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**Americanization and the Role of Cinema in Shaping Early Soviet Culture**

A thesis presented

by

Marina L. Levitina

to

The Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies

in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
Russian and Slavonic Studies

University of Dublin Trinity College

2011

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A doctoral thesis by Marina L. Levitina

## SUMMARY

This dissertation argues that the Americanization discourse of the 1920s was one of the key sources for the project of creating the New Soviet Man and Woman, and that Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s played an important role in this project, by creating a new type of Soviet cinematic hero(ine) and promoting the positive human traits that were perceived as innately American – such as energy, optimism, physical fitness, efficiency, technological skills, resourcefulness, and the frontiersman's self-reliance, – even if not directly acknowledging the connection with American culture. This study argues that, in fashioning the new Soviet cinematic hero(ine), Soviet filmmakers in the 1920s and 1930s were in part inspired by popular American film stars in films imported into Soviet Russia in the 1920s; by translated works of American frontier and adventure fiction; and by the trope 'Russian American' that was used in the Soviet press of the 1920s to describe the new type of efficient worker, and that stemmed from the Stalinist formula encouraging Soviet workers to combine 'American efficiency' with 'Russian revolutionary sweep'. In the 1930s, the 'American' trope moved onto a subtextual level, but nevertheless played an important role in the fashioning of the cinematic Socialist Realist positive hero(ine).

This study examines the effect of cinema on the formation of Soviet culture using methodologies and theoretical models derived from film, literary and comparative cultural studies. The insights of Mikhail Bakhtin and Iurii Lotman on the dialogic nature of culture play an important role in my study. This dissertation contextualizes the Soviet spectators' reception of American films historically, using

articles published in Soviet cinema magazines of the time, Soviet audience studies and questionnaires, and memoirs of Soviet filmmakers, who, on one level, were also spectators.

In Chapter 1, I examine the Russian fascination with early American adventure serials and the films of Douglas Fairbanks, and focus on the impact of the dynamic stars of American cinema on the formation of the new Soviet cinematic hero.

In Chapter 2, I analyze Soviet cinematic portrayals, in the 1920s, of the new hero who acquires 'American' qualities, alongside representations of contemporary American citizens and heroes of American literature in Soviet film adaptations.

Chapter 3 focuses on the role of American cinema and the Americanization discourse of the 1920s in the shaping of the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman, while Chapter 4 looks at Stalinist cinema of the 1930s and early 1940s, demonstrating how the cinematic New Soviet Man can be seen to possess 'American' traits such as optimism, athleticism, mastery over technology, and self-reliance.

Conclusions: This study argues that many new positive heroes and heroines in Soviet Socialist Realist films of the 1930s and early 1940s were a product of the Americanization discourse of the 1920s. Through endowing the new Soviet cinematic hero(ine) with 'American' traits, whether consciously or unconsciously, early Soviet filmmakers participated in constructing the new Soviet culture and the new Soviet identity. Both American and 'Americanized' Soviet cinema contributed to this project, placing 'Americanness', among other sources, at the root of the cinematically constructed 'Sovietness'.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**.....1
I. Sources and Models.....11
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II. Representations of American Characters in Soviet Films with Contemporary Themes.....153
III. Representations of American Characters in Soviet Film Adaptations of American Literature.....166
IV. Representations of 'Russian Americans' in '*Novyi Byt*' Films of the Late 1920s.....186

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**Appendix**.....359
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**Bibliography**.....375

# INTRODUCTION

'Эта рыжая шляпа ковбоя,
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Увлекают и нас за собою
По провалам и крутизнам.
[...]
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В беспощадном дыму погонь?'[1]

'Через США – к СССР!'[2]

In the first two decades after the Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik government initiated and enforced a vigorous, all-pervasive, and ruthless transformation of Russian culture. Walter Benjamin, who spent some time in Moscow in the late 1920s, captured the spirit of the times in the following lines:

> Each thought, each day, each life lies here as on a laboratory table. And as if it were a metal from which an unknown substance is by every means to be extracted, it must endure experimentation to the point of exhaustion. No organism, no organization can escape this process.[3]

One of the key goals of this transformation was to create a new kind of human being, the New Soviet Man and Woman. The Bolshevik regime attempted to drastically propel the 'backward' Russian populace of workers and peasants into modernity. Citizens of the future communist society were to become radically different from their pre-revolutionary predecessors. Russian culture was to be replaced by new, Soviet culture.

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A country that provided great inspiration to the young Soviet state was America. By the 1920s, America had become the modernist nation par excellence. While European countries were experiencing economic devastation in the wake of the first World War, unprecedented technological developments were happening in the United States, both in the fields of industry and mass production, and in its popular culture, including cinema. For Soviet Russia in the 1920s, America became a kind of 'measuring stick' of success[4] on the road toward the new, technologically advanced and efficient Soviet society. While the communist future was not yet attained and the country was undergoing a process of massive transformation, the adjective 'American' acquired a new meaning: it became a metaphor for excellence[5] and led to the appearance and wide use of the discursive practice of Americanization, both in the sphere of technology and working methods, and among the avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and Soviet officials who were concerned with transforming the human nature of Soviet citizens.

Russian fascination with America dated back to the eighteenth century. According to early Russian eyewitness accounts of the United States, the main objects of that fascination before the Bolshevik revolution were American democracy and freedom.[6] By the early twentieth century, the appeal of democracy was gradually replaced by admiration of American technology and, later, mass entertainment.

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Additionally, Russians admired certain positive traits of character that were seen to be innately American.

The account of life in the United States by the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, entitled *Democracy in America* (1835) was very influential in creating an image of that country in imaginations abroad, including in Russia. Its first Russian translation was not published until 1860,[7] although the censors could not prevent the circulation of the original French edition among the liberal intellectuals.[8] Alexander Herzen read it in 1838.[9] Copies of the French original have been preserved in the personal libraries of Chaadaev and Pushkin, both of whom actively discussed the book in their correspondence.[10] Another Russian translation was published in Moscow in 1897, followed by a century-long interruption until its new publication in post-Soviet Russia in 1992.[11]

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citizens, Tocqueville wrote, 'Choose any American at random, and he should be a man of burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and, above all, an innovator.'[13] Such qualities were clearly seen by Tocqueville as very positive.

In the early twentieth century, there existed a certain perception in the Russian popular imagination of model American qualities, which included some of the same human traits that impressed Tocqueville. Among them were energy, optimism, resourcefulness, efficiency, technological skills, physical fitness, and the frontiersman's adventurous, pioneering spirit. Jeffrey Brooks notes that, while at the turn of the century pre-revolutionary intellectuals had looked to America mostly as an economic (if not political) model for Russia, popular journalists and authors of cheap fiction were more interested in American psychological qualities, including the notions of energy, efficiency, and self-improvement.[14] After 1917, these same traits were still praised, this time as among exemplary qualities that the citizens of the new Soviet state lacked and needed to acquire.

The general image of a positive American set of qualities was reinforced among the wider Russian population in the 1910s and 1920s by imported American films. Many of these films became hugely popular with Russian audiences, who soon fell in love with such American stars as Pearl White, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin.[15] The characters created by these stars were optimistic,

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[13] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. by J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 370.
[14] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 236.
[15] Ball points out that information about the American way of living was also coming to Russia and other European countries through letters from recent émigrés, especially the large numbers of Jewish émigrés who left Russia for America at the turn of the century due to the intensified pogroms. (Ball, *Imagining America,* p. 67.) Another factor in the snowballing of positive ideas about America among the Russian people was American governmental propaganda on Russian soil, often through films brought specifically for this purpose.

inventive, dynamic, and often successful, and that was how citizens of 'golden America' came to be viewed.

