted their energies not so much to works of literature as to the works and people of military art. The prominent Russian literary scholar Kirill Pigarev, for example, in 1950 wrote an article, "The Great Russian Commander," for the literary journal *New World* to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Field Marshal Aleksandr Suvorov's death. Suvorov, argued the critic, will be remembered in art history (!) because he is "one of the founders of the Russian national school of military art" (181). Pigarev listed the field marshal's artistic heritage:

> No Russian commander in the past has left so many military-didactic instructions and testaments
> as did Suvorov. Among them are "Regimental Organization" (1764-65), orders and instructions
> (1770-71), "Instructions to My Godson A. Karachai about the Virtues of Being an Officer"
> (1794), a "Letter to a Young Man, P. Skryptsyn, about the Nature of a True Hero" (1794), *The
> Science of Achieving Victory* (1796). (185, translation mine)

The article concludes with the insightful observation that "the best monument to Suvorov is the flourishing of Soviet military art, elevated even higher by the genius of Stalin" (188). Military art was the major art of late Stalinism, and its central tropes were the war between "us" and "them" and the nation as a Great Family. Nekrasov's work, with its alternative model of male communality—the egalitarian military unit-family—was pushed to the margins of Stalinist culture's landscape.

Konstantin Simonov's trilogy, *The Living and the Dead*, as an example of trench prose (Lazarev, Kozlov).

In 1959 "trench prose" also became the object of a literary discussion concerning the diversity of artistic forms within the limits of socialist realism. The choice of texts for discussion reflected the key themes and tropes of Soviet culture. The militaristic conflict between "us" and "them" continued to be the chief trope of Soviet culture, while the trope of the Family served to organize Soviet society. World War II served as the major historical theme for the instantiation of these two tropes.

The tropes, indeed, were not even questioned during the discussion. The main argument concerned the possibility of varying the scale for representing war and its participants, or, as Benedikt Sarnov put it in his article "The Globe and a Small Scale Map," both scales are equally valuable within the limits of socialist realism as a method. Sarnov also unwittingly preserved in the title of his article the primacy of spatiality over temporality in totalitarian culture. Such critics as Lazarev, Sarnov, and Trifonova praised "trench prose" for introducing a small scale and personal feelings in war prose as an alternative way of representing war. The critics Kozlov and Grinberg, however, feared that "trench prose" would put into jeopardy such central devices of Soviet literature as the positive hero and his Party mentor.

The critics attached two standard labels to the works of Nekrasov, Baklanov, and Bondarev: "naturalism" and "Remarquism."[146] "Naturalism" meant a narrative focus on the

---

[146] Erich Maria Remarque's first novel, *Im Westen nicht Neues (All Quiet on the Western Front)* (1929), provided a sharp contrast to the patriotic bombast that characterized most war prose of the 1930s. His novels were translated into Russian and were extremely popular during the Thaw. While *All Quiet* provided an alternative way of looking at the war, Remarque's *Drei Kameraden (Three Comrades)* (1936/38) was especially valued for celebrating a new sensitivity, the intimacy of human relations. The 1958 Russian edition of the novel became one of the era's bestsellers. Remarque remains one of the most widely read German writers in Russia: *The Erich Maria Remarque*

violence of war, without sufficient differentiation between socially progressive Soviet violence and purposeless and reactionary fascist and capitalist violence (Solov'ev). "Remarquism" was a synonym for "naturalism" and referred to Erich-Maria Remarque's famous novel about World War I, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). The point critics usually made is that "trench prose," similarly to the works of Remarque, Hemingway, and Barbusse, depicted war as senseless butchery, lacking any goal. According to these critics, the Soviet people at war always have the goal of resolving the contradiction between the Communist "us" and capitalist "them" (Druzin and D'iakov).

The discussion ended in November 1959, when the *Literary Gazette* published the editorial board's conclusion to the discussion—that is, the Party's finalizing word on critics' individual statements. The editorial opened with the reassertion of a hierarchical family structure as the model for relations between the Party and writers:

> Having protected our literature's ideological and aesthetic positions from
> revisionist attacks, having corrected <u>with fatherly care</u> those Soviet writers who at
> some point displayed ideological immaturity, the Communist Party has set the
> stage for a new creative search, directed at strengthening the link between
> literature and the life of the Soviet people. ("The Ideological Position of a Soviet
> Writer" 2, emphasis added, translation mine)

At the forefront of the implied revisionists in need of the Party's "fatherly care" were Vladimir Dudintsev, the author of the anti-Stalinist novel *Not by Bread Alone* (1956), and Boris Pasternak, who had recently violated the orders of the Party's culture bosses by publishing his novel, *Doctor Zhivago* (1957), in the West.

Peace Center Osnabrück maintains its web page in German, English, and Russian

http://www.remarque.uos.de/russian.htm .

The article proceeds to affirm the possibility of representing war in a variety of ways, including that of "trench prose." The only condition is that writers' work should stay within the limits of "idea-mindedness" (*ideinost'*). Idea-mindedness, the imperative of which the newspaper emphasized by printing the word in bold font, meant following current changes in Party policies: "The determining factor here is the ideological position of the writer, his relationship to the represented world, his adherence to great communist ideals" (3 translation mine).

The article explains the mistakes of literary critics who participated in the discussion of "trench prose": the most serious errors were made by those critics who praised "trench prose" as a demonumentalizing trend in Soviet literature. Finally, the editorial explains how to improve the idea-mindedness of "trench prose": the protagonist must become the positive hero; the community of a military unit must attain its goal either through Party leadership or through an enlarged narrative scale; a strong explicit judgment on the part of an idea-minded author has to replace an impartial and often powerless first-person narrator. The discussion of "trench prose" manifested the Thaw's understanding of a possible diversity within totalitarian culture. While not allowing writers to question the fundamental tropes of this culture, the Party gave writers permission to represent those tropes in a wider range of interpretations.

2.4. "Trench Prose": Visual Responses

"Trench prose" not only stirred controversy among literary critics, but also attracted the attention of cinematographers. Aleksandr Ivanov was the first Soviet director to make films that focused on individual war experiences, adopting a small-scale perspective on the war. Ivanov's film *Star (Zvezda)* (1948), based on the eponymous story by Emmanuil Kazakevich (1947), was criticized and eventually shelved (it was released in 1953). During the Thaw, Ivanov returned to

the convention of war film that takes the point of view of an ordinary soldier: he directed *Soldiers*, based on Nekrasov's *In the Trenches*. Nekrasov wrote the screenplay adaptation for the film and appeared in a cameo role as a German POW. This film also witnessed the cinematic debut of Innokentii Smoktunovskii (the role of Lieutenant Farber), who would become one of the Thaw's most popular film actors.[147]

Following the literary source, *Soldiers* strives by cinematic means for a sincere narrative about the war. For example, the film employs a first-person voiceover that mimics the first-person narrative of the literary source. The film also rejects the Stalin-era omniscient disembodied voiceover: the protagonist recollects his war experience while the viewers observe the speaker in action on the screen. The film redefines the function of the voiceover inherited from Stalinist films.[148]

---

[147] Innokentii Smoktunovskii (1925-1994) became famous during the Thaw for his role as Prince Myshkin in Georgii Tovstonogov's stage production of Dostoevskii's *Idiot* (1957) and his role as Prince Hamlet in Kozintsev's film (1964). Ironically, his celebrity status reached such heights by the mid-1960s that the authorities, trying to adjust ideological icons to the values of the time, made him play Lenin in the 1965 film *On One Planet*.

In *Soldiers*, Smoktunovskii played an unheroic hero, Lieutenant Farber, a Thaw double of Babel''s Liutov from *Red Cavalry*. As opposed to Liutov, whose confused identity is caught between his intellectual upbringing and the violence of natural *Ubermenschen*-cossacks--that is, between his Jewish and Russian identities--Farber chooses intellectualism and opposes all violence, not only on the part of Nazis, but also among Russians.

[148] Stalinist culture did not limit voiceover to cinematic texts. Radio was its main channel for official voiceover. The speakers mounted on street corners broadcast news whenever the government considered it necessary. The solemn voice of Iurii Levitan, Stalin's favorite anchorman, was so popular and omnipresent that Hitler promised to hang him first after the capture of Moscow (Stites 109). Thaw culture was uneasy about radio's status as an "official voiceover." In *Cranes* Levitan's voice is linked to official lies: right after Boris's death, the radio announces that

The film, however, completely changes the narrative temporality of its literary source. *Soldiers* abandons the present tense and favors a nostalgic flashback stance: the postwar protagonist longs for the simplicity and sincerity of his wartime military unit's community. The most important visual device of the film, which renders the temporality of separation, is the use of the photograph of Kerzhentsev's friends taken during the war. The photo appears at the end of the film, turning the entire film into the photograph's visual extension. The photograph establishes the general nostalgic mode for the paradise lost of the egalitarian military family.[149]

In addition to changing the temporality of the narrative, *Soldiers* complicates the image of the frontline family through its use of expressive *mise-en-scène*. The setting for this community is consistently the nighttime landscape of the ruins of Stalingrad. Daylight actually abandons the characters soon after they arrive in the city and returns only at the very end of the film. The dark claustrophobic setting is the locus of war and, significantly, of Stalin's city. In the first half of the film the characters gradually enter more and more confined spaces—trenches, dugouts, craters left after shell explosions[150]—, but in the second half of the film they move out of the contained spaces of occupied Stalingrad. The characters leave their dugouts and gather

---

nothing serious has happened at the front. See also Solzhenitsyn's "Matrena's Home" ("Matrenin dvor") (1963), where the radio is linked to the infernal landscape of modernized Russia.

[149] War films that emphasized a sense of separation from the idealized frontline community became especially popular during the Stagnation era. See, for example, *Belorussia Station (Belorusskii vokzal)* (Smirnov 1970), *Only Old Men Go into Battle (V boi idut odni stariki)* (Bykov 1973), and *One-Hup-Two, Soldiers Were Going (Aty Baty Shli Soldaty)* (Bykov 1976). Leonid Brezhnev's war memoir, *Little Land* (1978), continues a similar narrative tradition: a war veteran narrator recovers a long-lost military community via flashback.

[150] The crater caused by a shell explosion represents a paradoxical space: it is open in the sense that it has no roof, but the characters inside the crater are imprisoned by enemy fire. This containment is linked with the men's vulnerability, as when Kerzhentsev lies in the crater alongside the corpse of his best friend.

among the city's ruins to put on trial their Stalin-like commander, Abrosimov, who has slaughtered half the military unit and is responsible for making the survivors hide in the shell craters. Later, Kerzhentsev leaves Stalingrad itself for the military hospital, subsequently returning to a liberated Stalingrad on a symbolically sunny day. Ultimately, the film liberates and redefines Stalingrad, just as Thaw culture attempted to destabilize and redefine Stalinist culture.

The expressive *mise-en-scène* not only lends ambiguity to the setting for the military family, but also becomes the major way to articulate the moral polarization of the characters. Such use of *mise-en-scène* mirrors the use of expressive *mise-en-scène* in Thaw family melodrama.[151] The most graphic example of the film's use of *mise-en-scène* to visualize the moral polarity of central characters occurs during Farber's confrontation with Abrosimov. The verbal level of the confrontation is less important in this scene than the visual opposition between Abrosimov's neat military coat (a symbol of Stalinist Russia), and Farber's GULAG quilted cotton coat (a symbol of those recently liberated from the camps). Abrosimov is anti-intellectual, insensitive, and disrespectful to individual human life, while Farber is Russia's redeemer—a sensitive, delicate, and humane intellectual.

The expressive *mise-en-scène* complicates the idyllic image of the military unit family, linking it through setting not only with resistance to the foreign invasion, but also with the experience of Stalinism. While introducing the narrative of nostalgia for the lost male communality, the film also promots an ambiguous representation of the paradise lost via expressive *mise-en-scène*. It links the domestic happiness of the military unit family with the darkness of the Stalingrad setting. As opposed to the book's end, which celebrates the military

---

[151] The film's sound imagery also mirrors moral polarization. The sounds linked with Kerzhentsev's friends— lyrical and elegiac songs, Chaikovskii's music—are contrasted to the noise of Nazi machine guns, toward which Abrosimov pushes Kerzhentsev's soldiers.

family, the film concludes with Kerzhentsev's wish to see his friends comfortably settled in new non-military families.

   Soldiers displaces both the war and the war community into the past. The film's *mise-en-scène* indirectly connect war dilemmas with the Stalinist experience. However, both "trench prose" and its film adaptations preserved the centrality of war as a way of life for the community. Moreover, the pleasure of communality remained part and parcel of military experience.

3. War Experience In Family Melodrama

> How can one suddenly come to terms with Veronika's betrayal, have
>
> sympathy and forgiveness after the virtuous moralism of Simonov's "Wait for
>
> Me" and Stolper's equally virtuous film adaptation, after so many years of
>
> inarguable agreement with the screen's commandments?
>
>   —Shilova 1993 55

3.1. The Great Patriotic War as Family Melodrama

   During the Thaw, the war and family tropes underwent the most radical redefinition in family melodrama, where the family became the site of an internal conflict triggered by the war. In such melodramas as *The House I Live In (Dom, v kotorom ia zhivu)* (1956), *The Cranes are Flying* (1957)*,* and *Communist* (1957) war stopped being culture's *modus vivendi,* resolving all ideological crises and contradictions. Instead, it became a social force that made the protagonist first vulnerable and then a victim. In these films, the family, as the model for social organization, ceased to be an omnipotent institution protecting the protagonist. On the contrary, the family is either absent in such films or turned into a site of conflict, and even into an arena for the protagonist's victimization. In the final analysis, the major function of Thaw homefront

melodrama became the production of pathos, evoked by the loss of fundamental elements in a cultural landscape. The Great Family ceased to be the cradle of social and ideological security and the war ceased to be the prime mode of expanding the family's living space.

Soviet critics usually claim that melodrama was not characteristic of Soviet cinema: "v sovetskom kino melodrama ne poluchila shirokogo rasprostraneniia" (Shilova 1986 264), "melodrama never became widespread in Soviet cinema." The powerless, victimized protagonist of melodrama, for example, was incompatible with the conventions of socialist realism, especially with its key device—the positive hero. Melodrama was relegated either to the pre-revolutionary history of Russian film or to non-Soviet film traditions. The only published Soviet-era monograph on film melodrama (Markulan) deals primarily with Hollywood and French film.[152]

Even though critics deny that Soviet directors made melodramas, the genre of homefront melodrama became especially popular in Russia during the Great Patriotic War. Its popularity may be explained by the predominantly female film audience and by shifts in the iconography of Soviet culture after the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War.   Before the Nazi invasion, the important instantiation of both war and family tropes was the Russian Civil War: the epic war of the Great Family's origins. The Great Patriotic War became the second major instantiation of the war trope in Soviet culture. For contemporaries, this war was a personal drama of separation, of extreme violence and emotions, and, most importantly, of the moral polarization of characters, objects, and events into "us" and "them" categories.

[152] Since the 1970s Maiia Turovskaia's studies of film melodrama were the only exception to the unanimous critical denial that melodrama was characteristic of Soviet film art and of filmgoers' tastes. Turovskaia's publications on melodrama as a mode of popular culture opened and expanded a new field in Russian film studies. Hers was one of the first attempts to articulate a discourse that could conceptualize the phenomena of popular culture. Very interesting in this respect is her article on the success of the Mexican melodrama *Eseniia* in Russia, where she discusses film melodrama as a form of modern urban folklore (Turovskaia 1979 138-74).

3.2. War-Era Melodramas: Blueprints for the Fighting Family and the Faithful Female

War-era melodrama favored a direct appeal to the viewers' emotions in representing the hardships of war. To evoke a pathetic response, melodrama often employed a sadistic treatment of the protagonist as one of its main devices (Doane 303-304). Accordingly, war as a threat to the stability of the family (national and/or nuclear) and to the powerless members of the community (above all, women and children), was a recurring motif in melodrama. During the Great Patriotic War (1941-45), Stalinist culture used family melodrama to domesticate the images of war as the ultimate resolution of the ideological conflict between the family of "us," on the one hand, and "them," as the anti-family, on the other. In Stalinist melodrama, the preservation of the nuclear family signified the survival of the great Soviet family.

Stalinist melodrama also identifies gender roles within the war-time family, most importantly, the woman's role of wife or girl friend, waiting faithfully for her man—usually an officer and, often, a pilot--whose military feats and victorious return home the film depicts. The apparent death of the hero is usually a red herring: despite rumors and even eye-witnesses the protagonist inevitably survives by the end of the film. If a woman loses contact with her man, it is simply because he lacks an opportunity to write because he is busy fighting the enemy. Eventually, however, he comes back home, his survival guaranteed by his wife's faithfulness and her belief in his eventual return. Often placed at the end of the film, the husband's return mirrors national success at the front.

War-era family melodrama occupied a low niche in the Stalinist hierarchy of film genres, the top of which featured films about male warriors. Russian generals and Georgian princes, leading people in epic battles, were favorite characters. The titles of war-era melodramas (*Wait For Me* [Stolper 1943]*, The Wife of a Guard* [Barkhudarov 1943], *At Six pm after the War*

[Pyr'ev 1944]) indicated the smaller scale of representation and, consequently, positioned the films at the bottom of the Stalinist genre pyramid.

One of the best-known war-time film melodramas is *Wait For Me*.[153] Its female protagonist, Liza (Valentina Serova), guards the home front, while her husband, pilot Ermolov, fights the Nazis. The narrative's predictability is confirmed by the omniscience of the female protagonist: even when Ermolov's buddies have lost faith in his survival, Liza never ceases to believe that he is alive.

As the guard of the homefront and keeper of the family, Liza is central to the narrative. The similarity between Liza's role at the homefront and Ermolov's as the defender of the nation at the military front is achieved by cross-cutting sequences, in which Liza talks about Ermolov's survival as Ermolov fights the Nazis. The war trope is enacted twice in the film: first, between faithful Liza and the weak of faith, and, second, between Ermolov and the Nazis.[154]

---

[153] My analysis of *Wait For Me* relies on Andrea Walsh's discussion of women's film in *Women's Film and Female Experience: 1940-1950* (23-48), for the narrative conventions and visual style of Stolper's film fit her description of this type of filmic text. The title of the film originates in Konstantin Simonov's (1915-79) poem "Wait For Me" (1941), the most popular poem of the war era (Stites 101), dedicated to Valentina Serova (1917-75), who later played the lead role in the film. Simonov himself wrote the screenplay. In the folklore of the Moscow intelligentsia, Simonov's affair with Serova, which led to their 1943-56 marriage, brought together an infatuated Simonov and a cold Serova. According to apocrypha, when a desperate Simonov published a collection of poems, *With You and Without You*, dedicated to Serova, Stalin disapproved of the book's lyrical tone and suggested it be printed in two copies: one for Simonov and one for Serova.

[154] Two intertextual links are crucial for the structure of Stolper's melodrama. First, Liza is a foil to the protagonist of "Poor Liza" (1792), a paradigmatic Sentimentalist tale by Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826). Karamzin's Liza, seduced and abandoned by Erast, at story's end commits suicide. Stolper's Liza is the legitimate wife of Ermolov, and is faithful to her husband, never losing hope for his survival and return. The second link is with Russian military history: Ermolov was a hero-general of the Napoleonic 1812 war.

Barbara Walsh points out that in Hollywood women's film established stars played leading roles (28). The same holds true for Stalinist melodramas of the war era. Serova's status as the star, which derived from her success in Stalin-era musical comedies[155], enhanced the perseverance of her war-era melodrama character, who saved her husband's life by fulfilling the film title's imperative.

During this era of grand ideological pronouncements, one of Liza's distinctive features is her verbal strength. In the film's numerous dialogues, which Walsh distinguishes as the key element of women's film narrative (27), Liza talks through her major problem (her missing husband) and verbally out-argues anyone lacking her steadfast faith, be it the unfaithful wife of one of Ermolov's friends or Ermolov's friends themselves.

The family guarded by Liza extends beyond the nuclear family, for it also includes those pilots who serve with Ermolov. The opening shot of the film introduces this family-military unit (Figure 32).

Figure 32.

---

[155] Serova's first role was in the comedy *A Girl with Character* (1939), where she plays a witty, independent, and sharp-tongued character.

Ermolov's friends constantly come to Liza to regain their faith in his survival, while Liza visits the air base, searching on military maps for the places where Ermolov could have landed. The blurring of the border between the family and the military units locates the female protagonist in the middle of a family structure that makes no distinction between nuclear and national family. Russia is one great family fighting the external enemy.

Stolper domesticates the national family through two characteristic features of the *mise-en-scène*: the predominance of interior sets and the stability of symbolic objects. The major symbolic object in the film is the key to Liza's apartment and, metonymycally, also to her invisible chastity belt. After Ermolov's plane is shot down, the key, which Lisa gives to Ermolov before his departure, is shown to the viewer to confirm that the symbol of fidelity has not been lost. The concluding episode opens with a shot of someone's hand inserting the key into the keyhole of Liza's apartment door (Figure 33).

Figure 33.

Fortunately, the hand belongs to Ermolov, who has returned home. The key has never been lost, nor have the wrong hands touched it.

Through closeness of space, the interior sets of the *mise-en-scène* confirm the security of the community.[156] Liza's apartment is a citadel of faith and fidelity. Stolper's film also introduces the stairwell leading to the protagonist's apartment as a recurring element of war melodrama's setting. Stairs establish the vertical axis of the film's space, essential to the melodramatic quest for the moral occult that Peter Brooks deems essential to melodrama (1976, 1991 53). In *Wait for Me* stairs lead the characters upward toward the entrance to Liza's apartment, elevating them to her superior moral plateau. Thaw films, especially *The Cranes Are Flying*, further develop the motif of the stairs and make the stairwell a primary transitional space of the film, filled with deep metaphorical and metaphysical significance.

The secure internal spaces associated with Liza are mirrored in the internal spaces associated with Ermolov. After he is shot down and joins the partisans, Ermolov is seen for the most part inside a safe and clean dug-out. The film assures the viewer that he is as safe at the frontline as Liza is safe and secure at the homefront. Moreover, his fidelity reflects hers, for he resists the blandishments of a secondary female character who flirts with him, never succumbing to the dangers of promiscuous sex. A parallel plot-line shows the consequences of infidelity: Liza's friend is unfaithful to her husband and this, according to the logic of the film, is the major cause of his eventual death.

The film's closed secure spaces (Liza's apartment, the air force base headquarters, etc.) are illuminated by the whiteness of the female protagonist's face. A distinct feature of the film's visual style is the constant focus on the protagonist's brightly highlighted face and blonde hair. The close-ups of Liza's face emphasize her fidelity and perseverance, providing the film's definition of love. The brightness of her face also echoes the golden colors of Russian icons

---

[156] Walsh points out that the interior settings of women's film also may be explained in economic terms: "Films could often be shot more cheaply on studio lots" (27). The interior setting is also a departure from the open public space associated with Stalinist positive heroes in the films of the 1930s.

illuminated by divine light, the main function of which is to preserve national identity and spirituality in the face of the war's trials.

Wait for Me amply demonstrates the main features of war-era family melodrama: the family's stability and completeness as the prime goal of the narrative. The female protagonist guards the homefront, while her husband conquers the enemy at the battle frontline. The border between the homefront and the frontline is blurred through the use of such transitional spaces as the air base. During the Great Patriotic War, the front is everywhere: up front and back home.

If *Wait for Me* reestablished war family melodrama as an important film genre in Soviet culture, then Ivan Pyr'ev's film *At 6 pm after the War* is probably the most popular war-era rendition of the narrative about a faithful woman waiting for her frontline sweetheart, a Soviet classic that still appeals to many Russians of the older generation. The story features a female protagonist, Varia, who waits for her beloved Vasilii, whom she has lost in the chaos of the war. Vasilii, in turn, loses a leg. After several years of separation the lovers, however, find each other and meet on Red Square at 6 pm after the war. As the annotated catalogue, *Soviet Feature Films,* puts it: "Torzhestvenno zvuchat kremlevskie kuranty, vozveshchaia pervyi den' mira" ("The clock on the Kremlin's tower triumphantly announces the first day of peace") (*Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my* 329). The concluding scene of Pyr'ev's film provides a visual quotation for the opening of Kalatozov's film, *The Cranes Are Flying*. However, in *Cranes* the clock on the Kremlin tower chimes four times: at four am on June 22, 1941 the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. By means of this inversion, *Cranes* implicitly signals its main goal: to reconfigure the conventions of Stalinist melodrama through a new instantiation of the war trope.

3.3. Reconfiguring the War and Family Tropes in Thaw Melodrama

Two variants of family melodrama provided the main narrative instantiations of the tropes: homefront female melodrama and domestic male melodrama. The following table

summarizes how the family and war tropes are reconfigured in the narrative structures of these two subgenres.

Table 1

Subgenres of family melodrama	Homefront melodrama	Domestic Male Melodrama
Protagonist	Female/family	Male/family
Family's gender composition	Heterosocial	Homosocial; female often located on the margins, less sensitive than the male
Generational completeness of the family	Incomplete: masculine lineage is interrupted	"Complete": father and son
Family crisis	Often not resolved—family is not reconstituted—or resolved by *deus ex machina*	Resolved: family is reconstituted
War experience	War victimizes protagonist in the present	War victimized protagonist in the past
Frontline setting	Displaced spatially	Displaced temporally—into the past
Temporality of loss	Never completely resolved	Resolved by male protagonist, who "cures" loss by reconstituting the nuclear family

In addition to alternative narrative structures, Thaw melodrama, above all in its feminine homefront strain, developed a different visual language to represent the small family's war experience. This language did not abandon the cine-stylistics of Stalinism; rather, it (often, unconsciously) spotlighted the *loci* of social and aesthetic contradictions. Among the latter, three had immediate implications for the political discourse of the era: a disruption of narrative linearity (flashbacks, dream sequences, fragmentary structure, etc.), which eventually conveyed the protagonist's personal crisis; montage sequences (expressing the intensity of characters' emotions) that challenged the total monopoly of continuity editing; and open-endedness, which replaced the strong closure that earlier used to resolve all the lines and threads of the plot.

The Cranes are Flying underscores the dominant narrative of Thaw homefront melodrama: the reconstitution of the nuclear family around the trauma of irrecoverable loss generated by war. Unlike other melodramas of the same period that primarily focus on the reconstitution of the troubled family (*Big Family* [Kheifits 1953]*, The Unfinished Story* [Ermler 1955]*, Ekaterina Voronina* [Anninskii 1957], etc.), *Cranes* shifts the focus of the war experience to the most powerless and sinful member of the community (from the Stalinist point of view): the unfaithful woman.

In the homefront melodrama of the Thaw, war as the cause of loss and instability is an ambiguous signifier because the victimizer is usually not an external enemy, but a sadistic one of "us." Kalatozov's melodrama reconfigures the war trope inherited from Stalinism, transforming the ideological confrontation between "us" and "them" into a conflict between the female protagonist and the war equated with familial "us." War victimizes disempowered, orphaned, and fallen Veronika (Tat'iana Samoilova). Her individual female experience becomes the locus for the enactment of Thaw values.

Thaw culture emphasizes the visualization of a protagonist's sufferings. The resurrection of visual expressivity in post-Stalinist film makes cameramen key figures in the production of Thaw films. Directors of photography of Thaw films are often remembered better than the directors.[157] It is no coincidence, that Kalatozov, one of the Thaw's major directors, started his career in the 1920s as a cameraman. Kalatozov's *Cranes* owes much of its success to the director of photography, Sergei Urusevskii[158] My discussion of *Cranes* concentrates on those

---

[157] Russian film histories usually refer to the director as the main author of the film. The only exceptions are to be found in the 1920s avant-garde film and in Thaw cinema. The Thaw's two most famous cameramen are Sergei Urusevskii (1908-74), who worked with Kalatozov, and Vadim Iusov (1929-), who collaborated with Andrei Tarkovskii.

[158] Sergei Urusevskii's contribution to Soviet cinema is usually discussed within the context of reviving the traditions of the 1920s avant-garde film (Bogomolov 157—161, Kamenskii, Liehm 199-200, Merkel' 32).

elements of its structure that contributed to a post-Stalinist re-imagining of both the war and family tropes: the protagonist's characterization through the uses of *mise-en-scène,* the new personalized temporality of war, and the re-hierarchized family structure.

The protagonist of Kalatozov's film, Veronika, is a foil to Stolper's Liza in *Wait for Me*. Veronika fails to follow the Stalinist commandment: "Zhdi menia" ("Wait for me"). The narrative, in fact, visually links her betrayal of Boris (Alexei Batalov) with his death. It is also important that she (like Iurii Zhivago's last daughter) is an orphan and a character with a lost identity, a quintessential melodrama character.

In addition to redefining the conventions of Stalinist melodrama, Veronika's characterization also subverts the canon of Stalinist femininity, which was shaped within the framework of socialist realism. Female characters were often at the center of early examples of socialist realist novels (Gor'kii's *Mother* [1907], Gladkov's *Cement* [1925]). Later Stalinist culture was less generous in making female characters the sole protagonists in such senior genres of socialist realism as the war novel or historical-revolutionary film. The position of the female character, Anka, in Furmanov's *Chapaev*—the novel written in 1923 and canonized in the 1930s--is more typical for the mature Stalin-era novel. Being responsible for the machine gun, Anka represents an emancipated woman. Her function in the main narrative, however, is auxiliary.

In Stalinist culture, the strong female character moves from prestigious to lower genres. If in 1926 Vsevolod Pudovkin makes a female character the central character in his film adaptation of Gor'kii's *Mother* (a historical-revolutionary film), then in 1930s the strong female protagonist becomes the staple of such lesser genres as musical and romantic comedy. In a way, the musicals of the 1930s shaped Stalinist femininity and passed it on to war-era melodrama. The

---

Urusevskii was a student of Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956), a major constructivist artist, whose visual style influenced Urusevskii's work.

musical's protagonist is a provincial Cinderella[159], whose upward mobility is enabled by the new regime's justice and the personal care of the father—Comrade Stalin. Stalin is usually indirectly present in the film, often as the name on the new model of a machine: the ship *Joseph Stalin* in *Volga, Volga* (Aleksandrov 1938) or the new model of a tractor, the "Stalinist," in *Tractor Drivers* (Pyr'ev 1939).   The female protagonist typically makes a symbolic trip to Moscow (the Stalinist Paradise), where she finds first her social status and then love (*Volga, Volga, The Radiant Path* [Aleksandrov 1940]*, The Swineherd and The Shepherd* [Pyr'ev 1941]).

By contrast, the heroine of the Thaw, Veronika, is excommunicated from the Stalinist Paradise at the very beginning of *Cranes*. In the introductory section of the film, the two lovers—Veronika and Boris—play in the heart of this Paradise: the garden inside the Kremlin walls. After the main narrative begins, the characters leave this sunny Eden for the narrative about their separation, Boris's death, and Veronika's fall and redemption. Such structuring of space in the film inverts the space of the Stalinist musical, epitomized by Aleksandrov's *Radiant Path*, where the protagonist embarks on her course in a provincial town and finishes it in the Moscow Kremlin.

The other key characteristic of the Stalinist woman that constitutes an important point of departure for Thaw femininity and Veronika's characterization in particular is the verbal ability of Stalinist women. They compose songs (*Volga, Volga*); initiate socialist competitions at factories (*Radiant Path*); criticize, unmask, and help to arrest bureaucrats, "wreckers," spies, and other enemies (*Circus* [Aleksandrov 1936], *Member of the Government* [Kheifits and Zarkhi 1939], *Radiant Path*). Stalinist women are empowered by the discourse of Stalinist modernization: collectivization, industrialization, and culturization.

---

[159] Aleksandrov originally planned to title one of his musicals *Cinderella*, but Stalin suggested that he change the title. Not surprisingly, the film was released under Stalin's title, *Radiant Path*, depicting the internationally known fairy tale as Soviet reality.

Cranes defines Veronika against the background of ideal Stalinist womanhood, as the Thaw envisions it. Her foil, Boris's older sister, Irina, incarnates this ideal: articulate, reason-driven, sexually repressed, and dressed in a military uniform. Kalatozov, however, presents Irina's model of femininity as unfit for the Thaw's envisioned new deal. The military uniform, a masculine, low voice, and military body language are presented as a gender mismatch. Irina's father even complains that in being a successful surgeon his daughter made only one mistake— she was born female. Kalatozov transforms the verbal facility of the Stalinist woman into unjustifiable harshness, especially evident in Irina's treatment of Veronika. The phallic power of Irina's comments about Mark's infidelity wounds Veronika as much as the literal rape by Mark (Aleksandr Shvorin). Finally, the primacy of reason at the expense of emotionality is presented by the filmmakers as Irina's deficiency of sensitivity. Moreover, Irina's repressed sexuality is channeled into sadistic energy, used to torment the victim-protagonist of the film.

4. Visual Style of Thaw Homefront Melodrama

4.1. Expressive *Mise-en-scène*

Marginalized and gender displaced, Irina yields the narrative and visual space of the film to the true melodramatic protagonist—Veronika, who inherits, in inverted form, the Stalinist heroine's transparency and exteriority of structure. Stalinist films use *mise-en-scène* to represent an absence of interiority and the public nature of the new Soviet femininity. In *Radiant Path*, for example, the heroine exists only in public spaces: factory, public shower, communal room. She meets her date as the Exhibit of Economic Achievements in Moscow. She drives a convertible limo. The exemplary Soviet woman needs no closed or private space. Veronika's version of femininity is also represented through *mise-en-scène*, but its function here radically differs from that of Stalinist films. The expressive *mise-en-scène* of *Cranes* makes visible the protagonist's inner suffering. Mary Ann Doane argues that the distinctive feature in the structure of the

melodramatic character is "the externalization of internal emotions and their embodiment within the *mise-en-scène*" (Doane 285). Among elements of *mise-en-scène,* the most important are the protagonist's body, emotionally charged objects, and a setting emphasizing temporality of loss.

In family melodrama, in general, and *Cranes,* in particular, the protagonist's body is especially important because Veronika, unlike Stalinist women, has a weak command of language.[160] Tania Modleski notes that "many of the classic film melodramas from the 30s through the 50s are peopled by … women possessed by an overwhelming desire to express themselves … but continually confronting the difficulty, if not the impossibility to realize the desire" (537). This observation accurately describes the dilemmas confronting Veronika, who cannot give form to her sufferings through language and painfully searches alternative channels of self-expression. At the beginning of the film, Veronika either asks questions or speaks in incomplete sentences. The best example of her inarticulateness is the song about the cranes, which Veronika sings at the beginning of the film. Viewers never hear the whole song, only the introductory lines[161]:

> Zhuravliki-korabliki
> Letiat pod nebesami,
> I serye, i belye,
> I s dlinnymi nosami.

---

[160] Following Peter Brooks' (1976 56) and Christine Gledhill's (5-39) discussions of melodrama, Marcia Landy and Amy Villarejo point out that a "mute quality" is one of the major characteristics of melodrama: "the verbal language is inadequate to the affect that melodrama seeks to communicate" (27).

[161] The screenplay is based on Viktor Rozov's play *Alive Forever*, the first stage production of Thaw-era major theater—*The Contemporary* (1956). In the play Veronika sings an entire song and not just a fragment (Rozov 1985 355).

