

"I Need Some Life-Assertive Character" or How to Die in the Most Inspiring Pose: Bodies in The Stalinist Museum of *Hammer and Sickle*¹

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After all, two times two makes four is no longer life, gentlemen, but is the beginning of death.

—Fedor Dostoevskii, "Notes from Underground" (30)

The dolls are jerked by their long strings,
Smiles on their faces
And the clown plays a trumpet.
And during the performance
It seems as if

The dolls dance on their own.

—Andrei Makarevich, "Marionettes,"²
translated by Vladimir Padunov

The metaphor of Soviet Culture as a museum, where life is presented by its simulation, became one of the central tropes of both perestroika and post-perestroika films. In some of these films the museums of Soviet dreams are distanced in space and time from the everyday life of the protagonists. A character either goes on a business trip to a city in a surreal time and place, as in Karen Shakhnazarov's *City Zero* (1988), or works at a cemetery of mythology while spending the rest of her time in the comparably exciting world of Russian everyday life, as does the protagonist of Viacheslav Krishtofovich's *Adam's Rib* (1992), who is a guide at the Moscow Museum of the Revolution. Another group of mostly post-perestroika films broadened the limits of the Soviet museum, which now embraced both the diegesis—"the total world of the story action" (Bordwell 56)—and the extra-diegetic space and time of cinematic texts. Entire films now became the museum/mausoleums [m(a)us(ol)eums] of dead narratives and embalmed cultural icons. Within this group, the most-famous is Ivan Dychovichnyi's *Moscow Parade* (1992). Sergei Livnev's museum of hammers and sickles adds one more exhibit to this ironic exhibition hall.

Livnev's film about the creation of the "new Soviet man" through a sex-change operation provides a meta-commentary on Stalinist culture, and especially on one of its central tropes—the metaphor of the garden (Clark 106—113). The male lover of the protagonist (while the latter is still a woman) moans to her: "We'll make our dream come true. We'll plow the tundra, plant flowers and orchards . . . Have seven kids."³ This promise of abundance and fertility in the future becomes a recurring motif in Livnev's film. The major characteristic of this motif is that it always remains in the

protagonist's recollections about his past. Thus the film is an inversion of a promise, a "simulacrum,"⁴ i.e. "a false copy introducing difference" (Iampolskii 53).⁵

This strange inversion of the promise actually opens the film, when Stalin's aid, Aleksei,⁶ tells Amvrosii, the character responsible for the operation: "Look, Amvrosii, we're friends. Do you trust me?" Although Amvrosii shakes Aleksei's hand, he remains silent. Later he finds out that the promise to save his wife by orchestrating of the operation is a death-trap that will kill both of them. Aleksei's words mean the opposite of what they seem to mean. His handshake of life is a kiss of death. Instead of the garden that Stalinist culture created in its narratives, the implied author⁷ lays bare the inversion of the garden—the museum of a garden, in which life is imitated and eventually freezes in static replicas.⁸ The inversion of the trope of the garden into the trope of the museum is the *dominanta* of the film.⁹

The inversion of the promise of paradise into a museum motivates the *chronotope* of the film¹⁰: the new man is created in a Soviet version of Dr. Frankenstein's castle—a monastery transformed into a concentration camp.¹¹ The place where people have direct access to divine will becomes both a death camp and the place where people imitate divine creation.

The various domiciles in Moscow Evdokim, this "new Soviet man," takes also construct the space where the Stalinist myth of the transition from the world of spontaneity into the world of consciousness (Clark 15—24, 167) becomes a narrative about the transition of life into death. The first apartment that Evdokim receives in Moscow has all the basic household fixtures. Amvrosii even lists them: "Here's the stove and kitchen utensils. The bathroom is in the hallway." After the newsreel segment, in which the character both metamorphoses into a conscious Soviet man and becomes the model for a famous Soviet sculpture,¹² he gets a new temple-like apartment that is no longer furnished with creature comforts and basic household fixtures. Characters within it are almost motionless. Evdokim works at his desk in a pose that has been iconicized by official photographs of Lenin or Stalin.¹³ The whole setting increasingly evokes Lenin's "museum-office" in the Kremlin. Ceasing to be a living space, the apartment becomes a place where static figures imitate life. The living family in turn turns into a family of sculptures. Finally, at the film's end, Evdokim's apartment is literally transformed into his own m(a)us(ol)eum. Life makes the transition into its epic simulacrum.

Time in the narrative also imitates life. It is structured around the life of the protagonist (i.e., it seems to be biographical time) but the major characteristic of this life is that it exists in a fantastic time that is marked neither

by death nor life: Evdokim lives after the death of Evdokiia, whose supposedly entombed remains he discovers when he attends the funeral of one of his creators—Amvrosii. At the same time, the protagonist uses her body for his existence. Evdokim's existence in this fantastic time is made painful by his body's recollections of his life as a woman, especially during sexual intercourse.