There were plenty of negative American personal qualities emphasized in the Soviet press and eye-witness accounts by travelers, such as lack of a subtle sense of humour, greed, and individualism (which had both positive and negative connotations, in Russian eyes), as well as negative descriptions of America's shortcomings, including racism, exploitation of the poor, and most importantly, its capitalist political system. Capitalism and racism were vehemently criticized in the early Soviet press and literature. However it was the positive human qualities, along with the image of America itself as a 'golden land' of freedom, opportunity, and technological excellence, that kept Russians captivated and personally inspired, largely thanks to the high popularity of imported American films, as well as American adventure literature.

The positive American qualities listed above were the ones that the Bolshevik officials wanted to instill into the Russian people, in an attempt to create a new kind of person, a Soviet citizen (*novyi chelovek novogo mira*). At a time of great economic hardship and major political changes, the young Soviet state needed inventive, optimistic, fit, and efficient citizens who would enthusiastically support the Revolution and help build the 'new world.'

The Bolshevik officials in the 1920s set America as an example to Soviet citizens for several reasons. First of all, America's industrial practices and techniques

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Secretary of the Interior Lane led an energetic 'Americanization' campaign in the early 1920s, at the time of the U.S. intervention in the Russian Civil War. The American film industry was addressed with a request of fifty-two 'Americanization' pictures per year, where there would 'run a golden thread of the American spirit through the web.' See Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960), p. 152.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**.....1
I. Sources and Models.....11
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**Appendix**.....359
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[12] Etkind, *Tolkovaniie puteshestvii,* p. 40.

citizens, Tocqueville wrote, 'Choose any American at random, and he should be a man of burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and, above all, an innovator.'[13] Such qualities were clearly seen by Tocqueville as very positive.

In the early twentieth century, there existed a certain perception in the Russian popular imagination of model American qualities, which included some of the same human traits that impressed Tocqueville. Among them were energy, optimism, resourcefulness, efficiency, technological skills, physical fitness, and the frontiersman's adventurous, pioneering spirit. Jeffrey Brooks notes that, while at the turn of the century pre-revolutionary intellectuals had looked to America mostly as an economic (if not political) model for Russia, popular journalists and authors of cheap fiction were more interested in American psychological qualities, including the notions of energy, efficiency, and self-improvement.[14] After 1917, these same traits were still praised, this time as among exemplary qualities that the citizens of the new Soviet state lacked and needed to acquire.

The general image of a positive American set of qualities was reinforced among the wider Russian population in the 1910s and 1920s by imported American films. Many of these films became hugely popular with Russian audiences, who soon fell in love with such American stars as Pearl White, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin.[15] The characters created by these stars were optimistic,

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[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. by J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 370.
[4] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 236.
[5] Ball points out that information about the American way of living was also coming to Russia and other European countries through letters from recent émigrés, especially the large numbers of Jewish émigrés who left Russia for America at the turn of the century due to the intensified pogroms. (Ball, *Imagining America*, p. 67.) Another factor in the snowballing of positive ideas about America among the Russian people was American governmental propaganda on Russian soil, often through films brought specifically for this purpose.

inventive, dynamic, and often successful, and that was how citizens of 'golden America' came to be viewed.

There were plenty of negative American personal qualities emphasized in the Soviet press and eye-witness accounts by travelers, such as lack of a subtle sense of humour, greed, and individualism (which had both positive and negative connotations, in Russian eyes), as well as negative descriptions of America's shortcomings, including racism, exploitation of the poor, and most importantly, its capitalist political system. Capitalism and racism were vehemently criticized in the early Soviet press and literature. However it was the positive human qualities, along with the image of America itself as a 'golden land' of freedom, opportunity, and technological excellence, that kept Russians captivated and personally inspired, largely thanks to the high popularity of imported American films, as well as American adventure literature.

The positive American qualities listed above were the ones that the Bolshevik officials wanted to instill into the Russian people, in an attempt to create a new kind of person, a Soviet citizen (*novyi chelovek novogo mira*). At a time of great economic hardship and major political changes, the young Soviet state needed inventive, optimistic, fit, and efficient citizens who would enthusiastically support the Revolution and help build the 'new world.'

The Bolshevik officials in the 1920s set America as an example to Soviet citizens for several reasons. First of all, America's industrial practices and techniques

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Secretary of the Interior Lane led an energetic 'Americanization' campaign in the early 1920s, at the time of the U.S. intervention in the Russian Civil War. The American film industry was addressed with a request of fifty-two 'Americanization' pictures per year, where there would 'run a golden thread of the American spirit through the web.' See Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960), p. 152.

were seen as far superior, and methods of efficient assembly-line mass production, founded by Henry Ford, led to the so-called Fordization of Soviet industry. America's system of labour efficiency and 'scientific management' pioneered by Frederick Winslow Taylor led to Bolshevik officials recognizing in Taylorism an inspiration for transforming the Soviet labour force. During the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was implemented in 1921 and lasted until 1928, American production strategies were used as an example to inspire Soviet workers and peasants to change their old methods of work to modern, efficient, and 'scientific' ones. According to Hans Rogger, it was the positive spirit of Americanism that the Soviet policy-makers were trying to impart to the tradition-bound Russian people in the 1920s, and this spirit of Americanism was used as part of the ideological justification for the new Bolshevik policies.[16]

The Central Institute of Labour, founded by Alexei Gastev, was an example of how much hope was placed in the idea of training the Soviet work force according to Taylorism.[17] Gastev expected the modernist, American-inspired machine culture to yield not just productivity, but also a sense of new belonging for the workers, who would thus contribute to the shaping of the new society. Such 'Soviet Americanism,' for Gastev, would result in superb scientific regulation of work and would turn Russia into a 'new, flowering America'.[18]

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[16] Hans Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 23.3 (1981), pp. 382-420 (p. 417).
[17] Ball, *Imagining America,* pp. 28-29.
[18] Alexei Gastev, *Poeziia rabochego udara* (Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel', 1964), 244.

In the Russian press of the 1920s, the widely used trope 'Russian Americans' signified Soviet citizens of a new kind.[19] These people possessed a number of highly valued qualities that were perceived as innately American. In that decade, people described in this way were seen as role models for other Soviet citizens. In fact, they were the predecessors of the 'extraordinary men and women' of the Stalinist thirties. In a 1924 *Pravda* article entitled 'Russkie Amerikantsy' a reporter wrote,

> What are the 'Americans'? They are the people who know how to work at such a speed and with such vigor and pressure as was unknown in 'Old Rus''[...]The 'Americans' are those who most of all know how to take things in hand.[20]

These positive images were contrasted against those of traditional Russian sloth.[21]

In another article with the same name, published in 1923 in *Rabochaia gazeta*, a journalist wrote,

> 'Americans' are those who think over a task carefully before beginning it. But having begun it, they work without doubt or hesitation, with unshakable faith in our creative powers; with a sober appreciation of these powers they see the job through to the end. [22]

In a speech, Karl Radek described the efficiency and energy of American famine-relief personnel working in Soviet Russia at the beginning of the 1920s as a model for the new generation of Soviet workers, whom he called new 'American Russians'. Radek voiced hopes for these 'American Russians' to be the future of Russia.[23] Brooks points out that in many press references to 'Russian Americans' in