> The long-billed cranes
> Are flying overhead,
> Gray ones, white ones,
> All with long noses. (Rozov 1968 24)

In this fragment, the narrative or facts fade into irrelevance, replaced by the value of mood and emotion. When other characters hear Veronika speak, they do not understand her, and either tell her to calm down (her neighbor Anna Mikhailovna) or accuse her of hooliganism (Mark).

Veronika lacks the paternal source of discourse available to Stalinist women. All the males who could potentially empower Veronika with their ideologically impeccable logos disappear from the narrative. Stalin, as a potential father, is excluded at the very beginning of the film when the lovers leave the Kremlin gardens. Veronika loses her biological father and her fiancé in the first months of the war. The discourses offered by the other two male characters, Mark and Fedor Ivanovich (Vasilii Merkur'ev), are corrupt. Mark constantly lies to Veronika. When Fedor Ivanovich pronounces his diatribe against unfaithful women, he speaks the official discourse that pushes Veronika toward a suicide attempt: after his speech Veronika decides to jump off a bridge under a train.[162]

Inept at verbal expression, Veronika retreats to the language of emotional bodily gesture[163], which the film promotes to the status of a natural language, as opposed to the

---

[162] As Stites notes, this was a literary reference "no Russian could miss" (141). In case, however, anyone did manage to miss it, in the late 1960s Tat'iana Samoilova was invited to play the protagonist in Zarkhi's film adaptation of *Anna Karenina* (1967). Because the success of *Cranes* ensured her star status and identified her with Thaw priorities, Tat'iana Samoilova's suicide as Karenina provided a symbolic closure to the Thaw. The star had to die, at least on celluloid, when the discursive practices of the Thaw approached an end.

[163] Discussing the reactions of Diderot and Rousseau to the Enlightenment crisis, Brooks notes, "Gesture appears in [Rousseau's AP] *Essai* to be a kind of pre-language, giving a direct presentation of things prior to the alienation from presence set off by the passage into articulated language" (1976 66).

conventionality of verbal discourse. Body language provides the most efficient way to be sincere and to convey the inner self. Tellingly, at the beginning of the film, Veronika and Boris agree on the time of their next date by using fingers instead of words; more precisely, Boris speaks, while Veronika uses her hands (Figure 34).

No, I can't. I'll be at the factory.
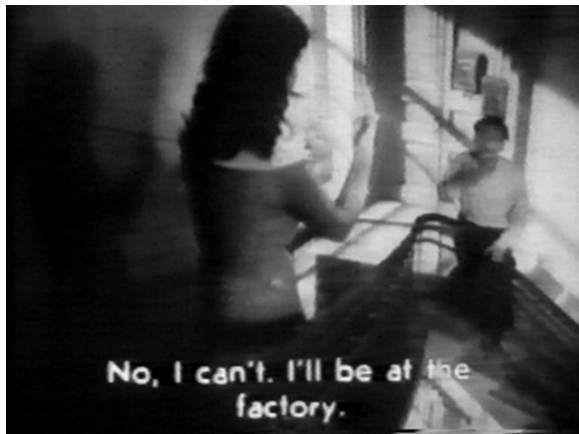
Figure 34.

In several key episodes of the film, Veronika retreats to expressive bodily gestures: she throws cookies to the soldiers in the departure for the front scene; she slaps Mark's face in the rape scene; she runs to the train station in the suicide scene; in a hyperbolic displacement of emotional tears to domestic "duty," she does the laundry for Boris (a war orphan whom she has adopted) as she silently listens to the news of her beloved's death. Finally, at film's close, she gives flowers to the people celebrating the end of the war.

Veronika's gestures often look clumsy and overstated. In her review of the film, Maiia Turovskaia argued that the melodramatic excess of Tat'iana Samoilova's acting in the role of Veronika is a shortcoming of the film.

Veronika's fate started as a realistic human drama … but turned into a tearjerker

… I would argue that Veronika's infernal aspects signal the filmmakers' failure to

230

cope with the complexity of the film's theme. (1957, 17, translation and emphasis

mine)

Discussing the representations of sincerity in Russian culture, Svetlana Boym notes, as though in

response to Turovskaia's argument, that in Russian culture emotional excess that appears

artificial (verbal clumsiness, scandal) signifies one's sincerity: "Russian sincerity … is a

melodrama … in which the first-person voice tries to authenticate its truthfulness and pure-

heartedness in the most exaggerated and occasionally scandalous declarations" (100—101). In

this context, Veronika's excessive gestures, together with her verbal ineptitude, convey her pure-

heartedness and the genuineness of her sufferings.

Other characters who share the protagonist's sincerity also favor emotional gesture over

corrupt, reason-driven speech. When Fedor Ivanovich, for example, tries to explain why his son

has to go to war, he cannot find the appropriate words, starts crying, and has a shot of pure

alcohol. When Boris's friend jokes about the likelihood of Veronika's being unfaithful to him,

Boris also abandons words and uses his fists as a means of argument.

While Veronika's bodily gestures create a sincere discourse beyond the corrupt word,

Veronika's body also becomes a major site of war trauma, conveyed through two major elements

of *mise-en-scène*: lighting and the color of her clothing. Veronika's clothes create a polarized

realm of white and black. The two colors signal the protagonist's fall and resurrection as part of

the hyperbolized melodramatic world, where every dress change

is charged with the conflict between light and darkness, salvation and damnation,

and where people's destinies and choices of life seem finally to have little to do

with the surface realities of a situation, and much more to do with the inner drama

231

in which consciousness must purge itself and assume the burden of moral

sainthood. (Brooks 1991 53)

The contrast inscribed in Veronika's clothes expands into morally polarized tonal contrasts in the

entire film. Like many films of the Thaw, *Cranes* is black and white, contrasting with the

opulent color of late Stalinist film and linking it with the stylistics of 1920s avant-garde cinema.

Veronika's black and white clothes serve as the ultimate surface signifier exteriorizing her inner

conflict.

Kalatozov's second mode of inscribing visual trauma on Veronika's body is via lighting.

If in *Wait for Me* the bright light on Liza's face and blonde hair underscores her fidelity and

perseverance amidst the darkness of war, the onset of war in *Cranes* covers the face of the

protagonist in shadows. They emphasize her vulnerability and anticipate the brutality of war.

Bright, high-key lighting disappears from the film once the war begins.

Shadows envelop Boris and Veronika during their last meeting. Only their eyes are

highlighted by bright patches. The ominous potential of shadows receives full realization in the

rape scene, when the flashes of bomb explosions cast grotesque shadows on the protagonist's

body, with the rape experience visualized as patches of black on Veronika's face (Figure 35), in a

conflation of national and bodily invasion.

Figure 35.

The thinner and lighter shadows in the second part of the film signal Veronika's gradual recovery from the rape of war. The concluding scene, however, represents but does not resolve the contradiction between personal loss and common victory. The high-key, bright light shining over the celebratory crowd contrasts with the darkness of Veronika's eyes and hair.

The two major functions of the protagonist's body—producing the language of sincerity and serving as the site of war trauma—are mirrored in the film's use of emotionally charged objects. True to melodrama's penchant for "the non-psychological conception of the *dramatis personae*" (Elsaesser 69), Kalatozov's film makes interiority visible through the affectively charged objects in the *mise-en-scène*.

To represent the protagonist's emotional state, Kalatozov employs Pudovkin's notion of "plastic material": "those forms and movements that shall most clearly and vividly express in the images the whole content of the idea" (55). Plastic objects in *Cranes* carry extraordinary emotional weight. For example, the stuffed squirrel that Boris gives to Veronika, whose nickname is Squirrel, materializes the characters' emotional state (love, grief) or implies the generation of intense emotions (signalling betrayal, resurrection). Passed on to Veronika as Boris's birthday gift to her, after his departure the squirrel

233

transforms into a symbol of their love.[164] After Mark rapes and marries Veronika, he steals the squirrel and presents it as a birthday gift to his mistress, thereby transforming the squirrel into an antithetical symbol, that of betrayal. When the stuffed squirrel returns to Veronika and she belatedly reads the birthday card from Boris hidden inside it, the stuffed toy comes to symbolize the promise of Veronika's resurrection.

Displaying characters' interiority through the objects of *mise-en-scène* is one of post-Stalinist culture's earliest discursive strategies for articulating the individual's inner world. In the case of the stuffed squirrel, Kalatozov uses the plasticity of a melodramatic object to create a dialectical spiral of meaning transformations: the stuffed squirrel returns eventually not to the initial meaning, but to its metaphor: a birthday gift becomes a symbol of Veronika's spiritual resurrection.

A similar return to the metaphorized version of the initial meaning may be traced in the transformations of water as an emotionally charged entity. In the opening shot the lovers are on the embankment, where the river's water is clear and pure, like the lovers' experiences. In an excessive doubling typical of melodrama, a passing street-cleaning machine pours cleansing water on the lovers (Figure 36).

---

[164] The stuffed squirrel also functions as a realized metaphor for interiority. Boris leaves a note inside the toy, which Veronika for a long time leaves unexplored. The inner core of the symbolic object is revealed to Veronika only after her fall and redemption.

Figure 36.

That water turns into broken glass in the rape scene, and into muddy swamp water on the battlefield in the scene of Boris' death. Veronika's marriage with Mark is framed by Siberian snow and ice, while melting water dripping into a puddle symbolically denotes the return of spring and the protagonist's resurrection. This motif is also linked to the sequence of Veronika's laundering (Figure 37).[165]

Figure 37.

---

[165] Compare the use of similar imagery in the characterization of Lara in *Dr. Zhivago*.

Closing the symbolic circle, water finally returns as a clear river in one of the concluding shots of the film, when Veronika tells Volodia: "Chelovek ne mozhet zhit' bez nadezhdy" ("A human being cannot live without hope"). Water, thus, gradually acquires the meaning of restored hope—a metaphor for the love between Boris and Veronika.

Kalatozov's use of emotionally charged objects recycles the avant-garde notion of plastic material at the service of melodrama. These uses are indicative of early Thaw signifying practices. First, items represent individual interiority. Second, through the plasticity of melodramatic objects, the Thaw changes the nature of the interaction between signifier and signified. If Stalinism designates only one meaning for every signifier, Thaw melodrama recognizes that a signifier (water, a stuffed squirrel) may change its meaning depending on context, though it has one meaning per context. More complex forms of ambiguity become part of signifying practices only in late Thaw, with the rise of ironic discourse in Youth Prose and film comedy.

The filmmakers of *Cranes* (especially the cameraman Sergei Urusevskii) considered setting the primary means to express Veronika's confrontation with the war, her muted war trauma. A distinctive feature of Thaw melodrama's setting, and of *Cranes'* in particular, is the subordination of space to the temporality of lateness, separation, and loss.

Cranes is radically different in this respect from Stalinist works, which favor spatial metaphors of war. In *Wait For Me,* Liza searches for her husband on a map. In Eisenstein's film, Ivan the Terrible contemplates the Earth's spheres. Numerous portraits depict Stalin with maps and battle plans. By contrast, Thaw homefront melodrama allows time "out of joint" to dominate the space of the film. War becomes a time of personal tragedy instead of an epic space for a monumental battle.

Temporality starts dominating space from the initial frame with the film's title, which appears against the background of the clock on the main Kremlin tower (The Spasskaia [literally, Savior's] Tower). Clock sounds and images constantly remind the viewer about war as a time of

loss. The clock chime of the radio foreshadows the announcement of war. When viewers hear the radio signal, they see Boris's empty chair at the family table (Figure 38).

Figure 38.

The family clock ticks deafeningly when Veronika opens the door into the abyss of her apartment, which has been destroyed by a bomb.

If time signifies the personal tragedy of war, then Veronika's recovery from the trauma is conveyed through images of the protagonist transgressing the spatial borders separating her from other people.   Crossing borders acquires semiotic significance in post-Stalinist culture because Stalinism values and protects borders and their impenetrability. See, for example the cult of the borderguard and his dog in Stalin-era film *Dzhul'bars* (Shneiderov 1936). The guard dog's nickname becomes the title of the film. In addition to defending Soviet Motherland, the guard is also necessary to protect the sovereignty of Soviet airwaves. See for example, the figure of an armed guard in Rodchenko's *Photo Story About Shukhov Radio Center and Tower* in Moscow (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Aleksandr Rodchenko. *Armed Guard* **(1929). <http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/art-history/werckmeister/May_6_1999/1016.jpg> Accessed May 9, 2001.**

To represent the protagonist's ordeal, usually Kalatozov favors two types of spatial composition within the film's shots: a space marked by dividing and separating lines and borders, and a space dominated by the protagonist's motion across them. Divided space appears more often in the first part of the film until Veronika's suicide attempt (see, for example, the shots of the departure to the front, where the prison-like bars of the steel fence [Figure 40] separate Boris and Veronika).

Figure 40.

Cranes also recasts the machine, which was idolized by Stalinist culture, into an important means of fragmenting the visual frame. Kalatozov focuses on one of the most popular machines in totalitarian cultures—a tank. The farewell scene at the beginning of the film is introduced through a shot in which the space of *mise-en-scène* is divided by tank columns (Figure 41).

Figure 41.

Their diagonal lines dividing the screen echo the shadows on the protagonists' bodies in the preceding sequence and visually anticipate Boris and Veronika's separation.

The film contrasts such divided frames and claustrophobic rooms to transitional spaces, in which the protagonist experiences radical transformations. Mikhail Bakhtin, discussing the poetics of Dostoevskii's creative art, notes that "on the threshold … the only time possible is crisis time, in which a moment is equal to years" (169—70).[166] The crisis/threshold chronotope precisely characterizes the emotional intensity of Veronika's existence in transitional spaces. Her arrival in such a space indicates her extreme emotional state and a drastic change in her life. Among various types of such spaces, two are of decisive importance for the construction of the protagonist and her relationship to the war: bridges and staircases.

A bridge provides the space for Veronika's psychological/spiritual transition, enabling her resurrection and reconciliation with the losses of war. Veronika comes to the bridge to commit suicide, but ends up saving the life of an orphan and thereby saving her own soul. At film's end, Veronika crosses the bridge in an attempt to come to terms with her loss.[167]

The three stairwell sequences, likewise, provide transitional spaces in which characters experience the unavoidability of war sufferings en route to their eventual salvation. The

---

[166] In her article for *Aktery sovetskogo kino,* Maiia Turovskaia links Veronika with the female characters of Fedor Dostoevskii.

[167] Kalatozov originally planned to include one more bridge scene at the beginning of the film:
> One of the scenes not filmed for technical reasons was supposed to be the beginning of the film. Veronika and Boris are walking on the Crimean Bridge. I will just cite from Aleksei Batalov's memoir: "The dark buildings in the background and the wet street make the lovers' figures illuminated [by contrast]. While walking past the camera, Veronika jumps up onto a chain lying along the embankment, which gradually stretches up to the top of the bridge's support. The young couple continues walking together now holding hands, but Veronika seems to take off into the sky, as she follows the gigantic rising chain of the bridge. (Bogomolov 178, translation mine)

stairwells spatially symbolize the death-shadowed time of war as an inversion of life's temporality. Consequently, living characters move counter-clockwise—that is, against the time of war, while dead characters move clockwise, in tune with the temporality of death. Significantly, both Boris and Veronika favor an ascending motion, associated with a reconstitution of their "moral sainthood" (Brooks 1991, 53). Stairs belong to the vertical axis of Thaw melodrama, linking the earthly and heavenly worlds.

Thus the expressive *mise-en-scène* of *Cranes* provides an alternative to Stalinist discourse, elaborating both effective and affective ways to represent the dynamics of the protagonist's interiority. David Rodowick notes in his discussion of melodramatic *mise-en-scène* that it "did not so much reproduce as produce the inner turmoil of the characters; or in other words … the *mise-en-scène* took over the objective signification of the social network that entrapped the characters" (274). In the context of 1950s Soviet Union, that process entailed the use of an expressive *mise-en-scène* to foreground the emotionally-driven individual who is brutalized by, but transcends, the deadly logic of war. Crucially, transcending the war indirectly signals transcending the reason and iron necessity of Stalinism.[168]

4.2. Camera Use: Visualizing the Melodramatic Protagonist

The camera's primary function in *Cranes* is to create the melodramatic protagonist. If the *mise-en-scène* employs the protagonist's excessive bodily gestures to represent the sincerity and uniqueness of her emotions, then the camera employs close-ups to the same end. Close-up

---

[168] The reviewers of the film identified a lack of rationality and the primacy of emotions as key aspects of Veronika's characterization: "Veronika ne umna … No aktrisa s udivitel'noi proniknovennost'iu pokazyvaet sozrevanie chuvstv svoei geroini" (Iurenev 13); " Veronika is not smart … However, the actress demonstrates the ripening of heroine's feeling with a surprising sincerity" (translation mine).

241

shots focus mainly on Veronika. They foreground and validate the sufferings of the most

disempowered and marginalized member of the film's social and family hierarchy—a raped

orphan, a female in-law. Moreover, to obliterate the significance of the background, the

cameraman, Urusevskii, often uses short-focused lenses and blurs the background of his close-

ups (Figure 42).[169]

Figure 42.

The camera emphasizes the intensity of Veronika's emotions by tilting her face in the

frame, disrupting the tonal homogeneity of the image with shadows, placing an obstacle between

the protagonist's face and the viewer's gaze (Figure 43).

---

[169] Kosmatov (26), Zorkaia (1989 212), and Bordwell and Thompson (216) identify short-focused optics as a

distinctive feature of the film's style.
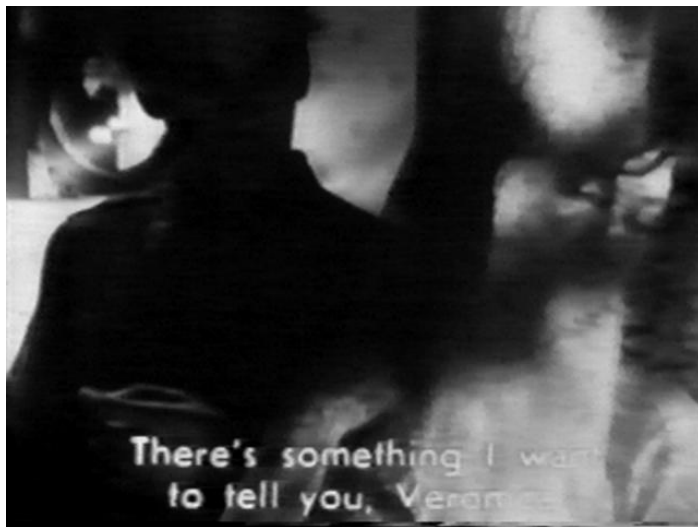
Figure 43.

An upside down close-up (Figure 44) of Veronika as Mark carries her off indicates the destruction of peace-time norms and hierarchies. Through a carnivalesque close-up, Urusevskii presents the ultimate trauma of the protagonist as Mark rapes her.

Figure 44.

The close-ups conveying emotional excess also serve an important narrative function. They break the linear flow of the narrative and usually frame sequences designed to evoke pathos. For example, the sequence of Veronika's rape and Boris's death opens with a close-up of Veronika's face and ends with a close-up of Boris in the throes of death. His dead eyes acquire a glass-like quality, echoing the image of broken glass on the floor of the room where Veronika was raped. Serving as a framing device for the sequences dominated by extreme feelings, close-ups emphasize emotional intensity as the protagonist's distinctive trait.

To convey the intensity of the protagonist's emotions, Urusevskii also employs extremely long tracking or panning shots.[170] For example, he structures the concluding scene, in which Veronika runs to see Boris's friend and to learn about her beloved's death, as a combination of radically extended tracking shots of Veronika (lasting from 25 to 55 seconds). The temporal excessiveness of the tracking shots underscores Veronika's passionate hope, while the abrupt cut to a close-up of her and Stepan visually captures her despair when Boris's death is confirmed.

To impede the narrative flow and to intensify the emotional excess of the episode, the filmmakers also use real time in their long tracking shots, the main effect of which critic Vitalii Troianovskii sums up as follows: "superpanorama dlitsia i dlitsia v estestvennom vremeni, a vy vdrug oshchushchaete gorlovoi spazm ot … blizosti k drugoi dushe" (1993 54) "The extralong tracking shot filmed in real time goes on and on. And you suddenly feel choked up from your closeness to another's soul." If the close-ups emphasize the authenticity of suffering, than the length of the takes underscores the scope of individual trauma.

---

[170] Russian works on Urusevskii's style call these long takes *superpanorama*, without distinguishing between pans and tracking shots (Merkel', Troianovskii 1993 54).

Finally, the third important camera device in the film is the use of unconventional angles (extremely high and low) to represent the protagonist's psychological state. In the introductory part of the film high-angle crane shots suggest the scale of the lovers' happiness through the openness and expanse of space. Shifts to low-angled shots focusing on the couple foreground the significance of their togetherness. With the beginning of the war, high-angled shots gradually disappear, while closed forms convey the claustrophobic nature of Veronika's space. She lives in the attic, where the camera's eye is always confronted with objects blocking the view, creating an atmosphere of entrapment (Figure 45).[171]

Figure 45.

High-angled shots reappear only at the very end of the film, which closes with a crane shot of the protagonist (Figure 46).

---

[171] Compare this visual representation of the protagonist's inner disharmony through the use of claustrophobic space with the description of Gordon's apartment at the end of Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, another Thaw master text. The conformist intellectuals are entrapped in an apartment created out of the space between the first and second floors of a house (Pasternak 1994, 387). See also the discussion of the novel's chronotope in chapter three of this dissertation.

Figure 46.

These high-angled shots return Veronika to the peaceful life established at the beginning of the film. The camera here serves as a *deus ex machina* that tries to bring the film to a happy closure and to symbolize Veronika's coming to terms with her tragedy. Moreover, the concluding high-angled shot—where the camera becomes a sort of eye in the sky—and the reappearance of the paternal figure (Fedor Ivanovich) emphasize the restoration, if only partially, of the patriarchal order that presumably will protect Veronika in the future. The protagonist's emotional state, however, hardly coincides with the camera's attempts to regain the space of innocence. To rephrase Linda Williams: *Cranes* "begins, and wants to end, in a space of innocence" (65), but for Veronika the old space of innocence cannot be restored unambiguously.

5. "The Rhetoric of Too Late"

5.1. Redefining Soviet Time.

Homefront melodrama of the 1950s, in general, and *Cranes* in particular, redefined the nature of Soviet time by foregrounding the temporality of the protagonist's losses and her powerlessness in the face of time's irreversibility. Stalinist culture favored a teleological vision

of great historical time: the inevitable progression of history toward the triumph of communism. Characters existing in this linear temporality were expected to create features of the future in the present, by, for example, overfulfilling production plans and, thus, being several months or years ahead of schedule.

Stalinist wartime melodrama gave an interesting twist to the theme of overcoming the present. For instance, in *Wait For Me,* when the pilot Ermolov is missing in action and his friend, the journalist Vainshtein, tries to convince Ermolov's wife, Liza, that he was killed, she continues waiting for Ermolov, who finally returns to her. The pilot's return here becomes a metonymical sign of the future in the present: viewers are supposed to recognize in Liza's personal happiness omens of the impending common victory.

Cranes shifted the direction of Soviet temporality. Instead of overcoming the past in the name of the future, the film's protagonist seeks reconciliation with her past. Moreover, Thaw melodrama shifts the focus from official state time to personal, individual time. More precisely, the film dramatizes the conflict between personal and state time. The film opens with a tilted frame of the clock on the Kremlin tower. This unconventional perspective on the country's major clock is the first visual clue to the film's concern with personal time. The narrative confirms the discrepancy between state time and the characters' personal time: the Kremlin clock simultaneously chimes the end of Boris and Veronika's date and the beginning of war (4 am on June 22, 1941). War-driven time determines the fate of the characters.

State time and the lovers' personal time are out of emotional tune throughout the film. Two events—the beginning of the war and the hard-won victory at its end—delineate state time. Boris and Veronika miss the official announcement of the outbreak of war because of their long rendezvous. They are also emotionally displaced at the moment of victory because Boris is killed and Veronika's irrecoverable loss prevents her from joining the general festivities.

Boris and Veronika are not only out of sync with state time, but are also never able to synchronize their personal times. The only moment the lovers' personal clocks tick together is during the last morning of peace. With the outbreak of war, the "rhetoric of too late" (Doane

247

300) takes over the characters' personal time. Doane points out that "the 'moving effect'" of melodrama "is tied to a form of mistiming, a bad timing, or a disphasure" (300). The traumatic separation of the two lovers starts with Veronika's lateness, first to the farewell party, and then to the site of the recruits' departure. This series culminates in the scene of Boris's death, where the last thing Boris sees is himself arriving late to his wedding with Veronika.

The alternative to this temporality of belatedness and loss is the temporality of new beginnings, which derives much of its symbolism from the Christian notion of resurrection. While not suspending the phenomenon of loss and lateness, this temporality provides hope for rebirth. The rebirth chronotope occurs at the center of the narrative four times in scenes of extreme emotional intensity. The first two scenes consist of miraculous coincidences—a distinctive feature of melodramatic narrative. When Veronika chooses to save the life of an orphan instead of committing suicide, the saved boy's name, improbably, turns out to be Boris. Similarly, when Veronika is betrayed by Mark, she finds the long-lost birthday note from her killed fiancé, its message articulated by his "posthumous" voiceover wishing her a happy birthday. Boris's greetings fall not on Veronika's actual birthday, but close to Christmas day: the moment of Veronika's spiritual rebirth.

These two miraculous events in *Cranes* are followed by two naturalized metaphors of rebirth. First, spring returns to the town where Veronika is staying during the war. Second, at the very end of the film, the cranes—birds that abandon Russia in winter—return to post-war Moscow.

Like the author of *Doctor Zhivago*, the filmmakers of *Cranes* were criticized for using "non-realistic," excessively melodramatic narrative coincidences (Turovskaia 1957 17). The temporality of hope cast in the melodramatic discourse did not find easy acceptance among Thaw critics, who either were closet modernists or enjoyed living in the totalitarian world of linear progressive time, which is alien to the temporality of resurrection and miraculous coincidences.

By defining its dominant temporality as the personal time of the protagonist's loss and rediscovery of hope, *Cranes* rejects the Stalinist procedure of overcoming the present so as to project it into the future. Veronika's personal time reasserts "the need for some version of the Sacred and offers further proof of the irremediable loss of the Sacred in its traditional, categorical unifying form" (Brooks 1991 61). Thaw home-front melodrama conceived of the resacralization of time as a personal reconciliation with the losses of war.

5.2. Dismantling the Family

Cranes' emphasis on the temporality of individual loss indicates the major difference between the narrative structure of Viktor Rozov's play, on which the film is based, and that of the film. Rozov spotlights the reconstituted family, whereas Kalatozov explores war as an individual trauma. Although the family exists in the background of the film's narrative structure, its redefinition as the small family (as distinct from the official national family) carries tremendous weight for the articulation of Thaw values.

The family of Borozdins seems to preserve, although on a smaller scale, such elements of the Stalinist Family as a vertical hierarchy and the centrality of the patriarch (in the film, Fedor Ivanovich). Visually *Cranes* installs the primacy of the father figure through the dominance of the father's body in the *mise-en-scène*, especially in the episodes where the entire family gathers around the table: the breakfast sequence at the beginning of the film, the farewell dinner, and the announcement of Mark and Veronika's marriage (Figure 47).

Figure 47.

The hierarchical structure, however, is flawed because the patriarch lacks a direct heir: his son, Boris, is killed. Fedor Ivanovich is powerless to protect Boris from death, as well as his fiancée from rape. The father cannot keep his family in order. His own nephew, Mark, manipulates him: he uses his high position to arrange an exemption from military service, rapes Veronika, and gets father's reluctant blessing for his marriage with her.

Finally, the patriarch's name, Fedor Ivanovich, underscores the flaws of the hierarchy: Fedor Ioanovich was a "saint but feeble-minded" (MacKenzie 174) successor and son of Ivan the Terrible. Tsar Fedor died in 1598 without a male heir and brought the rule of Ivan's dynasty in Russia to an end.

In addition to destabilizing the structure of the nuclear family, *Cranes* complicates the family's hierarchy by contradictions in the construction of the father's masculinity. The major contradiction arises from the juxtaposition of the official paternal discourse of the state and the discourse of the small family's paternal authority, Fedor Ivanovich. Official paternity is represented mostly through acoustic devices, especially radio announcements. Of the two central radio messages in the film, the first announces the outbreak of war (thereby linking official discourse with war), and the second assures listeners that nothing special has happened at the front—right after the episode where Boris falls victim to enemy fire.[172] The incompatibility between the tragedy of Boris's death and the tone of the official news broadcast lays open the contradiction between the personal experience of war and the perception offered by the radio, the mouthpiece of the state. Similarly, Stepan's official speech at the end of the film contrasts with

---

[172] The scene evokes the ending of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front.*

Veronika's silent mourning. Stepan's off-screen, upbeat voice is at diametric odds with the close-ups of Veronika's speechless anguish.

Fedor Ivanovich, in contrast to state paternity, avoids and even ironizes the style of official speeches, as in the scene of the farewell dinner before Boris's departure. His paternal discourse mirrors Veronika's melodramatic sincerity as he stumbles over the words of his toast and breaks into tears. The film's closing scene shows Fedor Ivanovich as silent as Veronika, connecting him emotionally with her trauma of war and contrasting with the officiousness of Stepan's loud public speech. In the last frame of the film Fedor puts his arm around Veronika: both characters "disappear" together into the crowd as the camera pulls back.

Such a splintering of paternity affects the meaning of both the war and the family tropes. *Cranes* equates war with the "us" that brutalizes the individual. Homefront melodrama does not resolve the conflict between state paternity implicated in war and small family paternity attempting to intercede on behalf of the victimized protagonist. It represents the conflict but suspends judgment (Zorkaia 1989 212). The small family with a melodramatic emotional father provided one of the first proto-private spaces as an alternative to the totalitarian national family of the Stalinist era. This space, like the protagonist, celebrates its virtue through its vulnerability and suffering.

6. Thaw Culture Re/Views *Cranes*

6.1. Viewers' Responses.

Accounts of viewer response to Kalatozov's film are as much a cultural construct as the film itself. In accordance with the cultural values of the time, Thaw cultural producers emphasized certain moments of the film's reception and effaced less important ones. For example, *Cranes* opened in the movie theater *Moscow*, and, according to Rozov, proved a modest event, virtually unnoticed by critics and the general public (1987 380). Histories of

Soviet cinema, however, have moved the opening of the film to the *Udarnik*, the central movie theater in Moscow at that time (Anninskii 1991 8-9, Liehm 1977 199). The major reactions to the film, according to contemporaries, consisted of tears, extreme emotional excess, and an inability to express verbally the overwhelming experience (Anninskii 8-9, 33 1991, Iutkevich 144, Rozov 1987 379, Samoilova 40). In short, viewers' reception mirrored the melodrama of the visual text. Lev Anninskii's account of the film's first screening (October 1957) became a *topos* of Thaw cultural history:

> The silence in the *Udarnik* Theater in Moscow was profound . . . A certain shift of
> values took place in the audience . . . In my mind, hundreds of international
> awards could not make up for the tears with which people purged themselves after
> the film. In truth, our tears "unlocked the door." (cited in Liehm 199)

According to these critics, the emotional intensity with which the audience allegedly responded to the film not only confirmed the new values articulated in the film's style (above all, the cult of emotions and individual experience), but also recognized the limitations of those verbal conventions that the film associated for the most part with the Stalinist legacy. Finally, the outburst of emotions elicited by the film was indicative of the ideological crisis within Soviet society. Kalatozov's melodrama in this respect was the single most subversive cinematic dramatization of Thaw cultural conflicts. Critics who associate themselves with the values of Thaw culture claim that *Cranes* marks the major shift in the cinematic language of the time: "Vse nachalos' s *Zhuravlei*" (Anninskii 1991 8) "Everything started with the *Cranes*"; "shestidesiatye dlia menia nachalis' s 57-go—fil'mom *Letiat zhuravli* " (Shilova 55), "for me the sixties started in 1957 with the film *The Cranes Are Flying*."

Russian accounts of the international reception of *Cranes* also spotlight emotional excess. Sergei Iutkevich's account of the screening of *Cranes* at the 13th Cannes Festival dwells on the audience's transition from supercilious reserve to an outburst of admiration and sympathy for the protagonist:

> The audience, arrogant and snobbish as ever, … always reserved and reluctant to show a sincere response, suddenly burst into applause after the departure for the front scene … The viewers burst into applause again after the episode of the bombing raid at night and Boris's death . . . The entire concluding episode was accompanied by the sound of endless applause. I looked around and didn't recognize the audience. Members of the festival jury were sniffling and putting handkerchiefs in their pockets. Sincere tears touched the meticulous make-up of the film stars and, above all, the hostess of the festival, Danielle Darrieux. Suddenly losing their snobbishness, high society ladies and gentlemen, who didn't in the least know Tat'iana Samoilova, kept hugging and kissing her. (10 144, translation mine)

In this vivid description of Soviet Thaw values being publicly enacted at the Cannes Festival, Iutkevich draws a direct parallel between the most stylistically hyperbolic episodes in the film and the most emotionally excessive reactions of the audience to it. Cinematic "open form" triumphed as the politics of melodramatic style spilled over textual boundaries.

6.2. Reviews of *Cranes.*

If in retrospect the evocation of pathos seems to be the hallmark of this entire period of Soviet history, the immediate critical responses castigated the film for its melodramatic stance. Two aspects of the film's structure were the hardest both to articulate and to accept: (1) the

reconfiguration of the war and family tropes and (2) the emotional excess of the protagonist, which periodically disrupted the linear narrative and distorted the realistic *mise-en-scène*. The discussion of the film among Gorchakov, Iurenev, Kosmatov, and Turovskaia published in the journal *The Art of Cinema* (12, 1957) fully captures the critics' struggle with the film's style.

Maiia Turovskaia expressed her sincere bewilderment at the use of melodramatic conventions in the film through the aporetic title of her review, "'Da' i 'net'." In fact, the insightful critic pinpointed in her review the defining features of homefront melodrama: a powerless, victimized, female protagonist, overt villainy, extreme situations, miraculous coincidences, and the representation of emotional intensity through an excess of editing, lighting, and music (16-18). Turovskaia rightly notes that these properties of *Cranes* disrupt logical motivation and the linear narrative's coherence. Ironically, she even defines Kalatozov's stylistic excess as an "imitation of life" (16), the title of one of Hollywood's most famous family melodramas (Stahl 1934, Sirk 1959). According to the critic, however, the appearance of melodramatic devices—with their "shameless contradictoriness" of style and ideology (Nowell-Smith 74)—are simply flaws in the textual design, and not the hallmarks of the film's genre or authorial style. The critic finds the melodramatic style of the rape scene insulting:

> The aesthetics of this scene, with the melodramatic effects of light and music, …
> seems almost insulting after the reserved realism of the departure for the front
> episode. Life is patently replaced by its more or less artful imitation in the rape
> scene. (16, translation mine)

In her review Turovskaia finds it regrettable that the mastery of montage merely serves the "sentimental banality" (17) of melodrama.

In short, Turovskaia accurately described the key techniques of melodrama as the cinematic mode for representing Thaw values, but had difficulty accepting them. A response shared by most critics of Samoilova's acting style was a fear of melodramatic pathos, which programmatically strives for excessive emotionality. Iurenev's reading of the rape scene is the most revealing expression of such unease: "What actually took place? Rape? This is not how Mark would behave . . . The film does not even hint at" (13).