The temptations of the body become unbearable when Evdokim runs into Vera at the doctor's office. Evdokim imagines that he will be able to return to his other life if he lives with Vera, the only character who has survived the transplantation from his previous life into fantastic time. The return, however, proves to be impossible, not only because the NKVD kills Vera. Apart from her death, there is a much more powerful force that does not allow Evdokim to escape the fantastic time—the power of discourse that promises paradise. During the sex act with Vera, he gasps out the words of “others”—the promises of paradise articulated both by his lover from his former female life and by Stalinist discourse: “We'll make our dream come true. We'll plow the tundra, plant flowers and orchards. Have seven kids.” In despair Evdokim tells Vera—“You had another life, and I had another life”—implying that he is entrapped in this fantastic time, where life has turned into a fairy tale about life.

Similar to the chronotope of *Hammer and Sickle*—the museum in the twilight zone between life and death—the film's structure redefines the narrative of the positive hero who acquires new consciousness into a story of the gradual transformation of living bodies into their static imitations. This transition is performed four times in the film: first, the discourse of power transmogrifies the bodies of Evdokim's creators, Amvrosii and Maria, by killing them; second, the bodies of Evdokim and Elizaveta are transformed by using them as models for Mukhina's sculpture; third, the body of Vera is transformed into a corpse; and fourth, the body of Evdokim is transformed again by creating out of it a living death displayed in its own mausoleum.

Each of the four segments begins as an example of direct, unmediated, authorial discourse, aimed exclusively at its referential object, or as the objectified discourse of the characters. As it turns out, both of these forms of discourse echo someone else's words inside the cinematic text. In the first part, charting the operation, Amvrosii realizes that the whole project he undertook has nothing to do with his wish to save his wife, but is actually Aleksei's project to kill both him and his wife. In the newsreels the filmmaker turns out to be the creator of the presumably omnipotent voice-over. In the section about Vera and Evdokim, Stalin interferes to show who is the actual master of the narrative. And in the last segment of the film, each character echoes someone else: Aleksei echoes Stalin, German writers echo

Aleksei, Dolores echoes Aleksei, and Elizaveta echoes both the writers and Aleksei. Nobody's discourse is authentic; instead, each is a refraction of the master-voice that hovers over its bodies-subjects.

The protagonist is this master-voice's guinea-pig, on whom it tests the power of its discourse. Everything that Evdokim does, sees, or says belongs to the makers of the power discourse, whether they be film-maker, sculptress, Aleksei, or the major scientist and artist, comrade Stalin. This is the major subversive device that the implied author uses to expose the artifice of the Soviet master-voice. It lays bare the site of discourse production and shows that the protagonist, with whom the spectator usually identifies as the central consciousness of the film, is dispossessed within the narrative of any discursive power.¹⁴ The same dispossession comes to everyone—Vera, Amvrosii, Maria—who tries to deceive this voice of power. After focusing on the site of the master-voice's production, the narrative shifts into the final part, in which the kinetic energy of the human body reaches point zero in the pose that is most inspiring for Stalinist discourse.

The creators of Evdokim, for example, die after the successful completion of the operation. However, before joining the museum of life they pass through the narrative pattern described above. The film begins with a discussion of the operation, the goal of which, as Aleksei tells Amvrosii, is to create a new man out of a woman. In effect, this operation becomes the "Great Leap Forward," enacting the ritual that underlies all Soviet novels and films—the passage from the stage of individual spontaneity into collective consciousness. The leap ensures the transition from the elemental "natural" feminine condition into what Cixous and Clément call the masculine realm of History, Art, Mind, and Action (64).

The central signifier of this segment is Evdokiia's body, which undergoes multiple inversions. First, it goes through a forced transformation into a male form. The artificial womb into which she (now he) is placed after the operation evokes both a rocket and a phallus in an erect position. These inversions serve as foreshadowing devices anticipating the inversion of the ultimate goal of the operation: the birth of a new Soviet man turns out to be a death trap for his creators.

Amvrosii overhears the whisper of power discourse—Aleksei dictates to his secretary the article about the conspiracy of doctors who decided to confuse the clear-cut gender division of Soviet society—and understands the larger meaning of what he (Amvrosii) has been doing and saying. This unveiling of Amvrosii's discursive dispossession leaves him with two choices: either to commit suicide or to let himself be butchered by the silent agents of the NKVD. In the latter case he would move into that niche of the Stalinist museum devoted to anti-socialist demons and mad scientists; in the

former—he turns into an obituary in *Pravda* (*Truth*), with a gravestone at the cemetery of revolutionary martyrs and heroes. The creation of a new man is accompanied by three corpses: the two key figures responsible for the operation—Amvrosii and his wife Maria—and Evdokiia Kuznetsova. For the first time, bodies in the narrative reach the zero point of their kinetic energy and are installed into the museum of Stalinist sculpture in one of its gardens—the cemetery.

This segment of creation is followed by two newsreels in which the master-plot of the Soviet novel is reenacted in its most explicit form.¹⁵ In the first newsreel, the positive hero acquires a new consciousness in the course of constructing the Moscow metro. His major obstacle is, unsurprisingly, the underground waters, a symbol of elemental nature and “femininity,” as opposed to civilization. He and his friends tame the fluids and overfulfill the plan, finishing the construction of “the most beautiful metro in the world” two days ahead of schedule. In the second newsreel, Evdokim and Elizaveta, the bride Stalin has chosen for him, create a new family with a child conceived outside of Elizaveta’s uterus. This procreation is made possible by the death and destruction of the Spanish Civil War, from the bloody foam of which Dolores comes to her new parents.