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[19] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 241 and p. 247.
[20] Quoted in Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 242.
[21] Ibid.
[22] G. Rurskii, 'Russkie amerikantsy', *Rabochaia gazeta,* 26 January 1923, p. 7.
[23] Ball, *Imagining America,* p. 26.

the 1920s, the qualities of 'American' energy, initiative, and individual motivation were emphasized.[24]

Many top Party officials in the 1920s recommended a combination of Marxism and certain American qualities for the future development of Soviet Russia. In 1923, Nikolai Bukharin wrote that, in order to build Socialism, the Party required people who would have a combination of 'desirable features of the old Russian intelligentsia – namely a grounding in Marxism, breadth of vision and theoretical acumen – but combined with American practical grasp of things.'[25]

In his widely circulated remarks entitled *Foundations of Leninism*, written upon his ascent to power and published in 1925, Stalin famously described an exemplary worker as being characterized by a combination of two traits, 'Russian revolutionary sweep' (*russkii revoliutsionnyi razmakh*) and 'American efficiency' (*amerikanskaia delovitost'*).[26] He thus set an example for all Soviet citizens to follow: 'Only such combination gives us the finished type of Leninist worker, the style of Leninism in work.'[27] This combination was to be central to the working style of the New Soviet Man and Woman.

Due to the officially expressed positive attitudes towards certain aspects of America and Americanism, negative portrayals of America in the press in the mid-1920s were much less frequent than neutral or positive stories.[28] High regard for American technology and efficient work methods, as well as certain positive human

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[24] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 241.
[25] Nikolai Bukharin, *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia i kul'tura* (Petrograd: Priboi, 1923), p. 16 and pp. 48-49.
[26] I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoj literatury, 1952), pp. 186-88.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 235.

traits that could be set as an example for Soviet citizens, allowed the Bolshevik officials in the 1920s to endorse largely positive portrayals of America, albeit with sporadic reminders (often half-hearted in that decade)[29] that America was still the land of capitalism and exploitation.

Soviet intellectuals and avant-garde artists also contemplated America and what they perceived as positive American qualities as a model. Their sentiments were expressed by Sergei Tretiakov who, in the 1923 LEF Manifesto, wrote about the creation of a new kind of human being:

> A person has to be created, one who is a worker, who is energetic, inventive, disciplined... *'Americanization' of personality,* together with electrification of industry, dictates a re-molding of a passionate orator who can initiate an elemental breakthrough by a sharp explosion, into a business-like, well-calculated controller-mechanic of the new Revolutionary period.[30]

The emphasis here is placed on such qualities as inventiveness and energy, as well as the Taylorist concept of discipline and machine-like self-control.

Brooks argues that the American metaphor was used only by professional Soviet journalists, and thus the admiration for the active and innovative 'Russian Americans' had limited currency.[31] However, throughout this study we shall see that the situation was quite different.

Some Soviet avant-garde artists that relied on the 'American' metaphor saw modern American technology and 'American' character traits as inseparable parts of the same phenomenon. As the NEP era introduced a relative degree of artistic

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[29] Jeffrey Brooks points out this half-heartedness of official attempts to fit America into the xenophobic story of the Soviet Union being surrounded by hostile enemies. He adds that even the American intervention against the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War was all but forgotten in the 1920s. (Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 235.)

[30] Sergei Tretiakov, 'Otkuda i kuda? (Perspektivy futurizma)', in *LEF* 1 (1923), pp. 192-203 (p. 201). My italics.

[31] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 247.

freedom, numerous avant-garde artistic movements flourished in Russia in the 1920s. The machine culture, hailed by some of the pre-Revolutionary artists such as the Futurists, found its multiple proponents in Soviet Russia, just as it did among many other avant-gardists around the world at that time. For the Soviet avant-garde artists, fascination with modern technology went hand in hand with admiration of American dynamism and the fast pace of life reflected in various artistic media, especially American cinema. Throughout the decade, America, with its automobiles, airplanes and other technological advances, was often used by Soviet avant-garde artists as a metaphor for modernity and dynamism.

Russians were not the only nation to perceive America in this way. Dynamism was one of the chief attributes of modernity, and America was perceived in Europe and other non-European countries as the epitome, if not the epicentre, of modernity. Americans themselves defined the American spirit in terms of movement. Frederick Jackson Turner, the author of the theory of the American frontier, wrote that 'movement has been [the] dominant fact of [American life] and, unless this training has no effect on a people, the American intellect will continually demand a wild field for its exercise.'[32] Dynamism and the perception of a geographical and cultural frontier played an important role in both American and Soviet political self-fashioning.[33]

In the early 1930s, the official endorsement of the American example was curtailed, to be replaced by the new Stalinist formula '*dognat' i peregnat' Ameriku*',

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[32] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', 1893, reprint, *The Annals of America,* vol. 11 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968), p. 478.
[33] For more on dynamism and movement in early Soviet culture, see Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

which established the ideologically competitive goal of catching up with, and eventually surpassing America. However, even after this change in official attitudes, America continued to be viewed as a 'measuring stick' for the advancements of Soviet industry, while positive 'American' traits were cultivated in Soviet citizens. The trope 'Russian Americans' was no longer openly used in that decade; however, as I will attempt to show, many Soviet films made in the Stalinist thirties focused on a new kind of positive heroes and heroines who possessed qualities that, a decade earlier, were referred to as 'American'.

## I. Sources and Models

There existed a number of models in the Russian political and cultural discourse of the 1920s for creating the New Soviet Man and Woman. Both the physical and psychological qualities of citizens of the new Bolshevik state were intended to be altered. However, scholars of Soviet culture tend to overlook the connection between the 'Russian American' ideal of the 1920s and the New Soviet Man project.

The idea of changing human nature 'for the better' did not originate in Soviet Russia. Various projects of improving human beings in order to achieve an ideal 'new man' have been suggested by thinkers of different nations throughout history. Rolf Hellebust points out a number of historical precedents to the New Soviet Man project, such as Biblical concepts that alluded to forging a new type of human being, the medieval tradition of alchemy, as well as the ideas of the French Revolutionary

thinkers and the German metaphysical historicism of Hegel.[34] In Russia, attempts to change human beings were made in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great, but an explicit doctrine of the 'new man' appeared there only with the rise of the radical intelligentsia in the 1860s.[35]

Hellebust argues that after the Revolution of 1917, the concept of a 'new man' turned from a dream into a practical goal of the Soviet state. In the 1920s, an attempt was made to achieve this goal by radically changing both the physique and psychology of citizens of the new state.[36] According to Hellebust, the making of the 'new man' as described in the political discourse of the 1920s evokes mythic archetypes of alchemy, focusing on the image of spiritual transformation through the metallization of human flesh.[37]

The alchemical 'flesh-to-metal' metaphor and the resulting image of a 'man of steel' was only one of the sources of inspiration for the New Soviet Man project. A number of cultural discourses of the early twentieth century contributed to this project, each providing its own metaphors as models in whose image the New Soviet Man and Woman were to be constructed. Some of these models tended to blend with each other and to enrich each other in the popular Russian imagination, resulting in a somewhat eclectic image of what the future citizens of the new communist state would be like.