6.3. Homefront Melodrama: Diversity and Its Limits

Kalatozov's film not only stirred passionate debates among critics, but also influenced the style of Russian film directors of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The most significant and immediate directorial response was Grigorii Chukhrai's *Clear Sky* (1961), a remake, simultaneously, of Stolper's *Wait For Me* and of *Cranes*. Chukhrai focused on the sufferings of his female protagonist, Sasha, at the homefront and tried to follow Kalatozov's reading of the war trope as vulnerable individual's confrontation with forces hostile to her emotional world.

Chukhrai, however, politicized the film: its straightforward discussions of the cult of personality and other political topics evoked World War II melodrama, rather than a Thaw-era variant of the genre mode. As a result, *Clear Sky* eschewed the ambiguity of Thaw melodrama and revived many aspects of Stalinist binarism. The female protagonist, Sasha, became morally flawless and impervious to the advances of anybody but her beloved. The major threat to her nuclear family comes from the state, which unjustly persecutes Sasha's husband, the military

pilot and a POW.[173] However, the same state rescues Sasha's family when the government denounces Stalin and his outdated politics. In a way the plot favors the story of reeducating the Great Family of the Soviet state and reintegrating the nuclear family into the regenerated Great Family. In contrast to the destabilization of the nuclear family at the end of *Cranes*, the nuclear family in *Clear Sky* regains its stability when the authorities rehabilitate Sasha's husband and even award him the Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union.

Numerous Stalin-era visual metaphors resurface in Chukhrai's film. Among them, two are especially important for Soviet culture of the time, in general, and for a discussion of homefront melodrama, in particular: images of the sky and airplanes. A cloudless, sunny sky was a central element of Stalinist landscapes, emblematizing the absence of obstacles en route to the radiant future. At the same time, the airplane was the symbolic and state-owned vehicle of modernity, effecting the triumphant journey to communism. (Figure 48).
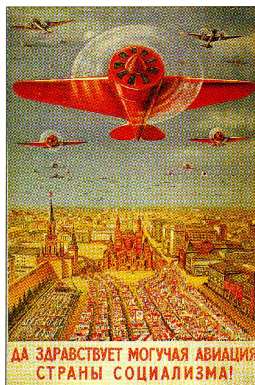
Figure 48. V. Dobrovol'skii. *Long Live the Powerful Air Force of the Land of Socialism!* (1939). <http://www.funet.fi/pub/culture/russian/html_pages/posters1.html> Accessed February 23, 1998.

---

[173] Stalin considered all prisoners of war traitors. When they returned to the Soviet Union from Nazi concentration camps after the end of the war, he sent them directly to the gulags. Stalinist culture tabooed the depiction of POWs, and Chukhrai's film was one of the first to risk portraying them.

In politicizing his anti-Stalinist melodrama, Chukhrai unwittingly articulated the key metaphors of Stalinism, which were associated with the Stalinist Great Family and the victorious war of "us" against the elemental forces of "them." In contrast to Chukhrai, Kalatozov (who had used the airplane as a major symbol of modernity in his Stalin-era films, *Courage* [1939] and *Valerii Chkalov* [1941]), deliberately abandoned the man-made "steel bird" in his famous Thaw film in favor of cranes as a "natural" metaphor.

Chukhrai's film combines excessive political rhetoric and unsuccessful choice of visual metaphors from Stalinist era with Thaw-era plot developments. The war trope in *Clear Sky* instantiates again the conflict between "us" (now anti-Stalinists) and "them" (now "the heirs of Stalin"). The "them" have been internalized: the heirs of Stalin are murderers among "us." The film's family representation revived the Stalinist *menage à trois* of the state, a husband, and a female who determined never to falter in her fidelity to both state and husband. When, however, Sasha has to make a choice between the state and her husband, she chooses husband over state, a choice unthinkable in Stalinist culture. The stylistic eclecticism of *Clear Sky* refracts the contradictory culture and politics of the Thaw.

6.4. Domestic Male Melodrama

Parallel to homefront melodrama, where the protagonist was usually a female, Thaw culture developed a male variant of family melodrama. In this more conservative variation of the genre, both the war and family tropes are moderately refurbished in accordance with the new values of the Thaw, but the validity of those tropes are never questioned to the extent they are in *Cranes*. The most important films of this subgenre are *The Return of Vasilii Bortnikov*, *Two Fedors* (Khutsiev 1957), *Destiny of a Man* (Bondarchuk 1959), and *Evdokiia* (Lioznova 1961).

257

These films do not challenge the war trope as Soviet culture's mode of resolving political and ideological contradictions. Instead, as in many other war films of the era, war is displaced into the past. Though never a scarless victorious warrior from Stalin-era posters and films, the protagonist is usually a war veteran, who won the war at the cost of a lost family and extreme sufferings during at the front. His victimization, however, belongs to the past, together with the war experience. In the present he returns home and settles down in a reconstituted family. This new family serves as the site of a regained idyll, where the familiar hierarchical structure—the vertical bond between father and son—is restored. Although structurally similar to the Great Family, these male melodramas are not a return to Stalinist models, but an attempt to reconcile the vertical family structure inherited from Stalinism with the egalitarian homosocial communality ushered in by Thaw values. In this nuclear family, interpersonal relations have primacy over any ideological goals.

The reconstituted family not only permits the naturalized softening of the men who have been tempered into steel, but also affords a safe place in which to resolve and contain the ideological contradictions of the era, to reduce the political implications of the conflicts of destalinization. Individual and developmental contradictions replace social ones as the major source of conflict. In *Two Fedors*, for example, family bliss is impeded because the younger Fedor cannot understand the older one's heterosexual desire: Fedor the Older wants to get married. Unquestionably, the stronger bond is between the two males in the film. The conflict, however, stems from Fedor the Younger's fear, which the film does not confirm, that a woman will disturb the homosocial community. Ironically, films like *Two Fedors* appeared on the Soviet screen at the same historical moment when "the man" became the scarcest national resource owing to war losses and purges.

Evdokiia (based on Vera Panova's novella of the same title) likewise constructs the family in a way that locates the man as the heart of the family unit and the woman as the cause of the problem that needs to be resolved. The family cannot reproduce because of the wife's infertility following an affair with a Tartar boy-friend. To preserve the immediate family, her Russian husband not only displays forgiveness, but also cultivates his capacity for maternal feelings. Instead of throwing his wife out of the house, he redefines the reproduction process by adopting orphans into his family. In short, Thaw culture naturalizes the social crisis of abandoning the totalitarian model of society through containing it within the small family: if the family is "natural," then the crisis is an organic and natural one, connected with issues of individual development, and so it can be managed. The male protagonist creates a post-war family, abandoning the war ethos to embrace the ethos of domesticity.

In male melodrama, protagonists abandon their war-era virility and omnipotence. They are never aggressive agents, tending to be doctors rather than soldiers (*My Dear Man* [Kheifits 1958]). Indeed, Thaw men are so sensitive and feminized as to verge on being biological mothers. Many of them are victimized by the war, in which they have lost their families. Fathers are orphans, just like the sons they adopt in the course of the film.

The decreased power of the *pater familias* coincides with the reduction in scale of the father as hero. This is often achieved through a "reduced double," for the hero-father shares his name with a younger male, often a boy (*Two Fedors, Rumiantsev's Case* [Kheifits 1955]). Andrei Tarkovskii uses the same device creatively in his first film, *Ivan's Childhood* (1961): little Ivan is a small-scale double of the author of Apocalypse (Ivan is the Russian equivalent of John). In Khutsiev's *Two Fedors* both father and stepson not only have the same name, but also

undergo comparable sufferings. The relations between the surrogate father and son are also dehierarchized through their identical form of address: "brother."[174]

Moreover, the "social" status in the present of Thaw fathers is significantly lowered (they are low-level managers, doctors in remote provinces, etc.), in the same way as their military status in the past is lowered (the private or junior officer, rather than the general, as a narrative center). Finally, Khutsiev in *Lenin's Guard* inverts the age of the father and son. The son, who lives in 1961, converses Hamlet-like with the ghost of his father, who was killed in 1943. When he asks his father for advice, his father points out that he was younger then his son when he was killed.

The Thaw father as a victim and sensitive man also assumes the qualities traditionally associated with femininity: maternal care, capacity for tears and tenderness, and ability to nurture rather than just introduce the "son" into the social order (in Lacanian terms, the imaginary replaces the symbolic order). In *Serezha* (1960), the first film by Grigorii Daneliia and Igor Talankin, Korostelev, the stepfather of the five-year-old protagonist, develops a much closer emotional tie with the boy than does his biological mother. In the final scene, when the state orders Korostelev to move to a new work place, his wife, for reasons of health, prefers to leave Serezha behind and return for him in a year. In an emotional scene, Korostelev, however, decides that he cannot endure the prospect of a second orphanhood for Serezha, and takes the boy along with the rest of the family.

---

[174] In postsoviet cinema Alexei Balabanov revives male brotherhood as a utopian community beyond laws and social conventions. His films, *Brat (Brother* 1997) and *Brat 2 (Brother 2* 2000)*,* create a tongue-in-cheek replica of Thaw-era egalitarian fraternities.

The final destination of Korostelev and Serezha's trip is Kholmogory, Lomonosov's legendary birthplace. If the cult figure of the Russian enlightenment took the trip from Kholmogory to Moscow and then to St. Petersburg, the heroes of the film symbolically reverse the trip: from the cult of reason to the cult of emotions. Only the maternal father can lead the family on such a journey back to Kholmogory.

Evdokiia, with the male protagonist, Evdokim, at its center, likewise shows the hero devoting his life to raising his adopted children and taking care of his far from uxorial wife. The film's title, *Evdokiia*, emphasizes that in the age of new sensitivity the maternal father embraces the best of both genders, successfully realizing his masculine and his feminine sides.

Sons play an auxiliary role in male melodramas of the 1950s. Their narrative function may best be described as a secondary device to evoke pathos. They mirror the orphanhood of the senior male. Restored father-son links also evoke pathos by, on the one hand, confirming the possibility of a homosocial community and, on the other hand, recalling the front-line male communality that has been lost.

In *Rumiantsev's Case* and *Destiny of a Man* orphans appear as silent or tearful background extras. Their function is to aid the older male characters either to pour out their hearts, to find outlets for their trauma and emotions, or to find reconciliation in a new homosocial community with small male orphans.

The protagonist of the film *Serezha* is a five-year-old semi-orphan, whose point of view is communicated by a handheld camera and low-angle shots. Serezha's unsophisticated but sincere way of storytelling also motivates the narrative disjunctures: the film consists of several disconnected fragments. Making a child the narrative and visual center of the film destabilizes the narrative pattern of male melodrama, the story of a male protagonist settling into a nuclear

family. The viewer empathizes with Serezha's point of view. This point of view, however, is somewhat distancing and, more importantly, often ironic about contradictions in the adult world of the family.

In a sense this film concludes Thaw male melodrama and discovers those discursive practices that will become important in the 1970s--above all, irony. *Serezha* is also an early example of a "children's film," a genre that becomes prominent during the Stagnation era. At the center of this genre is a community of children—an ironic replica of adult society.[175] The flawed collective replaces the nuclear family as a metaphor for society.

7. The Ideological Failure of Melodrama

The centrality to Thaw culture of narratives focusing on the family and its war experience underscores the fact that the tropes of the family and war underwent a change of status. Both were displaced as the fundamental tropes of Soviet culture and were redefined as the *loci* of that culture's crisis. Thaw culture started abandoning such Stalinist values as monumentalism, a teleological vision of history, an implicit faith in the primacy of spatiality over temporality, and an emphasis on the unambiguous significance of culture's narratives and tropes. In Stalin's times, the Great Family was the only possible community for a Soviet "us." The militaristic conflict between "us" and the elemental forces of "them" was predestined to be resolved in favor of "us."

---

[175] The children's film, which emerged as a genre in the 1960s, was prominent till the end of Stagnation. At the heart of its narrative are the relations within a community of children (often classmates). These relations are usually abusive, dysfunctional, and provide a social commentary (sometimes ironic, sometimes desperate) on the current state of society.

The Party allowed Thaw cultural producers to renegotiate the meaning of the war and family tropes within the limits of socialist realism. This redefinition of the fundamental tropes resulted partly from public debates, such as the discussions of trench prose and of *The Cranes Are Flying*. The reduction of scale and even the shift from the primacy of space to that of temporality—specifically, to the melodramatic temporality of loss—largely remained within the limits of the permissible according to the socialist realist canon. Whenever authors transgressed the limits of Soviet culture, critics and party censors helped them correct their mistakes. One such *faux pas* was the dirth of teleological motion in trench prose. The other problematic moment was the narrative and visual ambiguity in homefront melodrama. In both cases critics provided clarifying commentary on the textual disjunctures of the Soviet artistic canon. See, for example, the concluding remarks by the editotial board of *Literary Gazette* to the discussion of the trench prose or Iurenev and Turovskaia's discussion of the melodramatic mode in *Cranes are Flying*.

Within the boundaries of the permissible, Soviet writers and filmmakers supplemented the single model of the Great Family and the Final War with the small-scale variants of these tropes. Trench prose served as the transitional narrative form that reduced the scale of the family and the military confrontation, and emphasized a focus on human relations among "us"— a small military community structured as an egalitarian male family-- through first-person narration.

Whereas literature was drastically restricted by the method of socialist realism, the less logocentric medium of film provided more radical opportunities for departures from Stalinist instantiations of the family and war tropes. Thaw culture made the family melodrama its central cinematic genre. It was an ideal visual narrative form for redefining the central tropes of

Stalinist culture and for articulating the new values: anti-monumentalism, the cult of the small family, and emphasis on the individual, whose personal experience is as valid as the collective one.

The development of family melodrama after the 1940s and its centrality in Soviet culture in the 1950s coincided with what Vera Dunham calls the rise of the Soviet middle class, a state-financed intellectual and bureaucratic stratum with a standard of life above the survival minimum provided for workers and collective farmers—the "ruling classes" of the USSR, according to the mythology of Soviet propaganda. The values and apprehensions of this middle stratum found expression in the style of 1950s melodramas. Two fears, in particular, nurtured these texts' style: fear of the state, which constantly interfered with the privacy of the nuclear family, and fear of ideological purges, which threatened the integrity of individual identity.

Ironically, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's definition of 1950s Hollywood melodrama adequately describes the role of melodrama as social praxis in early post-Stalinist culture, despite the marked difference in the production circumstances of the Soviet film industry:

> Melodrama can thus be seen as a contradictory nexus, in which certain determinations (social, psychical, artistic) are brought together but in which the problem of the articulation of these determinations is not successfully resolved. The importance of melodrama . . . lies precisely in its ideological failure. Because it cannot accommodate its problems, either in the real present or in an ideal future, but lays them open in their shameless contradictoriness, it opens space which most Hollywood forms have studiously closed off. (74)

Soviet family melodrama of the 1950s, especially its homefront variant, turned the Stalinist war trope inward: the narrative and visual focus shifted to the murderers and rapists among "us." In

turn, the family trope ceased functioning as the locus of social and ideological security,

becoming, instead, the site of loss and victimization. Most importantly, such films as *The*

Cranes are Flying present the reconfigured war trope as an irresoluble conflict within the family

of "us," the open wound of a personal trauma that cannot heal.[176]

---

[176] After the film's domestic success, viewers waited for a sequel about Veronika. Although it was never made, as

many as twenty-five years later Tat'iana Samoilova was asked how she would envision the fate of her protagonist in

such a sequel. Her answer is revealing ("ona by prosto poshla po rukam" [43] "she would be lost and exploited for

the rest of her life"). The reenactment of abuse, as part of the communal treatment of the individual, would not stop

with the end of war's hardships.

<u>Chapter Five. Ironizing Thaw Culture: Soviet Tropes in Youth Prose and Film Comedy of the 1960s.</u>

"Irony is the non-heroic residue of tragedy"

--Northrop Frye

<u>1. Ironizing Soviet Tropes</u>

In the 1960s irony became the dominant mode of representing the major Soviet tropes: the positive hero, the family, and the war. The short novels associated with the journal *Youth*—above all, the works of Vasilii Aksenov, Anatolii Gladilin, and Vladimir Voinovich, as well as the film comedies of El'dar Riazanov, Georgii Daneliia, Leonid Gaidai, and Elem Klimov—epitomized the ironic style of the 1960s. This chapter examines the ironic instantiations of the main Soviet tropes through the examples of Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars* (1961) and Riazanov's *Watch Out For the Car* (1966).

Tropes exist in two major types of discourse: serious and serio-comic, or ironic. Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the relationship between serious and serio-comic genres in *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Whereas serious genres are monological and "impose an integrated and stable universe of discourse" (106), serio-comic ones are dialogical and opposed to the possibility of a single finalized universe. "As tragedy and epic enclose, Mennipean forms open up, anatomize" (107).[177]

---

[177] Not all satire is dialogical: Horatian (mild mocking) and Juvenalian (indignant in tone) satires, as opposed to the Menippean satire, favor monological discourse.

Bakhtin distinguishes three major characteristics of the serio-comic genres. First, they "radically change the time-and-value zone" (108) by making the present their subject and starting point for understanding reality "without any epic or tragic distance . . . In these genres the heroes of myth and the historical figures of the past are deliberately and emphatically contemporized" (108). Such is the case in the ironic works of the 1960s. Aksenov's characters travel to Estonia, imagining themselves as contemporary Argonauts, while the protagonist of Riazanov's film *Watch Out For the Car* enacts a contemporary version of Dostoevskii's Prince Myshkin—the Idiot here and now.

The second characteristic is the serio-comical genres' independence of legend. "Their relationship to legend is in most cases deeply critical, and at times even resembles a cynical exposé" (Bakhtin 108). The ironic works of the 1960s distanced themselves from the discursive practices of the Thaw, looking for ways to refurbish the basic Soviet tropes. The tropes themselves became carnivalized. Moreover, the ironists of the late Thaw turned their critical edge not only against Stalinists, but also against producers of Thaw culture, who had replaced political Soviet cults with quasi-religious and monumental cults of Shakespeare, Pushkin, and Dostoevskii.

"A third characteristic is the deliberate and hetero-voiced nature of all these genres … They reject the stylistic unity of the epic, the tragedy, high rhetoric, and lyric" (Bakhtin 108). The absence of a unifying voice and of a unifying genre scheme was the major criticism leveled at the works of both Aksenov and Riazanov. Aksenov was criticized for lack of a clear authorial position toward his heroes in *A Ticket to the Stars* (Lavlinskii), while Riazanov was accused of mixing various genres (detective, comedy, melodrama) in *Watch Out For the Car* (Obraztsova).

The serio-comic rendition of tropes signals their exhaustion. Linda Hutcheon distinguishes three major modes of serio-comic discourse: parodic, ironic, and satirical. She notes that they differ in their ethos—"the emotion with which the encoding speaker seeks to invest the decoding listener" (1985 55). The ethos of irony is mocking, that of parody is positive, while the ethos of satire is one of disdain (1985 56-60).

When tropes become exhausted and automatized, incompatible with new cultural values, the questioning ironic mode permeates them. Hutcheon isolates relational, inclusive, and differential semantic characteristics as central for ironic meaning (1994 58). By relational Hutcheon means that irony operates between meanings (said, unsaid) and among people (ironists, interpreters, targets) in order to create something new and to endow it with the critical edge of judgment (1994 58). The relational aspect of irony implies a discursive community of an ironist and an interpreter that makes irony possible:

> Discursive community (as signaled, I hope, by the Foucaultian echo of discursive
> formations) … acknowledges those strangely enabling constraints of discursive
> contexts and foregrounds the particularities not only of space and time but of
> class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice … But what this idea shares with that
> of socio-rhetorical "discourse community" is a sense that we all belong to many
> overlapping communities. (1994 92)

Inclusivity means that irony would share with puns "a simultaneity and a superimposition of meanings" (1994 60). Ironic usage does not replace the said with the unsaid, but, rather, superimposes the unsaid on the said. Finally, the differential element implies that "ironic meaning is formed when two or more different concepts are brought together" (1994 64).

The ironic mode became decisive for late Thaw and emerging Stagnation culture. In a way it marked the border between Thaw culture, which still attempted to refurbish the master tropes, and Stagnation culture, which ironized and later satirized the exhausted tropes. During late Thaw, irony came to signify a discrepancy between the cultural values of the Thaw—anti-monumentalism, sincerity, the cult of emotions—and the undercurrent of the new set of cultural values. The new values became (1) consumerism, (2) loss of the heroic, (3) skepticism about the possibility of naturalness or authenticity (naturalness became the highest form of artifice)[178], and (4) a sense of powerlessness over one's fate. In literature and film of the 1960s irony's edge targeted the gap between the lofty values of the Thaw and the actual practices and experiences of the communities in late-Thaw novels and films. The communities continued to proclaim Thaw values, but acted according to the values of the emerging Stagnation era.

2. Irony in Thaw Literature: Vasilii Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars.*

Aksenov's novel *A Ticket to the Stars* questions not only the Stalinist past but also the instantiations of Soviet tropes in Thaw culture. It marks an ironic distancing from Thaw values and specifically from the style of so-called 1950s "youth prose" (Kuznetsov, Osipov, some of early Gladilin and Aksenov[179]), with which it is usually associated.

[178] While Bulat Okudzhava, the major bard of the Thaw, participated in World War II and always emphasized that he sang about his first-hand experiences, Vladimir Vysotskii, the major bard of Stagnation, was often misperceived as a war veteran, although he never participated in the war about which he sang so eloquently.

[179] In the introduction to the Ardis edition of his early novels *Colleagues* and *A Ticket to the Stars*, Aksenov notes: "Between *Colleagues* and *A Ticket to the Stars*, which were published in *Youth* exactly one year apart, there is a greater distance than between my last prose published in the USSR and my first works published abroad" (n.p., translation mine).

The dialogue of Aksenov's text with the tradition of youth prose and the Soviet novel in general demonstrates all three major characteristics of ironic discourse. Such a dialogue is relational (involves an engagement with the previous tradition), inclusive (Aksenov superimposes his style on previous conventions), and, finally, differential (Aksenov distances his writing from the *topoi* of novels about constructing the brave new world in Siberia).

Youth prose is a style of writing associated with the destalinization of Soviet culture and was published mostly in the journal *Youth* (established in June 1955). The first editor of the journal was the prominent 1920s writer Valentin Kataev, and in the early 1960s Aksenov and Evtushenko joined *Youth's* editorial board. As in the socialist realist novel, in youth prose of the 1950s and even 1960s, the protagonist's maturation coincides with the completion of state construction projects (Clark 228-30). Thus, hero and state grow together. These novels, of which Kuznetsov's *Sequel to a Legend* (1957) is one of the best-known examples, however, have a first-person narrator and a fragmented narrative structure. Siberia, the frequent setting for these works, stopped being merely the site for the construction of communism and became part of an exotic natural world, where the protagonist discovered his authentic self.

Most importantly, protagonists of 1950s youth prose returned humor to Russian *belles-lettres* and occasionally even engaged in self-irony, an unacceptable mode of discourse for the positive heroes of socialist realist novels. As Timothy Pogacar notes about the journal *Youth*, "one of the magazine's most important functions during the early to mid-1960s was the introduction of humor and irony into the literary magazine and literature as a whole" (203). The heroes of Aksenov's *Ticket to the Stars* go even further: they ironize not only the world of Stalinist fathers, but also that of the sons familiar from 1950s youth prose. Moreover, "the star

boys" make their questions and internal conflicts the prime value of the narrative, completely

marginalizing the interests of party and state.[180]

2.1. Replacing the Positive Hero with an Ironic Protagonist: Difference and Inclusivity

The differential and inclusive aspects of irony dominate the representation of the major

characters in Aksenov's novel. The creation of the protagonist through deferral and difference

may be seen, above all, in the protagonist's separation from his ideal. The maturation of

Aksenov's heroes, unlike that of the heroes of both Stalinist and early Thaw novels, is marked by

increasing distance between the character and his ideals. As in the novel of disillusionment, "the

ideal is said to be constitutive only for the soul in a state of immaturity" (Lukacs 123). The

protagonist's coming of age coincides with a separation from the values that until then he has

considered his ideal. The ironic protagonist of *A Ticket to the Stars* coincides with the hero

described in Douglas Muecke's *Irony and the Ironic*:

> From *Don Quixote* to the present there has been an unbroken line of novels … in
>
> which the hero or some lesser victim has vainly attempted … to impose unity

---

[180] Timothy Pogacar in his Ph.D. dissertation about the journal *Youth*, discusses in detail the style of youth prose in

the 1950s and its evolution in the 1960s. Similarly to most of the scholars writing about youth prose (Al'tshuller,

Meyer, Odintsov), he applies the term youth prose to Aksenov's fictional works of the 1960s, although in that

decade Aksenov's style become noticeably different from the majority of writers who continued to preserve the main

conventions of 1950s' youth prose: a maturation plot in an exotic Siberian setting, parallelism between the

maturation of the protagonist and a state construction project, and the first-person narrative of young protagonist.

For a detailed discussion of the style of Aksenov's writing in the 1960s see Pricilla Meyer's Ph.D. dissertation,

"Aksenov and Soviet Prose of the 1950s and 1960s."

upon the world by interpreting it in terms of his fears or wishes, theories or ideals.

(88)

Not unlike the protagonist of the European novel and unlike the positive hero of the Soviet socialist realist novel, Aksenov's hero is manifestly unable to give the novel's world a unifying narrative. Irony of that sort is close to Romantic irony: "the recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality" (Wellek 14).[181]

The coming of age of the novel's protagonist, Dimka, is represented as a loosely connected set of narratives that influence him, test his current set of values, but never finalize his individual identity. The novel opens with a neo-Romantic story of a trip to Estonia (an exotic country within Soviet borders), followed by an actualization of the socialist realist paradigm

---

[181] In his "Critical Fragment 108" Friedrich Schlegel defines Romantic irony as

die einzige durchaus unwillkürliche, und doch durchaus besonnene Verstellung … In ihr soll alles Scherz und alles Ernst sein, alles treuherzig offen, und alles tief verstellt. Sie entspringt aus der Vereinigung von Lebenkunstsinn und wissenschaftlichem Geist, aus dem Zusammentreffen vollendeter Narutphilosophie und vollendeter Kunstphilosophie. Sie enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöslichen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigkeit Mitteilung. (Schlegel "Kritische Fragmente" 1967, 160) the only involuntary and yet completely deliberate dissimulation ... everything should be playful and serious, guilessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of *savoir vivre* and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and a perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication. (Schlegel 1971)

Also in "Ideas," Schlegel defines irony as "Bewußtsein der ewigen Agilität, des unendlich vollen Chaos" (consciousness of everlasting agility, of endless and complete chaos) (Ideen 1967, 263).

(work and reeducation on a collective farm). The novel ends with a somewhat elegeic story of

the loss of Dimka's Promethean brother, Viktor (sic!). He dies at novel's end during a space

program test. In the novel he functions as Dimka's mentor, whose authority is legitimized by his

involvement in the Soviet space program. All three narratives end with the frustration of an ideal

that Dimka was about to grasp; in each narrative the ideal turns out to be either false or

unattainable. The exotic world of Tallinn loses its beguiling aura: Dimka's girlfriend betrays

him, the stars and sky turn out to be a cheap painting on the ceiling in a local bar: "Neuzheli

predel moikh mechtanii . . . igrushechnyi mir pod narisovannymi zvezdami?" (1987 304) ("Was

it possible that I could wish for nothing beyond standing at a bar and admiring the gleam of

artificial stars on the ceiling?" [1963 132])**.**

In the second narrative, devoted primarily to Dimka's work at a fishing cooperative on

the Baltic Sea, the protagonist's ironic comments devalue the socialist realist *Bildungsroman*:

"Skazhi, kapitan,—sprosil ia odnazhdy Igoria,—zachem ty nam togda nazval svoi kolkhoz?

Khochesh' posmotret', kak my stanem perekovyvat'sia?" (1987 313). "Tell me, skipper,' I asked

Igor one day, 'why did you suggest that we

come to your collective farm? Did you want to watch how we'd get reformed?'" (1963 141). At

the novel's end Dimka contemplates the death of his older brother as he gazes at the remote

stars—an unattainable personal ideal that for him has replaced the Soviet communal ideal--

ambiguous celestial stars in the sky instead of the Red stars of the USSR's brave new world.

The gap between the protagonist's ideal and his earthly/empirical experience is the major

device defining the neo-Romantic ironic protagonist of Aksenov's novel. This protagonist

radically differs from the positive hero of the Stalin era—who is purposefully guided by the

unifying narrative of Marxism and draws closer to communism by the end of the novel—or the

positive hero of the early post-Stalinist era—who discovers his own ideology, which both unifies and saves the world. That ideology is usually a master narrative based on Christian *topoi*, mixed with allusions to Western literature (Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe). Pasternak's novel and Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle* are the best-known examples of this brand of Thaw-era writing.

The differential aspect of irony is also articulated in the double lives of the major characters. In his public life Dimka's older brother, Viktor, writes a doctoral dissertation☺, while in his second, hidden life he conducts research that questions his own dissertation's conclusions. Dimka's tough exterior disguises his sensitive and vulnerable interior. Alik Kramer produces two types of artistic writing: one for publication so as to make a living, the other—for himself, "for the soul" (1987 232-233). Dolgov, Galia's seducer, plays Hamlet and Romeo to get a one-night stand with her (1987 281-82). The characters are not what they seem to be. Most importantly, the protagonists, who sound initially cynical and nihilistic, are, in fact, the few sincere souls in society portrayed in the novel.

Aksenov contrasts the ambiguity of irony to moralistic dogmatism, which he equates with lies. Viktor's colleague Boris, who cannot tolerate Dimka's ironic tone, proves to be the novel's villain. His moralistic and ideologically correct language masks his lack of academic integrity. Boris understands the importance of Viktor's research, but attacks it because it questions the authority of his dissertation advisor.

On the level of characters' discourse, the differential aspect of ironic meaning is expressed in the refraction of the "other's" discourse. Ironic discrepancy in *A Ticket to the Stars* not only defines relations between the characters and their ideals, but is also part and parcel of the linguistic texture of the characters themselves. Both Viktor and Dimka regularly and openly ironize the word of others: each other's speech, that of various other characters, and, above all,

official discourse. Such an ironic attitude disrupts the conventional hierarchy of discourses and

the uniformity of language characteristic of the socialist realist novel.   At the beginning of the

novel, en route to an amusement park, Viktor sees people listening to the radio on the street.

U vkhoda vozle stolba s reproduktorom stoit tolpa. Litsa u vsekh kakie-to

odinakovye.

"Liubogo agressora, pronikshego na nashu sviashchennuiu, obil'no smochennuiu

krov'iu zemliu zhdet plachevnaia uchast'. My imeem v rasporiazhenii

dostatochno sil i sredstv dlia togo chtoby"

Potom smotriu vdal', gde na fone vechernego neba vrashchaetsia gigantskoe

"koleso obosreniia" . . . Iz glubiny parka nesetsia dzhazovaia muzyka, dvizhetsia

koleso, i dvizhetsia ves' nash sharik, nachinennyi zagadochnoi smes'iu … Tam my

smeemsia, a zdes' my molchim." (1987 193-94)

By the entrance gate, a crowd had gathered near the radio loudspeaker. All the

faces somehow seem the same to me.

"Any aggressor who sets foot on our holy land . . . may expect to

come to a lamentable end. We have at our disposal sufficient

power and capabilities"

Then I glance at the distant giant Ferris wheel profiled against the evening sky …

From the bottom of the park come the sounds of jazz. The wheel goes round and

round and so does the whole little ball of our earth, stuffed with mystery … Over

there we laugh, while here we are silent. (1963 11-12)

A radio broadcast that homogenizes people's faces is contrastively juxtaposed to jazz music (with its constant improvisation) in the park, which makes the world diverse, ambiguous, and unstable.

During the Thaw the public address system acquired strong associations with totalitarian monologism. The Thaw developed an alternative radio culture. The key sign of this culture became the portable transistor radio. Such a radio presumed an individual user, functioned as a sign of alternative youth subcutlure, possessed shapes associated with modern design, favored materials emphasizing the new technology (above all, plastic), and allowed the user to listen to non-Soviet radio stations, including openly hostile to the regime. The first Soviet mass-produced transistor radio, *Spidola*, was developed at Riga (capital of Latvia) VEF Radio Works in 1961 (Figure 49).

Figure 49. Transistor Radio *Spidola*. http://oldradio.onego.ru/index.html Accessed June 11, 2001.

If Dimka and Viktor refract the word of other characters, then the main narrator refracts the word of his protagonists. The narrator often echoes the phrase of a character, pointing to a meaning different from the literal one. When Dimka calls Galia "Brigitte Bardot," the appellation ironically hints at the fact that she is beautiful and wants to become an actress. In the following dialogue, however, the main narrator ironically refracts the meaning of Galia's nickname.

> Daite mne sigaretu, kapitan,—sygrala Galia.
>
> Ty uverena, chto Bridzhit Bardo kurit?—burknul Dimka i protianul ei sigaretu
>
> …Dimka vzglianul na Galino litso … i pochuvstvoval sebia … khliupikom; emu zakhotelos' … skazat' ei chto-to nezhnoe. On udaril ladon'iu po ee plechu i bodro voskliknul:
>
> -Ne trus', detka! Derzhi khvost pistoletom!
>
> -Slushai, pochemu ty tak so mnoi obrashchaesh'sia? Ia ved' tebe ne Iurka i ne Alik … Dima, my ved' uzhe ne deti.
>
> -A chto ty imeesh' v vidu?
>
> Bidzhit Bardo ulybnulas'. Dimka terpet' ne mog etikh ulybok, osobenno kogda ona tak ulybalas' drugim. (1987 221-22)
>
> "Give us a cigarette, brother," Galia said, acting a part.
>
> "Are you sure Brigitte Bardot smokes?" Dimka barked and handed her his pack … Dimka glanced at Galia's face … He felt he too was just a stupid small boy with a runny nose. He longed to … tell her something nice. So he slapped her on the shoulder and said cheerfully:
>
> "Don't let it get you down, girlie. Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Why do you talk to me like that? I'm not Yurka or Alik, remember Dimka, we're no longer little children."

"What did you mean?"

Brigitte Bardot smiled. Dimka hated her smiling like that, especially when those smiles of hers were directed at others. (1963 43-44)

The narrator's echoing of the nickname introduced by Dimka ironically refracts the meaning originally invested in it. The main narrator implies that Dimka has not noticed that Galia has become a grownup woman and their relations have changed since their teens.[182]

Hutcheon notes that ironic meaning does not work as an either/or structure, but, rather, as a structure that retains both meanings, a doubling that she, following Roland Barthes, calls "amphibology or amphiboly" (1994 63). Hutcheon focuses on "the inclusive pleasure of irony—similar to that claimed for jokes and puns" (1994 63). This effect of inclusivity or superimposition of sorts is integral to the interaction between the novel's characters, above all Viktor and Dimka. This inclusivity also defines the attitude of the main narrator to his protagonist.