Both newsreels are interrupted to show the site of their production. In the first, the film-maker and the sculptress stop to discuss Evdokim’s and Elizaveta’s lives, the poses of their body. The epic dimension of the newsreel narratives is deconstructed by the focus on their artificiality. In the second newsreel, the authenticity and authority of the discourse is again challenged by the interpolating shots of the sculptress and the film-maker, who manipulate the supposedly authentic images in order to create both the story about the new Soviet people and their new steel bodies. The visual narrative stops, shifts back and forth, or freezes according to the artists’ whims.

The display of the production site is followed by images of static bodies. In the first newsreel, the film-maker freezes the frame with Elizaveta. Then both characters freeze on the stage in a long kiss. Finally, the filmmaker stops the reel with Evdokim and Elizaveta in the frozen frame and says: “How about the title ‘Transforming Life into a Fairy Tale’?” The Stalinist garden/museum has received another sculpture to display “Stakhanovites in Love.”¹⁶

The second newsreel focuses on the construction of the sculpture *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*. The new Soviet family is solidified by the double-figured sculpture. Evdokim and Elizaveta acquire a new common body—they are transformed from flesh-and-blood human beings into a larger-than-life statue made of stainless steel.¹⁷ Within the second newsreel this evolution is depicted as the gradual immobilization of Evdokim’s and

Elizaveta's bodies in the process of their aesthetization. In the newsreel clip, Elizaveta invites Evdokim to dance and, after Stalin's approval, he starts to waltz with her. The motion of the bodies becomes patterned, hence less spontaneous. As Sally Peters notes about dancers: "[They] approximate living pieces of sculpture" (151). The sculptress Mukhina, who watches this newsreel on the moviola, asks its director to freeze the frame when she finally finds the inspiring shot. The motion picture turns into a still. The following segment shows the series of transformations distancing life from its various imitations: the still becomes a sculpture, and the sculpture in turn becomes a gigantic epic figure, as workers assemble the 24-meter stainless steel replica of the prototype created by Mukhina.

The stasis of the gigantic sculpture symbolically alludes to the movement forward and upward toward the ultimate goal of communist utopia. The living, moving bodies of Evdokim and Elizaveta have been replaced by artistic representations, metaphorically anticipating the Great Future. The war on living human bodies is on the way to ultimate success. In the last long shot of the newsreel, the spectator simultaneously sees two sculptures of two families—the family with its new child that has been saved from the horrors of war¹⁸ and Mukhina's statue. The bodies of the characters exist hereafter both in the present of the narrative and in a fantastic time—in the museum of Communist Eden, which is inhabited by colossi made of stainless steel and stone.

The narrative segment about Evdokim's love for Vera tests the power of Stalinist discourse over their bodies. Evdokim, who meets Vera again by chance, decides to change his existence and create his own paradise for two, an alternative to the paradise of sculptures and museums. This alternative paradise motif is constructed around the dream images of the field of daisies in Evdokim's mind and a painting in Vera's apartment of a mountain wilderness. It represents one more imaginary Garden of Eden to which, Evdokim promises Vera, they will go the next morning.

The scene of their love-making becomes the real trial for the discourse of power. When Evdokim has sex with Vera, he is twice entrapped in Stalinist discourse: first, his penis is literally given to him by the power against which he rebels and, second, his discourse, i.e., his phallus, reiterates his former husband's words simply by repeating Stalin's slogans of the time: "We'll plow the tundra. Plant flowers and orchards." This discourse deprives Evdokim of the paradise he dreams about, and forcibly returns him to the world of the museum: Vera is shot. When he continues to resist, he is taken to Stalin, where he finally sees his ultimate creator—"the engineer of

human souls" who screwed him up to screw him together both as a social and biological entity: his words, his appearance, the story of his life.

In Stalin's office, Evdokim's body decelerates again to the point of stasis. The first sculptural composition into which his body is incorporated may be called "The Guard of the Discourse with his Dog,"¹⁹ and in the second it becomes a mummy for a mausoleum. The border-guard or sentinel with a guard dog is one of the fundamental visual and verbal signifiers of the Soviet lexicon of power. In the film, the image of "man's best friend" together with a guard appears three times. First, an NKVD guard with a German shepherd is seen in the background when Aleksei presents Evdokim with a car. Second, when the child Dolores²⁰ plays a game with Evdokim, enacting a scenario based on the Stalinist spy-film, she plays the border guard and Evdokim plays his dog, Dzhul'bars. Dolores reproaches Evdokim for not sounding like a real, faithful dog: "Make it sound real."²¹

The third time the image of a guard with his dog appears in the film is in Stalin's office. After Stalin explains to Evdokim who has created him, both men are petrified into a living sculpture: Stalin as the guard of the discourse and Evdokim on all fours as his speechless friend, who understands everything but cannot speak.²² When Evdokim loses control after this shot and attacks Stalin, Evdokim's "rabies" are cured with a bullet, and he joins the museum of Stalinist sculptures now as the living dead—the immobile and speechless display in his own museum (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The Living Dead. *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1995): 53.