Among these other sources were the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, which were widely discussed among the Russian intellectuals in the first decades of the twentieth

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[34] Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature and the Alchemy of Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 56-57.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p. 58.
[37] Ibid., p. 23.

century. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal posits that 'Nietzsche's overall importance directly and by proxy for Soviet culture' was largely unacknowledged until recently.[38] Nietzscheanism was, in fact, pervasive among the pro-Bolshevik avant-garde in the first two decades of the twentieth century, in their endeavors to transform humanity.[39] Russian artists and writers at the turn of the century hailed Nietzsche as the prophet of a new, courageous, creative and free human being, and of a new culture of art and beauty.[40] According to Mikhail Agurskii, the majority of Bolshevik intellectuals were influenced by Nietzsche's ideas, which became an important undercurrent of Soviet culture.[41] Nietzscheanism was the inspiration behind the Bolshevik heresy of God-building, championed by Maxim Gorky and Antalolii Lunacharsky soon after the Revolution of 1905. God-builders believed that art could change consciousness, and that superior individuals could achieve true self-fulfillment in transcending the self in artistic and social creativity and in performing heroic deeds.[42]

Agurskii has provided an insightful overview of the Nietzscheanism of many Bolshevik leaders and the Nietzschean roots of Stalinist culture.[43] According to Agurskii, Lenin's idea of remaking passive, inert Russian men into a superhuman community is 'entirely within the Nietzschean outlook.'[44] Agurskii posits that Lenin's concept of social revolution 'was inseparable from his idea of a cultural revolution

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[38] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*, ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 2.
[39] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 58.
[40] Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p. 2.
[41] Mikhail Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, pp. 256-286 (p. 256).
[42] Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p. 4.
[43] Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', pp. 256-286.
[44] Ibid., pp. 258-259.

which would purge the new, perfect society of old human types that were unfit for the future.'[45]

Katerina Clark traces the images of 'daring' heroes of the 1930s Socialist Realist novels back to the Nietzschean 'daring man' or superman (*sverkhchelovek*) ideal.[46] According to Clark, Nietzscheanism and God-building in the early 1920s affected the extraordinary hero rhetoric of the 1930s.[47] Just as Gorky's Nietzscheanism had an influence on the development of Socialist Realist literature and its portrayals of positive heroes,[48] I suggest that Lunacharsky's Nietzscheanism affected portrayals of positive heroes in early Soviet cinema.

Another source of ideas for creating a new type of human being, popular among artists, intellectuals, and some Bolshevik officials at the time, was Freudian psychoanalysis. As a movement of thought in the 1920s Russia, it was labeled Freudianism (*freidizm*). Both Freudian and Marxist sociological analysis shared a common goal: to unveil and reveal a hidden truth, and thus it is not surprising that Freudianism became very popular among revolutionary intellectuals.[49] Early Soviet followers of psychoanalysis believed it equipped them with 'new vision' enabling them to recognize unconscious drives.[50] Furthermore, by blending psychoanalysis with Marxist sociology, the 'backward' consciousness of illiterate Soviet workers and

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 152-155.
[47] Ibid.
[48] See, for example, Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', pp. 256-286 (p. 258). According to Agurskii, Gorky 'was an important transmitter of Nietzsche to Soviet society throughout his career.'
[49] Alexei Alexeievich Kurbanovskii, 'Freud, Tatlin, and the Tower: How Soviet Psychoanalysts Might Have Interpreted the Monument to the Third International', *Slavic Review* 67.4 (Winter 2008), pp. 892-906 (p. 895).
[50] Ibid., p. 893.

peasants could be transformed.[51] Alexei Kurbanovskii posits that, for the Soviet avant-garde artists and intellectuals in the 1920s, psychoanalysis became a practical manual for building a 'new man.' For them, the model of such a new, perfect being was the artist, one who was equipped with the tools of psychoanalysis and who was able to creatively master his unconscious Oedipal complex through utilitarian artistic endeavors.[52]

Traditionally, literature has been the central outlet in Russia for such radical discourses as that concerning the improvement of human nature. In her seminal study *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, Katerina Clark traces the roots of Socialist Realist prose, including its 'positive hero' who was supposed to set an example for the general Soviet population, to pre-revolutionary radical fiction and to medieval hagiographies. The literary positive hero of Russian radical fiction, as well as of medieval literature, was to set forth models of behavior to be emulated, and to show 'the way forward' for Russia.[53]

The Bolshevik regime had a number of programmes for the identity building of Soviet citizens, of which literature was but one part. Among other ways of creating the New Soviet subjects, both physically and psychologically, were children's education (which was considered an extremely important tool), the press, physical culture, ideas such as Trotsky's 'psycho-spiritual training by means of science',[54] and the cinema, which will be the focus of this study.

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[51] Ibid., p. 900.
[52] Ibid., p. 906 and p. 904.
[53] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 46.
[54] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 58.

All of the competing sources of inspiration for the New Soviet Man project mentioned above have been noted and written about by a number of scholars. However, the Americanization discourse of the 1920s was an equally powerful source. In the present study, I will show that the image of the 'Russian American,' described in the Soviet press in the 1920s, also found its expression in Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, even if this term was not specifically applied within the diegesis to characters representing this ideal in Soviet films. The image of the 'Russian American' as a positive hero has not received as much attention among scholars of early Soviet culture as it should. I posit that the positive image, in early Soviet films, of the 'Russian American' as a role model for future New Soviet Men and Women had its roots in American cinema, as well as American adventure literature and the broader Americanization discourse of the 1920s. In the following pages I will attempt to illustrate how this ideal was used on a par with the more widely analyzed 'man of steel' and other models mentioned above, in constructing the new Soviet identity. I will analyze the presence of the 'Russian American' ideal in Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. I will attempt to show how film heroes and heroines with positive 'American' qualities became role models for Russian audiences thanks to the work of Soviet filmmakers, as well as to direct imports of American films and admiration for American stars. I will analyze the role of the positive 'American' qualities in constructing Sovietness and thus shaping early Soviet culture. Cinema, both Soviet and American, played a very important role in this process.

## II. American Cinema as the Source of the 'Russian American' New Soviet Man Model

In the 1920s, Soviet screens were flooded with imported American films. The young field of Soviet cinema drew enormous inspiration from the advances made by American filmmakers such as D.W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, and others. As Miriam Hansen has suggested, Hollywood cinema in the 1920s was perceived as the 'incarnation of the modern'.[55] The dynamism and energy of the Soviet montage cinema of the 1920s was an aesthetic reflection of Americanization, with its call to 'join' modernity. The duality of the official attitude to the United States in the 1920s was reflected in the works of Soviet filmmakers. In this decade more than in any other, film directors were able to express their positive attitudes to America while paying only nominal homage to the official anti-capitalist propaganda.

'The screen needs "Americanized" us, and it needs "us-like" Americans', wrote the Soviet film critic Al. Voznesenskii in 1924, appealing to film directors that were just beginning to build the foundations of the new Soviet cinema. [56] The critic called for a balance, in cinematic portrayals of a new hero, of traditional Russian psychological depth and American 'brave characters, tension of willpower, dynamic pressure and diversity'.[57] Voznesenskii believed that cinema was one of the most powerful means of achieving the 'universal goal' of creating a new human being, 'tomorrow's person' who would be 'today's person plus something else, larger than

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[55] Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism', *Modernism/modernity* 6.2 (1999), pp. 59-77 (p. 64).
[56] Al. Voznesenskii, *Iskusstvo ekrana. Rukovodstvo dlia kino-studij i kino-rezhisserov* (Kiev, 1924), p. 72. My translation.
[57] Ibid.

today'.[58] Voznesenskii was among numerous Soviet film critics who called for 'Americanizing' Soviet film heroes, as we shall see in the following pages.