The protagonist of *A Ticket to the Stars* is ambiguously located somewhere between the two overlapping consciousnesses of the brothers: Dimka and the older, Viktor. The interplay of two first-person voices and the third-person narrative of the main narrator shapes the narrative stance of the novel. By contrast to the narration in the Stalinist novel or early Thaw novels, no voice in Aksenov's novel is omniscient. Both Dimka and Viktor question themselves and their own values. Viktor, who is involved in the country's space program, questions the results of his

---

[182] See similar examples in Odintsov's article about the style of youth prose (182-83).

own research (his Ph.D. dissertation!) and dies during one of his experiments. His story recalls Gagarin's then momentous spaceflight[183] and narrates the failure of the Promethean myth, which had inspired the Russian intelligentsia since the late nineteenth century.[184] The possibility of heroic closure, which still operated in such 1950s novels as Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* and Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, has disappeared in *A Ticket to the Stars*.

The interaction between the character zones with the zone of the main narrator is also based on ironic inclusivity. V. Odintsov cites an example in which the zone syntactically belonging to the main narrator consists entirely from phrases uttered by the characters

> Pokazhem im, chertiam, stolishnyi klass! Nu-ka, davai, Iurka! Dima-a! Nichego, podozhdite, doidet i do vas ochered'. Eshche zaplachesh', pizhonchik. Davai, Dimka! Iura! Vyshe! Uznaete, kak kleit'sia k nashim devochkam! (1987 229)

> Let's show these poor suckers how it is done in the capital! Here, Yurka! Dimka! Here, don't be in such a hurry, fellows. You'll get the ball when our turn comes,

---

[183] Iurii Gagarin (1934-68), the first human to orbit the Earth (April 12, 1961), is Russia's national hero, whose flight had a great impact on his contemporaries. He died in a plane crash in 1968.

[184] James Billington distinguishes three "general attitudes" that dominated Russian culture at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries: Prometheanism, sensualism, and apocalypticism:

> Particularly pervasive was Prometheanism: the belief that man—when fully aware of his true powers—is capable of totally transforming the world in which he lives … Merezhkovsky translated Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*; others read *Prometheus and Epimetheus* of the Swiss Nietzschean, Carl Spitteler … objects as far afield as a leading publishing house and a key musical composition of Scriabin [the key musical influence on Pasternak AP] bore the name of Prometheus. (478-79)

but you'll have to work for it, you country bumpkins! Over here, Dimka! Higher,

Yurka, up! We'll teach you to pester our girls! (1963 51)

Usually, however, the paragraph starts within the zone of the main narrator (third person,

past tense) and then shifts into the zone of a character (second or first person, present tense)

Rebiata okhotno podderzhali ton Shurika: durachilis' izo vsekh sil … Nachalo

puteshestviia skladyvalos' priiatno. Poezd letel v krasnoi zakatnoi strane … Teni

na litsakh i bliki zakata skvoz' khvoinyi zabor, vokrug blestiat glaza, i

otkryvaiutsia v khokhote rty. Kakie slavnye rebiata nashi poputchiki! I

voobshche—vse o'kei! V mire polno smeshnykh i blagozhelatel'nykh liudei.

(1987 219)

Shurik set the general tone and the fellows all tried hard to be funny … Thus the

beginning of the trip was shaping up nicely. The train was roaring through the

reddish, sunset landscape … They were passing through a pine forest now and

flashes of the sunset through the gaps between the trees alternated with the

shadows on the young faces with their sparkling eyes and open, laughing mouths.

Ah, what a nice bunch, our fellow travelers, they all seemed to think, and, in

general, everything's O.K.: the world is full of amusing and friendly people.

(1963 41)

The discourses of the main narrator and the characters constantly superimpose themselves on

each other, creating an ironic tone and subverting the traditional hierarchy between the

authoritative voice of the main narrator and the voices of his characters.[185]

---

[185] Critics actually attacked Aksenov for the absence of a so-called clear authorial position (see Lavlinskii, Kotov

and Shevtsov, Pozdniaev).

Aksenov's novel established an ironic protagonist in Soviet culture, one who attains fulfillment in the course of searching for his ever-elusive ideal. The ideal became ambiguous, while the characters lead double lives instead of moving steadfastly toward the ultimate goal of communism. An interplay of character zones and a refracting double-voicedness determins the linguistic texture of the ironic protagonist. The ironic edge of such characters is directed not only at the monosemantics of Stalinist discourse, but also at the naive sincerity of 1950s youth prose.

2.2. Ironizing The Family Trope

Contemporary critics lambasted the characters of *A Ticket to the Stars*, accusing them of nihilism because of their alienation from society (Gribachev, Lavlinskii, Smirnov). Indeed, whereas the hero of a socialist realist novel joins the community once and forever, the communities that Dimka and Viktor join are just temporary shelters, where they stop en route to their personal self-fulfillment. A sense of distance—both cultural (foreign culture, alienated generations) and class (intelligentsia vs. working class)—permeates the entire novel. These communities do not give characters the sense of stability and security vouchsafed by the Great Soviet Family in the Stalinist novel or the nuclear family in the novels and films of the 1950s.

Dimka's foreign-named apartment house, *Barcelona*,—a perfect setting for Italian neorealist films (201 1987)—is an ironic parody of the early Thaw communities of the 1950s.[186] The differential aspect of the ironic mode dominates both the description of *Barcelona* and references to friends' high school experiences and their nuclear families. The novel starts with

---

[186] See, for example, Iakov Segel and Lev Kulidzhanov's film *The House I Live in* (1956).

the characters' departure from *Barcelona*, a small-scale Soviet family, and school, from which

they have just graduated. Dimka and his friends also leave their nuclear families, the major

haven of Thaw values. At the end of the novel, the reader learns that *Barcelona* has been

demolished and Dimka's parents have moved to a new apartment. For Dimka, there is no way

back to his old communities.

Verbal irony reinforces the gap between the protagonist and Thaw-era communities,

above all, the nuclear family. When the parents meet to discuss Dimka's departure with his

friends to Estonia, for example, Viktor, who is present, double-voices for the readers the parents'

language.

> Ded Alika (s pafosom 14-go goda). "Pozornyi dokument! A moi vnuk zaiavil
>
> mne na proshchanie, chto solidnye professii pust' priobretaiut meshchane, i
>
> protsitiroval: "Nadeius', veruiu, voveki ne pridet ko mne pozornoe blagorazumie."
>
> Otets Iurki (staryi boets). "Malo my ikh drali, tovarishchi! Moi olukh sovsem ne
>
> poporshchalsia. Skazal tol'ko vchera vecherom: "Ne davi mne, papasha, na
>
> psikhiku." Nu ia ego … kkhm … Net, malo my ikh drali. Reshitel'no malo."
>
> Nash papa (myslit shirokimi kategoriiami). Udivitel'no, chto na fone
>
> vseobshchego dukhovnogo rosta. (1987 216)
>
> Alik's grandfather (in the pre-1914 oratorical style): "A disgraceful document!
>
> My grandson, in his parting message, declares that he leaves the solid trades to the
>
> philistines and he hopes that he will never stoop to carefulness as long as he
>
> lives."
>
> Iurka's father (a war veteran): "Ah, we did not spank them enough, comrades.
>
> My idiot didn't even say good-bye. Last night he just mumbled, 'Stop walking all

over my personality, Pa. Get off it …' Well, I'll show him yet … Yes, we

certainly didn't beat them enough, our youngsters …"

Our father (thinking in clichés): "It's really amazing that against the background

of general progress." (1963 36)

Here the referential aspect of irony interplays with the differential one. The irony's edge targets

both the values and the linguistic stereotypes of older generations of Russians and Soviets. The

young are separated from their parents not only by age and values, but, more significantly, by the

language in which they articulate their values.

The novel also ironizes male brotherhood as an alternative to the nuclear family. Indeed,

the distinctive characteristic of this community is self-irony. The self-ironic stance is achieved

either via Viktor's point of view or via Dimka's self-referential comments. When they arrive at

the Baltic Sea shore, they ironize their own plans to conquer the world by assuming

incommensurate personae from Homer's *Iliad*.

Nu vot on, morskoi pliazh.

"Pliazhi mne vsegda napominaiut bitvu u sten Troi, skazal Alik.

"Mne tozhe,"—srazu zhe otkliknulsia Dimka.—"Pomniu, kak seichas, idem u

sten Troi vtroem: Gektor, Alik i ia,—a navstrechu nam …"Penelopa!"—

voskliknula Galia i sdelala tsirkovoi reverans.

"Ty khochesh' skazat', Elena,"—popravil Alik,—"togda ia Paris."

"A ia? A ia kto budu?"—zaoral Iurka,—"Menia-to zabyli!"

"Kem ty khochesh' byt'? Govori sam."…"Ia Akhill!"—zaoral Iurka, potriasaia

ruzh'em dlia podvodnoi okhoty. Dimka momental'no brosilsia na pesok i skhvatil

ego za piatku. (1987 226)

At last they were seeing the beach and the sea.

"Makes me think of the Siege of Troy, the beach," Alik said.

"Me too," Dimka said. "It seems to me as if I remember—the three of us, Hector,

Alik, and me, walking under the walls of Troy and suddenly who is coming

toward us—""Penelope!" Galia said with a curtsy. "I suppose you mean Helen,"

Alik corrected her, "and that'd make me Paris."

"And what about me?" Iurka growled. "Who shall I be? How come you forgot

me?

"Tell us yourself who do you want to be."…"Uh-uh, I'm Achilles!" Iurka yelled,

brandishing his underwater spear gun. Dimka dove forward into the sand and

caught Iurka by the heel. (1963 48-49)

Self-irony foregrounds the inclusivity of the novel's discourse: the mock epic's self-referential

image of the friends is superimposed on the more neutral picture of contemporary teenagers at

the seashore.

Self-irony makes the community of Dimka's friends open to new ideas and new ways of

realizing themselves. However, even the brotherhood of friends does not guarantee a stable

community for Dimka, for they are his high school friends, from whom he will become separated

after graduation. At novel's end, Dimka is alone, his brother dead, and his friends away in

Estonia: "Whatever happens, this is now my ticket to the stars! … Viktor has left this ticket to

me. But where will the ticket take me?" (1963 176). This interrogatory closure, which became

the target of many critical articles (Lavlinskii, Nazarenko, Pozdniaev), contrasts with the

affirmative and prophetic closures of not only the Stalinist but also the Thaw's so-called

controversial novels, such as *Dr. Zhivago, Not by Bread Alone,* and *The First Circle*.

2.3. Ironizing the War Trope

Finally, the novel engages in an ironic recasting of the war trope in two ways. First, the young "us" of the novel speak Westernized jargon and embrace Western culture, superimposing the discursive practices associated with a Western "them" on a Soviet "us." Second, the young characters distance themselves via irony from some emblems of Thaw culture: its slogans, its love of film melodrama, and the official romanticism of Siberian construction projects that ran through the youth prose of the 1950s. Here Aksenov's novel employs the differential aspect of irony to articulate the war trope in his work.

The young characters—the "us" of the novel—speak a youth jargon that is full of references to Western celebrities. The models for discursive emulation are definitely from the other side of the Iron Curtain.[187] The portraits of Laurence Olivier and Sophia Loren are background images for the characters' love story (1987 242). Viktor likes to sit American-style—feet on the desk (1987 282). One of the characters, Boris, has an American nickname—Bob (1987 288), while Dimka's friend Alik recommends that Iurka follow the example of a famous American basketball player: "Alik ubezhdaet Iurku igrat' tak, kak igraet vsemirno izvestnyi negr Uilt Chemberlen" (1987 190) ("Alik advises Iurka to try a play used by the famous American Negro Wilt Chamberlain" [1963 8-9]).

 Viktor's introductory description of Dimka and the streets of Moscow also condenses the visible signs of Western culture:

---

[187] The 1963 English translation replaces Bardot, as Galia's nickname, with plain Galia (49).

Vykhodit iz bulochnoi s batonom v khlorvinilovoi sumke. Sekundu smotrit, kak

zavorachivaet za ugol strashnovatyi sverkaiushchii Pontiak … Ia smotriu, kak

mel'kaiut vperedi ego cheshskaia rubashka s takimi, znaete li iskorkami, shtany

neizvestnogo mne proiskhozhdeniia, avstriiskie tufli i strizhennaia pod

frantsuzskii ezhik russkaia golova. (1987 187)

He comes out of the bakery with a long French loaf in his bag. For one second he

watches a glittering, rather frightening Pontiac turn the corner … I see him

zigzagging amid the traffic in his gaudy Czech shirt, his pants that he got I don't

know where, his Austrian-made loafers and his Russian head topped with a

French style of crew cut. (1963 5)

Dimka's pants, obtained "I don't know where," turn out to be American jeans. Aksenov focuses

on them via an ironic paraphrase uttered by a puzzled pedestrian: "Look at that! Are they

wearing their pants inside out now—with seams outside?" (1963 5). The ironically carnivalized

opposition of "us" and "them" is materialized in Dimka's jeans—pants with the seams inside

out.

Similarly, the intertextual links of the novel connect it with the literature of a Western

"them." The three buddies in Aksenov's novel build their relations on the model of characters

from their favorite novel, *Drei Kammeraden* by Erich Maria Remarque (1987 267). Alik,

Dimka's friend, knows Hemingway by heart. When Dimka has a problem, he seeks for advice in

Hemingway's prose (1987 252). The film that Alik discusses with the film director Ivanov-

Petrov is Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, which had just been screened in Russia (1987 233).

Ironically, the West as the locus of the young friends' cultural icons is as unattainable to

the characters as the stars in the sky. The closest to the West the three comrades can get is

Estonia, for within the world of the Soviet "us" the Baltic republics are the only West permissible. They signal an ambiguous exotic space, similar either to the Caucasus or Finland in the Russian Romantic poems or to Livonia (the territory of contemporary Latvia and Estonia) in Russian imitations of Walter Scott's novels.[188] The exoticism of the Baltics in the Soviet context also incorporates the ideological exoticism and ambiguity of the West.[189]

The closest target of Aksenov's irony as he sends his characters westward to Estonia is the youth prose of the early Thaw, in which young characters travel eastward to Siberia to construct hydroelectric stations and monumental dams, as, for example, in *A Sequel To a Legend*. When an older person on the train advises Dimka to go work in Siberia ("You useless, ignorant bums, why don't you go to Siberia"), Dimka notes, with a chuckle: "Everybody is going east and we're going west" (1963 47).

Aksenov's novel employs ideological clichés of the Thaw era as part of his ironic paraphrases. One of the characters calls Dimka and his friends "heroes of the seven-year plan" when they try to earn some money by loading furniture.[190] For the few rubles they earn, the

---

[188] For a detailed discussion on the place of Livonia in Russian cultural geography of the romantic age, see Mark Altshuller's monograph *Epokha Val'tera Skotta v Rossii: istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (50-51, 132-143).

[189] Numerous films of the era capitalize on the exoticism and ideological ambiguity of the Baltics (the Western side of the Soviet "us"). *Rumiantsev's Case* (1955) is a detective film in which criminals live in Estonia. In *State Criminal* (1964) a former Nazi collaborator commits a murder in Riga, Latvia. Finally, in *Watch Out For the Car* (1966), which I discuss below, the protagonist travels to the Baltics to sell a stolen car. Aksenov returns to Estonia in his novel *Pora, moi drug, pora!* (1964).

[190] In January 1959, Khrushchev convened the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party to approve a Seven Year Plan "to begin building communism" (MacKenzie 714). Khrushchev actually scrapped the more realistic Sixth

three friends buy canned corn, to which they ironically refer as "tsaritsa polei" (1987 269) "the queen of the fields"—the official bombastic periphrasis current during Khrushchev's obsessive campaign for planting corn in Russia.[191]

Dimka also ironizes conventions from contemporary Soviet films, specifically, the syrupy spring imagery of official film comedies: "Nothing doing, it's just fate; they'll all have to sit through the movie *Spring Melodies*, the latest comedy, which is full of clichés and devoid of psychological insight." (1963 10) He likewise treats in a serio-comic mode the typical narrative of Thaw-era film melodrama: a combinination of romance story with the master plot of building communism.

> Liubov'! … emu uzhe bol'she goda razreshaetsia poseshchat' koe-kakie fil'my … On znaet, kak eto byvaet. Liudi stroiat gidrostantsiiu, i vdrug On govorit: "Ia liubliu,"—a Ona krichit: "Ne nado!" ili "A ty khorosho vse obdumal?" A potom oni begaiut po naberezhnoi i vse pytaiutsia potselovat'sia. Ili sidiat na beregu, nad gidrostantsiei, a svodnyi khor i orkestr glavnogo upravleniia po proizvodstvu fil'mov (dirizher—Gamburg) naiarivaet v zaoblachnykh daliakh. I vot zal tsepeneet: on snimaet s sebia pidzhak i nakidyvaet ego na plechi liubimoi. Naplyv. (1987 244)

Five Year Plan in order to "construct the bases of communism . . . In 1963, the Seventh Five Year Plan was abandoned as impossible of achievement" (Ibid 717).

[191] Khrushchev started his campaign for planting corn in Russia after visiting the US in 1959. He was impressed by Iowa prairies full of maize, and ordered that maize be planted everywhere, forgetting that the US is far south of most of the Soviet Union. A Corn Research Institute was established. The scholarly journal *Corn* appeared. Nobody was allowed to challenge the authority of the "queen of the fields" (Hosking 358-59). The campaign was a disaster because most of the corn could not be harvested ripe, owing to Russia's cold climate.

Love … for over a year he has been allowed to see a certain type of movie …He

knows how it happens. People are building a hydro-electric station … and then

the man suddenly declares, "I love you!", to which the girl shouts in reply, "No,

you mustn't!" or "Have you given it plenty of thought?" And then they keep

running up and down the embankment, with him trying to kiss her. Or they sit in

front of the hydroelectric station while the choir of the film company's orchestra

(Comrade Hamburg conducting) is heard from beyond the clouds … Then

suddenly the audience grows tense with expectation. He removes his jacket and

throws it over the shoulders of his beloved. There's a mighty crescendo at this

point. (1963 67)

The protagonist distances himself from such masterpieces, which carefully avoid any

manifestations of sexuality, connect personal emotions with state construction projects, and favor

nineteenth-century symphonic music as a vehicle for representing the life of contemporary

youth.

Finally, the irony of Aksenov's novel targets such cultural phenomena of the Thaw as the

cult of Shakespeare and his tragic heroes, above all, Hamlet. In *A Ticket to The Stars*,

Shakespeare stops being the mentor of the Thaw intelligentsia or, to invoke Kozintsev maxim,

"Shakespeare—our contemporary." Shakespearean imagery is used only self-ironically by

Dimka and his friends.

"Udivitel'naia plastichnost',—skazal sedoi chelovek iz kino,—ia eshche ne videl

ni odnoi Dzhul'etty, kotoraia by tak velikolepno tantsevala "lipsi." On vykhvatil

shpagu i otsaliutoval. I vokrug nachalos' poboishche. Shpagi stuchali kak

khokkeinye kliushki, kogda v Luzhnikakh igraiut s kanadtsami. Konechno, vsekh

pobedil Dimka. "Nash luchshii napadaiushchii,—skazal sedoi chelovek iz kino

reporteram.—semnadtsat' let, familiia—Montekki, imia—Romeo." (1987 239-

40)

"She is surprisingly supple," a gray-haired movie director commented. "I've

never seen a Juliet before who could dance calypso[192] with such fluid grace."

And, saying so, he pulled his sword out of its sheath and saluted Galia with it.

And right away, a terrible massacre began. Sabers clanged and clashed. The

swords sounded like hockey sticks when the Soviet hockey team meets the

Canadians in Luzhniki Stadium. But it was Dimka who was the great winner.

"He is our best attacking forward," said the old movie director to the newspaper

reporters. "His name is Montague, his first name Romeo." (1963 62-63)

When Dimka gets drunk, he dreams that he becomes a contemporary Romeo, while Galia

becomes a famous actress who either is Juliet or plays her. The dream inspired by plentiful

libations is self-ironic and ostentatiously ambiguous. The serio-comic lowering of the solemn

and distanced tragic masks to the profane present also marks the film comedy of the era.

Dimka's mixing of hockey imagery with elements from the famous Shakespearean tragedy

parallels the theater director's use of a referee's whistle and soccer terminology in a production of

Hamlet in Riazanov's *Watch Out For the Car*.

Shakespeare's *oeuvre* as a sign also becomes treacherously ambiguous when, for

example, the actor Dolgov refers to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as he attempts to seduce Dimka's

---

[192] In the original, Galia dances Lipsi, "a fast waltz invented in East Germany to rival decadent Western dances"

(Stites 133) and endorsed by the Komsomol in 1961.

beloved, Galia (1987, 262). The protagonist's foils, such as Dolgov, assume the masks of

Shakespearean characters, but are never comfortable with them. When Galia imagines that she

will play Juliet and Dolgov—Romeo, Dolgov notes, "I'm afraid it's no longer a suitable part for

me" (1963 107). He uses the persona of the tragic character only to seduce Galia; the role is a

skeleton key to open her chastity belt, not another semi-religious exemplar to be emulated, as in

Doctor Zhivago.

The novel not only inverts the relations between a Western "them" and a Soviet "us," but

also distances "us" from the values and conventions of Thaw culture. In this respect, *A Ticket to

the Stars* is not the epitome of youth prose, but an ironic parody of the youth prose of the 1950s.

Aksenov's novel ironically inverts and debunks the master tropes of Stalinism that early Thaw

culture attempted to revitalize.

2.4. Ironies of Cultural Politics Around Aksenov's *Ticket to the Stars*.

A Ticket to the Stars was published in the June and July issues of *Youth* (1961) and

became a cult novel overnight. In his memoirs Anatolii Gladilin[193] notes: "They read it in the

metro, in the trams, on the street. It was published in thirty countries (the accursed West, plus

Japan)" (92). Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the popularity of the novel is the

appearance of a parody in a scholarly journal, *Voprosy literatury*. Eduard Gai and Boris Ganin

published a chapter, "Dimka," from a non-existent young author's novel *Moroka s limonami*

(Headache with Lemons)—a parody on the title of Aksenov's story "Apel'siny iz Morokko"

---

[193] Anatolii Gladilin is one of the first youth prose writers. His "Chronicle of the Times of Viktor Podgurskii"

(*Youth* 9:1956) was an early attempt to re-introduce the ironic mode into Soviet literature.

("Oranges from Morocco," *Youth* 1:1963).[194] Moreover, a film adaptation of *A Ticket* appeared

in 1962[195], and Russian teenagers embarked on pilgrimages to Tallinn, the setting of the novel.

The book's title bequeathed a slightly ironic name to the generation of the 1960s:

"zvezdnye mal'chiki"/"star boys" (Al'tshuller 235, Gladilin 91). Above all, the novel reflected

the rise of a youth culture independent of state control. This culture had its own slang, clothes,

music and dancing style, and its youth developed an ironic attitude toward not only official, but

also adult culture in general.

The "discursive communities" that enabled the ironies of Aksenov's works were, first, his

contemporary critics and, second, the communist party officials who controlled literature. The

officials demanded that Aksenov disarm the irony of his writings by clarifying his own stance in

regards to his characters and by shunning irony in his future writing. The era's critics argued

about whether ironic self-reflexive characters should be allowed into the sunlit realm of Soviet

literature. In his dialogue with both communities Aksenov cleverly chose a ritualistic agreement

with his opponents in his public responses and a complete disregard for their advice in his

writing.

---

[194] Eduard Gai and Boris Ganin published a bigger version of their parody in issue 8(1968) of *Voprosy literatury.*

[195] Even before the novel was published, Mosfilm bought the rights to transform it into a screenplay and to produce

the film. Aksenov recollects that they were in the middle of shooting the film when the issue of *Youth* with the

novel's first part was published. The novel became a sensation (*Strelets* 10[1985]: 31).

The film *My Younger Brother,* made by Aleksandr Zarkhi (1908-97), a prominent film director who

matured during Stalin's times, was a monologization of the novel's ironic style. As its title indicates, the film

replaces the interplay of several points of view in the novel by the hierarchizing point of view of the older brother.

Il'ichev, Khrushchev's deputy in charge of ideology, praised Aksenov for making changes in the screenplay that

avoided the stylistic controversies of the novel (Johnson 14).

2.4.1. Discursive Community I: The Author and The Critics

Aksenov's ironic treatment of the fundamental tropes of Soviet culture attracted considerable attention to his novel both in the Soviet Union and in the West. Gladilin recollects:

> For a whole year *The Literary Gazette* argued over *A Ticket to the Stars* in every
>
> issue. Iurii Bondarev claimed that he would not have been afraid to cross the
>
> enemy lines with Aksenov's boys (a sign of approval—that is, these are "our"
>
> boys, AP). "They have no place in Soviet reality!" cried Vasilii Smirnov. "Right,
>
> boys!" Robert Rozhdestvenskii titled his article. "Wrong, boys!" Nikolai
>
> Gribachev immediately answered him. (92)

In the Soviet press, however, criticism predominated. Aksenov and several other authors, such as Evgenii Evtushenko, Andrei Voznesenskii, and Viktor Nekrasov, were attacked for violating the limits of Thaw culture. These limits implied that an artist may to modify fundamental Soviet tropes, but may not not abandon or ironically distance him/herself from them.[196]

Most of the criticism appealed to Aksenov to provide some form of disclaimer or antidote for the text's ironic stance and to give an unambiguous explanation of his own attitude toward unofficial youth culture. Aksenov's response was characteristically ironic in the inclusive mode: he complied with the system in his articles, but in his writing utterly disregarded critics'

---

[196] Predominantly critical articles on the novel include V. Pankov's "Pravo na zvezdnyi bilet" ("The Right to a Ticket to the Stars," *Literatura i zhizn'* August 25, 1961), V. Nazarenko's "Kstati o formalizme" ("About Formalism," *Zvezda* 9[1961]), V. Kotov's and I Shevtsov's "Fal'shivyi bilet. Eshche raz o romane V. Aksenova" ("Counterfeit Ticket. Once Again about Aksenov's Novel," *Literatura i zhizn'* October 6), K. Pozdniaev's "'Zvezdnyi bilet'—kuda?" ("A Starry Ticket to Where?" *October* 10[1961]), and V. Rosliakov's "'Pravdokha' i 'modern'" ("'Real Stuff' and 'Groovy'," *Literaturnaia gazeta* November 16).

suggestions. He obediently performed all the ritualistic recantations and reconciliations in the

Soviet press, while continuing to write fiction thematizing not only ironic, but also satirical

distance from both the Stalinist utopia and Thaw illusions.

Soon after the appearance of the novel in the journal *Youth*, L. Lavlinskii published an

article in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* under the title "Ticket, But What is the Destination?" The

critic argued that Aksenov's novel was sympathetic to alternative modes of youth culture,

specifically to the *stiliagi*.[197] Aksenov's major fault, according to Lavlinskii, was the absence of

a monologizing authorial judgement on his characters, who do not fit the profiles of positive

heroes: "Here, as nowhere else, the writer's word should be especially authoritative and wise."

Lavliniskii operated with two major medical metaphors: that of disease, with which he equated

the non-official youth culture of the *stiliagi*, and that of prophylactics—the function that Soviet

writers were supposed to fulfill: "We must protect young souls from this disease."

Lavlinskii directed serious criticism at Aksenov's characters on account of their interest

in Western culture:

> Oni poklonniki zapadnoi kul'tury modern … kotoraia nalipla neponiatnymi
>
> podchas dlia nikh samikh slovami: "ekzistetsialism," "tashizm." Po
>
> voskresen'iam oni tantsuiut bugi-vugi i iz'iasniaiutsia na ptich'em iazyke stiliag.

---

[197] *Stiliagi* was the one of the post-World War II forms of unofficial urban youth subculture. *Stiliagi* girls adopted short, tight skirts and lots of lipstick, while boys wore zoot-suits. "A 1949 satirical piece in *Crocodile* called them *stiliagi*, rude and ignorant freaks who did weird dances and knew more about Viennese operetta than about Russian culture" (Stites 124-25). The cult of jazz music was part of *stiliaga* culture. For a comprehensive discussion of the *stiliagi* movement, see Troitskii (13-18).

They admire Western modernist culture … which adheres to them with words

they themselves do not understand, such as "existentialism," "tachism." On

Sundays they dance boogie-woogie and speak the pigeon language of the *stiliagi*.

The world of the Soviet "us," the critic complains, exists in the novel only as "boring teachers'

preaching," "correct" and "cement-made" people, and "bad radio programs." In effect,

Lavlinskii identifies the ironic inversion of the opposition between "us" and "them" as the key

feature of the novel's world.   According to the critic, such ambiguous play is unacceptable in a

Soviet novel.

Finally, the article lambasted the novel for lacking a teleology (a movement toward the

communist future): "Is it good that Dimka's life lacks a goal?" The very title of the article

echoed the last words of the novel, while at the same time pointing to the absence of a teleology:

"Ticket, But What is the Destination?" Whereas most youth prose characters would have bought

tickets to a construction project in Siberia, Aksenov's protagonist, first, bought a ticket to

Estonia out "West," and later continued to search for his ideal in the starry sky.

Several days after the appearance of Lavlinskii's article, Aksenov published one as well,

"Printsy, nishchie dukhom" ("Princes Who Are Poor in Spirit") (*Literaturnaia gazeta* September

17, 1961), where he wrote:

> Vy ne dinozavry, rebiata! Vspomnite, chto vy sovremennye sovetskie liudi,
>
> podnimite golovy v nebo. Neuzheli vy ne uvidite tam nichego, krome neonovoi
>
> vyveski restorana?
>
> You aren't dinosaurs, guys! Remember that you're modern Soviet people. Lift
>
> your heads to the sky. Do you really see nothing there but the neon sign of a
>
> restaurant?

The article was written in that annoyingly moralizing tone that Lavlinskii had demanded of

Soviet writers. Aksenov, however, also used his article as a platform on which to raise the

question of youth culture and the artistic means of representing this culture in modern literature.

2.4.2. Discursive Community II: The Author and His Party Mentors

Not only literary critics, but also party officials at the highest level were disturbed by

Aksenov's works. To ensure that his prose would subscribe to the ideological canon, Leonid

Il'ichev, Khrushchev's deputy for ideological affairs, personally edited Aksenov's story "Oranges

from Morocco" for the January 1963 issue of *Iunost,* "and wrote an article in the 10 January

issue of *Literaturnaia gazeta* warning that the party would take steps to correct 'formal' and

'abstract' tendencies among young writers" (Pogacar 245). Sergei Pavlov, the Head of the

Komsomol, criticized Aksenov's two skyward works, "Halfway to the Moon" and *Ticket to the

Stars* (Johnson 187). His article in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* on March 22, 1963 branded

Aksenov and other liberal writers "traitors" to the motherland, who "forget . . . about the people .

. . about their motherland . . . for . . . the publication of a book 'over there'" (cited in Johnson

187).

Pavlov criticized the magazine *Youth*, where many fledgling writers published their

works, for offering Soviet youth wrong models for emulation:

> The editorial board of *Yunost* very much likes the adventures of notorious lads
>
> who, if they make an impression on the reader, do so primarily by their tough
>
> *stilyaga* slang, their predilection for calvados . . . and their cowboy bravado when
>
> it comes to sexual questions. (cited in Johnson 187)

Pavlov considered Aksenov's fiction the most notorious instance of this lamentable tendency in

Youth. Pavlov's major criticism focussed on the absence of a positive hero in this undesirable

type of novel and the simultaneous presence of signs of Western culture. Ironically, Pavlov fell into official disfavor for illegal hard currency operations—his own closeted desire for the West. As punishment, he was appointed Chairman of the State Sports Committee of the USSR (Gladilin 124).

Attacks on the intelligentsia, including Aksenov, peaked during the meeting of party leaders with the creative intelligentsia on March 8th, 1963. Khrushchev and others criticized Thaw writers and filmmakers for abandoning the canon of socialist realism. At the meeting, critics faulted Aksenov for two sins: his writing and his recent controversial interview, together with Voznesenskii, given to a Polish (that is, foreign) journalist, Adam Perłowski, and published in *Polityka* on March 2, 1963 (Johnson 36).[198] Both writers in the course of the interview raised the question of the older generation's responsibility for the Stalinist purges. Aksenov specifically and tactlessly asked: "How could they have allowed the year 1937 to happen?" (cited in Johnson 37). Although criticism of Stalinism was tolerated, writers were forbidden to question the fundamental Soviet tropes, such as, for example, the symbolic Soviet family, specifically the father-son bond.

At the March 8th meeting, family rhetoric dominated Aksenov's vilification. First, Wanda Wasilewska, a Soviet writer of Polish origin, mounted the podium and, reportedly "on the verge of tears informed [the audience] that she'd just returned from Poland, and the Polish

---

[198] Perlovsky interviewed Aksenov and Voznesenskii in Fall 1962, but did not publish the results until March 1963. Because the interview took place during Khrushchev's attacks on the intelligentsia, Johnson believes that Poles delayed the publication "in hopes that the campaign would ease off and the damage to Aksenov and Voznesenskii would be minimal" (37). The interview, however, appeared at the most unfortunate moment—during a new campaign against intellectuals.

comrades had complained to her that certain young Moscow writers were preventing fraternal

Poland from building socialism" (Gladilin 107). Khrushchev demanded the names of the culprits

who dared to hurt "fraternal Poland" and Wasilewska, after some weak resistance, cited

Voznesenskii and Aksenov.

Khrushchev first reprimanded Voznesenskii in front of the two thousand people present

in the hall, and threatened to "chop him into pieces" if he turned against "us" (cited in Gladilin

108). Then came Aksenov's turn:

> "There he is!" yelled Khrushchev, pointing at a young bearded man in a red
>
> sweater. "I noticed him a long time ago—everyone applauds but him!"
>
> The man Khrushchev pointed at was literally dragged from his seat to the podium.
>
> It was the artist Illarion Golitsyn.
>
> "You're taking revenge on us for your father!" yelled Khrushchev, without even
>
> letting Golitsyn open his mouth.
>
> "What father?" asked Golitsyn. "My father's alive, and anyway, I'm not
>
> Aksenov."
>
> "Okay, sit down," growled Khrushchev to Golitsyn, "here's my hand!" (Gladilin
>
> 108)

It is ironic that Khrushchev, who played the role of a castrating patriarch at the meeting,

misrecognized the deviant writer. By so doing he reiterated one of the major points of *A Ticket

to the Stars:* the generational alienation that was part of the era's cultural behavior. For

Khrushchev all bearded young people in sweaters were potential ideological perverts.

When Aksenov was finally found, Khrushchev assumed a Claudius-like role, saying:

"You're taking revenge on us for your father's having been executed" (cited in Gladilin 109).

Aksenov, however, did not follow the cultural pattern of Thaw Hamlets. He avoided confronting Khrushchev in front of two thousand people. Instead, he confirmed the father-son bond by thanking Khrushchev for releasing various camp prisoners, including his father: "'Nikita Sergeevich,' said Aksenov, 'my father is an old communist, he was rehabilitated, he's alive, and we associate his rehabilitation with your name'" (cited in Gladilin 109). Khrushchev softened in response: "Okay … if you're with us, we'll help you; turn against us, and we'll annihilate you! But for now, go, and work—here's my hand!" Khrushchev's remarks may be summed up as a warning to Aksenov to represent unambiguously in his works the major tropes of Soviet culture.

Like most writers criticized during the attacks on the intelligentsia, Aksenov published a recantation in *Pravda*. Aksenov's disavowal is important because its major function is to monologize his own ironic treatment of such tropes as the positive hero, the great family and the war. Although the Russian original is not divided into parts, Priscilla Johnson's translation of Aksenov's article appears in three sections, each of which addresses in turn the three fundamental Soviet tropes.