The transition to the last narrative part—Evdokim's m(a)us(ol)eum—is the most striking ironic inversion of the Stalinist promise of a garden. The protagonist's attempt to kill Stalin is reiterated in the painting hanging in the museum that depicts Evdokim's attempt to protect the Great Leader by covering him with his own body. In this image, the production site of the discourse is co-present with the body it controls. Aleksei works as a guide at the museum, while Elizaveta writes books that her husband supposedly transmits to her through impulses of his paralyzed hand. In this final museum all elements of the narrative pattern coexist simultaneously: the production site of discourse and its object of control—Evdokim's body is both living and static.

This is the body that the power discourse was seeking throughout the film. Unlike Evdokim's mobile body, it cannot move or escape control. The imitation of life and life itself collapse into the living dead displayed in the museum. Aleksei calls this condition "immortality." The only escape from the omnipotence of this discourse is the moment when the discourse itself stutters in one of its numerous inversions and kills Evdokim. Evdokim's daughter, dressed as a boy, plays with a pistol and shoots her father. The smile on the face of the corpse signals relief at the release from the power of the museum: the body attains death, the only possible paradise according to the film.²³

On the level of *mise-en-scène*, the narrative structure of the film—in its inversion of the Stalinist garden into a museum—relies on the depiction of human bodies as its central signifiers. They are the major objects of discursive aggression. When bodies become immobilized by Stalinist narratives, they join the museum as displays. The ways in which bodies are immobilized vary. They may be killed, as in the introductory story of genesis or in the segment devoted to the love of Vera and Evdokim. Another way to achieve stasis is through the body's aestheticization. Every newsreel is interrupted by stills. Indeed, the statue of the *Worker and the Collective Farm Woman* is created on the basis of a still from a newsreel. Finally, as suggested earlier, the most harmonious form of discursive control over the body in the film is its metamorphosis into a living corpse that cannot move or speak, does not decompose, and can even be utilized as a dildo. If one looks for a happy ending in *Hammer and Sickle*, Elizaveta's orgasm on top of Evdokim's paralyzed body provides an ideal closure.

Apart from the two ultimate incarnations of Soviet Power in the film—Stalin and Aleksei—the monumental family of Evdokim and Elizaveta is surrounded mostly by female characters: the film-maker, the sculptress, Maria (who oversees the operation), and Vera (Evdokim's nurse and lover). With the exception of Vera, all these characters represent, in a weaker form,

the same seeming gender inversion that the protagonist himself undergoes. Their pseudo-masculinity is emphasized by their semi-military or monastic clothing and their speech, full of imperatives. This is especially clear in the segment where the sculptress is looking for the shot that will inspire her to create the sculpture. She speaks almost exclusively in imperatives: "Forward! Back! Stop!" As far as clothing is concerned, especially striking is Dolores' boy-scout-type uniform at the conclusion of the film. With her short army-style haircut, her way of walking and talking, and the military game she plays, she projects the masculine.²⁴ The film presents the Stalinist myth of gender equality as the transformation of women into men, who will then eventually become sculptures or, even better, living sculptures, like Evdokim. The gender of Stalinist discourse only seems to be masculine; it is asexually sculptural.

As suggested earlier, the ultimate test for the endurance of Stalinist discourse is the moment when its conscious sculptural bodies are engaged in sex. Each of the four major narrative parts of the film includes a segment in which bodies are engaged either in sex or in sublimated variants of sex, such as kissing on stage or dancing in the newsreel segments.²⁵ The major characteristic of sexual scenes in the film is the inauthenticity of the experience. The sex performed by characters in the film reminds them of their lived experiences but emphasizes the impossibility of any return to life. Even when Evdokim seems to bond with a person he loves, when he has sex with Vera, he is entrapped in the discourse of the other. It envelops his most intimate experiences like a Soviet condom, crudely fashioned out of hard rubber.²⁶ The discrepancy between the interaction of bodies and the recollections of the characters is represented through the anguish usually felt by one of the partners during the sex act. In the first such scene, Vera cries and feels physical pain, while Evdokim learns how to use his newly acquired organ. At the conclusion, Evdokim cries while Elizaveta enjoys raping his motionless body. The promise of infinite and shared pleasure in sex exists only in the newsreels, the discourse of which is manipulated by its producers right in front of the spectator.²⁷

Finally, sex in this film does not provide for procreation, although abundance and fertility are the major attributes of the promised garden. When Evdokim steps outside of his apartment-museum, he repeatedly runs into people who talk about expecting a baby. His gender, as the new Soviet man, however, retains the firmness of sculpture, with the potency of limp-metal. He cannot produce anything but death.

Apart from the bodies themselves, the key element of the *mise-en-scène* that helps to invert the promise of the garden is the lighting. In the first part of the film, the bars on the windows around the operating room and on the

doors cast grid-like shadows on the living bodies. These shadows are an evocative reminder of the scholarly nature of the project, à la Muybridge's grids in the background of his bodies, and of the nature of the institution where the project is undertaken—a monastery converted into a concentration camp.