In addition to endowing cinema heroes with positive 'American' qualities, Soviet avant-garde filmmakers in the 1920s contributed to constructing the image of the New Soviet Man through the use of film devices inspired by American cinema, especially montage.[59] In his early montage experiments, Lev Kuleshov created a 'new' woman by editing together shots that centered on various body parts of a number of different women. Similarly to Kuleshov's experiments, Dziga Vertov wrote in his manifestoes about creating a new, perfect man through the use of montage:

> I am the Cine-eye. I take the hands of one person, the strongest and most dexterous; the legs of another, the most slender and fast; the head of the third one, the most beautiful and expressive, and I create, through montage, the new, perfect human being.[60]

In addition to envisioning the process of creating a new human being on the screen through montage, Vertov essentially put forward the concept of a new Soviet filmmaker who was a cross between man and machine (a cameraman with his camera, and an editor with his or her editing table), resulting in the notion of an omnipotent Cine-Eye. In his 1929 masterpiece *Man With A Movie Camera*, Vertov went further, by virtually effecting the transformation of the viewer into the new

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[58] Ibid., p. 9.

[59] See, for example, Naum Kleiman, '"Natsional'noe," "internatsional'noe" i sovetskii kinoavangard', in *Formula finala: stat'i, vystupleniia, besedy* (Moscow: Eisenshtein-tsentr, 2004), p. 310.

[60] Dziga Vertov, 'Kinoki. Perevorot', in *Stat'i. Dnevniki, Zamysly* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966), pp. 54-55. Hans-Joachim Schlegel and Naum Kleiman have also pointed out the similarity between Kuleshov's and Vertov's theories of creating the new human being through montage. See Hans-Joachim Schlegel, 'Konstruktsii i izvrashcheniia. "Novyi chelovek" v sovetskom kino', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 50 (2001), http://www.kinozapiski.ru/article/705, accessed on June 1, 2009; Kleiman, '"Natsional'noe," "internatsional'noe" i sovetskii kinoavangard', p. 310.

Soviet subject: watching this film was equal to seeing the world through the eyes of a new, perfect, Marxist-educated citizen who noticed (or was encouraged to notice, through the use of specific filmic devices) the hidden processes unseen by the 'old-style' viewer.

In the 1920s, imported American films were an important source of knowledge about the positive 'American' traits that were encouraged in the new Soviet citizen. In addition, certain American qualities that came to be praised and were used in the New Soviet Man project of the 1920s and 1930s, found their way into Soviet culture through translated works of American literature, especially frontier literature, serialized detective fiction, and the immensely popular adventure stories of Jack London. The characters of London's stories, with their frontiersman qualities of ingenuity and will in the struggle against nature, were popular among the Soviet population and were personally admired by Lenin.[61] I posit that these Jack London fiction characters became another source, along with American cinema, of what were seen as specifically American positive qualities, and another inspiration behind the 1930s Stalinist model of the exceptional man who could defy the inevitability and brute force of the elements. The Soviet fascination with Jack London stories was also apparent among filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov, who used a Jack London story 'The Unexpected' as the basis for his 1926 film *By the Law*, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

Similar to the inspiration that Soviet filmmakers drew from the dynamism of plots of American films, the dynamism and excitement of American adventure fiction

[61] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 102.

inspired Soviet writers and avant-garde theorists of the 1920s.[62] This sense of adventure and adventurous individuals carried over into Soviet literature, cinema and the entire culture of the 1930s – although its American roots are generally unacknowledged by scholars of Soviet culture.[63]

Svetlana Boym argues that the Soviet vision of the future was 'radically different from the mythical American dream, which was based on the comforts of the American lifestyle.'[64] However, I would argue that at least in the 1920s, official Soviet ideology as well as popular culture did not equate the American dream with the comforts of everyday life. Instead, a Soviet version of the 'American dream' that developed in the popular and official discourse of the 1920s, pointed towards a future society of energetic, efficient, strong and enthusiastic citizens. To be sure, this future society was to be built on the principle of collectivism; however, at the core of this vision was the popular perception of the highly valued individual American qualities, which was based, to a large degree, on portrayals of positive heroes and heroines in American and 'Americanized' Soviet films, as well as adventure fiction.

In her book *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War*, Emma Widdis writes about Sovietness as a lived identity, envisaged from the very beginnings of the Soviet state as a 'revolutionary way of living in the world.'[65] She points out that modern technology was enlisted in an

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[62] Ibid., p. 104.
[63] Clark does note the popularity of American adventure fiction, but does not elaborate on the importance of its inspiration for the shaping of Soviet culture. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 104-105.
[64] Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 1994), p. 2.
[65] Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, pp. 1-2.

attempt to create this new identity.[66] The goal of the present study is to attempt an understanding of what role 'Americanness' and the forms it took in the Russian cultural imagination, especially through the medium of cinema, played in the early years of mapping out the new model of Sovietness. In this study, I will analyze the role of American and 'Americanized' Soviet cinema in the Bolshevik elite's attempt, in the 1920s and 1930s, to alter the identity of Russian citizens and thus to lay the foundations of the new Soviet culture.

## III. The 'Crucified' and the 'Glorified' New Man

A number of scholars have pointed out that there appear to have been two distinct types of the New Soviet Man and Woman images in the literature and cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. Hellebust indicates this duality when he notes, 'the qualities that make the martyr for utopia are, for the most part, not those of its ideal inhabitant.' [67] He calls the two models 'the crucified and glorified New Men', and makes the first model, the martyr for the communist cause, the main object of his study.[68] Hellebust does not go on to explore the second model, the 'glorified' New Man, or the future happy citizen of the Soviet Utopia. Lilya Kaganovsky, too, focuses entirely on the

[66] Ibid., p. 2.
[67] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 58.
[68] Ibid., p. 59.

martyr model of male subjectivity, the New Man whose mutilated body and self-sacrifice for the Soviet cause make him worthy of elevation to 'hero' status.[69]

This duality of what were seen as exemplary human qualities, is, in fact, representative of the duality of Russian cultural aspirations that can be traced back to the reforms of Peter the Great, and that were accentuated by the contending views of the Slavophiles and Westernizers in the nineteenth century. The call to modernity (to Europe and, later America) splits Russia in two: the old, traditional Russia, and the new, westernized (and later Americanized) one.[70]

While examples of both models, the 'crucified' and the 'glorified' one, can be seen in Soviet literature and cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, literary texts, especially the proletarian poetry and prose of the 1920s and Socialist Realist novels of the 1930s tended to focus on portraying the 'crucified' hero, while, arguably, the 'glorified' New Man and Woman – the joyful, energetic, inventive, and more individualized subject of the future Utopia, – was more often represented in cinema. I suggest that representations of the 'glorified' New Soviet Man and Woman in films of the late 1920s and 1930s were often based on the 'Russian American' ideal and on Soviet filmmakers' admiration for American cinema of the 1920s, as well as American adventure literature and the broader Americanization discourse, with its emphasis on mastery of technology.