Aksenov opens his apology by acknowledging that his writing has to be part of the ideological war between the Soviet "us" and capitalist "them": "All of us who took part in the meeting gained a new and much broader insight into our tasks in the struggle between the Communist and the capitalist ideologies" (cited in Johnson 206). Aksenov also notes that the Polish journalist to whom he gave the interview forgot to mention the distinction Aksenov drew between Soviet and Western youth: "I said some things about what distinguished young Soviet people from Western ones. I spoke of the naked practicality that is so natural to young Western people and that's not only alien but shameful to us" (cited in Johnson 208 [translation amended for accuracy]).

Just as the most dramatic action of *A Ticket to the Stars* takes place in Estonia, the most Western part of the Soviet Union, so Aksenov got into trouble when he gave a controversial interview to a journalist from Poland—the Westernmost member of the Eastern bloc. In his recantation, Aksenov clearly emphasizes that Poles are part of "us" and that he could be open about the crimes of Stalinism with an understanding ideological brother: "Of course, Poland is a socialist country and readers there can figure out what is going on" (cited in Johnson 208).

The second part of Aksenov's recantation recovered the Great Soviet family, which, according to his critics, was not represented in the novel as the organizing principle of the community. Aksenov, along with Viktor Nekrasov and the filmmaker Marlen Khutsiev, was specifically criticized for emphasizing the generational split within the Soviet family as an indirect indictment not only of Stalinism, but of the Soviet system is general. In his *Pravda* article, Aksenov notes that the generational conflict is the invention of Western propaganda. The generations of fathers and sons in Soviet Russia are united by the common ideology of Marxism-Leninism. There is no conflict because nobody tries to abandon "<u>our</u> Marxist-Leninist philosophy . . . <u>our</u> philosophy, <u>our</u> bright and bold view of the world, is the chief thing that unites all generations of Soviet people. <u>Our</u> enemies will not succeed in getting <u>us</u> into a quarrel with our fathers. We are one flesh and blood" (cited in Johnson 208, emphasis added). Though out of tune with the stance of his own novel, this statement definitely harmonized with the current ideological campaign.

The concluding part of Aksenov's article focuses on the trope of the positive hero. He admits that his characters hardly accord with the canonical positive hero. Moreover, Aksenov does not promise to create such a protagonist, but, rather, promises to search for one: "We are searching [for such a type], and I, too, am searching to the best of my ability" (209). This

comment is not just an evasive maneuver in the face of ideological pressure. The promise to search reflects the temporality of the post-Stalinist condition, in which the protagonist and his ideal are in a state of separation. Aksenov's own imagery of the unattainable Moon or Stars is at the heart of such a separation. In Aksenov's earlier novel, "Colleagues," readers can still find the "modal schizophrenia" (Clark 37) of the future ideal as already available in the present, which is characteristic of the socialist realist novel. With *A Ticket to the Stars,* however, future and present become separated in Aksenov's fictional world. The search for a positive hero, or, to be more precise, for a neo-romantic ideal, is an important part of Aksenov's early (Thaw-era) prose—just as seeking is for all his oeuvre. Hence, journey or movement is a recurrent *topos* in his writing.

Soviet criticism of Aksenov's novel targeted, above all, its ironic style and attempted to make the writer both monologize and purge his text of irony. Aksenov's response, in turn, avoided any direct confrontation with the cultural authorities. In 1963 he made no attempt to confront or change the system, trying, instead, to beat the system on its own terms. He repented in the major Party newspaper *Pravda*, then, using his institutional connections and position as a Soviet writer, he continued to write what he wanted.

Such a response was very different from Pasternak's confrontation with the system or Dudintsev's efforts to improve it. Aksenov achieved the goals of a Thaw artist—writing what he considered sincere and honest. His means, however, went beyond the Thaw ethos of sincerity, openness, and overt confrontation with evil. He ironically distanced himself from the cultural authorities by performing "self-criticism" (*samokritika*), the requisite ritualistic self-flagellation, in *Pravda*. In a way Aksenov's behavior complies with what Slavoj Žižek calls an ideal "subject of ideology"—a person who sees through ideology, does not try to confront it, but attempts to

manipulate it for his own ends. This elusive and ironic pattern of cultural behavior marked the transition to the new cultural period—that of Stagnation.

3. Cine-Irony of the Late Thaw

The central feature of an ironic work, as Northrop Frye notes, is the disappearance of the heroic (228). During the late Thaw, the writers and filmmakers of the younger generation created works in which the protagonist's main function was to produce the ironic effect of deheroicizing not only Stalinist values, but also those of the Thaw. These works do not directly juxtapose a heroic protagonist incarnating Thaw values to the positive hero of the Stalinist era. They do not strive to create an alternative positive hero, as did the writers or filmmakers of the earlier generation (Pasternak, Kozintsev, and many others). Rather, the films of the late Thaw adopt a detached view of the vanishing cultural values of the Thaw era. Disillusionment with and displacement of these values via a series of discrepancies in the films' structures are the dominanta of these films.

Comedy was the main genre for conveying cine-irony. Film directors such as El'dar Riazanov, Leonid Gaidai, Georgii Daneliia, and Elem Klimov created protagonists who dwell on the margins of mainstream Soviet culture: a child (*Serezha*, *Welcome*), a person suspected of insanity (*Watch Out For the Car*) or even a righteous dog (Gaidai's two shorts, *Barbos and a Fantastic Cross* and *Moonshiners*). These new protagonists are the last believers in Thaw

values, whose idealistic acts or words[199] cast an ironic light on a world that is devoid of virtue and the heroic, in which power often serves a baser cause.

3.1. Ironic Doubles of Soviet Positive Heroes

El'dar Riazanov's Iurii Detochkin, played by Innokentii Smoktunovskii, is one such new protagonist. Both child and divine madman, he has a surname that explicitly pinpoints his childlike nature. He is the last child in a world that grew up and became soiled and cynical. Georg Lukacs would call him the last "abstract idealist" in a universe devoid of the heroic. Lukacs's discussion of the cultural values at the time when *Don Quixote* was written accurately describes the shift in cultural values at the end of Khrushchev's Thaw: "It was the period … of great confusion of values in the midst of an as yet unchanged value system … the purest heroism is bound to become grotesque, the strongest faith is bound to become madness" (105). The discrepancy between the cultural values of the protagonist and the rest of the world constitutes the major source of irony in *Watch Out For the Car*. Indeed, according to Riazanov, an "ironic intonation" (101) defines the film's structure and its protagonist.

Detochkin's infantile and helpless acts might elicit sad laughter and sympathy, but never serve as a positive model or provide the *Bildungs* story about the protagonist who has transformed the community. Rather, Detochkin's story engages the common Thaw narrative about an individual and artistic maturation. Significantly (especially in terms of the Early

---

[199] [24] Catch phrases from the comedies of the 1960s had a noticeable impact on the Russian language. *The Dictionary of Popular Russian Film Quotes* (Elistratov 1999 154), for example, lists thirty phrases from Riazanov's *Watch Out For The Car* that became idiomatic expressions in modern Russian (154).

Thaw), his talent and passion is theater, especially Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In Riazanov's film, however, the familiar Thaw-era maturation plot about a creative individual, familiar from Pasternak's novel and Kozintsev's film adaptations of *Don Quixote* and *Hamlet,* turns upon itself. The unsaid irony of Detochkin's figure is that he can grow up only into a cynic and criminal, like the other adult characters in the film. Like Dostoevskii's Prince Myshkin, with whom Iurii is compared by his fiancée Liuba, he must either abandon this world or learn to play by its rules.

Riazanov represents Detochkin's pseudo-maturation visually in his changing of hats and hairstyles. Detochkin first appears with the childishly disheveled hairstyle of a three-year-old (Figure 50), an ironic mirror of a Thaw character's casual and unruly coiffures.

Figure 50.

Detochkin's hair is ambiguous: on the one hand, it is the standard All-Soviet children's haircut; on the other hand, Detochkin's hair goes beyond the standard style by sticking out of its orderly ugliness. This deliberate excess transforms youthfulness into infantilism.

When Detochkin puts on a hat, the gesture suggests to a Soviet viewer a detective-story development, for the protagonist in the Thaw detective story was often a rookie investigator who matures into an experienced detective. The protagonist of Riazanov's film, however, turns out to be on the wrong side of the law. He matures into a criminal who is the only honest person in the story. Detochkin is an ironic replica of a neo-Romantic convention—the criminal as honorable man, somewhat in the tradition of Schiller's *Die Raüber*.

Detochkin wears his criminal hat and the criminal mask on his face inappropriately. Instead of putting them on just at night (according to the conventions of film noir), Detochkin wears his robber's hat and steals cars in broad daylight. When he tries to steal Dima's car during the daytime, he is the only person in a black hat on the sunlit street. His appearance, instead of providing a disguise or threatening appearance, gives him away and makes him look like a "schlemiel." Through foregrounding Detochkin's inappropriateness, the director indicates a discrepancy between society's ideas of justice and those of the protagonist.

Detochkin's criminal hat does not fit his infantile and confused facial expression (Figure 51). He is not the criminal predator, but the hunted victim—an ironic inversion enacted when Dima, the car owner, puts a trap in his *Volga* in order to catch Detochkin.

Figure 51.

305

Instead of developing or being reeducated, Detochkin remains a thirty-six-year-old child playing at Robin Hood.

Detochkin's social and generic displacements in the detective part of the narrative have their analogue in the ironic displacement of Detochkin-the-actor in the segment of the film dealing with his theatrical career. When Detochkin attempts to grow up into Hamlet, via playing the role in a stage production of the tragedy, he fails to fit the part. Detochkin himself admits that Hamlet's wig looks funny on him. The viewer feels a constant gap between the role played and Detochkin's inability to merge with the hackneyed role of the Thaw era's major positive hero.

When at film's end Detochkin returns from jail and his mature voice serves as a sign that he has finally grown up, the protagonist takes off his hat to reveal the half-shaved head of an ex-convict (Figure 52).

Figure 52.

Figure 53.

This haircut is an ironic mirror of Dima's hair—the real criminal in the film, whose car

Detochkin has stolen (Figure 53). The film visually blurs the distinction between a matured

Detochkin and his ideological antipode. They turn into ironic doubles of each other.

Detochkin's implied insanity casts both satiric and ironic light on "normal" Soviet life.

Detochkin is under suspicion of insanity because he is pathologically honest and acts according

to his principles. All of the intertextual links of Detochkin's insanity consist of ironic references

to Thaw culture heroes, above all Hamlet and Prince Myshkin. These sublime doubles of

Detochkin emphasize what Paul de Man calls irony as "a consciousness of madness . . . the

ironist invents a form of himself that is mad but that does not know its own madness; he then

proceeds to reflect on his madness thus objectified" (198).

When his fiancée learns about his lonely fight for justice—he steals cars from thieves,

resells them, and donates the proceeds to orphanages—she calls him "an idiot": "Look at

yourself. You're an idiot!" This characterization echoes the nickname given Prince Myshkin by

the women who love him. For Soviet viewers of the 1960s this intertextual irony was enhanced

by the fact that Smoktunovskii performed the role of Prince Myshkin in the 1960 stage

production of Dostoevskii's novel.[200] Moreover, the actor Iurii Iakovlev, who provides the

voiceover in Riazanov's film, also evoked the famous Dostoevskii character. Iakovlev became

famous in his first role as Prince Myshkin in Ivan Pyr'ev's film adaptation of the same novel

(1957). Detochkin's insanity echoes the holy insanity of Dostoevskii's Christ-like positive hero.

Riazanov, however, never allows this divine insanity to acquire sublime connotations in

the film. The narrative shifts registers and produces humorous discrepancy when the detective,

Podberezovikov, questions not Detochkin's spiritual, but his psychological, normalcy.

Detochkin very seriously assures Podberezovikov that he even has a medical certificate attesting

to his sanity, which he immediately shows to his interlocutor. Detochkin's appearance

(disheveled hair, deranged and bewildered glance) directly contradicts his verbal and written

assurances in Riazanov's typical comic clash between visual and verbal content.

Riazanov's comedy is dominated by a dramatic irony deriving from the split between

Detochkin's lonely quest for the goodness of human nature and the rest of the characters'

disbelief in the inherent goodness of the world. The logic of the film's narrative confirms the

values of Detochkin's opponents. Detochkin, in turn, is trapped in the circular motion of the

narrative. He steals cars from immoral thieves, leaving them near police stations with notes

explaining the illegal nature of the owners' income. The police, however, return the cars to their

criminal owners.

---

[200] Georgii Tovstonogov directed the production at the Bol'shoi Drama Theater in Leningrad. The production was

one of the most important theater events of the Thaw. In his memoirs, Smoktunovskii notes the link between his

interpretation of Prince Lev Nikolaevich Myshkin and Detochkin: "The appearance of the naive and honest

Detochkin would be downright unthinkable without the primordial simplicity, unpretentiousness, and wisdom of

Lev Nikolaevich" (81 translation mine).

The film provides another intertextual comment on the Thaw positive hero by emphasizing that this model hero has turned into a mask that constantly falls off the face of the protagonist, for it does not fit him. This mask is that of Hamlet, the archetypal positive hero of the Thaw. Riazanov's film indicates the limit of Thaw culture by directing its irony's edge at the hero with whose name the era's cultural values are associated.

To play the role of Detochkin, Riazanov personally invited Smoktunovskii whose acting credentials included not only the part of Prince Myshkin, but also that of Hamlet in Kozintsev's film adaptation of the tragedy. The director's commitment to Smoktunovskii was exceptional. When he learned that Smoktunovskii might not be able to play the lead, he even considered canceling the entire project (Riazanov 1995 58).

In the film, *Hamlet* is staged by an amateur theater under the guidance of a moronic director, who explains acting via soccer terms and behaves like a soccer coach. According to him, "a troupe consists of people of two friendly professions: motorists and police officers." Appropriately, Detochkin plays Hamlet, while the detective who is investigating the car thefts plays Laertes. The actors ostentatiously play like amateurs, so that the viewers never forget that tragic heroes are just masks put on for the performance. Detochkin as Hamlet is a stage production, while Detochkin as the only honest person in the non-stage world of the film is a criminal and the last holy fool of the Thaw.

The film's irony targets not only the primary Thaw positive hero, but also his creator—Shakespeare, as interpreted by Thaw culture: in terms of the cult of the artist and the individual, non-conformity, and resistance to tyranny. The film, however, distances itself from the simplistic idealism of the Thaw. Deconstructing the Thaw cult of Shakespeare, Riazanov uses an abrupt cut from a rehearsal episode to an episode of a car theft on a Moscow street to emphasize

Detochkin's failure to distinguish between the fiction of dead cultural values (Thaw ideals) staged in the theater and the street laws of the new cultural values. Right after the director suggests staging Shakespeare, the film cuts to the episode where Detochkin tries to steal Dima's car, in the process covering his face with a volume of Shakespeare. Detochkin believes that he applies the values of Shakespeare to life (Figure 54). The ironic parallel with the knight from La Mancha living according to chivalric romances in an age devoid of chivalric values indicates that the Thaw as a cultural period has run its course.
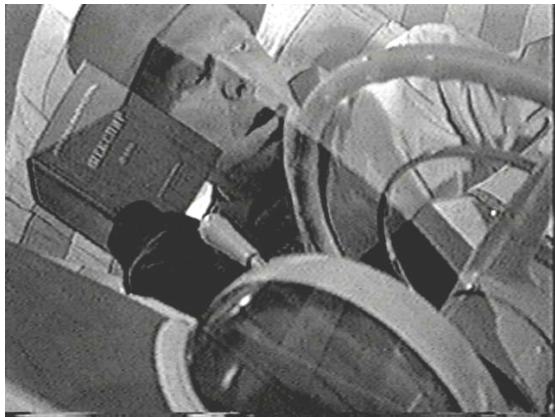
Figure 54.

Finally, the film emphasizes the protagonist's distancing from Shakespeare as his "mentor." Detochkin loses his volume of Shakespeare's plays at the scene of the crime. When the detective who finds the book tells Detochkin that people usually put their names in their books, Detochkin notes that he does not. In fact, Detochkin does not claim Shakespeare as his master text, and Shakespeare is not his *Catechism of a Revolutionary*. In his acts and double life, ironically, he is closer to the thieves against whom he fights. In this respect, the volume of Shakespeare's plays itself serves as a reified object, a remnant of once dominant Thaw values.

Detochkin marks a turning point in the iconography of Russian positive heroes because he questions the paradigm of Promethean characters who save the community through personal sacrifice. Detochkin inaugurates the paradigm of Russian Sisyphuses, who, no matter what they do, return to the narrative's point of departure—the flawed and incorrigible community. Riazanov notes in his memoirs

> In my view the film's plot does not leave any doubts about the expediency of the protagonist's activity à la Robin Hood. To punish the thieves he resells stolen cars. Only another thief, however, will buy a stolen car …The protagonist's entire activity ultimately boils down to milling the wind. (1995 106, translation mine)

Sisyphus-Detochkin not only replaces the Promethean version of the positive hero, but undermines the entire project of a Soviet positive hero as a model to be emulated.

When Detochkin starts reselling the cars, a circular logic entraps the protagonist. In the film, criminals are the only Soviets who are able to buy cars. Moreover, to sell a car Detochkin has to travel to one of the Baltic republics, which within the world of the Soviet Union was always considered a sort of Twilight Zone, part Soviet, part Western. The buyer of the stolen car is a corrupt priest, who uses the money belonging to the parish to buy the car for himself. Thus the car is always implicated in a vicious circle, passing from one criminal owner to another.

Detochkin's circular motion provides an ironic comment not only on the idealism of the Thaw, but also on a century of Russian populism—the intelligentsia's Promethean project to enlighten Russia. Here the Thaw becomes only an episode in a bigger picture. Detochkin circles around the Soviet Union caught in the film's main trap—the car.

As in many Russian avant-garde and totalitarian texts, the central character of the film is the machine. Riazanov, however, deheroicizes the machine as the protagonist of modernity. The

machine was the heroic protagonist of Eisenstein and Alexandrov's 1926 film *Battleship Potemkin*. Ships, planes, tractors, and tanks named after state leaders dominated Stalinist culture. The early Thaw replaced the heroic machine with either temporarily disabled machines (the shot-down plane in Chukhrai's *Clear Sky*) or naturalized machines (cranes instead of planes in Kalatozov's film). Riazanov's title for his late-Thaw film invokes a nameless, mass-produced, philistine machine, an ironic double of the heroic machine.

The nameless mechanical protagonist of the film is a seducer who inspires base human instincts: the lust for possession. The film's mise-en-scène renders the car a synonym for a trap. Indeed, as noted above, Dima installs a trap inside a car to catch Detochkin. The latter's inability to find a way out of the circulation of money and the car as the most desired commodity is equally a narrative trap with the car at its center. The car-*dentata* also echoes the trap of the Elsinore gates, especially the opening shot of Kozintsev's film, and "The Mousetrap"—the interpolated narrative from the famous tragedy.

Unlike the heroic narratives of the past, in Riazanov's comedy the personal automobile symbolizes an emerging consumerist culture. The narrator explains to the viewers that everyone who does not have a car would love to acquire one. Detochkin is an exception—he has not desire to own a car. He is caught, however, in the same circulation of commodities as those who aspire to be consumers. *Watch Out For the Car* is the first Soviet film to demonstrate, through the looking-glass of irony, Soviet society as a consumerist culture.

Riazanov chose the mechanical protagonist of his film wisely. Russian-made passenger sedan Volga (Model 21) became one of the first vehicles available to Soviet citizens for individual purchase in the late 1950s and 1960s (Figure 55)

Figure 55. Volga 21 <http://gaz21.com/GAZ-21Real> Accessed on September 5, 2001.

In Russia, the Volga (Model 21) acquired a cult following similar to the cult of such classics as the Chevy 57 in the US. The consumerist fetishism ignited by Volgas during the Thaw materialized into numerous Volga Clubs by the 1990s. The Internet provides ample information about Volga clubs in Russian cities (for example, the Novosibirsk Volga Club http://www.volga21.h1.ru/menu.htm), and former Soviet and Eastern Bloc countries: Fotogalerie moji Gazely (the Czech Volga on the Web, http://www.fi.muni.cz/~xkment/gazela.htm), Scheidas Wolga M21 Page (Germany, http://www.scheida.at/volgacenter/index.htm), Volga M21 Custom by Kalev Lepik (Estonia, http://www.trenet.ee/~toomast/kalev/volga.html), and many others. In addition, the electronic GAZette is available on the Internet for fans of the Thaw-era hot rod (http://sol.spaceports.com/~gaz21/Gazette/gazette.html).

3.2. Soviet Communities at Irony's Edge

The Big Family is one of the central tropes of Stalinist culture. The vertical bond between the paternal leader and the son/positive-hero forms the backbone of the family structure. The paradigmatic female protagonist is a perky totalitarian girl—the state's gift to the positive hero.

The early Thaw mediates the relations between the nuclear family and the state family, the former no longer functioning just as a smaller replica of the Big state family. The Thaw also foregrounds an egalitarian male community, usually a frontline military unit, as an alternative to the hierarchical structure of the Stalinist Big Family.

Riazanov's *Watch Out For the Car* directs its irony not so much against the Big Stalinist Family, as against the reconstituted Thaw family and the male brotherhoods of Thaw novels and films. The only concrete family to which the narrative pays extensive attention is that of the Semitsvetovs. The father is a former military officer, who now sells strawberries at the peasant market. From a Soviet-era perspective, he is a private entrepreneur. His daughter Inga is a crude, materialistic housewife. His son-in-law, Dima, is a salesman at an audio-video store, who profits primarily from selling Western stereos on the black market. The distinctive characteristic of the Semitsvetovs as a Thaw family is a displaced bond between the family's male members. Dima is not the son, but the son-in-law of the patriarch.

The family also preserves some formal elements of the Big Soviet Family: the father-in-law, wearing military pants, gives totalitarian orders/advice to the family's younger members. In her toughness of tone and aggressiveness of manners, his daughter recalls Stalinist state brides. The elements of the Big Family, however, are out of appropriate context. The father-in-law combines military pants with a half-open fly and a tank top.

The representation of the totalitarian father, nevertheless, is not exclusively negative. The film is ambiguous about this aging military leader. On the one hand, his private entrepreneurship is satirized. His notion of social justice, on the other hand, is represented as fair. Yet his extremist tone is ironized as inappropriate in a peaceful age. He constantly switches to the language of military commands and supports the idea of sending his son-in-law

314

to jail for ten years for receiving illegal commissions from his sales at the store. Through him, the film enacts a faint nostalgia for the pseudo-clarity of the strong ruler.

The film also demonstrates continuity between Stalinist and Thaw era visions of social justice. The totalitarian father is the only person in the courtroom, apart from Podberezovikov, who raises his voice in defense of Detochkin. The major difference between the screen totalitarian father, however, and the Big Father of Stalinist texts is that the former is concerned only with his family's well-being. Dima's father-in-law is not interested in any great causes of communist construction or the Big Soviet family. He uses inflated official slogans (such as "my budem besposhchadno borot'sia s litsami, zhivushchimi na netrudovye dokhody" "We will mercilessly fight with those people who live off the sweat of another's brow") as a front for taking care of his own family. The ironic effect of the scene emerges from the domestication of state rhetoric. The father's double-talk departs from both the rhetoric of the Stalin-era paternal figure and from the Thaw-era rhetoric of rebellion against the rule of the false father. The film's father is the patriarch of the new values and the new cultural era—Brezhnev's Stagnation.

Semitsvetov's daughter, Inga, likewise uses the style inherited from Stalinist women—verbal articulateness, leadership skills—not to enforce state policies, but to exploit the state and its officials for her own interests. She reprimands the detective for his nonsensical philosophical questions (an implicit attack on Thaw-era idealism) and for not protecting their family property from a thief.

When the investigation against her husband, Dima, starts, it is she who elaborates a plan to manipulate the police for her family's benefit. She suggests that Dima bribe the investigator. Inga's idea violates Thaw culture's idealistic vision of the police force, familiar from the detective novels and films of the era. Cops in these works usually incarnate incorruptible virtue,

315

where as Riazanov's film shows them capable of taking bribes. Not only Inga, but also pure and honest Detochkin prepares money when he is stopped by a highway patrol officer on the road.

In the case of Inga's suggestion that the family bribe Podberezovikov, the situation takes an ironic twist. When Dima responds to his wife's advice with terror, she corrects herself in an unexpected way: "We should give a big bribe. Then they will swallow the bait." Whereas Dima is still trying to decide whether to bribe or not, Inga focuses on the appropriate amount of the bribe. Her last statement on the subject is left without any comment, thereby suggesting an agreement on the part of the implied viewer that a big bribe is the ultimate argument. The power of money and the double standard are the new cultural values. The honest cops of the Thaw-era have to yield to the heroes of a new order: money and cars.

Though still an aggressive and tough decision-maker, the wife is decidedly not a state bride of the Stalinist era. She cares about her family's material well-being and is prepared to manipulate the state's representatives for her personal interests. During the Thaw, such a character would be a villain.[201] In the late Thaw, however, the reappropriation of the characteristics of state womanhood for personal ends makes Inga an ironic double of the Stalin-era state bride.

With the death of the father and the dismantling of the positive hero, the woman who reappropriated state power for her own personal ends emerged as an important cultural icon. This stock character, who becomes prominent in the 1970s, is already visible in *Watch Out For the Car*, where all male characters are either hen-pecked or patronized by dominating maternal figures. Inga directs Dima's behavior. Detochkin has two mothers—his biological mother and

---

[201] See, for example, Tania in Leonid Lukov's popular melodrama *Different Fates* (1956).

his fiancée—who cannot stop infantilizing him. Finally, in the concluding episode, the judge who decides Detochkin's fate in the courtroom is also a female.

The success story of the Semitsvetov family belongs to Dima. His major source of income is the money he receives as extra pay from the customers for whom he obtains scarce Western equipment, such as a German tape recorder. The way Dima invests his money also reflects his double life: he owns none of his purchases, using his wife and father-in-law as fronts for his illegal activities. Dima is a double-life hero—a favorite character of Brezhnev-era culture.[202]

Another distinctive feature of Dima's is his consumerism[203], which turns out to be linked to Western products and in direct contradiction to the concept of "domestic brand." When one of his clients asks him to obtain a good tape-recorder for extra money, Dima straightfacedly suggests that she buy the Soviet-made one on the counter: a huge wooden box reminiscent of Edison's phonograph. The client with an even straighter face requests something "less" Soviet.

Consumerism as an alternative ideology to the cultural values of the Thaw surfaces above all in Dima's relationship to his car. Accompanied by sassy jazz music, Dima enjoys what borders on a sexual act, or at least foreplay, with his white Volga. One of Dima's buddies actually calls his car a blonde. First, Dima tries the car's rear end, then raises his car's antenna,

---

[202] Numerous double-life characters inhabit detectives and spy-thrillers of the late 1960s and 70s. An intellectual who undergoes a conversion and starts working for the secret police is one of the positive two-layered heroes of the Brezhnev era. See, for example, the TV mini-series *Operation Trust* (Kolosov 1967). Cultural life under Brezhnev, in fact, was prosperous for those writers who were allowed to publish on both sides of the Iron Curtain, such as Evgenii Evtushenko, Vasilii Aksenov, Andrei Bitov, Bulat Okudzhava, Fazil' Iskander, and Iulian Semenov.

[203] In his memoirs Riazanov characterizes Dima as a grotesque Lopakhin (a character from Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*): "Back then this role incarnated the authors' antipathies. Now Dima Semitsvetov is not only typical, he is simply the hero of our time: Chekhov's Lopakhin, reduced *ad absurdum*" (157, translation mine).

317

in visual confirmation of his own arousal. Then he opens the door and poses with the car in front of Detochkin. Finally, he gets into the car, gives a good-bye beep, and leaves utterly satisfied (Figure 56).

Figure 56.

The car, in fact, is a central member of the Semitsvetov family. It is not, however, a mechanical helper to build socialism, as, for example, in Pyr'ev's musical comedy *Tractor Drivers*. The car represents the seductive body of consumerism. She is the expensive mistress of both Dima and his wife. It is no coincidence that Dima and his wife struggle to obtain a separate dwelling (the garage) for their car during the film. The car embodies, so to speak, the lure of the new ideology. Not only men but also women (e.g., Dima's friend Sima) attempt to establish bodily contact with the object of their desire—Sima lies on the car's hood while asking Dima for a ride (Figure 57).

Figure 57.

In the film, the Semitsvetovs, like any Soviet family, construct "the radiant future." The construction site, however, is an ironic replica of the great projects of socialism—it is a country house financed by Dima's illegal money and on paper owned by Dima's father-in-law. Instead of building anything, the family merely argues about ownership of the future house. Dima complains that, despite all his resourcefulness and entrepreneurial shrewdness, he has to hide and conceal his income. He ends his monologue with a rhetorical question: "God! When will this all be over?" Dima's father-in-law immediately asks what exactly he means by "this" and threatens to inform on him. The construction site—a common place of socialist realist poetics— transforms into its ironic inversion: the place to inquire not when the radiant future will begin, but when the current absurdity will end. Soviet absurdity becomes the unsaid of an ironic conversation among the characters.

The Semitsvetov family is not only the major focus of the film, but also the numerically big family. Dima and his wife have an extended network of friends and acquaintances, as the viewers can observe during the party at Dima's house. Relations among these members are

highly emotional, and while not always positive from the Soviet point of view, they indicate, nonetheless, interaction among people who have strong ties with one another.

The opposite of this loudly concrete semi-bourgeois family is Detochkin's family, which is the fruit of his fantastic imagination. Every time he steals a car, Detochkin takes a leave of absence from work because of the death or illness of one of his non-existent "relatives." Even in Detochkin's imagination his relatives, like earlier Thaw values, are dying out. The only actual, living member of this family is his idealistic mother. She sings about the locomotive of the world commune to the police detective Podberezovikov, who immediately confirms that he remembers the famous fifty-year-old song. His intonation, however, reveals the unsaid: he patiently nods to everything Detochkin's mother says and sings with her as though she were an enthusiastic mental patient. Detochkin is her only child, who at thirty-six behaves like a three-year-old.

Detochkin's fiancée Liuba (literally "love") sooner resembles a second mother. Whereas Dima and his wife are sexual beings and are even shown sharing a bed (not a frequent moment in Soviet film), the relations between Liuba and Detochkin promise to develop into a day-care attachment between a teacher and her favorite pre-schooler. Detochkin's family lacks the teleology of the Soviet family, even on the level of a nuclear family: passed from the older biological mother to the younger one, he is doomed to remain at an infantile stage of development.

While the family trope is ironized through the mésalliance of consumerist values with elements of the Soviet family, especially in its Thaw nuclear variation, the film's irony also focuses on male brotherhood as an alternative to a standard Soviet family. The Thaw male

community, although lacking the hierarchy of Stalinist military units, was modeled nonetheless, on the military unit. Male friendship never died, even when family ties were broken or betrayed.

In *Watch Out For the Car,* indissoluble male friendship finds reification in an ironic fetish—the cigarettes *Friend*, with a guard dog on the package. The symbol of the Stalinist police state--the guard dog--and the Thaw cult of male bonding collapse into a cheap surrogate: "Cigarettes *Friend*. Thirty kopecks a package." Detochkin's preference for the thirty-kopeck brand betrays him. It becomes the key piece of evidence in the detective part of the film.

Riazanov introduces the male brotherhood of Podberezovikov and Detochkin via dramatic irony. At first, neither of them realizes that they are supposed to be arch-enemies according to the logic of the detective genre. Detochkin (not the detective) finally understands that Podberezovikov is investigating his car thefts, while the detective, like Inspector Clousseau from *The Pink Panther*, does not understand till the very end of the film that his friend is his prime suspect—and the guilty party.

The shared smokes and drinks in the film, familiar from the frontline idylls of trench prose and Thaw-era war films, transform into comic situations, in which one of the characters is ignorant of the other's true identity. Such dramatic irony dominates the scene in which Detochkin meets a police officer on the road. Detochkin helps him start his old motorcycle, after which the officer and the protagonist declaim panegyrics to human brotherhood (the slogans of a vanishing era): "All men are friends to each other. If I am in trouble, then you help me. If you are in trouble, then I help you." Detochkin concludes: "You are protecting justice by your means and I am doing it by my means. But both of us are fighting for the common cause." The irony is shared between the implied author and the viewer, but remains inaccessible to the cop, who escorts the thief to the local post office.

321

When Podberezovikov finally realizes that Detochkin is the thief he is looking for, their friendship should come to a halt. A Soviet cop cannot be a criminal's friend. The only way to keep the friendship alive is to blind oneself again. True to Russian/Soviet traditions, the two men find the magic source of friendship (equated with blindness) in alcohol. Podberezovikov holds the first interrogation in a bar and after they get drunk their friendship revives. Podberezovikov even promises to tear up the warrant for Detochkin's arrest. The irony, however, is that to maintain such a close male brotherhood, the characters now must be in a permanent state of intoxication. Riazanov's film foreshadows a later trend: the liberating and bonding power of alcohol becomes a prominent sign of 1970s' culture.[204]

3.3. Ironizing the War Trope

In the 1960s Soviet cultural producers ironized not only the tropes of the positive hero and the family, but also the war trope, at the heart of which was the opposition between a Soviet "us" and a capitalist "them." Stalinist culture favored spatial representations of the war trope: an epic confrontation of the forces of the radiant future with the demonic forces of capitalism. Early Thaw internalized this conflict and discovered domestic demons to fight (see for example, Drozdov in Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone*). A split either within the Soviet family (the villain not as a foreign agent, but as a member of the community) or within the protagonist's personality (the protagonist in conflict with her/himself) replaced war with an enemy-foreigner. It is important that the late Thaw ironized not only Stalinist instantiations of the war trope, but also its early idealistic Thaw versions.

---

[204] Such a psychedelic version of Thaw values was created in Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow to the End of the Line*. See also Riazanov's film *Irony of Fate.*

The internalized war trope manifested itself in such film genres as family melodrama (the fallen woman as a temporary alien to be redeemed), war film (the Stalinist commander as a villain to be purged), and detective film (the criminal as a lawbreaker to be caught and reeducated). This last was especially important because it not only internalized the war trope (the war between an honest Soviet "us" and "our" Soviet criminals), but also radically changed the nature of the crime. The detective film of the Thaw era replaced the Stalinist conspiracy thriller, in which foreign spies infiltrate and indoctrinate unwary Soviets and are eventually uncovered and destroyed by NKVD agents. In the Thaw detective film, the crime is not a political transgression. Instead, a general human weakness—such as greed, pride, carelessness, immaturity, and susceptibility to alcoholism—becomes the main motive behind the majority of crimes.[205]

The detective film of the 1950s and early 60s marginalized the incorrigible "them" and focused on the weak and fallen "us," who need support to rejoin the community of a strong and mature "us." This impulse to inclusivity manifests itself in genres other than the detective film of the era. See, for example, the conclusion of *The Cranes are Flying*, when Boris's father leads Veronika into the middle of the crowd of "us" celebrating V-day. The mature "us" provide sympathy and support to the weak members of the community. The hideous, foreign "them" are either completely absent from Thaw films or appear on their margins.