Later in the film, lighting is used to show how the human body gradually petrifies. The small segment dividing two newsreels ends with a close-up of Evdokim, in which his head is sculpted by sidelighting. His nose, cheekbones, and lips cast sharp attached shadows and create a living sculpture. Elizaveta asks this half-person/half-sculpture: "The North Star. Do you think it's habitable?", but the sculpture does not know. The work of light anticipates Mukhina's work on the sculpture in the next segment.

In the last segment, in which Evdokim's body is displayed in the central room of the museum, shadows almost disappear. A blinding white light emanates from the window and through the hammer and sickle cutout of the headboard of Evdokim's bed. Red colors project forward within the frame, while the white hammer and sickle, Evdokim's head, and the window behind him recede, creating a color metaphorizing emptiness, non-existence. Death in this context becomes a return to one of the stages in the life cycle.

If the visible world and especially its bodies represent the object over which Stalinist discourse exerts its power, then sound, especially in its disembodied form—voice-over—stands for the omnipotence of Stalinist discourse. Sound in *Hammer and Sickle* is also the most ambiguous medium. On the one hand, the male voice-over is the major *modus vivendi* of the Stalinist master-voice, which easily transforms any body into a motionless replica. On the other hand, this omnipotent master-voice is subverted when the implied author presents it as an artifice in the segments unveiling the production site of Stalinist discourse.

The male voice-over is the major, most consistent controlling device of bodies in the film. In the newsreel about the Stakhanovites' ball both Evdokim and Elizaveta apparently speak with Stalin, but their words cannot be heard because the voice-over conveys everything one is supposed to know about "the best people." Later in this newsreel, the narrative is accompanied by solemn, extra-diegetic music that transforms the assembling of the statue into an epic ritual of ultimate creation. The voice-over is the master-voice that has unassailable authority over the narrative, temporal, spatial, visual, and acoustic aspects of the film.

The master-voice is not necessarily disembodied. Apart from Stalin and Aleksei, it is embodied mostly by women—the film-maker, the sculptress, Elizaveta, Dolores—or, as in Evdokim's case, by a man produced out of a woman. Their speech is aggressive in both its intonation and its use of

imperatives. The master-voice, speaking through their lips, makes these women sound more masculine. There is little difference between the epic tone of the *novina* about Marshal Voroshilov²⁸ that Elizaveta recites for her daughter and the epic tone of the voice-over in the newsreels. The filmmaker actually gives the newsreels a working title: *A Fairy Tale Comes True*. Female characters become the puppets of the semi-military, epic, patriarchal discourse of power. Evdokim's daughter Dolores, for example, in the last part of the film, repeats the museum lecture about how Evdokim in his fictional childhood protected *kolkhoz* tractors against the enemies who tried to destroy them. In this respect, Evdokim's maleness is also inauthentic. He echoes the master-voice but never says anything that belongs to him. As already noted above, even in the most intimate moments during sex with Vera, Evdokim reproduces only the words of others: of his former lover and of the Stalinist slogans promising abundance and fertility in an Earthly paradise. Even when the protagonist rebels against the master-voice, he is by no means free of it. He still sounds like a poor echo of Stalin's words. Stalin asserts: "You will live as I want you to live," and Evdokim replies: "I will live the way I live." The master-voice resounds incorrectly in Evdokim's speech but instantly remedies this failure by making Evdokim speechless. His wife, who in turn is also a puppet of the master-voice, now does the speaking for the protagonist. The irony of this situation is emphasized by the fact that the speechless Evdokim becomes a writer.

The power that Stalinist discourse, especially as a voice-over, exerts over the diegesis of the film is infinite. At the same time, precisely on the level of sound, the implied author subverts the Stalinist master-voice's omnipotence. First, the implied author undercuts the God-like, booming voice-over by displaying how it is constructed. The film-maker and the sculptress rewind the tape and the omnipotent voice-over becomes a distorted, meaningless noise. Second, when Aleksei reads the lecture in the last part of the film, he makes no attempt to repeat the solemn tone of the newsreels' voice-over. His tone is indifferent, bored, and impotent. And third, in the scene in Stalin's office, the master-voice is subverted at the moment of its triumph over the body of Evdokim. The authoritative, male voice-over, the major controlling device of Stalinist discourse, becomes materialized as the body of the major Soviet artist, comrade Stalin. Keeping in mind that the acquisition of the phallus is the moment of the initial creation of a new man in the film, it would be appropriate to compare "the inadequacy of all penises" to the phallus (Lehman 10) with the inadequacy of the aging Stalin to the omnipotence of the voice-over. This is the moment when the discourse of power undergoes a major ironic subversion. The demiurgical voice-over merges with the mortal, aging, and impotent body of the dictator. This embodied master-voice,

like its disembodied form, still has the power to petrify any living body. The only thing it is impotent to do is to create life, to "turn the tundra into a garden."

Because the garden cannot be created, it is replaced by its imitation, the museum. On the level of the narrative structure of the film, this means that the ritual of transition from the state of spontaneity into the state of consciousness—so central in Stalinist texts—is redefined by the implied author as the transition from life into death. On the level of visual devices in the film, it means the structuring of narrative segments around the gradual immobilization of the characters' bodies. Finally, on the level of sound, it means the reduction of the polyphony of social and individual voices to the monologized master-voice, which hovers over the eternal sculptures in the museum of paradise.