Filmic representations of such hero(in)es with 'American' traits, especially in the 1930s, went 'against the grain' of the portrayals, more often literary than

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[69] Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 3.
[70] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 39.

cinematic, of the stern, wilful and steel-like martyrs.[71] I will provide examples of the 'glorified' filmic positive hero(in)es with 'American' qualities in the following pages. There were several possible reasons for such a dichotomy between the literary and cinematic hero portrayals. I suggest that one of the reasons was the educational and social background of early Soviet filmmakers and writers. Many Socialist Realist writers (including Nikolai Ostrovsky and Maksim Gorky) came from a peasant or proletarian background; many of them, including writers of the 'proto-Socialist-realist' novels of the 1920s, were Party members.[72]

On the other hand, many of the filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg, Grigorii Alexandrov, Aleksandr Macheret, Vladimir Nil'sen and others, were intellectuals, some of whom never joined the Party and whose personal stance vis-à-vis the official ideology can be described as ambiguous. These filmmakers' attitudes towards American popular culture were a lot less ambiguous, which is documented in numerous articles and manifestoes written by these filmmakers in the 1920s.[73] Many of them admired American cinema, technology, and positive 'American' human traits. When the American metaphor was no longer openly used in the 1930s, some filmmakers nevertheless kept this element of admiration in their films, which no longer had any overt thematic references to America. This was done either unconsciously or,

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[71] Hellebust describes these qualities of the martyr heroes in *Flesh to Metal*, p. 13 and p. 20; Clark describes them in *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 57-60.
[72] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 83.
[73] See, for example, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 'AB! Parad ekstsentrika', in Grigorii Kozintsev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh,* vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1983); Lev Kuleshov, 'Americanism', in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 72.

arguably, as an element of subtle subversion of the newly dominant Socialist Realist discourse.

We have to bear in mind that this attitude of admiration towards American cinema and modernity in general did not necessarily result in direct borrowings. Rather, it was a case of true cultural dialogism. Naum Kleiman has argued that for the Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, using certain elements of Hollywood films provided an opportunity to learn (*osvoit'*) and surpass (*preodolet'*) the experience of American directors.[74] Also, as Sergei Kapterev has noted, for the Russian intellectuals, learning the ways of another culture was a natural part of broadening one's cultural horizons; thus, foreign culture had to, in a certain way, become 'one's own.' [75] Seen in this light, Kuleshov's 'American' films of the 1920s were the result of a well-educated Russian intellectual's desire to immerse himself in another culture, in order to truly understand it[76] and to apply its best elements to the process of artistic creation.

One other reason for the difference between the literary tendency to focus on the 'crucified' New Man and the cinematic openness to representing the 'glorified' New Man is the nature of the filmic medium as inherently popular and entertainment-oriented. Even though combining entertainment with ideology was at the centre of the Soviet cinema discourse in the late 1920s and 1930s, a strong argument can be made in support of the claim that, for the majority of Soviet viewers, cinema remained first and foremost a form of entertainment. It was this entertaining quality, therefore, that helped ensure the continued presence on the silver screen of the joyful, physically fit,

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[74] Kleiman, '"Natsional'noe," "internatsional'noe" i sovetskii kinoavangard', p. 314.
[75] Sergei Kapterev, 'Mezhdu novym i starym svetom: Nekotorye problemy kul'turnogo konteksta sovetskogo nemogo kino', in *Sovetskaia vlast' i media. Sbornik statei,* ed by Hans Günther and Sabina Hänsgen (Saint Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2006), pp. 555-565 (p. 561).
[76] Ibid.

successful, and innovative hero(in)es – the 'glorified' inhabitants of the future Soviet paradise, who kept their place on the screen side by side with the mutilated and self-sacrificing martyrs.

Thus, arguably the most accessible and popular image of the New Soviet Man, the one with 'American' qualities, entered the Soviet discourse via the medium of cinema, through Soviet films made mainly by intellectuals who, in turn, drew their inspiration from silent American films, adventure fiction, and the Americanization discourse of the 1920s. In this study, I will focus on such 'glorified' positive hero(in)es with their American cultural roots.

## IV. Contribution to the Field

Early Soviet cinema has been studied by a large number of scholars, including Richard Taylor, Ian Christie, Yuri Tsivian, Peter Kenez, Richard Stites, Denise Youngblood, Birgit Beumers, Emma Widdis, Julian Graffy, Neia Zorkaia, Maia Turovskaia, Naum Kleiman, Vera Kuznetsova, Nikolai Izvolov, and many others, both in Russia and in the west.[77] The authors who have dealt with imported American films and American influences in early Soviet cinema include Yuri Tsivian, Vance Kepley, Jr., Denise Youngbood, and Alan Ball, among others.[78] The results of Jeffrey Brooks' inquiry into portrayals of 'Russian Americans' in the official press of the

[77] For specific titles by these authors, please refer to the Bibliography.
[78] For example, Yuri Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New'; Vance Kepley, Jr., and Betty Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens, 1922-1931', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 4.4 (Fall 1979), pp. 429-442; Denise J. Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918-1935* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Ball, *Imagining America*.

1920s have been very informative for this study.[79] While this thesis will draw on the work of these and other authors, in the next few paragraphs I will highlight the work of scholars who have specifically focused on the process of constructing the new Soviet identity and the idealized image of the New Soviet Man in Soviet cinema and literature of the 1920s and 1930s.

A number of scholars inquiring into the New Soviet Man project have focused on literary portrayals of this ideal/idealized image and the role of literature as a tool for new identity building by the Bolshevik regime.[80] Rolf Hellebust has done so in his previously mentioned book *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature and the Alchemy of Revolution*. However, as I will argue throughout this study, cinema, and specifically the 'Americanized' Soviet films of the 1920s and 1930s, played an equally, and potentially even more important role in shaping the new Soviet identity, as they targeted a wider audience, due to the popularity of the film medium and to low literacy rates in early Soviet Russia.

In the past decade, more attention has been given to the cinematic New Soviet Man portrayals, such as in the recent works by John Haynes and Lilya Kaganovsky. John Haynes' book *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* focuses on 'masculinization' of Soviet culture in the 1930s. Haynes begins his study with the late 1920s, omitting the role of the Americanization discourse and other, earlier debates on the project of creating the New Soviet Man. Haynes posits that the appearance of exemplary heroic figures in literature and cinema of the 1930s was due to a 'paradigm shift' in Soviet culture, explained by the emergence of the

[79] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message.'
[80] See, for example, Clark, *The Soviet Novel*; Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal.*

cult of the leader, as well as reassertion of the individual as an active agent of historical change and of active masculinity as opposed to passive femininity.[81] The idea of such a paradigm shift ignores the dialogic cultural processes of the preceding decade, including the Americanization discourse.

In the first chapter of his book, Haynes states, 'similarities between Hollywood and Soviet cinema ran deeper than might at first appear to be the case'.[82] While further in the book he does list a number of such similarities, including parallels between Alexandrov's musical comedies and Hollywood musicals in terms of structure, stars, and themes, Haynes stops short of inquiring into the deeper underlying reasons for these similarities, which date back to the Americanization discourse of the 1920s.[83]

In her recent book *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*, Lilya Kaganovsky posits that, in addition to the image of a muscular and virile ideal man, the New Soviet Man project included another way of visualizing the ideal positive hero, through images of men whose bodies were sacrificed and dismembered in the name of the Socialist cause. Kaganovsky argues that 'the two forms of masculinity exist together, that together they create the ideal Stalinist man.'[84] Both Haynes and Kaganovsky acknowledge the importance of cinema to the analysis of the New Soviet Man project. Neither one of them, however,

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[81] John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 42-43.
[82] Ibid., p. 22.
[83] Ibid., p. 25. There are a number of parallels drawn between the Soviet and Hollywood musicals of the time, including the idea of a musical creating spectatorial involvement in both cases and the application of Western genre theory to Stalinist cinema See Haynes, pp. 75-76 and p. 82. However, while similarities are pointed out, no further analysis is provided as to their underlying causes.
[84] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 4.

perceives the role of the Americanization discourse, nor of American cinema, in constructing the image of the New Soviet Man.