By the 1960s this domesticated version of the war trope in detective films had become a cliché. The best indication of this shift was the appropriation of detective conventions by comedy films. Leonid Gaidai made several comedies based on situations from the era's

---

[205] The most prominent detective writer of the Thaw was Arkadii Adamov, whose *Speckled File* (1956) was the first detective novel published in the Soviet Union since the 1920s (Pogacar 113-26).

323

detective genre (*Barbos and a Fantastic Cross* [1961], *Moonshiners* [1961], *Operation Y* [1965], *Captive of the Caucasus* [1967], and *Diamond Hand* [1968]). Riazanov's *Watch out for the Car* also employs the conventions of the 1950s' and early 1960s' detective film.

Riazanov redefines the opposition between the investigator (the upright "us") and the criminal (the fallen "us"). The superficial logic of the detective line of the narrative, according to which the detective is an antipode of the criminal, is constantly contradicted by Riazanov's representation of his characters through misé-en-scène, their verbal statements, and their function in the comedy plot. The clothes of the characters during their first meeting make them doubles: they wear similar hats and raincoats. They both have the same hobby—theater—and even appear in the same stage production of *Hamlet*. They are the last knights of the Thaw in a world that has grown up and out of the illusions of the era.

Neither Detochkin's nor Podberezovikov's language corresponds to his social status. Podberezovikov's conversations with witnesses and plaintiffs are based on Stanislavskii's method instead of criminological procedures, while Detochkin in his interaction with people speaks like a child or holy fool. Ironically, the misfits find each other and become close friends, though located on opposite sides of the law.

Finally, both the criminal and the detective not only befriend each other, but fundamentally share views on social justice.[206] Ironically, Podberezovikov, in order to find the car thief, has to investigate the crimes of the same people from whom Detochkin has stolen the cars. At Detochkin's trial, Podberezovikov appears as a witness for the defense, not for the prosecution.

---

[206] In order to pass censorship, Riazanov introduced several scenes in which Podberezovikov dismisses his affinity for Detochkin. This obvious disclaimer only emphasizes the closeness of the two characters. Riazanov's film anticipates the closures of Brezhnev-era films: one for the Film Committee, one for the filmmaker himself.

An important part of the Thaw detective film was the story of the criminal's reeducation, a variation on the maturation plot of the socialist realist novel. Such films as *The Speckled File* or *File #306* focused on those who made a mistake and could be reeducated. Foreign spies and irremediable villains remain on the margins of the narrative.

In Riazanov's film, several characters attempt to reeducate Detochkin: his mother, his fiancée, and the detective. Yet in the course of the film, it is Detochkin who reeducates all of them. He transforms both of his mothers by his performance in *Hamlet*. Their tears—an indispensable sign of Thaw ethics and aesthetics—are, characteristically, the main visual signal of transformation in the film (Figure 58).

Figure 58.

Podberezovikov is reeducated at the moment when he learns about the charitable motives behind Detochkin's thefts—helping orphans.

The film actually contains two reeducation stories in its narrative structure. At film's end Detochkin returns from jail and tells his fiancée Liuba in a mature voice that he is finally back. His head is semi-shaved, a visual reminder of his recent incarceration. His eyes, however, are

not the eyes of a grown-up child or holy fool, but rather the eyes of a deranged person. The satirically twisted reeducation narrative leads the hero from social inadequacy to a literal mental illness. Debasing through literalization, the poetic madness of Thaw heroes is one more way Riazanov ironizes the Thaw cult of the artist.

The final return/maturation scene forms a frame when connected to a similar scene at the beginning of the film, where Detochkin smiles while telling Liuba that he has returned. In the final scene Detochkin's facial expression is ambiguous: he both laughs and cries against the background of wet snow in wintry Moscow. The ironic displacement of the reeducation/maturation story introduces tragic overtones at film's end. Northrop Frye's observation about tragic irony appropriately describes this scene: "Tragic irony differs from satire in that there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the 'all too human,' as distinct from the heroic, aspects of the tragedy" (237).

The opposition between "us" and "them" shifts from the conflict between the detective and the criminal into a conflict between the community (Dima's family and his friend, the manager of a local bar) and the doubled characters: the cop and the thief. The ironic displacement is achieved in that the viewers supposedly should identify with the idealism of Detochkin and Podberezovikov, but have difficulty identifying with their idiosyncratic lives. Podberezovikov is a philosopher and self-reflexive Stanislavskii fan. Detochkin is a creature of the night, whose true identity emerges only during his nocturnal Robin Hood adventures.

Dima's family, on the other hand, is a much easier set of characters with whom to identify, because they deal with everyday Soviet problems, such as the scarcity of consumer goods. Their materialism is not alien to an average viewer, who also dreams about a car, an apartment, and a country house. The duplicity of Dima's family (appearing as an exemplary

326

Soviet family on the surface, but in fact involved in various semi-legal activities) is an easily identifiable pattern of behavior for the viewers of the time, too.

The opposition between Detochkin and Dima's family, however, is not a clear one. It is undercut by the fact that in order to achieve his version of social justice, Detochkin has to lead a double life reminiscent of the villain's own. In a way Detochkin and Dima also become ironic doubles, as signaled by their clothes: if the surface layer of clothes—the raincoat—makes Detochkin Podberezovikov's double, then the clothes under the raincoat—the sports coat—make the protagonist a double of Dima.

Riazanov ironizes the exhausted war trope not only on the level of narrative displacements (through doubling characters who are supposed to be antipodes or inverting the narrative functions of villains and positive heroes), but also through the film's visual style. The chase scene also contains several episodes in which cops and robbers become, in Detochkin's terminology, "friends and brothers." When the police officer who stops Detochkin and Detochkin himself step outside of society—just the two of them in the middle of the "nowhere" that is the remote highway—they actually do become friends and brothers. When, however, they enter society, they return to their functions of textual antipodes. The police officer, whom Detochkin helps to start his motorcycle, escorts the protagonist (seated behind the wheel in a stolen car) to show him the location of the post-office. The shot is reminiscent of the final frame of Chaplin's *Modern Times* (Figures 59 and 60)—the small silhouettes of two vehicles, together on the endless road leading to the horizon line.

Figure 59.
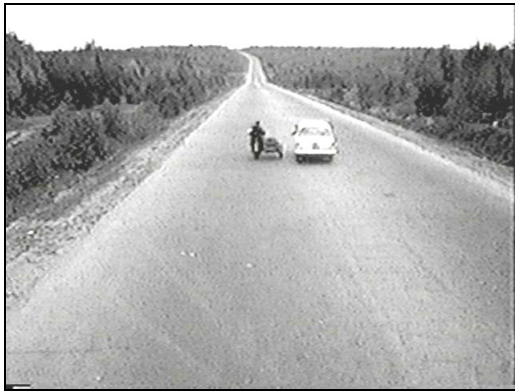
Figure 60.

Once the police officer realizes that Detochkin is, indeed, the car thief he is looking for, the

chase begins. This clear-cut opposition, familiar from Keystone cops films, however, becomes

blurred in the middle of the chase. When the two vehicles enter a school zone, they both slow

down. The voiceover explains to the viewers that Detochkin loves children and the police

officer is as honorable as Detochkin.

     Irony in the scene is achieved by focusing on the inappropriate similarity between the

cop and the robber. The shots of the two are absolutely identical as they pull up within the

school zone and it is not clear why they even chase each other if both are such honorable human beings. An additional ironic effect is achieved by the fact that Detochkin slows down first, thereby providing an example for the policeman. The chase transforms into a contest of good behavior on the road, with the criminal leading.

The voiceover explains the obvious—that both characters love children—and by doing so reduces to absurdity the positiveness of both the thief and the cop. Moreover, the phonetically repetitive phrase "Detochkin loved children," (in Russian "Detochkin liubil detei") reproduces Gogolian doubling on the sound level—the doubling that replaces the expected black-and-white contrast between the thief and the police officer.

The final ironic version of the "us" vs. "them" opposition hinges on the juxtaposition of Detochkin with the ethos of Thaw culture. Detochkin leads a double life in order to live up to his ideals of honesty. He has to lie and wear disguises in the name of truth and justice. Detochkin's frame of mind is too complex for Thaw-era positive characters and indicates the emergence of new cultural values—those of Stagnation. In this respect Detochkin is a transitional hero, closer to Stagnation-era well-intentioned liars, undercover cops, and Soviet spies whose lies save the world from social disasters.[207]

Riazanov visually expresses the opposition between the protagonist and the culture that can no longer accommodate him by not allowing Detochkin to enter the trolley bus driven by his fiancée. He remains "the outsider." During the Thaw the trolley bus became a symbolic means

---

[207] The most popular examples of this trend are the mini-series of the Brezhnev era with spies as protagonists. In Evgenii Tashkov's *His Majesty's Aid* (1969) the protagonist is the Red James Bond working undercover against the Whites during the Russian Civil War. In Tat'iana Lioznova's *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) the protagonist is the Soviet mole working in Nazi Germany and saving the world from the Nazi plague.

of transportation after the appearance of Bulat Okudzhava's famous song "The Last Trolley Bus." The words of this song ("Kogda mne nevmoch' peresilit' bedu,/ kogda podstupaet otchaian'e,/ Ia v sinii trolleibus sazhus' na khodu,/ poslednii, sluchainyi" ["When I cannot overcome my troubles, when despair is at my door, I get on a passing blue trolley, the last one, the one that came by chance"]) were known to all educated Russians of the period. The Thaw intelligentsia associated the song with the spirit of the time.[208]

Riazanov places the Thaw trolley between two other vehicles: the locomotive of revolution, about which Detochkin's mother sings, and the private "Volga" of the post-Thaw philistine. The image is a felicitous one, for the trolley has much more flexibility of motion compared to the locomotive, which must follow the tracks, and much less freedom of motion than a private car. The trolley has a fixed route and cannot abandon the wires that supply it with electricity. It is therefore a perfect Thaw vehicle—representing limited freedom within totalitarian borders.

The appearances of the trolley in the film indicate Detochkin's relations with the cultural period that he attempts to defend. He and his values are out of sync with the new times, the notion visually punctuated by protagonist's inability to get on the trolley bus driven by his beloved. Thus, the two episodes in which Detochkin his Thaw ideals are left behind frame the film (Figure 61).

---

[208] The 1982 nostalgic film about the Khrushchev era, *Pokrovskii Gates*, includes this song as one of the era's key texts.

Figure 61.

Two other episodes with the trolley anticipate a farewell to the Thaw. In one of them, the

trolleys that normally ride along the streets are parked in the night garage. Surrounded by

immobile trolley buses, Detochkin listens to Liuba, who explains how insane and childish he was

to steal cars. Several episodes later Detochkin steals another car and Liuba notices him from the

window of her trolley. The chase scene ends with the trolley losing the car, when Liuba has to

turn onto a street without electric wires (Figure 62).

Figure 62.

The motionless trolley metaphorizes again the limits of the cultural period of liberalism within

totalitarian constraints—Khrushchev's Thaw. The ironic question remains: where is the "us"

located: in this motionless trolley or outside it, observing the vanishing cultural period?[209]

3.4. *Watch Out For the Car:* Designing Irony as Discourse of the Era

The production circumstances and reception of Riazanov's *Watch Out For the Car*

indicate that irony did not remain merely the textual property of the director's film, but also

became part and parcel of cultural behavior during the late Thaw. Two discursive

communities—first, the director and the film industry administration, second, the director and

the critics—promoted irony as the key element of the era's cultural politics.

In relations between Riazanov and the controlling bodies of the film industry, irony

meant mutually ambiguous doubletalk, which concealed the true intentions of both the

filmmaker and the cultural administration. In tune with the values of the era, Riazanov

conceived *Watch Out For The Car* as his "confession" (1995 493). In order to make this

comedy-confession, however, Riazanov had to negotiate and to invert the orders he had received

from the cultural administration.

In relations between the filmmaker and the critics, the ironic mode became a password of

sorts. Neia Zorkaia pinpointed irony as simultaneously the distinctive feature of the film's style

and the common dialect of the intelligentsia. Her witty review functions as a verbal echo of the

film's visual ironies, for which critical responses that "did not get it" served as a contrastive

---

[209] Ol'ga Aroseva, the actress who plays Liuba in the film, revived her filmic persona of a trolley driver in

December 2000. Aroseva drove a trolley to the party arranged to celebrate fifty years of her work at the Moscow

Satire Theater http://lenta.ru/culture/2000/12/21/aroseva/_Printed.htm .

background. By the late 1960s ironic dicourse had become the intelligentsia's prime mode of communication.[210]

3.4.1. Discursive Community I: The Film Maker and The Film Industry's Controlling Institutions

If one compares the production circumstances of Riazanov's earlier comedy, *A Man from Nowhere* (1961), with those of *Watch Out For the Car*, one will appreciate how intelligetsia's uses of irony changed the interaction between the director and film industry administrators of the era. As part of the discursive community of the Soviet film industry, its controlling bodies (Goskino and The Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) were extremely conservative and suspicious of any experimentation with film conventions or genres. The major guidelines for evaluating a film were the master tropes of the positive hero, family, and war. *A Man from Nowhere* was an open challenge to the conventions of Soviet comedy, which demanded that the story of a protagonist's reeducation be constructed either as a musical or a romantic comedy. Slapstick as a comic mode was possible only for a film's villain. Riazanov's *Man from Nowhere* was an eccentric, even absurdist, comedy about a yeti coming to Moscow and discovering that people in the Soviet capital are divided into cannibals and non-cannibals, just as in his native tribe, which still lives in prehistoric times. His introduction to Soviet civilization is paralleled to Muscovites' learning from him that some of their compatriots are primordial cannibals. The core of slapstick humor is the yeti, who serves as the text's surrogate positive hero: spontaneous and avid for Soviet education.

---

[210] This became especially evident with the Siniavskii and Daniel trial, at which the ironic split of the intellectual's personae (Andrei Siniavskii as Moscow bookworm putting on the mask of Abram Tertz, a thug from Babel's modernist stories about Jewish ghetto life in Odessa) became part of the public domain. The state legally punished the ironies of political Detochkins, while the intelligentsia made Siniavskii/Tertz its hero.

The Second Creative Unit of Mosfilm Studio, "Luch" ("Ray"), produced the film. It was released because of the moral and financial support (four million rubles) of Ivan Pyr'ev--the Unit's head and Riazanov's mentor. The film, however, was immediately attacked: first, the Soviet press buried the film; then, Communist Party Secretary Mikhail Suslov gave orders to suspend distribution after four days of screening. He criticized the film at the XXII Congress of the Party (Riazanov 1995 122)[211], and it was released again only in 1988, during perestroika.[212]

Riazanov did not undergo significant punishment because he was still considered a young director (that is, it was still possible to reeducate him). Moreover, he also worked in the minor genre of comedy, and the scale of his transgression was smaller than, for example, Khutsiev's, who made an "erroneous" film about the heritage of the Bolshevik Revolution a year later, and was reprimanded by Khrushchev himself (131-32). Finally, 1961 was the height of the Thaw: Stalin's body was removed from the Mausoleum, the XXII Party Congress reiterated the Party's

---

[211] See Mikhail Suslov's speech in *XXII s''ezd KPSS. Stenograficheskii otchet,* Vol. 1. Moscow 1961, p. 528. For the Party bureaucrats' response to the film, see also the memo lambasting the film issued by the Culture Department of the Central Committee of CPSU (Fomin 128-30).

[212] Riazanov recollects:

> In 1988 The State Film Committee of the USSR (Goskino) and the Conflict Commission of the Filmmakers' Union of the USSR decided to release *A Man from Nowhere* again. After twenty-eight years of imprisonment, several dozen copies of the ill-fated film appeared in the movie theaters . . . The viewers could not understand why this innocent . . . and by contemporary standards too Soviet film was left to rot so many years on the shelf. (1995 125, translation mine)

Elem Klimov, the new First Secretary of the Filmmakers' Union, established the Conflict Commission in May 1986 in order to abolish censorship in the film industry and to release all the shelved films (Lawton 57-59).

commitment to the destalinization of Russia. Public lynching of a comedy director would have been out of tune with the general Party line.

The production circumstances of *Watch Out For the Car* demonstrate the changed relations within the discursive community that included the film director and the film administration in charge of approving the film. The ironic mode in their interaction stemmed from the fact that both the administration and the director were seemingly receptive to each other's goals and values, while manipulating each other for their own ends. On the surface the film administration developed a more liberal attitude toward unconventional projects, while terminating them on the basis of various reasonable excuses. Analogously, Riazanov seemed to play according to the rules of the system, while manipulating it to his own ends.

Writing about the official approval of the screenplay for *Watch Out For the Car*, Riazanov notes that it was initially rejected. That was the bottom line, but the process of rejection was impressively intricate and sophisticated. The Russian film scholar Evgenii Gromov notes that, first Mosfilm and later the State Film Committee approved the screenplay (98). In 1963 Riazanov even hired a crew to shoot the film (Nakhabtsev 143). Then, however, the production process was halted. The reason made perfect sense: the screenplay was written for Iurii Nikulin, a well-known comedy actor and circus clown. Because Nikulin had to go abroad on a tour with the Moscow Circus, work on the film had to be delayed. Officially the film project was not rejected, but suspended for an indefinite time: "An excuse was used to suspend (literally, "to can" AP) the film's shooting. We have a convenient formula, according to which work on a film stops for a while. It can stop for months or years, depending on circumstances" (Gromov 98, translation mine). Although the film was not officially rejected by

the film industry administration, the result was the same. Riazanov had to stop work on his project. His film was "canned" and put in storage.

Riazanov, in turn, seemingly complied with the rules of the game. He accepted an offer to make a different comedy, *Give Me the Complaint Book*, after which he was promised he would be allowed to continue work on *Watch Out For the Car*: "The Film Committee offered me a deal: I'll make the comedy *Give Me the Complaint Book*, and then they'll allow me to film *Watch Out For the Car*" (Riazanov 1995, 100, translation mine).

The film, which appeared right after Khrushchev's fall, juxtaposed a bald conservative boss to a new one liberally endowed with hair and bushy eyebrows. The comedy dutifully mocked the old leadership and celebrated the new, hirsute order.[213] Riazanov, however, used a lame screenplay by Aleksandr Galich as an experimental site for new cinematic devices. He abandoned color in this comedy, used a hidden camera, mixed various genre conventions (comedy, melodrama) and acting styles (eccentric, realistic). He shrewdly transformed a sycophantic screenplay offered to him by the Film Committee into a project serving his own artistic ends.

Meanwhile, Riazanov and Emil' Braginskii, who co-authored the screenplay of *Watch Out For the Car*[214], rewrote their play into a short novel and published it in the thick journal

---

[213] Officially endorsed carnivalization of the previous style of state management is one of the major functions of Soviet comedy. See Evgenii Dobrenko's article "Soviet Comedy Film: or The Carnival of Authority."

[214] Riazanov co-authored most of his 1960s' and 70s' screenplays with Emil' Braginskii. Riazanov and Braginskii also collaborated in writing prose.

Molodaia gvardiia (Young Guard). This stratagem elevated the status of the screenplay and increased the likelihood of its approvability. Now Riazanov was offering to make a film adaptation of a literary text released in the most prestigious form of Russian literary publications—the thick journal. Moreover, publication also meant that the text had been approved by Glavlit (State Censorship Agency). Emil' Braginskii recollects:

> While Riazanov was shooting *Give Me the Complaint Book*, the short novel *Watch Out For the Car!* was published. It even received some critical acclaim. Now we could offer the studio not the original screenplay, but a film adaptation, which, as is well known, they like more. The film adaptation of the novel *Watch Out For the Car!* quickly moved into the production stage. (183, translation mine)

The fact that the novel also enjoyed success with readers and critics was proof of the film's ideological acceptability and probable commercial viability. When Riazanov completed *Give Me The Complaint Book*, he was allowed to resume work on *Watch Out For the Car*.

In short, Riazanov no longer directly confronted the system, as he had in the case of *A Man from Nowhere*. Instead, he maneuvered to achieve his ends: he abandoned *Watch Out For the Car*, made a different film in response to an official "request," and eventually revived his initial project, packaged in a way that would allow the system to pass it. The irony of Riazanov's relations with the film administration entailed his skillful adherence to all its instructions in order to make a film that the administration did not want him to make.

3.4.2. Discursive Community II: The Film Maker and The Critics

The second discursive community that enabled irony to become a mode of cultural politics consisted of Riazanov as director and the film critics of *Watch Out For the Car*. Among

contemporary critics, Neia Zorkaia was the most important interpreter of the film, who pointed at irony as the leading discourse of the film.

Her review of *Watch Out For The Car* in *The Art of Cinema* identified irony, if indirectly, as the main mode of the film, which she called the mode of paradox, ambiguity, and mixture of the said with the unsaid. The title of Zorkaia's review, "Svoi fil'm" ("Our Film"), also implied that irony was becoming the intelligentsia's common idiom. "Svoi fil'm" simultaneously evokes two meanings: first, a film conveying values that are "ours" (svoi)—shared by "our" community[215]; second, a film that expresses the ideals and thoughts of the director.

Although at the end of her review Zorkaia emphasizes the latter meaning, the former is foregrounded in the ironic stance of the review itself, which echoes that of Riazanov's comedy. In the film, the comic evidence of the crime is the sunflower oil with which Detochkin lubricates the hinges of garages before stealing cars. The detective, who is actually a parodic figure, starts his investigation from this evidence. In her 1966 review, Zorkaia writes with a straight face: "Ot etoi uliki . . . potianetsia stal'naia nit' rozyska, kotoryi vedet muzhestvennyi sledovatel' Maksim Podberezovikov" (14-15) ("From this piece of evidence will extend the steel thread of investigation conducted by the courageous detective, Maksim Podberezovikov"). The hyper-serious tone of the passage in Zorkaia's review mirrors the irony incarnated in the discrepancy between the comic genre of the film and the expression of solemn profundity on the detective's face.[216]

---

[215] Compare Helena Goscilo's translation of Liudmila Petrushevskaia's *Svoi krug* as *Our Crowd*.

[216] Zorkaia's 1974 article on Riazanov, part of which is her earlier review, pushes to the limit the ironic potential of her passage about the evidence: "The first detail—returning us, the spectators, to our wonderful everyday life—is a bottle of sunflower oil" (1974 44). For Zorkaia's readers, the reference to the beginning of Bulgakov's *Master and*

In the review, however, Zorkaia does not directly name irony as the dominant mode of the film. She points to it as the default option. First, she excludes parody as the film's dominant tone, noting that despite the importance of parody in the film, the director constantly distances *Watch Out For The Car* from a pure spoof of a detective film, "as though the filmmaker were neglecting its infinite possibilities" (1966 15).   As a result, the comedy turns into "a parody of a parody" (1966 15).

Second, Zorkaia points out that satire is not the dominant mode of *Watch Out For the Car* either. "Satire is not alien to the film . . . The film, however, emphasizes a refined ability for observation, rather than harshness and grotesque—those alpha and omega of satire" (1966 16).[217] The camera eye of Riazanov's comedy, according to the critic, observes satirized types from a distance rather than exposing them. This is, actually, the function of the hidden camera extensively used in Riazanov's comedy.

With parody and satire rejected, Zorkaia defines the dominant mode of Riazanov's comedy as that of paradox and ambiguity

> The film's peculiarities and paradoxes … its non-detective detective plot, the
>
> subtleness of its parody, and its displacement of genres … all this comes down to

---

Margarita, which was by all means wonderful, linked the ironic tone of her article to the ironic tone of Riazanov's comedy.

[217] Zorkaia implies the double-voiced nature of satirical intonation. As mentioned above, the filmmaker eschews the abrasiveness of Juvenalian satire in favor of the Menippean mode.

one, major point: namely, the paradox that the mysterious bandit and thief Iurii

Detochkin is simultaneously an altruistic person. (1966 16, translation mine)

Her description is similar to Linda Hutcheon's description of the ironic as the third serio-comic

mode (the other two being parody and satire) (Hutcheon 1985 53). Zorkaia's longer 1974 article

about Riazanov revises her labels, and explicitly calls Riazanov's cinematic perspective the

ironic mode: "The secondary parodic plane is hardly ever visible … Its primary function is to

create an ironic meaning within the cinematic frame" (45, translation mine).[218]

A perestroika-era monograph about Riazanov isolates ironic discrepancy, inversion, and

interrogation as the distinctive features of *Watch Out For the Car*.

> Film editors who tried to impede the approval of the Braginskii-Riazanov
>
> screenplay … knew their business well. They were scared not by the story itself,
>
> but by its implications … The film depicts the handsome and courageous
>
> detective Maksim Podberezovikov. But the problem is in his assignment. He
>
> catches a petty thief, while protecting the property of big criminals. Moreover, …
>
> Detochkin does not believe in the ability and will of our law enforcement
>
> agencies to fight successful entrepreneurs ... On the other hand, they, convinced
>
> of their invulnerability, seek the law's support and receive it. Everything is turned
>
> upside down. (Gromov 103, translation mine)

The ironic unsaid of the film, according to the critic, is the world inside out, where the law fights

petty thieves and protects large-scale criminals.

---

[218] Riazanov in his 1967 interview for *The Art of Cinema* notes: "The ironic intonation of the novel influenced the

film and became the cement that united the diverse personalities of the actors" (1967 64).

The antipodes of the critics who embraced irony as their mode of communication were those who considered the stance of Riazanov's comedy dangerous and subversive. Although responses to the film exerted little influence on the cultural authorities, they constituted an important part of the dialogue on the status of ironic discourse in Soviet film.

Soviet critic A. Obraztsova in her review "Tri zhanra odnoi komedii" ("Three Genres Of A Single Comedy") denounced Riazanov's *Watch Out For The Car* for destroying the generic clarity of Soviet comedy. Russian policemen felt personally slighted by the film and in the newspaper *Evening Moscow* (June 14, 1966) criticized it for its disrespectful attitude toward the Soviet militia. Finally, an anonymous letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU (July 3, 1969), which complained about the Jewish conspiracy in the Russian film industry, defined the style of Riazanov's comedies as non-Russian and "ostentatiously cosmopolitan" (Fomin 339). This peculiar use of the appellation "cosmopolitan" is coeval with the anti-Jewsih purge, also known as "anti-cosmopolitan campaign," which concluded Stalin's reign. If Zorkaia's review constituted the pole of complete identification with irony as cultural discourse, then the anonymous letter declaring Riazanov's comedies part of a Jewish conspiracy formed the opposite pole of the discursive community negotiating ironic discourse—one that rejected irony as the era's cultural mode.

Critics constituting an exclusive in-group shared with the director his ironic uses of intertextual links. Zorkaia, for example, discussed how Riazanov quotes Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* in the episode where Dima Semitsvetov's friends are leaving his apartment after the party. The opening of the film, she noted, ironically parodies Hitchcock's thrillers. The chase scene echoes chase scenes from the films of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd (1966 15).

Riazanov's film also contains several ironic quotes apparently unperceived by any of his

critics, above all from Blake Edwards' *Pink Panther* (1963), starring Peter Sellers as Inspector

Jacques Clousseau. The very idea of a comedy parodying the detective genre derives from

Edwards' film: as in *The Pink Panther,* a detective spends most of the

film with the criminal without even suspecting that this is the person he is seeking. The musical

theme associated with crime in Riazanov's film echoes the theme tune of *The Pink Panther*.

Visually, one of the final shots in *Watch Out For the Car*, which shows Detochkin, triumphant

after his performance of Hamlet, flanked by cops, mirrors the shot at the end of *The Pink

Panther*, where the triumphant Inspector Clousseau sits flanked by policemen (Figures 63 and

64).

Figure 63.

Figure 64.

Both Detochkin and Clousseau, instead of the real criminals, are about to go to jail. Critics never discussed the irony of this quote, and the director, seemingly, decided to keep the joke to himself.[219]

4. Distancing the Cultural Values of The Thaw

The emergence of irony in the 1960s as the dominant mode of Soviet culture indicates the latter's distancing from its own master tropes, which had been dominant representational models during Stalinism and early Thaw: positive hero, family, and war. As a trend, such a distancing replaces the early Thaw attempt to redefine the major rhetorical figures of Soviet discourse in accordance with the values of the Thaw. Late Thaw literature and film focus on the fissures in the verbal, visual, and narrative aspects of the texts that foreground the discrepancy between the values of the Thaw articulated via Stalinist tropes and the values of the new cultural period: (1) loss of the heroic, (2) consumerism, (3) fatalism, (4) skepticism about the sincerity and authenticity of the Thaw.

Aksenov, the most prominent writer of the ironic mode, emphasizes in his "Ticket to the Stars" the separation of his self-reflexive protagonist from the ideal (Moon, stars). The

---

[219] In February 1999 I asked Riazanov about Peter Sellers' films. He told me that at the time he was making *Watch Out For the Car* he had no knowledge of Peter Sellers and his films. I find that hard to believe, especially if one keeps in mind that in 1964 Peter Sellers gave an interview to the Soviet journal *The Art of Cinema* titled "Razmyshleniia o komedii" ("Thoughts on Comedy"). On the first page of the interview the journal printed a still from *The Pink Panther*. Moreover, this was Peter Sellers' second publication in *The Art of Cinema*. The first was an article on Stanislavskii in the second issue of 1963.

discrepancy between his heroes' appearance and their essence constitutes the decisive principle of the characters' structure. Dimka's bravado disguises his vulnerability. Viktor's dissertation writing camouflages his quest for the ideal of scientific truth. His dissertation advisor conceals the soul of a revolutionary under his conventional appearance of a university professor (1987 211). Aksenov's characters in their speech constantly refract the discourse of the Other (official discourse, the discourse of the previous, Stalin-era, generation).

No longer a haven of the narrative's values, the family now serves as a point of departure for the characters. Finally, Aksenov ironically inverts the war trope by making Western culture the core of his Soviet characters' identity. American jeans, Brigitte Bardot's portraits, and Fellini's films, as opposed to the icons of Soviet civilization, constitute the "natural environment" of Aksenov's star boys. The Thaw itself, especially its youth prose, which romanticized Siberian construction projects, now is part of the alien "them" vs. the "alien" (i.e., Western) culture of "us."

Riazanov's comedy, *Watch Out For the Car*, as well as comedies by Georgii Danelia (*Thirty Three*), Leonid Gaidai (*Captive of the Caucasus* [1967], *Diamond Hand* [1968]), and Elem Klimov (*Welcome, Unauthorized Entry Prohibited* [1964]), visually ironized Soviet tropes instead of trying to refurbish them. The protagonist of *Watch Out For the Car* is a pathetic double of the Thaw's holy fools: Prince Myshkin, Hamlet, Dr. Zhivago. In Detochkin, the obligatory reeducation of the hero turns into the darkly ironic transformation of an infantilized man into a traumatized madman. Between the main narrative of the comedy and its dispiriting closure lies the unsaid and invisible story of Detochkin having undergone the educative experience of a Soviet camp.

In the film, the nuclear family, so central to the Thaw, becomes the anti-family of new Soviet consumers/entrepreneurs. Detochkin's Great Soviet family exists only as an ironic ghost, a phantasm of his imagination. Even in Detochkin's lies, his multiple relatives are ailing and dying all over the Soviet Union. Finally, within the genre of the domestic detective film Riazanov inverts the war trope as articulated in Thaw culture: our cops catching and reeducating our domestic criminals. Instead, Riazanov's spiritually noble thief reeducates the Soviet cop. Thaw culture becomes part of alien "them" (the parodied detective film) for both the filmmaker and his spectators.

An ironic stance became inseparable from the cultural politics of the late Thaw. For the authorities, irony permitted a more sophisticated way of manipulating and controlling cultural producers. For producers, it enabled the shift from a direct confrontation with the system to a more pragmatic negotiation and manipulation of the authorities for artists' own purposes. Irony became the discourse through which Soviet intellectuals tried to negotiate power within the Soviet culture industry, to subvert the monopoly of coercive state power in cultural matters. The excesses of the late Thaw (such as the Brodskii affair, the Siniavskii and Daniel trial, the vilification of Khutsiev and his film *Lenin's Guard,* the shelving of such Soviet films as *Commissar* [Askol'dov 1967]) manifested not so much the restoration of Stalinist practices as the state's loss of complete control over cultural affairs. Not only the notion of "state domination," but also that of "social hegemony" (Gramsci 12) became applicable to Soviet culture's condition. The intelligentsia repeatedly aspired to the role of the social group contesting state power in the realm of cultural production.

Cultural producers stopped trying to change/improve/destroy the system, setting themselves a more moderate goal—to beat the system while staying within it. Petr Vail' and

Alexander Genis note about Soviet culture of the 1960s: "The antithesis 'the direct word versus the ironic word' for the whole decade determined not only the literary process but the social ethics, as well" (78). The discrepancy between Thaw-era values pursued by the artists and the double-voiced mode of cultural behavior as a means to materialize those values—constituted the irony in the behavior of Aksenov and Riazanov as late-Thaw cultural producers.

The new subjects of ideology became both more sophisticated and more conservative. They learned to see through the dominant ideology without any illusions and to use it for their own purposes. Ironically, political opposition started co-existing with official success, subversiveness—with conformism. Ironic prophets of the late Thaw stopped openly confronting or attempting to improve the master tropes of Soviet culture. Khrushchev's Thaw was over, and cerebral distancing had replaced the Thaw's cult of emotions and sincerity. The history of the Thaw marks the shift from the valorization of the sincere heart to the valorization of the ironic mind. The era of irony and conformism that emerged subsequently would be labeled Brezhnev's stagnation.

<u>Conclusion: Bankruptcy of Sincerity.</u>

No matter how cultural producers of the Thaw resemble their Stalin-era counterparts in their utopian perception of artistic projects and practices, the Thaw established several distinctive features that separate this period from both earlier Stalinist and late Soviet culture. Above all, Thaw writers and artists demonstrated their attachment to the intentional fallacy when they attempted to reprise the sincerity and authenticity of Leninist revolutionary ideals, which had been allegedly tarnished by Stalinist crimes.   Cultural producers of the Thaw intended to create texts that could restore authenticity to the revolutionary spirit, and sincerity to artistic expression. Instead, Thaw poets, writers, artists, and filmmakers ended up generating discourses favoring citation as the dominant cultural gesture and focusing on the gap between the signifier and signified as self-conscious semiotic practice.

1. Citation as Creative Act

The Thaw revised the key tropes of Soviet culture in order to revive the total utopian project underlying twentieth-century Russian culture. In *The Total Art of Stalinism,* Boris Groys defines the major impetus of this utopia as the desire to halt historical time by creating an apocalyptic kingdom on Earth. The Thaw resuscitated the positive hero as the major trope of Soviet culture. The new positive hero manifested a strong predilection for the creative act as the means to remythologize the faltering narrative of ascent toward the radiant future. The era's positive heroes often possess a creative gift realized either in scientific or artistic work.

Thaw culture found its own peculiar way of generating the sincere and authentic voice of the new positive hero. Writers and filmmakers of the era gradually abandoned the practice of creating original characters, and sought sincere, authentic voices in the nation's cultural heritage.

Most of such cultural icons originated either in the art and literature of the 1920s, the period preceding Stalinist insincerity or in Russian and Western European Romantic and Symbolist-era traditions. Among the authentic voices of the 1920s, the most important roles were played by the poetry of Vladimir Maiakovskii, Aleksandr Blok, and Marina Tsvetaeva and the *skaz* prose of Mikhail Zoshchenko and Isaak Babel'. William Shakespeare and Aleksandr Pushkin were the chief icons recycled from the Romantic era. Studies of Blok's poetry (1962) inspired the first Tartu University structuralist seminars, around which the Tartu school of semiotics subsequently formed.