The implied author, in turn, lays bare the artificiality of the master-voice, which is as divine as any other sound track in any film. The interaction between the master-voice of Stalinist culture with the voice of the implied author makes the discourse of the film double-voiced, i.e., "discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse" (Bakhtin 1984, 199). By recreating the whole set of devices—narrative, visual, acoustic—characteristic of Stalinist culture and by emphasizing that culture's inauthenticity, the implied author "stylizes" and distances Stalinism. As Bakhtin notes, "the stylizer uses another's discourse precisely as other, and in so doing casts a . . . shadow of objectification over it . . . the author does not penetrate inside his speech—the author observes it from without" (1984, 189—190).

At the end of the film, the master-voice speaking through Elizaveta's lips promises that the forthcoming book by Evdokim Kuznetsov will be about love. That is also how Sergei Livnev described the main theme of his film in an interview with Nancy Condee. The question is—what kind of love is possible in a world where the promise of a garden is replaced by a museum with a living mummy at its center? Fortunately for the puzzled spectator, the answer is provided in the last love-making scene. This form of love is necrophilia. The film not only provides a stylized meta-commentary on Stalinist culture, in which the promised garden turns out to be an infertile desert of cemeteries, camps, and mausoleums, but also comments on the cultural landscape of the post-Soviet Russian culture industry, which attempts to procreate on those Victoria's secrets hidden in the stainless steel bodies of Stalinist discourse.

Notes

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² Andrei Makarevich is a Russian rock musician who in 1968 founded Time Machine, the most popular rock group in Russia during the 1970s. As Padunov notes in his course on Russian street culture, Time Machine was at the center of the first rock cult in the Soviet Union: "*Machinomania*."

³ In Russian, both orchard and garden are articulated by the same word *сад* (pl. *сады*).

⁴ Baudrillard defines simulacrum as

the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—it is the map that engenders the territory, as if we were to revive (Borges') fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of Empire, but our own. The desert of real itself. (2)

⁵ In his article "Chekhov/Sokurov: Repetition and Recollection" Iampolskii discusses the issue of difference in return and its relation to the concept of the simulacrum:

The return thus presupposes a kind of theatrical performance of one's past self, trying on one's own forgotten skin. This search for the lost self produces the previous self as different . . . This difference is closely connected to the problematic of simulacrum, defined in contemporary philosophy as a false copy introducing difference and thus destroying perfect platonic similarity of the copy and its model. Deleuze claimed that the eternal recurrence being profoundly anti-platonic in its essence,

doesn't presuppose the Same and the Similar; on the contrary, it constitutes the only Same—the same which differs, and the only resemblance of the unmatched . . . it is a power to affirm divergence and decentering (Deleuze 265).

In other words, the simulacrum is always a bad actor, an actor who can't imitate perfectly. (53)

⁶ Aleksei's pince-nez recalls Stalin's notorious Chief of Secret Police (NKVD), Lavrentii Beria (Figure 2).



Figure 2. "L. P. Beria." *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. (Moskva, BSE, 1951). Insert between pages 22 and 23.

After Stalin's death, his retinue arrested and shot Beria as a British spy, a standard excuse Beria himself used hundreds of times to get rid of his political rivals. All subscribers to the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* received by mail a note to cut out both the entry and the portrait of Lavrentii Beria and the new pages with pictures of the Bering Sea to replace those expunged. The sea instead of Beria is a really symbolic gesture within the context of Thaw culture. It is obsessed with water and melting ice. For example, in *Clear Sky*, directed by Grigorii Chukhrai (1961),⁴ the death of Stalin is associated with melting and breaking ice.

⁷ Rimmon Kenan defines the implied author as "the governing consciousness of the work as a whole, the source of the norms embodied in the work" (86). Kenan also points out that the implied author is "a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text" (87).

⁸ At a round table devoted to *Hammer and Sickle* at the Annual Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) in Washington D.C., on October 27, 1995, Nancy Condee suggest-

ed that "comic inversion" is the structural *dominanta* of the film. I believe that the inversion has an ironic rather than comic function in the film.

⁹ The term *dominanta* was introduced by Russian formalist and structuralist literary critics Iurii Tynianov and Roman Jakobson. It means the group of structural elements in a text or cultural system that are foregrounded in that particular system and that deform the rest of the system. The change of *dominanta*, according to Tynianov and Jakobson, is the major condition of literary evolution (Tynianov 450, Jakobson 82—90).

¹⁰ Chronotope. Literally, "time-space." A unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented. The distinctiveness of this concept as opposed of most other uses of time and space in literary analysis lies in the fact that neither category is privileged; they are utterly interdependent. The chronotope is an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring. (Bakhtin 1981, 425—426)

¹¹ Condee noted that the setting where the operation takes place replicates the setting of *Frankenstein* or *The Bride of Frankenstein*. In the discussion of the film at the 1995 AAASS Convention, Susan Larsen also alluded to the intertextual links between *Frankenstein* and *Hammer and Sickle*.