Hans-Joachim Schlegel's analysis of the New Soviet Man project focuses on representations of the 'mechanical man' in Soviet avant-garde cinema, a new human being transformed in the image of 'machine rationalism and functionality'.[85] While Schlegel does mention the role of Taylorism and technology in the avant-gardists' interest in the machine culture, he, like Hellebust and Kaganovsky, does not consider the role of the Americanization discourse and American cinema in the construction of the New Soviet Man.

In her seminal study *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, Katerina Clark names the 'road to consciousness' plot formula and the positive hero character type as the hallmarks of Socialist Realist prose.[86] Clark differentiates between portrayals of more static positive heroes of pre-revolutionary works such as Gorky's *Mother*, and the new dynamic hero image that emerged in Soviet literature and culture of the 1920s. Clark attributes the emergence of this new dynamic hero image to the upheavals of the Revolution and the Civil War, and to the lure of revolutionary action and excitement.[87] She points out that the positive heroes in such 1920s' literary works as Gladkov's *Cement* and Furmanov's *Chapaev*, which became models for many more future Socialist Realist novels, were inspired by portrayals of certain revolutionary leaders in the press of the time.[88]

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[85] Schlegel, 'Konstruktsii i izvrashcheniia'.
[86] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 65-66.
[87] Ibid., p. 68.
[88] Ibid., p. 73.

While Clark does point out that some qualities of the new dynamic hero were 'rather like the "true grit" of the American frontier', she goes on to dismiss this similarity, focusing instead on the likeness to the Russian folk warrior *bogatyr'* qualities,[89] whereas it was indeed the American qualities that also helped shape the new hero image of the 1920s. Even if the word 'frontiersman' did not enter the Soviet hero discourse of the 1920s, the metaphor of 'Russian Americans' was often used in the press of the decade, as we have already seen. Clark does not seem to perceive the link between the new hero image of the 1920s and indeed the 1930s and the 'American' metaphor applied to exemplary individuals at the time.

In addition to Clark's hypothesis that the appearance of the new dynamic hero image in the press and literary fiction of the 1920s can be explained by the revolutionary upheavals of the time, I posit that the change in portrayals of heroes and exemplary individuals in literature and the press, as well as in cinema and the visual arts, can also be attributed at least in part to the 'American' metaphor widely circulated at the time, which, in turn, was partially based upon the popularity of certain American films and film stars, as we shall see further in this study.

The scholar who has described most fully the various influences of America on Russia in the twentieth century, focusing on the 1920s, 1930s, and 1990s, is Alan Ball, the author of *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth Century Russia*. Like a number of scholars mentioned above, Ball does not seem to perceive the link between the Americanization discourse of the 1920s and the formation of Soviet culture and the image of the New Soviet Man and Woman via American and then Soviet cinema. According to Ball, 'one might dismiss talk of American influence

[89] Ibid.

on Soviet movies of the 1930s.' [90] He does point out stylistic similarities between Soviet and Hollywood films in that decade, but sees no connection between the new Soviet cinematic heroes and American cinema.[91] This connection will be at the centre of my study.

In his book *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution,* Richard Stites describes the nature of the Americanization discourse in the 1920s Russia as 'funny and pathetic'.[92] He focuses on parodies of Marietta Shaginian and Ilya Ehrenburg as the main examples of Soviet intellectuals' engagement with the American metaphor. While quoting a contemporary Western journalist's description of an American of the Russian imagination, Stites implies that it was a highly idealized image, and does not analyze its importance for the development of Soviet culture.

Most of the scholars mentioned above have focused on the construction of new masculinity in Stalinist culture, the majority of them mentioning the constructing of the New Soviet Woman image only in passing. This issue has been analyzed by other scholars, including Oksana Bulgakova,[93] and Lynne Attwood and Catriona Kelly.[94] However, these scholars have not focused on the connection between the

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[90] Ball, *Imagining America*, pp. 107-108.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 149.
[93] Oksana Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema: The Metamorphoses of the Soviet Film Heroine', in *Red Women on the Silver Screen: Soviet Women and Cinema from the Beginning to the End of the Communist Era,* ed. by Lynne Attwood (London: Pandora Press, 1993), pp. 149-174.
[94] Lynne Attwood and Catriona Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity: The "New Man" and the "New Woman"', in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of the Revolution: 1881-1940,* ed. by Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 256-290.

construction of the image of the New Soviet Woman and the Americanization discourse. My study, on the other hand, will analyze this connection.

Yuri Tsivian's article entitled 'Between the Old and the New: Soviet Film Culture in 1918-1924' has been very informative for my study. In this article, Tsivian distinguishes between two kinds of Americanism in early Soviet cinema: stylistic borrowings in the field of editing and camerawork ('American montage', 'American foreground'), and fascination with the 'lower genres' such as detective thrillers, slapstick comedies and adventure films.[95] I propose that there was one more kind of Americanism present in early Soviet cinema, namely the attribution of specific positive character traits perceived as 'American' to the positive hero(in)es portrayed in Soviet films of the 1920s and 1930s. This kind of Americanism is at the centre of my study. The rhetorical figure of the cinematic New Soviet Man and Woman, an optimistic self-made trailblazer and an agent for change who infuses others with his or her energy, was constructed using a number of positive 'American' traits and differed from pre-revolutionary self-sacrificial Russian positive heroes.

In her article 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', Vera Kuznetsova presents a highly informative overview of the critical reception, in Soviet Russia of the 1920s, of a large number of American film stars, providing her interpretation of the reasons behind their popularity.[96] Similarly to my argument, Kuznetsova suggests that in the years after the Revolution, Russian people lacked and needed to acquire such qualities as 'energy, efficiency, dynamism, spiritual and physical health,' as well

[95] Yuri Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New: Soviet Film Culture in 1918-1924', *Griffithiana* 55/56 (1996), 14-63 (pp. 39-45).
[96] Vera Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 85 (2007), pp. 196-248.

as being practical.[97] However, this scholar sees the new Soviet drive for success as the main similarity between American and the newly constructed Soviet culture.[98] She argues that it was impossible for Soviet filmmakers and audiences to accept American film heroes fully, and that American individualism as represented by these heroes 'could not combine with the collectivism [*sobornost'*] that was deeply engrained in the Russian psyche.'[99] I will discuss other similarities between American and the newly constructed Soviet culture, and will argue that individualism indeed was an important aspect, among many others, of the new Soviet cinematic hero in the 1930s. While providing highly valuable information on the reception of various American stars in Soviet Russia, Kuznetsova's study is not concerned with Soviet film heroes or heroines whose cinematic image was, as I attempt to show in my study, inspired by American film stars and their characters; nor does the author mention the existence of the 'Russian American' ideal or probe the connection between Soviet culture and American adventure fiction, – something that I endeavour to do in my study. While applying some of Kuznetsova's findings in relation to the reception of American stars in Russia, this study will focus on in-depth analysis of those stars who left the most significant legacy in Soviet culture and in the process of consrtucting the new hero(ine) in Soviet films of the 1920s and 1930s.