It is worth mentioning that all of the key personae of the Thaw, both cultural saints and demons, were perceived as the contemporaries of Thaw writers and filmmakers. Note the telling title of Kozintsev's work on Shakespeare--*Shakespeare: Our Contemporary.* The Thaw does not return to historical time, but shares with Stalinism its apocalyptical post-temporality, when all cultural and historical characters coexist in atemporal synchronicity. It is not a coincidence that during these years, Russian literary scholars developed their own strain of structuralism and produced numerous synchronic descriptions of literature and culture.

In discussing the impossibility of sincere self-expression during Stalin era, critics often adduce as evidence writers' privileging of translation over the production of original literary texts. See, for example, the translator careers of such eminent writers as Boris Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova. In part accurate, such a viewpoint overlooks the rising belief among cultural producers of the era that the only way to articulate a sincere artistic voice is to assume the personality of a "character." In their quest for sincerity, Thaw writers, poets, and filmmakers produced characters enacting the personae of authors' cultural idols. For example, Pasternak, first modeled the *vita* of his Iurii Zhivago on Hamlet and Christ, and then himself enacted the

destiny of his favorite tragic characters. By publishing his novel, Pasternak assumed the role of

the demiurge who, Hamlet-like, repaired the broken link of time between the pre- and post-

Stalin eras, between the Soviet East and the non-Soviet West. Within this behavioral paradigm,

translating Shakespeare's plays, and especially *Hamlet* (1940), offered another occasion to

acquire poetic sincerity by assuming the persona of the cultural idol.

Similarly, Thaw poets made careers of the sincere poetic voices of the era through citing

devices and mimicking the traits of cultural personae from pre-Stalin Russian culture. Bella

Akhmadulina boosted the sincerity of her poetic persona via numerous references to the life and

works of Marina Tsvetaeva. Andrei Voznesenskii impersonated the techniques of Russian

futurist poetry: visual metaphorism, tonic verse, the stepped line, etc. Joseph Brodsky

constructed his genuine voice by reviving the Acmeist tradition. In his article on the Petersburg

cultural tradition, Groys characterizes Brodsky's cultural behavior as "retrospective innovation"

(364).

Parallel to literary sincerity through citation, filmmakers found their authentic voices by

citing both Russian and Ukrainian avant-garde filmmakers of the 1920s. For example, at the

beginning of his *Ballad of a Soldier,* Grigorii Chukhrai asserts his original voice as a filmmaker

via citing Vsevolod Pudovkin's montage techniques.[220]

Citing a painting, or, even better, an icon, functions as the moment of revelation in the

films of the sixties. Many filmmakers of the period graduated from Mikhail Romm's workshop

at VGIK (State Film Art Institute) and inherited the narrative model that crystallized in Romm's

Nine Days of One Year (1961): the intellectual-demiurge brings coherence to a world, from

---

[220] For more examples see pages 46-47, 114, 282 of this dissertation.

which order has disappeared. For the generation of the sixties (Andrei Tarkovskii, Andrei Konchalovskii, Gleb Panfilov, Georgii Shengelaia, and many others), the central figure was an artist-savior whose work of art restores the lost harmony. Tarkovsky for his film *Andrei Rublev* (1966) chose the life story of a medieval Russian icon painter. Shengelaia's *Pirosmani* (1971) is based on the life of a self-taught primitivist artist, Niko Pirosmani, who lived in turn-of-the century Tbilisi.[221] In Panfilov's *No Ford Through the Fire* (1967), the protagonist is a self-taught artist, Tania Tetkina, whose paintings function as the final judgment on the Russian Civil War.[222]

The paintings of Pirosmani and Tetkina, similarly to the icons of Tarkovskii's Rublev, are cited abundantly in the relevant films and their primary function is to transform the community. At the end of Tarkovskii's film, icons bring color into the black-and-white world of medieval Russia. In Panfilov's film, Tetkina's paintings constitute the only genuine expression of the revolutionary spirit. In Shengelaia's film, Pirosmani's paintings bring happiness to the life of his compatriots and change the appearance of his native city.

Citing the words and images of great role models reached its apogee when Thaw filmmakers started referring to the Scriptures. Shengelaia's film about Pirosmani's life opens with the reading of the Gospel and ends with the scenes of celebrating the Easter. The genre of the parable, central for Georgian cinema, became especially important in the context of Thaw cinema. Parables lend a quasi-religious, totalizing meaning to the life of both individual and

---

[221] Shengelaia chose a professional artist, Avtandil Varazi, to play the lead in his film.

[222] It is worth mentioning here what Panfilov said about his wife, Irina Churikova, who played the lead in most of his films: she has "a face, a personality, marked by God" (Gerber, cited in Lawton 21).

community. In *Andrei Rublev,* Tarkovskii also employs New Testament imagery and parables as

a narrative mode to represent the life of his protagonist*.* Tarkovskii first feature film, *Ivan's*

Childhood, evokes a different kind of imagery from the Scriptures, that of Apocalypse. The

horrifying visions and dreams of the orphaned child Ivan (John) are inspired by the loss of his

family, his hatred of the Nazis, and his desire for revenge. As one critic notes, "hatred is the

meaning of Ivan's life," the only reason for him to survive (Woll 140); it determines his

existence. In *Ivan's Childhood,* Tarkovskii spotlights not art as redemption, but the art of despair.

The iconic image that Ivan discovers in one of his books and that becomes the thematic and

stylistic core of the film is Albrecht Dürer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Figure 65).

Figure 65. Albrecht Dürer. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* **(1498).**

Another biblical image central to *Ivan's Childhood,* which recurs in Tarkovskii's later films is

the image of the scorched Tree of Life.   If the paintings of the Thaw's artists-redeemers restore

hope for harmony in the concrete, empirical world, Ivan's creative power, inspired by a thirst for revenge and death, implodes into his dreams and transforms the memories of his lost childhood into images shot on negative (scorched) film stock.[223]

Although cultural producers intended to regain the sincerity and authenticity of their voice, by the late 1960s the consistent practice of acquiring these traits via citation led to skepticism about the possibility of an authentic voice in contemporary art. The Thaw project of achieving ultimate sincerity via artistic creativity problematized for late Thaw producers not only the issue of sincere expression in Soviet culture, but also the possibility of authorship as part and parcel of artistic identity. Two of the first Soviet literati who sensed the vanishing possibilities of sincerity and poetic originality were Andrei Siniavskii and Iulii Daniel'. They regained the originality of their voices by assuming discrete personalities for their dissident authorship in Western publications. Andrei Siniavskii became Abram Terts and Iulii Daniel' turned into Nikolai Arzhak.[224] Their cultural behavior tellingly contrasts with that of Pasternak, who enacted sincere self-expression when he published his novel in the West under his own name.

The Thaw era ended when Russian cultural producers stopped searching for their authentic and sincere voices and turned to *personazhnost'* (characterness) as a way to enact an authorial persona in the process of creation.[225] By the early 1970s the positive hero-poet of the

---

[223] At the end of Tarkovskii's *Ivan's Childhood* we have another case of retrospective innovation. Tarkovskii cites the apple orchard scene from Dovzhenko's *Earth* on negative film stock to emphasize the inorganicity of Ivan's war-torn life, as opposed to the harmonious nature of the grandfather's death at the beginning of Dovzhenko's film.

[224] For a detailed discussion of the Siniavskii and Daniel trial and of Sinivaskii as an artistic persona, see Catharine Nepomniashchii's *Abram Tertz and the Poetics of Crime.*

[225] For a discussion of "characterness" see Boris Groys and Il'ia Kabakov, *Dialogi* (51-66).

Thaw had evolved into an impersonator of the positive-hero poet. Dmitrii Prigov, for example, assumed the role of "the hypersoviet poet" instead of being a Soviet poet. Prigov abandoned Soviet mythology by aesthetisizing it. His ironic stance vis-à-vis Soviet mythology is just one of many available disguises in an entire gallery of masks for identity masquerades.[226]

2. Visual and Verbal

During the Thaw, as in the 1920s, visual culture challenged the primacy of verbal forms, which had dominated Soviet culture under Stalin. New techniques in films brought back the expressiveness and ambiguity of the visual sign that superseded the monologic power of the word. Film proposed not only new visual techniques, but also new genres. Such values of the Thaw as domesticity, personal feelings, and the nuclear family found an appropriate model in the cinematic genre of family melodrama—the dominant film genre of the period.

Thaw culture, however, remained very contradictory even in its most transgressive projects. On the one hand, film as the era's leading form of cultural production articulated the new values and rehabilitated the innovative artistic forms of the 1920s (the expressive realism of Vsevolod Pudovkin, the constructivism of Aleksandr Rodchenko and Dziga Vertov). On the other hand, films such as Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* aspired to the status of a total narrative—a narrative striving for a synthesis of high art, of art in tune with the current Party

---

[226] For a detailed discussion of Prigov's poetry and its place in twentieth-century Russian culture see Boris Groys "Poet and Militiaman" in *The Total Art of Stalinism* (95-99).

general line, and of art accessible to the masses. In this respect Kalatozov's film reproduces the practices of Stalinist cinema.

After Khrushchev Secret Speech and denunciation of Stalin's cult (1956), the cultural production of the previous period that did not adhere to the new Party line was demoted by the intelligentsia from the status of high art. In this context, *Cranes Are Flying* functions as a new total work of art, to use Groys's witty term. *Cranes* qualifies as high art by evoking the visual style of constructivist photography, which by the 1950s had been canonized as a high culture phenomenon. The film obviously follows the general line of a Party-approved anti-Stalinist campaign. Finally, the genre of family melodrama, with the fallen female protagonist at its center, attracted the largest audiences since the advent of film in Russia. In a way Kalatozov's film, the hallmark of the new destalinized Soviet cinema, recuperates the possibility of the total work of art (the dream of both avant-garde and totalitarian art) in the culture undergoing destalinization.

Despite its close connection with the paradigms of Stalinist art, visualization as a sign of the new cultural politics remained one of the hallmarks of the Thaw. Even verbal forms of the era gravitated toward transgressing the border between the verbal and the visual. The poetry of Andrei Voznesenskii, one of the leading authors of the era, is often coterminous with visual art. In a neo-avant-garde drive, the visual design of the poet's collections constantly collides with his verbal craft. His 1962 book of poems, *The Triangular Pear,* combines verbal and visual signs in a futurist design. An architect by training, Voznesenskii, privileges the visual arrangement of verbal signs on the page. His idols are not writers or poets, but artists of transitional periods in the history of Western art, such as Michelangelo Buonarotti, Paul Gaugin, and Francisco Goya.

In the 1990s Voznesenskii produced a cycle of visiual poems, as he calls them Videoems. Some of them reflect on the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s (Figure 66 and 67).
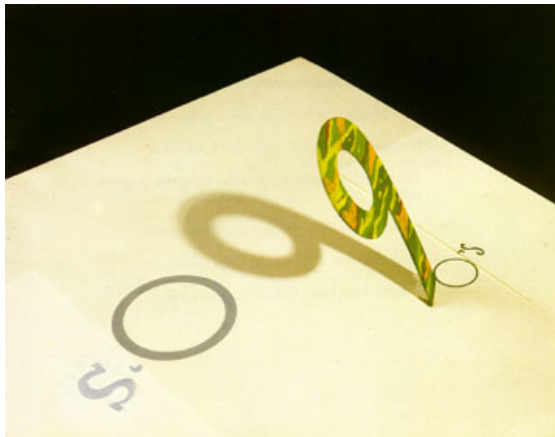
Figure 66. Andrei Voznesenskii. *The 90s—an Echo of the 60s.* <http://www.penrussia.org/n-z/vz_video.htm#90s>
Accessed May 24, 2001.
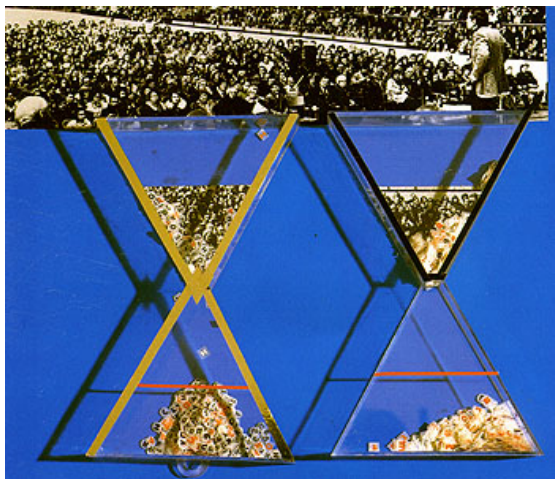
Figure 67 Andrei Voznesenskii. *The Poet's Self-Portrait.* <http://www.penrussia.org/n-z/vz_video.htm#90s>
Accessed May 24, 2001.

In its search for a total narrative, the Thaw era's return to the visual culture of the 1920s yielded ambiguous results. By the late 1960s-early 1970s such artists as Erik Bulatov, Vitalii Komar and Alex Melamid were producing artistic works foregrounding signifying interplay

355

between visual and verbal, rather than entertaining any possibility of a breakthrough into the sincere and authentic via artistic practices. In a way, Groys would argue, these early conceptualist post-utopianists rediscovered total narratives, but made no attempt to offer essentialist explanations of the world—a goal for which the Thaw still strived.

Russian visual artists of the 1960s (filmmakers, painters, and poets) started with a return to the visual experimentation of the 1920s and ended up reflecting on the interaction between linguistic and visual signs in culture. The simultaneity of visual and verbal, as reflected in the paintings of Erik Bulatov and other Russian conceptualist artists, started dominating the cultural landscape of Soviet culture in the 1970s (Figure 68).

Figure 68. Erik Bulatov. *Welcome* **(1974).**

The rise of new technologies, above all the final arrival of television in every Soviet house, provided a popular version of a conceptualist sense of the world. In turn, the rise of Soviet schools of structuralism and semiotics provided intellectuals with methodological tools for theorizing these conceptualist forms of cultural production.

3. Unequal Development of Individual Branches in the Soviet Culture Industry

As this dissertation demonstrates, various forms of Soviet cultural production (above all, film and literature) instantiate the same invariant tropes: positive hero, family and war tropes. The pace with which the changes occur in various industries varies. As Nancy Condee notes in her study of the cultural codes of the Thaw, one must acknowledge "(1) the particulars of production within the individual culture industries, (2) within the ideological hierarchies of the official culture, (3) the very different time frames within which a cultural text is produced" (162).

Till the end of the Soviet Union, literature had a special, semi-religious status in Russian culture, and it was specifically the changes in literature that signalled the cultural Thaw after Stalin's death. The discussion about the role of lyrical poetry in an article by Ol'ga Bergolts (1953) and the essay by Vladimir Pomeratsev (1953) on sincerity in literature and the necessity to redefine the Soviet positive hero opened the first period of liberalization after Stalin's death. However, many works that redefined the literary landscape in the 1950s were conceived and even published in the 1940s. Boris Pasternak started working on his *Doctor Zhivago* in 1945. Viktor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* was published in 1946; the work focused on the unheroic representation of war and initiated the "trench prose" trend in Soviet literature.

In addition to these developments, the period of 1941-45 saw an unprecedented increase in publishing of lyrical poetry. The war-ravaged Russian publishing industry issued seventy collections of lyric verse. Some of the most popular poems, such as Konstantin Simonov's "Wait for Me" (1941), appeared also in the form of leaflets, with a print run of 655,000 copies.[227]

---

[227] See Birgit Menzel's discussion of "Wait for Me" in "Sovetskaia lirika stalinskoi epokhi."

The period of World War Two also saw the appearance of genres that emphasized the individual feelings, such as personal letters broadcast via radio (Stites 110). Thus, one can say that the literary Thaw started during World War Two and was interrupted by the neo-conservative backlash of the late 1940s. In this respect, the literary Thaw after Stalin's death was a revival of the cultural trend that started in the first half of the 1940s.

Cinema lagged behind literature because film production requires bigger investment, has a different mode of distribution, and in the Soviet Union, experienced tighter control by the party and censorship organs. However, even in film the cultural liberalization started before Stalin's death. The 19th Party Congress in 1951 decreed an increase in film production, which by this time was at the catastrophic level of approximately ten films per year (Segida 6). The films with anti-monumental positive heroes and a focus on the personal experience of war and its effects on the nuclear family started appearing in 1953-54. Among the first such films were family melodramas, by Vsevolod Pudovkin (*The Return of Vasilii Bortnikov*) and Iosif Kheifits (*The Big Family*). However, when the new directors and films finally reached their viewers by the mid-1950s, it became clear that the Thaw, like the 1920s, placed visual forms of culture on an equal footing with verbal forms. It may even be argued that in the late 1950s-early 1960s visual modes and, above all, film, constituted the privileged mode of cultural production.

A similar asynchrony between literary and film industries remained evident throughout the Thaw. By the early 1960s literary producers, and especially youth prose writers, such Vasilii Aksenov and Anatolii Gladilin, started distancing themselves from Soviet iconography by

ironizing it. In film, this trend surfaced later, with the comedies of Georgii Danelia, Leonid

Gaidai, and El'dar Riazanov in the mid- and late 1960s.[228]

4. Alterity and Fragmentation as Blueprints for Post-Utopian Identities

As my discussion of ironic discourse in the late Thaw argues (see chapter five), the

writers and filmmakers of the 1960s gradually distanced themselves from the practices of Thaw

culture. Their reevaluation of the Thaw project, and, above all, the bankruptcy of sincerity,

signaled the end of Soviet utopianism. As a reaction to the uniform individualism of the Thaw,

with its All-Union quest for sincere and authentic self-expression, the culture of the 1970s

questioned the possibility of authentic self-expression and privileged otherness as a set of

potentials for artistic production, none of which promised any comprehensive narrative or

explanation of existence.

Mark Lipovetskii contends that during the late 1960s Soviet cultural metanarratives

entered stage of decomposition parallel to the delegitimation of the narratives of Progress and

Rationality in Western culture.

> It was totalitarianism that caused what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls
>
> "delegitimation," the collapse of all cultural and ideological discourses that
>
> structured this historic model of civilization [that of modernity based on the cult

---

[228] The undertaken analysis demonstrates that the political Thaw, that is, the premiership of Nikita Khruschev

(1953—64) and his reforms, has a mediated relationship to developments in individual culture industries.

Khrushchev was in constant dialogue with various modes of cultural production, above all literature, film, and fine

arts. The changes in the representational practices of political culture never fully paralleled developments in

literature and film. For further discussion of the ways the major Soviet tropes function in political culture of the

Thaw, see Condee "Cultural Codes of the Thaw."

of progress and rationality AP] from within … [During] the 1960s-80s, the

metanarratives of Soviet utopianism undergo the process of delegitimation. The

years from 1965 to 1968 marked the failure of the Thaw to modernize the

communist regime. (5)

By the 1970s, various instantiations of otherness as the distinctive feature of an artistic identity

circumvented the empty signifier of Soviet culture, which, with the demise of the sincerity

project in the late 1960s, had lost the possibility of establishing transcendental meaning.

In respect to the hollow center, all manifestations of otherness, whether ethnic, sexual, or

gendered, become marginal forms of artistic practice. Ethnic otherness manifested itself in

spatial and linguistic marginalization. Russian village prose, for example, valorized the local

idioms and virginal otherness of remote Siberia and the Russian North.[229] The 1970s also saw

the emergence of unofficial gay culture, which, obviously, existed on the margins of official

Soviet culture, in either *tamizdat* or *samizdat* because homosexuality had been criminalized since

1934. The life and work of the poet, playwright, and prosaist writer Evgenii Kharitonov (1941-

81), the cult figure of 1970s gay culture, serves as an example of productive otherness on the

margins of Sovietdom.

The late sixties ushered in another important revolution in Soviet culture: women

established themselves as independent voices in the era's artistic production, above all in

literature and film. I. Grekova, Natal'ia Baranskaia, Maia Ganina, and Viktoriia Tokareva

established a distinct tradition of writing focusing on female protagonist and emphasizing the

---

[229] For an insightful discussion of the subject see Katerina Clark's article "The Centrality of Rural Themes in

Postwar Soviet Fiction." See also the major work on village prose by Kathleen Parthé, *Russian Village Prose: The*

Radiant Past.

double burden of Soviet women. Usually, the main character has a fuol-time professional job, as well as full responsibility for the household and children, and struggles to assert her status and independence--a radical departure from Stalin era representations of Soviet women as happy recipients of state sponsorship. Baranskaia's novella "A Week Like Any Other" (1969), which appeared in the popular liberal journal *New World,* contains many key features of this new women's prose. In addition to the social issues mentioned above and the focus on women's experience, the novella also reveals Baranskaia's propensity to irony, which she shares with Tokareva and the male cultural producers of the period.

The West read Baranskaia's work as a feminist statement, which surprised, to say the least, Baranskaia herself. Russian women writers, especially the older generation, usually dislike being designated as gynocentric literati because they intuit the act of marginalization in such a practice. Their writing, however, for the first time since the revolution spotlighted women's issues and culture as a distinct set of voices in Russian literature.

If Russian literature could provide a fairly rich tradition of women's writing, Russian film had almost no female film directors prior to the late Thaw.[230] Despite the virtual absence of predecessors, Larisa Shepit'ko and Kira Muratova became major names in Soviet women's cinema of the 1960s. Their gender marginality, however, was reiterated in the fact that they started their careers in provincial studios: Shepit'ko in Kirgizia (Kirgizfilm), and Muratova in Ukraine (Odessa Studio). Both initially paid tribute to traditional Thaw cinema values, depicting individual and communal identity through a visual focus on nature and its elements. Shepit'ko employs this stylistic paradigm in her 1963 first feature, *Heat*, where the desert landscape

---

[230] Two exceptions are Esfir' Shub (1894-1959), who became famous in the 1920s for her compilation films, and Nadezhda Kosheverova (1902-89), who worked primarily in the genre of fairy tale.

functions as the externalized desert of human souls. Muratova collaborated with her husband, Aleksandr Muratov (1935-) on her first feature, *Our Honest Bread* (1964), the title alluding to the major building material of a harmonious human identity.

Both directors' second films, *Wings* (Shepit'ko 1966) and *Brief Encounters* (Muratova 1967), articulate distinctive features of Russian women's cinema. Distance from the naturalizing power of essentialist imagery constitutes one of the most important and sobering aspects of women's film style in the 1960s. Shepit'ko's film provides an excellent example of this stylistic trace. The protagonist, Petrukhina (Bulgakova), is a former military pilot whose career ends after World War Two. In the film, the sky figures the essence of freedom and love, yet everything related to the experience of sky is displaced into the war-era past. Petrukhina's lover, a pilot, was killed during the war. The protagonist herself now flies only in her dreams and in the flashbacks to her happier years—ironically, those of the war. Unable to find her niche in the postwar world, at film's end, Petrukhina comes to the local air club and takes off in one of the planes. The protagonist and the viewers finally see the sky, but the film makes clear that she has flown off only to commit suicide.

In *Brief Encounters* water images the unifying essence associated with female experience. Valentina, the protagonist[231], works as the city official responsible for the water supply of a provincial town, yet water is precisely the substance that she cannot provide for the urban dwellers. She cannot even attend a conference on water supply because she has to run some unrelated errands for her boss. This dearth of water defines Valentina's present and is linked to her separation from her lover, Maksim (Vysotskii), a prospector who, as the film

---

[231] Muratova herself plays the protagonist.

reveals, seeks gold, but finds silver. The water lacking in Valentina's present exists in the flashbacks of Valentina's maid, Nadia (Ruslanova), whose full name (Nadezhda) means 'hope.' As the viewer learns later in the film, after Maksim broke with Valentina, he had a brief but passionate relationship with Nadia. Now both women, like Petrukhina in *Wings*, define themselves only through their losses and memories. The absence of human contact--of water as the symbolic signifier of a living relationship--determines the characters' identity.

Women's cinema of the late 1960s favors a female perspective and, usually, a female protagonist, whose solitude constitutes its thematic and emotional center. As in Baranskaia's "A Week Like Any Other," even the traditionally glorified escape from solitude through childrearing loses its romantic aura and redemptive power in women's films of the 1960s. Neither Shepit'ko's Petrukhina, nor Muratova's Valentina is a biological mother, and both fail to establish genuine contact with their surrogate children. Petrukhina is alienated from her adopted daughter, and Valentina cannot find the right key to the psychology of her maid, whom she treats as her surrogate daughter. Any kind of essentialist foundation for relationships, however, is ruled out: in the two films, spiritual and emotional closeness, for example, cannot be established through biological ties. Petrukhina and Valentina try to educate, to "enlighten," their surrogate children but encounter only resentment. In Shepit'ko's *Wings*, the protagonist works as the principal at the local vocational school. Woll notes that "Petrukhina explodes the Soviet clichés of the conventionally tough and fair heroine, who wins reluctant admiration despite her sternness" (218). Although the protagonist means well, her awkward didacticism alienates her students, as well as her adopted daughter.

Shepit'ko and Muratova entertain no sentimental illusions about the blessings of a nuclear family. Traditionally, the Thaw favored the nuclear family as a shelter for genuine

feelings and emotional bonding. In early poststalinist culture, the nuclear family served as the

master signifier for identity construction, both personal and communal. In *Wings,* however,

mother and daughter can hardly talk to each other. *Brief Encounters* ends with the image of the

family table devoid of human presence. A visual simulation of a harmonious nuclear family

waits for Valentina and Maksim, but family bliss remains unattainable.

Muratova's *Brief Encounters* also ends the cult of the harmonious individual in Soviet

film. In fact, Muratova redefines the very phenomenon: instead of creating a redeemer-artist, a

child-hero/victim, a genius-intellectual (all men, by the way), she suggests the fundamental

impossibility of a unified individual identity. In lieu of creating a new positive hero, Muratova

introduces the notion of "characterness" in Soviet film. Boris Groys describes "characterness" as

the desire of an artist to assume another's identity to express her (1999 53). Instead of

embodying the self-articulation characteristic of traditional art, the artist uses ready-made

identities and their discourses to achieve only a degree of self-expression.

Muratova's Valentina changes her identities like clothing, and none of them becomes

completely her own. She plays a lover, a surrogate mother, and a caring city official responsible

for satisfying everyone's thirst. All these identities, however, do not fit, do not cohere into a

unified character. They fall apart, to reveal Valentina's persona as a series of lacks and desires.

The social roles that Valentina plays in the film combine fragments of 1960s heroes: her public

persona is that of "the source of life" for everyone; her romance with the prospector Maksim

links Valentina to the pioneers of the Thaw, but in a very mediated and rather ironic way. These

fragments, however, have one thing in common—like Petrikhina's idealized sky, they are

displaced into the past. Together with the lifegiving water, these fractured pieces of the sixties's

protagonist never surface in the present, where Valentina is responsible for supplying non-existent fluids.

The anti-essentialist drive of women's culture in the sixties signals the dissolution of Thaw culture, a process finalized in the perestroika years. And the notion of sincerity so central to Thaw values, received a death blow when in 1992 Boris Groys, one of the major European theoreticians of postmodern condition, wrote a monograph about contemporary cultural production, *Über das Neue: Versuch einer Kulturökonomie*.[232] Groys's study devotes several pages to the notion of sincerity in contemporary culture: he contends that cultural critics often refer to sincerity as some metaphysical value beyond any specific cultural conditions, an ideal against which one can measure the aesthetic value of an artistic text. The critic finds this position fundamentally flawed.

> The notion of artistic sincerity … refers only to the place of the work of art in cultural memory: the work of art can be regarded sincere if it is made at a certain date and lacking any sincerity if it turns out that it is made at a different date. ("O novom" 1993, 188)

According to Groys, sincerity in culture differs from sincerity in life and has to do with artists' ability to abandon the habitual frame of reference and cross the border between the culturally valorized and profaned: "The artist is considered to be sincere and authentic when he abandons his usual environment and goes on a trip to Tahiti or Africa, creates a distinctly artificial environment for himself" ("O novom" 1993, 188). The more inauthentic, artificial, and non-canonical artist is in his project, the more sincere he is as a cultural producer. For late Soviet and

---

[232] Groys's work was originally published in German. According to the author, he wrote it partly in Russian, partly in German. I am citing the Russian edition of his book. The English translation is mine.

postsoviet subjects, sincerity stopped being the ideological and aesthetic essence of art and became a synonym for artistic defamiliarization. The deconstruction of sincerity as essentialist value marks the last gasp of Thaw culture.

Bibliography

Abramov, Nikolai. *Dziga Vertov.* Roma: Edizioni di Bianco e Nero, 1963.

Aksenov, Vasilii. "Zvezdnyi bilet." *Sobranie sochinenii.* Vol. 1. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987. 187-
347. Originally published in *Iunost'* (*Youth*) 6-7(1961).

---. *A Ticket to the Stars.* New York: Signet Books, 1963.

---. *A Starry Ticket.* London: Putnam, 1962.

Alekseev, Mikhail P. Shekspir i russkaia kul'tura. Moscow, Leningrad: Nauka, 1965.

Al'tshuller, Mark. *Epokha Val'tera Skotta v Rossii: istoricheskii roman1830-kh godov.* Sankt-
Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1996.

Al'tshuller, Mark and Elena Dryzhakova. *Put' otrecheniia: russkaia literatura 1953-1968. The
Path of Renunciation: Russian Literature 1953-1968.* Tenafly: Hermitage, 1985.

Anninskii, Lev. *Shestidesiatniki i my.* Moscow: SK SSSR/Kinotsentr, 1991.

Aumont, Jacques. *Montage Eisenstein.* London: BFI; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevskii's Poetics.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

---.   "Discourse in the Novel." *Dialogic Imagination.* Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. 259-423.

Barnes, Christopher. *Boris Pasternak. A Literary Biography. Volume 2 (1928-1960).*
Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction." *Film Theory and Criticism.* Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 731-52.

Bethea, David. *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989. 230—69.

Billington, James. *The Icon and the Axe. An Interpretative History of Russian Culture.* New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

Blake, Patricia and Max Hayward, eds. *Half-way to the moon; new writing from Russia.* Garden City: Double Day & Co, 1965.

Bodin, Per Arne. *Nine Poems from "Doctor Zhivago": A Study of Christian Motifs in Boris Pasternak's Poetry.* Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976.

Bogomolov, Iurii. *Mikhail Kalatozov: stranitsy tvorcheskoi biografii.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1989.

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction.* NY: McGraw-Hill, 1997.

Boym, Svetlana. *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994.

Braginskii, Emil'. "Zametki soavtora." *El'dar Riazanov. Sbornik.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974. 180-88.

Brooks, Jeffrey. "Socialist Realism in *Pravda*." *Slavic Review* 4(Winter 1994): 973-92.

Brooks, Peter. "The Melodramatic Imagination." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama.* Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 50-67.

---. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1976.

Brown, Deming. *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.

Brown, Edward. *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.

---. *Russian Literature since the Revolution.* New York and London: Collier Books, 1969.

---. *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature: 1928-1932.* NY: Columbia UP, 1953.

Boym, Svetlana. *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet.* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991.

Buchman, Lorne. *Still in Movement.* New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

Bulgakowa, Oksana. *FEKS: die Fabrik des Exzentrischen Schauspielers.* Berlin: PotemkinPress, 1996.

Christie, Ian. "Introduction. Soviet cinema: a heritage and its history." *The Film Factory.* Eds. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie. London: Routledge, 1988. 1-17.

Chukhrai, Grigorii. *Moe kino.* Moscow: Algoritm, 2002.

Clark, Katerina. "Socialist Realism." *Reference Guide to Russian Literature.* London: Fietzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998. 55-59.

---. "Socialist Realism with Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero." *Socialist Realism Without Shores.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 27-51.

---. "The Centrality of Rural Themes in Postwar Soviet Literature." *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe.* Eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Cushing. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. 76-100.

---. *The Soviet Novel.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

Cohan, Steven. *Masked Men. Masculinity and the Movies of the Fifties.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997.

Cohen, Stephen. *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography.* New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973.

Condee, Nancy. "Cultural Codes of the Thaw." *Nikita Khrushchev.* Eds. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000. 166-77.

---. "Kul'turnye kody ottepeli." *Russkaia literatura XX veka: napravleniia i techeniia.* 3(1996): 167-84.

Conquest, Robert. *The Pasternak Affair: Courage of Genius.* New York: Octagon Press, 1979.

de Man, Paul. "The Rhetoric of Temporality." *Interpretation: Theory and Practice.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1969. 173-211.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988.

Doane, Mary Ann. "The Moving Image: Pathos and the Maternal." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama.* Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 283-306.

Dobin, Efim. *Kozintsev and Trauberg.* Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1963.

Dobrenko, Evgenii. "The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste." *Socialist Realism Without Shores.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 135-64.

---. Dobrenko, Evgenii. "Soviet Comedy Film: or The Carnival of Authority." *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 17.3(Spring 1995): 49-57.

---. *Metafora vlasti.* Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1993.

Dreifus, Hubert and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983.

Dunham, Vera. *In Stalin's Time: Middle Class Values in Soviet Fiction.* Durham: Duke UP, 1990.

Efimova, Z. S. "Iz istorii russkoi romanticheskoi dramy: 'Maskarad' M. Iu. Lermontova." *Russkii romantizm.* Ed. A. I. Beletskii. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1973. Reprint of Leningrad: Academia, 1927 edition. 26—50.

Efremov, Oleg. "Volk v ovech'ei shkure." *El'dar Riazanov. Sbornik.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974. 161-67.

Eisenstein, Sergei. "The Montage of Attractions." *S. M. Eisenstein. Selected Works.* Vol. 1. London: BFI and Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. 33-38.

Elistratov, Vladimir. *Slovar' krylatykh slov (russkii kinematograf)*. Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1999.

---. *Slovar' moskovskogo argo*. Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1994.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 68-91.

Erlich, Victor. *Modernism and Revolution: Russian iterature in Transition*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994.

Eschelman, Raoul. *Early Soviet Postmodernism*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997.

Fainsod, Merle. *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958.

---. *How Russia is Ruled*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1953.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharskii. October 1917-1921*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970.

Fleishman, Lazar. *Boris Pasternak: The Poet and His Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990.

Flynn, Thomas. "Foucault's Mapping of History." *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Fomin, Valerii. *Kinematograf ottepeli: dokumenty i svidetel'stva*. Moscow: Materik, 1998.

---. *Kino i vlast', 1965-1985 gody: dokumenty, svidetel'stva, razmyshleniia*. Moscow: Materik, 1996.

Freytag, Gustav. *Die Technik des Dramas: in Anhang: Wilhelm Ditthey, Die Technik des Dramas.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965.

Frolov, I. "Na ekrane tragediia Shekspira." *Iskusstvo kino* 5(1956): 16.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.

Furst, Lilian R. "Shakespeare and the Formation of Romantic Drama in Germany and France." *Romantic Drama.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co, 1994. 3—17.

Gai, Eduard and Boris Ganin. "Ne svoim golosom." *Voprosy literatury* 12(1963): 227-30.

Geldern Von, James. *Bolshevik Festivals, 1971-1920.* Berkeley: U of Claifornia P, 1993.

Genis, Alexander and Petr Vail'. *60-e mir sovetskogo cheloveka.* Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998.

---. *Contemporary Russian Prose.* Ann Arbor: Ermitazh, 1982.

Gerber, Alla. "Aktrisa." *Sovetskii ekran* 24 (1976): 7.