The inversion of cinematic space in *Hammer and Sickle* can also be traced on an intertextual level. The motif of a monastery turned into a concentration camp has been used in the perestroika documentary *Solovetskii Power*, directed by Marina Goldovskaia, who happens to be Sergei Livnev's mother. This film is about one of the first and most notorious GULag camps organized in the closed monastery at Solovetskii Islands. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago* provides a brief history of this death camp (463—465). If the visual images of a camp in a monastery were used by a perestroika cultural producer as a documentary fact, the post-Soviet film director uses images of a similar space as part of a fictional narrative.

¹² In the film the sculpture of Evdokim and Elizaveta is "played" by Vera Mukhina's famous monument *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*. Vera Mukhina was a Soviet sculptress whose most famous work is "the 24-meter-high sculpture *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*, which topped the Soviet pavilion at the Paris World's Fair of 1937" (Sokolova 214). The entry in the *Soviet Encyclopedia* points out that this sculpture "became not only an epic work of socialist realism but also a world-famous symbol of the new society on the road to communism" (Sokolova 214).

The Soviet and Nazi pavilions were placed opposite one another at the World's Fair. Igor Golomshtok notes that "the organizers of the International Exhibition were probably hoping to underline the contrast between the two warring systems. The actual effect however was the opposite . . . While drawing attention to such shared characteristics as brutality, pretentiousness, and pomposity, serious critics defined the style of the two pavilions as neoclassical" (135) (Figure 3).

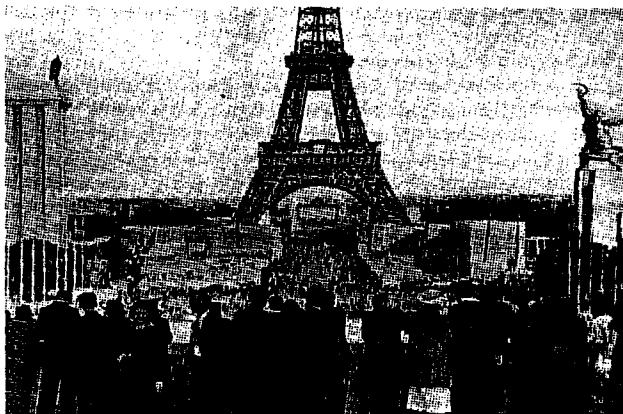


Figure 3. "Panorama of the Champs de Mars (Soviet and German Pavilions)" (Golomshtok 134).

¹³ In twentieth century Russian visual culture the tradition of portraits of Lenin—or Stalin—at the table in his office is framed by the tradition of the portraits of Tolstoi and Solzhenitsyn in similar poses and settings. The producers of the word-truth are canonized through visual icons (Figure 4).



Figure 4.1. "Vladimir Lenin, 1921." *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Vol. 24. (Moskva, BSE, 1953). Insert between pages 508 and 509.



Figure 4.2. "Solzhenitsyn on board a ship, 1957." (Nivat 78)

¹⁴ Kaja Silverman, following Daniel Dayan, observes that "the absence of the site of production is potentially disruptive for the viewer's pleasure . . . the discovery of a field beyond his or her gaze is experienced as 'dispossession'—as a diminution or loss of visual potency" (11). To cover this exclusion of the viewer from the site of cinematic production, notes Silverman, the cinematic text includes a character "from whom the film's sounds and images seem to flow, a character equipped with authoritative vision, hearing, and speech" (13).

¹⁵ According to Clark, the most common type of Stalinist novel "by far is the production novel (the novel about how the plan was fulfilled or the project was constructed)" (256). The task fulfillment usually is paralleled by the positive hero's maturation (the transition from the state of spontaneity into the state of consciousness).

¹⁶ The stakhanovite movement was a state campaign to increase labor productivity. It began in the early 1930s and reached its apogee in 1935, "when Aleksei Stakhanov, a coal miner in the Donbass, hewed 102 tonnes of coal in a single shift, instead of the seven tonnes prescribed" (Hosking 158). Similar miraculous feats were accomplished in other industries. Newspapers began to call these exemplary workers stakhanovites. Geoffrey Hosking notes that "stakhanovites became the cream of the new [workers' aristocracy], receiving huge pay raises and the pick of the few new apartments being built for the workers" (158).

¹⁷ Both characters, Evdokim and Elizaveta, are split between their two bodies. Their fragile human bodies stand for their present, and their stainless steel bodies for their "bright future." The two bodies of the protagonists symbolize the present's anticipation of the "bright future" as the major temporal characteristic of Soviet culture.

Clark discusses the chronotope of a Socialist Realist novel in terms of sudden shifts between realistic discourse and mythic or utopian discourse. She grounds her argument on Bakhtin's essay "Epic and Novel." Bakhtin maintains that there are two "diametrically opposed senses of reality": the completed, perfect epic vision of "what ought to be" vs. an imperfect and incomplete novelistic world of "what is" (Bakhtin 1975, 463). Clark notes that

these ideas of Bakhtin's can provide us with a theoretical framework for diagnosing the Soviet novel's modal schizophrenia. Its juxtaposition of "what is" and "what ought to be" represents the combining of two diametrically opposed time-value systems. This, Bakhtin's view, is impossible, because to create any kind of bridge over the gulf between the epic past [or future] and the present is to destroy the essence of the genre. (39)

¹⁸ In the last shot of the second newsreel Evdokim's figure with a child is reminiscent of Vutetich's sculpture of the Soviet Soldier in Berlin (Figure 5).