Gibian, George. *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature during the Thaw 1954-57.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1960.

Gillespie, David. *The Twentieth Century Russian Novel.* Oxford: Berg, 1996.

Giunter, Khans. "Totalitarnoe iskusstvo kak sintez iskusstv." *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon.* Sankt Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2000. 7-15.

Givry De, Emile Grillot. *Picture Museum of Sorcery Magic and Alchemy*. New York:

    University Books Inc., 1963.

Gladilin, Anatolii. *Making/Unmaking of a Soviet Writer: My Story of the "Young Prose" of the*

    Sixties and After. Tr. David Lapeza. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979.

Gledhill, Christine. "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation." *Home is Where the Heart Is:*

    Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI

    Publishing, 1987. 5-39.

Gorchakov, N. "Blizkie nam liudi." *Iskusstvo kino* 12(1957): 18-23.

Goscilo, Helena. "Playing Dead: The Ultimate Silent Part, or the Operatics of Celebrity

    Funerals." forthcoming.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, 1997.

Greenwold, Simon. "The Fate of Socialist Realism in an Indeterminate World: The Aesthetic of

    Thaw Fiction and Film." Diss. Northwestern U, 2001.

Grinberg, I. "Literatura I kartografiia." *Literary Gazette* August 25, 1959.

Gromov, Evgenii. *Komedii i ne tol'ko komedii: kinorezhisser El'dar Riazanov*. Moscow:

    Kinotsentr, 1989.

Groshev, Aleksandr, S. Ginzburg, *et al. Kratkaia istoriia sovetskogo kino*. Moscow: Nauka,

    1969. 425-30.

Groys, Boris. "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism Between Modernism and Postmodernism." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Eds. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko. Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 76-91.

---. "Imena goroda." *Utopiia I obmen. Stil' Stalin. O novom. Stat'i.* Moscow: Znak, 1993. 357-66.

---. "O novom." *Utopiia I obmen. Stil' Stalin. O novom. Stat'i.* Moscow: Znak, 1993. 113-245.

---. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond.* Princeton: Princton UP, 1992.

Groys, Boris and Il'ia Kabakov. *Dialogi (1990-1994).* Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1999.

Gukovskii, Grigorii A. *Pushkin i problemy realisticheskogo stilia.* Moscow: GIKhL, 1957.

---. *Realizm Gogolia.* Leningrad: GIKhL, 1959.

Gunning, Tom. "Narrative Discourse and the Narrator System." *Film Theory and Criticism.* NY: Oxford UP, 1999. 461-73.

---. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator." *Film Theory and Criticism.* NY: Oxford UP, 1999. 818-33.

---. "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-garde." *Wide Angle* 8.3/4(1986): 63-71.

Harris, Stephen L. *Understanding the Bible.* London: Mayfield Publishing Co, 1992.

Heller, Leonid. "A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories."
Socialist Realism Without Shores. Eds. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko.
Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 51-76.

Holquist, Michael. "Glossary." *Dialogic Imagination.* Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. 423-35.

Hosking, Jeffrey. *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction Since Ivan Denisovich.* New York:
Holmes and Meyers Publishers, 1980.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony.* London: Routledge, 1994.

---. *A Theory of Parody.* New York: Methuen, 1985.

Huyssen, Andreas. *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism
(Theories of Representation and Difference).* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.

Iampol'skii, Mikhail. "The Rhetoric of Representation of Political Leaders in Soviet Culture."
Elementa 1.1 (1993): 101-13.

Iarmolinsky, Avrahm, ed. *Soviet Short Stories*. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960.

"Ideinaia pozitsiia pisatelia." *Literary Gazette* November 21, 1959.

Iurenev, Rostislav. "Ivan Aleksandrovich Pyr'ev." *Ivan Pyr'ev.* Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1994.
5—82.

---. "Vernost'." *Iskusstvo kino* 12 (1957): 5-14.

Iutkevich, Sergei. "Kann 1958." *Iskusstvo kino* 10 (1958): 138-151, 11 (1958): 143-152.

Johnson, Priscilla and Leopold Labedz, eds. *Khrushchev and the Art, The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-64*. Cambridge: MIT, 1965.

Kamenskii, A. "Poeticheskii mir Sergeia Urusevskogo." *Sergei Urusevskii. S kinokameroi I za mol'bertom.* Moscow: Algoritm, 2002. 6-50.

Karabchievskii, Iurii. *Voskresenie Maiakovskogo* (*Resurrection of Maiakovskii*). München: Strana i mir, 1985.

Kenez, Peter. *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Khakhordin, Oleg. *The Collective and Individual in Russia. A Study of Practices.* Berkeley: U of CA P, 1999.

Khrushchev, Nikita. "Iz rechi N. S. Khrushcheva na vstreche rukovoditelei partii i pravitel'stva s deiateliami literatury i iskusstva. 8 marta 1963." *Kinematograf ottepeli: dokumenty i svidetel'stva.* Moscow: Materik, 1998. 131-32. Originally in *Novyi Mir* 3(1963).

---. "Vysokaia ideinost' i khudozhestvennoe masterstvo—velikaia sila sovetskoi literatury i iskusstva." *Vysokoe prizvanie literatury i iskusstva.* Moscow: Pravda, 1963. 167-235.

---. "Za tesnuiu sviaz' literatury i iskusstva s zhizn'iu naroda" ["For the Close Link between Literature and Life"]. *Vysokoe prizvanie literatury i iskusstva.* Moscow: Pravda, 1963. 9—55.

Kibirov, Timur. "Skvoz' proshchal'nye slezy." *Santimenty.* Belgorod: Risk, 1994. 125-85.

Knipovich, E. "Krasivaia nepravda o voine." *Znamia* 9-10 (1944).

Kolchinsky, Irene. *The revival of the Russian lterary Avant-Garde : the thaw generation and beyond.* Munich: Sagner, 2001.

Kosmatov, L. "Sovrshenstvuia khudozhestvennuiu formu . . ." *Iskusstvo kino* 12(1957): 23-26.

Kotov, V. and I Shevtsov. "Fal'shivyi bilet. Eshche raz o romane V. Aksenova." *Literatura i zhizn'* October 6.

Kott, Jan. *Shakespeare Our Contemporary.* London: Methuen, 1965.

Kozintsev, Grigorii. *Chernoe, likhoe vremia.* Moscow: Artist, Rezhisser, Teatr, 1994.

---. "Stone, Iron, Fire. From the Director's Diary." *Stanislavskii Today. Commentaries on K. S. Stanislavskii.* NY: The American Center for Stanislavskii Theater Art, 1973. 70—83.

---. *Glubokii ekran.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971.

---. Shakespeare: *Time and Conscience*. Tr. Joyce Vining. NY: Hill and Wang, 1966.

Kozlov, I. "Ob avtorskoi pozitsii." *Literary Gazette* November 17, 1959.

---. "Spor ne okonchen." *Literary Gazette* July 23, 1959.

Krymov, Iu. *Tanker Derbent.* Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1939.

Kuznetsov, Anatolii. "Prodolzhenie legendy." *Ottepel' 1957-1959.* Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1990. 30-174. Originally published in *Iunost (Youth)* 7(1957).

Lahusen, Thomas. *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997.

Lakshin, Vladimir. *Novyi mir vo vremena Khrushcheva (1953-1964).* Moscow: Knizhnaia
    palata, 1991.

Landy, Marcia and Amy Villarejo. *Queen Christina.* London: BFI Publishing, 1995.

Lang, Peter. *American Film Melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minelli* Princeton: Princeton UP,
    1989.

Larsen, Susan. "Melodramatic Masculinity, National Identity, and the Stalinist Past in Postsoviet
    Film." *Studies in 20th Century Literature. Russian Culture of the 1990s* 24.1(2000): 85-
    121.

Lavlinskii, L. "Bilet, no kuda?" *Komsomol'skaia pravda* 15 September 1961.

Lawton, Anna. *Kinoglasnost: Soviet cinema in our time*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Lazarev, L. "Piad' zemli." *Literary Gazette* June 18, 1959.

Levin, Iurii. *Shekspir i russkaia literatura XIX veka*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1988.

Levitt, Marcus. *Russian literary politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880.* Ithaca: Cornell
    UP, 1989.

Leyda, Jay. *Kino: A History of Russian and Soviet Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.

Liehm, Antonin and Mira. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film After 1945.*
    Berkeley: U of CA P, 1977.

Lipovetsky, Mark. *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos.* Armonk: M.E.Sharpe,
    1999.

Lotman, Iurii. *The Structure of the Artistic Text.* Tr. Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor: Department of
　　Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1977.

---. *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970.

Lotman, Iurii and Boris Uspenskii. "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture." *New Literary
　　History* 2(Winter 1978): 211-33. First published in *Trudy po znakovym sistemam
　　(Papers on Sign Systems).* Vol. 5. Tartu: Tartu UP, 1971.

Lotman, Iurii, Boris Uspenskii, Viacheslav Ivanov, V. Toporov, and A. Piatigorskii. *Theses on
　　the Semiotic Study of Culture.* Lisse/Netherlands: The Peter De Ridder Press, 1975.

L'vov, Sergei. "Smeiat'sia, pravo, ne greshno . . ." *Iskusstvo kino* 10(1965): 40.

Lukacs, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of
　　Great Epic Literature.* Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1971.

Lunacharskii, Anatolii. "Le réalisme socialiste." *Les Destinées de la littérature russe.* Paris:
　　Editeurs Francais Réunis, 1979.

MacKenzie, David and Michael W. Curran. *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond.*
　　Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co, 1993.

Mal'tsev, Iurii. *Vol'naia russkaia literatura 1955-1975.* Frankfurt/Main: Posev, 1976.

Margolit, Evgenii. "Lenin—geroi kino ottepeli." *Iskusstvo kino* 5(2000).
　　http://www.kinoart.ru/2000/5/18.html

Markulan, Ianina. *Kinomelodrama, fil'm uzhasov: kino i burzhuaznaia massovaia kul'tura.*
Leningrad: Iskusstvo, Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1978.

Martin, Marcel. *Le Cinéma Soviétique: de Khrouchtchev à Gorbatchev (1955—1992).*
Lausanne: L'Age D'Homme, 1993.

Matskin, A. "Ob ukrashatel'stve i ukrashateliakh." *Znamia* 11-12 (1943).

McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation.* Oxford:
Clarendon, 1996.

McLean, Hugh and Walter Vickery. *The Year of Protest 1956. An Anthology of Soviet Literary
Materials.* New York: Vintage, 1961.

Medvedev, Armen. "Tol'ko o kino." *Iskusstvo kino* 1-5, 7-11(1999).

Menzel, Birgit. "Sovetskaia lirika stalinskoi epokhi: motivy, zhanry, napravleniia."
Sotsrealisticheskii kanon. Eds. Hans Günter and Evgenii Dobrenko. Sankt-Peterburg:
Akademicheskii proekt, 2000. 953—69.

Merkel', Maiia. *Ugol zreniia: dialog s Urusevskim.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980.

Metal'nikov, Boris. "Ottepel'—vremia debiutov." *Iskusstvo kino* 5-6(1998).

Meyer, Priscilla Ann. "Aksenov and Soviet Prose of The 1950s and 1960s." Diss. Princeton U,
1971.

Miller, Frank. *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era.*
Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991.

Modleski, Tania. "Time and Desire in the Woman's Film." *Film Theory and Criticism*. Eds.
Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, Leo Brandy. NY: Oxford UP, 1992. 536-48.

Muecke, Douglas Colin. *Irony and the Ironic*. London: Methuen, 1982.

Nakhabtsev, Vladimir. "Vsegda v poiske." *El'dar Riazanov. Sbornik.* Moscow: Iskusstvo,
1974. 139-50.

Nazarenko, V. "Kstati o formalizme." *Zvezda* 9(1961).

Neale, Stephen. "Questions of Genre." *Film Genre. Reader II.* Austin: U of Texas P, 1997.
159-87.

---. "Melo Talk: On the Meaning and Use of the Term 'Melodrama' in the American Trade
Press." *Velvet Light Trap* 32(fall 1993): 66-89.

Nedobrovo, Viktor. *FEKS: Grigorii Kozintsev i Leonid Trauberg.* Moscow, Leningrad:
Kinopechat', 1928.

Nekrasov, Viktor. *V okopakh Stalingrada.* Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1995.

---. "Cherez sorok let." *Stalingrad*. Frankfurt-Main: Possev Verlag, 1981. 439-56.

---. *Viktor Nekrasov v zhizni i pis'makh.* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1971.

---. *Front-Line Stalingrad.* Tr. David Floyd. London: Harvill Press, 1962.

---. *V okopakh Stalingrada.* Moscow: GIKhL, 1948.

---. "Stalingrad." *Znamia* 8-9, 10 (1946).

Nepomnyashchy, Catharine. *Abram Tertz and the Poetics of Crime.* New Haven: Yale UP,

    1995.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. "Minelli and Melodrama." *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in*

    Melodrama and the Women's Film. London: BFI Publishing, 1987. 70-74.

Odintsov, V. V. "Nabliudeniia nad dialogom v 'molodezhnoi povesti'." *Voprosy iazyka*

    sovremennoi russkoi literatury. Moscow: Nauka, 1971. 164-221.

Oinas, Felix. "Folklore and Politics in the Soviet Union." *Slavic Review* 32(1973): 45-58.

---. "The Political Uses and Themes of Folklore in the Soviet Union." *Folklore, Nationalism,*

    and Politics. Columbus: Slavica, 1972. 77-95.

Ottepel' 1953-1956. Ed. Sergei Chuprinin. Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989.

Parthé, Kathleen. *Russian Village Prose: The Radiant Past.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

"Party Cinema Conference Resolution: The Results of Cinema Construction in the USSR and

    the Tasks of Soviet Cinema." *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in*

    Documents 1896-1939. Eds. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie. London: Routledge,

    1988. 208-15.

Pasternak, Boris. *Doktor Zhivago.* Moscow: Troika, 1994.

---. "Okhrannaia gramota" ("Safe Conduct"). *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh.* Vol. 4.

    Moscow: Khudlit, 1991. 149—240.

---. *Doktor Zhivago. Roman. Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh.* Vol. 3. Moscow: Khudlit,
     1990.

---. "Nobelevskaia premiia." *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh.* Vol. 2. Moscow: Khudlit,
     1989. 128.

---. "Safe Conduct." *Collected Short Prose*. Ed. Christopher Barnes. NY: Praeger, 1977. 21—
     100.

---. *Doctor Zhivago*. NY: Pantheon, 1958.

Petrushevskaya, Lyudmila. "Our Crowd." *Glasnost: An Anthology of Russian Literature Under
     Gorbachev.* Eds. Helena Goscilo and Byron Lindsey. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990. 3-25.

Pigarev, Kirill. "Velikii russkii polkovodets." *Novyi mir* 5(1950):183-88.

Pogacar, Timothy. "The Journal 'Iunost' in Soviet Russian Literature, 1955-1965." Diss. U. of
     Kansas, 1985.

Poliwoda, Bernadette. *Feks: Fabrik des eszentrischen Schauspielers: vom Exzestrismus zur
     Poetik des Films in der frühen Sowjetkultur.* Munich: O. Sagner, 1994.

Pomerantsev, Vladimir. "Ob iskrennosti v literature." *Ottepel' 1953-1956.* Moscow:
     Moskovskii rabochii, 1989. 17-61.

Pozdniaev, K. "'Zvezdnyi bilet'—kuda?" *October* 10(1961).

Pudovkin, Vsevolod. "To All Creative Workers in Soviet Cinema." *The Film Factory*. Eds.
     Richard Taylor and Ian Christie. London: Routledge, 1994. 322-23.

---. *Film Technique and Film Acting.* Tr. Ivor Montague. NY: Grove Press, 1949.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *Tri tovarishcha.* Moscow: GIKhL, 1958.

 "Revelation of John, The." *Oxford Study Bible.* NY: Oxford UP, 1992. 1556—1575.

Riazanov, El'dar. *Nepodvedennye itogi.* Moskva: Vagrius, 1995.

---. "Mezhdu fil'mami." *Iskusstvo kino* 5(1967): 61-66.

Robin, Régine. *Socialist Realism.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992.

Rodowick, David. "Madness, Authority, and Ideology in the Domestic Melodrama of the
    1950s." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama.* Detroit:
    Wayne State UP, 1991. 237-47.

Romer, Fedor. "Baikovye pantalony Sof'i Vlas'evny." *Itogi* 46.232(November 2000).
    <http://www.itogi.ru/paper2000.nsf/Article/Itogi_2000_11_10_160401.html> Accessed
    May 24, 2001.

Romm, Mikhail. *Ustnye rasskazy.*. Moscow: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR, 1989.

Rowe, Eleanor. *Hamlet: A Window on Russia.* New York: NYU Press, 1976.

Roythberg, Abraham. *The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime 1953-70.* Ithaca:
    Cornell UP, 1972.

Rozov, Viktor. *Puteshestvie v raznye storony*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987.

---. "Vechno zhivye." *Put' k pobede.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985.

---. "Alive Forever." *Contemporary Russian Drama.* Ed. Franklin D. Reeve. New York:

  Pegasus, 1968. 19-80.

Rubinshtein, Lev. "Dym otechestva, ili Gulag s fil'trom." *Domashnee muzitsirovanie.* Moscow:

  NLO, 2000. 221-23.

---. "Kommunal'noe chtivo." *Domashnee muzitsirovanie.* Moscow: NLO, 2000. 135-42.

Rylkova, Galya. "On the Border of Two Literatures: Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago.*"

  http://clover.slavic.pitt.edu/~ludwig/aatseel/Galina_Rylkova.html

Samarin, Roman Mikhailovich, ed. *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union. A Collection of Articles.*

  Moscow: Progress, 1966.

Sarnov, Benedikt. "Globus i 'karta-dvukhverstka'." *Literary Gazette* July 9, 1959.

Saussure de, Ferdiand. "Course in General Linguistics." *The Structuralists: From Marx to Lévi-

  Strauss.* Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972. 58-79.

Schatz, Thomas. "The Family Melodrama." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television

  Melodrama.* Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 148-167.

---. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System.* New York: Random

  House, 1981.

Schlegel, Friedrich. "Critical Fragment 108." *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*.

  Tr. and ed. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: 1971.

---. "Kritische Fragmente." *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801).* Munich: Verlag
Ferdinand Schöningn, 1967. 147-63.

---. "Ideen." *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801).* Munich: Verlag Ferdinand
Schöningn, 1967. 256-73.

Segida, Miroslava and Sergei Zemlianukhin, eds. *Domashniaia sinemateka. Otechestvennoe
kino 1918-1996.* Moscow: Dubl'-D, 1996.

Sellers, Peter. "Razmyshleniia o komedii." *Iskusstvo kino* 7(1964): 115-16.

Senderovich, Savely. "Chudo Georgiia o Zmie: istoriia oderzhimosti Chekhova odnim
obrazom." *RLJ* 39(1985): 135—225.

Shakespeare, William. "The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark." *The Riverside
Shakespeare.* Vol. 2. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974 1141—86.

Shemiakin, Andrei. "Dialog s literaturoi ili opasnye sviazi." *Kinematograf ottepeli. Kniga
pervaia.* Moscow: Materik, 1996. 138-70.

Shilova, Irina. *. . . i moe kino.* Moscow: NII Kinoiskusstva/*Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 1993.

---. "Melodrama." *Kinoslovar'* Ed. Sergei Iutkevich. Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia,
1986. 264.

Shveitser, Mikhail. "Ottepel' otkryla liudiam, chto mozhno byt' luchshe." *Kinematograf
ottepeli*. Moskva: Materik, 1996. 180—84.

Simonov, Konstantin. "Zhivye i mertvye." *Znamia* 4-12 (1959).

Skorino, L. "Razgovor nachistotu." *Znamia* 2(1954).

Smirnov, Aleksandr A. *Sovremenniki Shekspira. Sbornik p'es. Introduction by Aleksandr Abramovich Anikst.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1959.

Smoktunovskii, Innokentii. *Byt'.* Moscow: Algoritm, 1999.

Solov'ev, Boris. "Pooshchrenie naturalizma." *Novyi mir* 10(1948): 238-46.

Sontag, Susan. "The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer." *Against Interpretation and Other Essays.* New York: Octagon Books, 1978. 39—48.

Stites, Richard. *Russian popular culture: Entertainment and society since 1900.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Svirskii, Grigorii. *A History of Post-War Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition.* Tr. Robert Dessaix and Michael Ulman. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981.

---. *At the Place of Execution. Literature of Moral Resistance 1946-76.* London: Novaya literaturnaya biblioteka, 1979. Reprint Moscow: Kruk. 1998.

Swayze, Harold. *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962.

 "Takimi my byli. Fragmenty iz stenogrammy tvorcheskoi konferentsii 'Kinematograf ottepeli'." *Kinematograf ottepeli.* Ed. Vitalii Troianovskii. Moscow: Materik, 1996. 170—79.

Taylor, Richard. "Singing on the Steppes for Stalin: Ivan Pyr'ev and the Kolkhoz Musical in Soviet Cinema." *Slavic Review* 58.1(1999): 143-60.

---. *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany.* London: I.B.Tauris, 1998.

---. "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults." *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*. Eds.
Richard Taylor and Derek Spring. London: Routledge, 1993. 69—89.

---. "Ideology as mass entertainment: Boris Shumiatskii and Soviet cinema in the 1930s." *Inside
the film factory*. Eds. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie. London: Routledge, 1991.

Taylor, Richard, ed. *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Tertz, Abram. "The Trial Begins." *The Trial Begins and on Socialist Realism*. Berkeley: U of
California P, 1982. 1—127.

Trauberg, Leonid. *Svezhest' bytiia.* Moscow: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR, Kinotsentr, 1988.

Trifonova, I. "Pravo na mnogoobrazie." *Literary Gazette* September 17, 1959.

Troianovskii, Vitalii, ed. *Kinematograf ottepeli. Kniga pervaia.* Moscow: Materik, 1996.

---. "*Letiat zhuravli* tret' veka spustia." *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 17 (1993): 49-56.

Troitskii, Artemy. *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia*. Boston: Faber and
Faber, 1987.

Tsiv'ian, Iurii. *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception.* Chicago: U of Chicago P,
1994.

---. "Early cinema: some observations." *Inside the film factory: new approaches to Russian and
Soviet cinema.* London: Routledge, 1991. 7-30.

---. *Testimoni silenziosi: Film russi 1908-1919/Silent Witnesses: Russian Films, 1908-1919.*

      Pordenone, Italy: Biblioteca dell'Imagine, 1989.

Tucker, Robert. *The Soviet Political Mind: Studies in Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change.* New

      York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.

Turovskaia, Maia. "I.A. Pyr'ev i ego muzykal'nye komedii." *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 1(1988):

      111-46.

---. "Pochemu zritel' khodit." *Zhanry kino.* Ed. Valerii Fomin. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979. 138-

      74.

---. *Geroi bezgeroinogo vremeni.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971.

---. "Shekspir i my." *Da i net.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966. 120-49.

---. "Marlen Khutsiev." *Molodye rezhissery sovetskogo kino.* Leningrad-Moscow, 1962.

---. "'Da' i 'net'." *Iskusstvo kino* 12(1957): 14-18.

---. "O chem napisana p'esa." *Komsomol'skaia pravda* 5 Jul. 1956.

Uspenskii, Boris. *A Poetics of Composition.* Berkeley: U of CA P, 1973.

Vertov, Dziga. "Fiction Film Drama and the Cine-Eye. A Speech." *The Film Factory: Russian*

      and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939. Eds. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie.

      London: Routledge, 1988. 115-16.

---. *Stat'i, dnevniki, zamysly.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966.

Vickery, Walter. *The Cult of Optimism.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1963.

Voloshinov, Valentin. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language.* NY: Seminar P, 1973.

Walsh, Andrea. *Women's Film and Female Experience: 1940—1950.* New York: Praeger, 1984.

Wellek, René. "Friedrich Schlegel." *History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950: The Romantic Age*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1955. 5-35.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973.

Williams, Linda. "Melodrama Revisited." *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory.* Ed. Nick Browne. Berkeley: U of CA P, 1998. 42-88.

Woll, Josephine. *Real Images: Soviet Cinema And The Thaw*. London: I. B. Tauris and NY: St. Martin Press, 1999.

Youngblood, Denise. *The magic mirror: moviemaking in Russia, 1908—1918.* Madison, Wis.: U of Wisconsin P, 1999.

---. *Movies for the masses: popular cinema and the Soviet society in the 1920s.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

---. *Soviet cinema in the silent era, 1918-1935.* Austin: U of Texas P, 1991.

Zhdanov, Andrei Aleksandrovich. "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature." *Problems of Soviet Literature: Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress.* London: Martin Lawrence, 1935. 15-24.

Zorkaia, Neia. "Moi nezabyvaemyi 1968." *Kinematograf ottepeli: dokumenty i svidetel'stva.*

    Ed. V. Fomin. Moscow: Materik, 1998. 433-48.

---. "Polet skvoz' vremia." *Iskusstvo kino* 5(1995): 4-6.

---. *The Illustrated History of Soviet Cinema.* London: Hippocrene Books, 1989.

---. *Na rubezhe stoletii: u istokov iskusstva v Rossii 1900-1910 godov.* Moscow: Nauka, 1976.

---. "Skvoz' vidimyi miru smekh." *El'dar Riazanov. Sbornik.* Ed. Neia Zorkaia. Moscow:

    Iskusstvo, 1974. 7—98.

---. *Portrety.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966.

---. "Svoi fil'm." *Iskusstvo kino* 9(1966): 14-21.

---. "Iakov Protazanov i sovetskoe kinoiskusstvo 20ykh godov." *Voprosy kinoiskusstva* 6(1962):

    165-91.

---. *Sovetskii istoriko-revoliutsionnyi fil'm.* Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1962.

Filmography

Ad'iutant ego prevoskhoditel'stva (His Majesty's Aid). Dir. Evgenii Tashkov. Mosfilm 1970.

Aleksandr Nevskii. Dir. Sergei Eisenshtein. Mosfilm 1938.

Andrei Rublev. Dir. Andrei Tarkovskii. Mosfilm 1964-65.

Anna Karenina. Dir. Aleksandr Zarkhi. Mosfilm 1967.

Ballada o soldate (Ballad of a Soldier). Dir. Grigorii Chukhrai. Mosfilm 1959.

Beregis' avtomobilia (Beware of the Car). Dir. El'dar Riazanov. Mosfilm 1966.

Bol'shaia sem'ia (Big Family). Dir. Iosif Kheifits. Mosfilm 1954.

Brat (Brother). Dir. Aleksei Balabanov. CTB Film Company, Gorky Film Studios, Roskomkino 1997.

Brat (Brother 2). Dir. Aleksei Balabanov. CTB Film Company 2000.

Briliantovaia ruka (Diamond Hand). Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1968.

Chapaev. Dir. Vasil'ev Brothers. Lenfilm 1934.

Chelovek niotkuda (A Man from Nowhere). Dir. El'dar Riazanov. Mosfilm 1961.

Chistoe nebo (Clear Sky). Dir. Grigorii Chukhrai. Mosfilm 1961.

Chlen pravitel'stva (Member of the Government). Dir. Iosif Kheifits and Aleksandr Zarkhi. Mosfilm 1939.

Delo pestrykh (Case of Many Colors). Dir. Nikolai Dostal'. Mosfilm 1956.

Delo Rumiantseva (Rumiantsev's Case). Dir. Iosif Kheifits. Lenfilm 1955.

Delovye liudi (Business People). Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1963.

Deviat' dnei odnogo goda. Dir. Mikhail Romm. Mosfilm 1961.

Devushka s kharakterom (A Girl with Character). Dir. Konstantin Iudin. Mosfilm 1939.

Dobro pozhalovat' ili postoronnim vkhod vospreshchen (Welcome, Unauthorized Entry Prohibited). Dir. Elem Klimov. Mosfilm 1964.

Dom, v kotorom ia zhivu (The House I Live In). Dir. Iakov Segel and Lev Kulidzhanov. Gorky Film Studios 1956.

Dva Fedora (Two Fedors). Dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Odessa Studio 1957.

Dvenadtsataia noch' (Twelfth Night). Dir. Ian Frid. Lenfilm 1955.

Dzhul'lbars. Dir. Vladimir Shneiderov. Mezhrabpomfilm 1935.

Ekaterina Voronina. Dir. Isidor Anninskii. Mosfilm 1957.

Evdokiia. Dir. Tat'iana Lioznova. Gorky Studio 1961.

Gamlet (Hamlet). Dir. Grigorii Kozintsev. Lenfilm 1964.

Gosudarstvennyi prestupnik (State Criminal). Dir. Nikolai Rozantsev. Lenfilm 1964.

Il'ia Muromets. Dir. Aleksandr Ptushko. Mosfilm 1956.

Imitation of Life. Douglas Sirk. Universal 1959.

Imitation of Life. Dir. John M. Stahl. Universal 1934.

Ivan Groznyi (Ivan the Terrible) (Two Parts). Dir. Sergei Eisenstein. Mosfilm 1943-48.

Ivanovo detstvo (Ivan's Childhood). Dir. Andrei Tarkovskii. Mosfilm 1962.

Kavkazskaia plennitsa (Captive of the Caucasus). Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1967.

Kliatva (The Vow). Dir. Mikhail Chiaureli. Mosfilm 1946.

Komissar (Comissar). Dir. Aleksadr Askol'dov. Mosfilm 1967.

Kommunist (Communist). Dir. Iulii Raizman. Mosfilm 1957.

Korotkie vstrechi (Brief Encounters). Dir. Kira Muratova. Odessa Studio 1967.

Kryl'ia (Wings). Dir. Larisa Shepit'ko. Mosfilm 1966.

Kubanskie kazaki (Cossacks of the Kuban River). Dir. Ivan Pyr'ev. Mosfilm 1949.

La Dolce Vita. Dir. Federico Fellini. Riama Film and Pathé Consortium Cinéma 1960.

Letchiki (Pilots). Dir. Iulii Raizman. Mosfilm 1935.

Letiat zhuravli (Cranes are Flying). Dir. Mikhail Kalatozov. Mosfilm 1957.

"Naparnik" ("Partner") in *Operation Y.* Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1965.

"Navazhdenie" ("Hypnosis") in *Operation Y.* Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1965.

Minin i Pozharskii (Minin and Pozharskii). Dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin. Mosfilm 1939.

Modern Times. Dir. Charles Chaplin. United Artists 1936.

Moi mladshii brat (My Younger Brother). Dir. Aleksandr Zarkhi. Mosfilm 1962.

Muzhestvo (Courage). Dir. Mikhail Kalatozov. Mosfilm 1939.

Nachalo nevedomogo veka (The Beginning of an Unknown Era). Dir. Andrei Smirnov and
     Larisa Shepit'ko. Mosfilm 1967.

Neokonchenaia istoriia (Unfinished Story, The). Dir. Fridrikh Ermler. Mosfilm 1955.

Nezabyvaemyi 1919 (Unforgettable 1919, The). Dir Mikhail Chiaureli. Mosfilm 1951.

Operatsiia Trest (Operation Trust). Dir. Sergei Kolosov. Mosfilm 1967.

Operatsiia Y (Operation Y). Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1965.

Oshibka inzhenera Kochina (Engineer Kochin's Mistake). Dir. Aleksandr Macheret. Mosfilm
     1938.

Otello (Othello). Dir. Sergei Iutkevich. Mosfilm 1955.

Padenie Berlina (The Fall of Berlin). Dir. Mikhail Chiaureli. Mosfilm 1949.

Pes Barbos I neobyknovennyi kross (Barbos and a Fantastic Cross). Dir. Leonid Gaidai.
     Mosfilm 1961.

Petr Pervyi (Peter the First) (Two Parts). Dir. Vladimir Petrov. Mosfilm 1937.

Pink Panther, The. Dir. Blake Edwards. Mirisch Company and United Artists 1963.

Pirosmani. Dir. Giorgi Shengelaya. Gruziia-Film 1969.

Pokrovskie vorota (Pokrovskii Gates). Dir. Mikhail Kozakov. Mosfilm 1982.

Proshchaite, golubi (Good Bye Doves). Dir. Iakov Segel'. Ialta Studio 1960.

Pugachev. Dir. Pavel Petrov-Bytov. Mosfilm 1937.

Putevka v zhizn' (Road to Life). Dir. Nikolai Ekk. Mezhrabpomrus' 1931.

Put' k prichalu (Trip to the Harbor). Dir. Georgii Danelia. Mosfilm 1962.

Raznye sud'by (Different Fates). Dir. Leonid Lukov. Lenfilm 1956.

Sadko. Dir. Aleksandr Ptushko. Mosfilm 1953.

Salavat Iulaev. Dir. Iakov Protazanov. Mosfilm 1941.

Samogonshchiki (Moonshiners). Dir. Leonid Gaidai. Mosfilm 1961.

Semnadtsat' mgnovenii vesny (Seventeen Moments of Spring). Dir. Tat'iana Lioznova. Gorky Studio 1973.

Serezha. Dir. Georgii Daneliia and Igor Talankin. Mosfilm 1960.

Shinel' (Overcoat). Dir. Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. Leningradkino 1926.

Skazka o tsare Saltane (Tale of Tsar Saltan). Dir. Aleksandr Ptushko. Mosfilm 1966.

Soldaty (Soldiers). Dir. Aleksandr Ivanov. Kiev Studio 1956.

Sud'ba cheloveka (Destiny of a Man). Dir. Sergei Bondarchuk. Mosfilm 1959.

Svetlyi put' (The Radiant Path). Dir. Grigorii Alexandrov. Mosfilm 1940.

Svinarka i parstukh (The Swineherd and The Shepherd). Dir. Ivan Pyr'ev. Mosfilm 1941.

Tanker Derbent. Dir. Aleksandr Faintsimer. Odessa Studio 1940.

Traktoristy (Tractor Drivers). Dir. Ivan Pur'ev. Mosfilm and Kiev Studios 1939.

Tridtsat' Tri (Thirty Three). Dir Georgii Daneliia. Mosfilm 1965.

V ogne broda net (No Ford Through the Fire). Dir. Gleb Panfilov. Lenfilm 1967.

V Shest' chasov vechera posle voiny (At 6 pm. after the War). Dir. Ivan Pyr'ev. Mosfilm 1944.

Valerii Chkalov. Dir. Mikhail Kalatozov. Mosfilm 1941.

Vesna na Zarechnoi ulitse (Spring at Zarechnaia Street). Dir. Marlen Khutsiev and Feliks Mironer. Odessa Studios 1956.

Volga, Volga. Dir. Grigorii Alexandrov. Mosfilm 1938.

Vozvrashchenie Vasiliia Bortnikova (The Return of Vasilii Bortnikov). Dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin. Mosfilm 1954.

Vstuplenie (Introduction). Dir. Igor' Talankin. Mosfilm 1962.

Zastava Il'icha (Lenin's Guard). Dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Gorky Studio 1962.

Zhdi menia (Wait for Me). Dir. Aleksandr Stolper. TsOKS (Alma-Ata) 1943.

Zhena gvardeitsa (Wife of a Guard). Dir. Barkhudarov. Armenfilm 1943.

Zhivye i mertvye (Living and the Dead, The). Dir. Aleksandr Stolper. Mosfilm 1963.

Zvezda (Star). Dir. Aleksandr Ivanov. Lenfilm 1949.