¹⁹ The first part of the episode in Stalin's office ends with a shot in which Evdokim is on all fours and Stalin stands next to him, like a border-guard. Both border-guards and their dogs were heroes of Stalinist culture in the late thirties. State financed films, books, paintings, and sculptures (Figure 6) epitomized these important signifiers of Stalinism. Dzhul'bars, mentioned in Livnev's film, is actually a character from a feature film about a smart dog (a totalitarian Lassie), which helped Soviet border-guards to catch dangerous spies (*Dzhul'bars* [1936]).



Figure 5. Vutetich, E. V. "The Soviet Soldier-Victor." *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Vol. 9. (Moskva, BSE, 1951). Insert between pages 408 and 409.



Figure 6. "A. N. Orlov. *The Border-Guard and Collective Farm Woman*. *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. (Moskva, BSE, 1950). Insert between pages 516 and 517.



Figure 7. "Dolores Ibaruri." *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Vol. 17. (Moskva, BSE, 1950) 249.

²⁰ Dolores is an ideologically-loaded name in Soviet discourse. A Spanish communist, Dolores "La Pasionaria" Ibaruri, took part in the Spanish Civil War, then emigrated to the Soviet Union, where she spent most of her life. She returned to Spain after the fall of Franco's regime. The Soviet mass media have used her photos as icons of the invincible spirit of both Spanish communists and the Communist movement in general. She lived a very long life and in her last years served Soviet propaganda as a kind of living proof of the immortality of Communist ideals. It is also worth noting that her speeches were incomprehensible to Soviets because they were in Spanish. However, the meaning of her words played a secondary role in the newsreels about her speeches for primacy was given to the frenzied emotions with which she charged her words (Figure 7).

²¹ "Make it sound real" in Russian is "*He tak. Надо преданно.*" In Soviet Russian "*преданность*" (faithfulness) also carries ideological connotations. This word was used in such clichés as "to be faithful to the cause of Lenin and Stalin," etc.

²² A dog listening to its master's voice is the

hallmark of the RCA label, which in turn is based on Francis Barraud's painting *His Master's Voice* (1895) (Morgan 163). In Stalin's time this label underwent an unusual transformation. One of Stalin's favorite musicians, a jazzman Leonid Utesov, created a visual pun out of the famous RCA label. The jazzman is man's best friend and the master of his voice is obviously, *the Master* (*Хозяин*) Stalin (Figure 8).



Figure 8. "Leonid Utesov spoofs 'His Master's Voice,' but with an ear cocked to his other masters" (Starr insert between pp. 192—193).

23 Iampolskii, quoting Heidegger and Certeau, discusses the relationship of paradise and discourse.

One of the main models of any garden is, of course, paradise. Paradise presumes the stage of no experience, where fusion between the human being and nature is so absolute, that language itself is not necessary. Michel de Certeau in his *La Fable Mystique* has noted that the condition for any discourse is the exile from paradise. . . . So a return to paradise is a return to a pre-verbal stage, where, according to Heidegger, a primary, a pre-verbal experience is located. A garden of delight—*hortus voluptatis*—is probably such a garden where the stage of exile from paradise is overcome. The feeling of delight in such a garden is due to the return to the pre-discursive, to the elimination of the gap between discourse and nature. (57)

24 It is worth noting that some of the spectators who watched this film with me left the preview room convinced that the "final girl" (Clover 35—41) was actually a boy.

25 See Linda Williams' discussion of the parallelism between sex scenes in pornographic films and production numbers in musicals (160—161).

26 Soviet-made condoms (popularly called "galoshes") became the laughing stock of the post-Soviet mass media because of the crude, automotive tire-like quality of the rubber that was used in their production.

27 Similar to the gap between what characters feel and what they say, there is an unbridgable gap exists between the bodies with whom characters have sex and those with whom they are in love. Vera sleeps with Evdokim but loves her executed husband. She keeps his picture and embraces it like a real person (see Bazin's discussion of the ontology of the photographic image [9—16]). Evdokim, while having sex as a male, cannot escape his memories of making love in his previous female life. Finally, Elizaveta gets her ultimate pleasure in having sex with Evdokim's body, while this body's memories are with Vera.

28 Frank J. Miller in his book *Folklore for Stalin* writes as follows about Stalinist "novinas"—pseudo-folkloric texts sponsored by the state to glorify itself and its epic heroes, leaders, and achievements:

Folklorists adopted the term *noviny* (singular *novina*)—coined by the most celebrated performer Marfa Kriukova to distinguish her new songs from her old songs (*stariny*—a medieval oral epic)—to signify the new poetic works composed by narrators of *byliny* and performers of laments. (12)

The notion of *novina* as a form of Stalinist master-voice was suggested to me by Padunov, who also discussed its use in *Hammer and Sickle* at the 1995 AAASS Convention.

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