In my study, I analyze the role of the Americanization discourse and of American cinema and adventure literature, as well as of 'Americanized' Soviet cinema, in constructing the image of the New Soviet Man and Woman and thus in shaping early Soviet culture. This is something that has been previously overlooked

[97] Ibid., p. 197.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., p. 198.

by scholars. In Chapter 1, I analyze the popularity of some American film stars among Soviet viewers and avant-garde filmmakers. I inquire first into the reasons behind the popularity, both before and after the Revolution, of early American adventure film serials and their mainly female protagonists. The focus here is on the case of the 'serial queen' Pearl White, whose screen portrayals of a modern, daring, physically fit and technologically intelligent heroine were admired by Russian audiences of both sexes, including intellectuals and the future filmmakers, and influenced representations of the new female heroines as well as male heroes in Soviet films of the 1920s. The role of early American adventure serials in the formation of the Soviet cinematic hero(ine) is often overlooked by scholars.

I then analyze the attitudes of avant-garde filmmakers towards American cinema and specifically the work of D.W.Griffith and Charlie Chaplin, as well as of Richard Barthelmess. At the centre of my inquiry is the fondness of Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg for various devices of American adventure and comedy genres, including dynamic montage and plot construction, as well as their interest in modern technology.

Further on in this chapter, I analyze in depth the widespread popularity of Douglas Fairbanks, providing close analysis of the film *The Thief of Bagdad* (USA, 1924) and suggesting that Fairbanks' representation of Ahmed the Thief should be considered as a prototype of the positive hero of Socialist Realist cinema, due to such elements as the character's dynamism and athletic fitness, his ever-present optimism, democratic accessibility, resourcefulness, and individual motivation, as well as the process of transformation that the character undergoes within the film's narrative.

Chapter 2 examines the effects of the American adventure genre on portrayals of the new Soviet cinematic hero in films of the 1920s; representations of 'Russian American' characters in films of the late 1920s focusing on contemporary Soviet reality; and American characters in Soviet films, including adaptations of American literature. I explore the literary connection between early Soviet cinema and American adventure fiction and provide a close analysis of the most popular of the 'Red Pinkerton' films of the 1920s, *Little Red Devils* (1923), paying particular attention to its connection with the American adventure genre and the frontier literature of James Fennimore Cooper. At the focus of my analysis of this film are its two main protagonists, Mishka and Duniasha, who, I argue, reflect the two main models of the New Soviet Man discourse, and acquire 'American' traits through identification with heroes of American adventure literature, as well as through devices of the cinematic adventure genre.

There follows analysis of portrayals of American citizens in Soviet films and film adaptations of American literature, including several films based on the works of Jack London, O. Henry and Mark Twain. This is followed by analysis of the 'Russian American' hero, and enthusiastic and optimistic trailblazer Vasil', in Aleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930), who acquires the praised 'American' traits without any open references to American culture within the diegesis.

Chapter 3 focuses on portrayals of the New Soviet Woman in films of the 1920s and 1930s and on the American cinematic models for the construction of the new Soviet femininity. I demonstrate that in the 1920s, Soviet films tended to represent women's everyday reality, as well as their initial steps on the way towards modern femininity. I provide close analysis of Abram Room's film *Bed and Sofa*

(1927), focusing on the influence of, and elements of dialogue with, American cinema vis-à-vis the portrayal of the Soviet female heroine and her everyday reality. I proceed to discuss various models of new femininity presented by American cinema, including the *travesti* image of a woman with 'masculine' traits, which was of particular interest to Soviet critics, as well as the model of femininity most popular with Soviet audiences, the one presented by Mary Pickford. The third model of new femininity that had its roots in the Americanization discourse was the 'Russian American' ideal of an efficient worker. In my analysis of Eisenstein's *Old and New* (1929), I focus on the characterization of the main female protagonist as a 'Russian American'.

Soon after most foreign films were purged from Soviet screens, Soviet cinema began offering to its female viewers the more unified image of the New Soviet Woman. I argue that the heroines of Liubov' Orlova, as well as Marina Ladynina, Tamara Makarova and Ianina Zheimo, incorporated aspects of the two American cinematic models of femininity most popular in Russia in the 1920s, as well as traits of a 'Russian American'. I focus on the case of Liubov' Orlova and provide a detailed comparison of her screen heroines in Alexandrov's musical comedies and the heroines of Mary Pickford, something that has not been attempted by scholars previously. I then provide close analysis of Orlova's portrayal of Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path* (1940). I argue that Orlova's New Soviet Woman characters in films of the 1930s not only possess some similar qualities to those of Pickford, but are constructed using deeper links with American culture, including traits of 'masculine' femininity, such as mastery over technology, as well as 'American' traits

of efficiency and resourcefulness that stemmed from the 'Russian American' trope of the previous decade.

In Chapter 4, I argue that the purge of American films from Soviet screens in the late 1920s did not affect the memory of Soviet viewers and filmmakers, and that beloved American screen heroes of the 1920s continued to have an effect on representations of the New Soviet Man in films of the 1930s. I discuss Boris Shumiatskii's motivation behind the project of creating a 'Soviet Hollywood' and argue that his project of Americanization of Soviet cinema did not openly acknowledge the legacy of the Americanization discourse of the 1920s and the continued influence of American film stars of that decade, nor of heroes of American adventure fiction, but that this legacy was still important, even if unacknowledged officially.

In this chapter, I analyze the concealed but continued admiration for 'American' traits in representations of the New Soviet Man in films of the 1930s, providing close analysis of films whose male protagonists exhibit great energy and optimism, are physically fit, are or become famous, and/or possess mastery over technology, as well as efficiency, strong will power and the spirit of adventure. I argue that there existed a cult of the engineer-inventor in the 1930s Soviet Union, and that engineer heroes in films of that decade reflect continued fascination with modern American technology, while aviator heroes possess the Soviet version of the frontiersman's spirit. I discuss the issue of individualism vis-à-vis the Soviet collectivist rhetoric and conclude my study by applying Wilbur Zelinsky's model of American culture to the newly constructed image of the New Soviet Man, particularly in the film *Valerii Chkalov* (1941). I argue that the four central themes in American

culture described by Zelinsky, namely individualism, mobility and change, love of technology, and a belief that the United States is a nation with a world mission, equally apply to the newly constructed early Soviet culture, while representations of the New Soviet Man in films of the 1930s reflect a deep connection with American culture.

The Americanization discourse of the 1920s, which used the 'Russian American' trope to describe exemplary individuals, was an important source of inspiration for the New Soviet Man and Woman project. The Russian people's knowledge about what were perceived as highly valued 'American' qualities was largely based on portrayals of positive heroes and heroines by American actors in imported American films, as well as in translated American adventure fiction. The 'Russian American' ideal of the 1920s played a very important role in constructing the new Soviet cinematic hero of Stalinist cinema of the 1930s, and, on a larger scale, in the process of Russian culture's transformation and in constructing Sovietness via the medium of cinema.

The temporal cut-off point in my study is the early 1940s: the Great Patriotic War brought with it different concerns for Soviet filmmakers.[100] The beginning of the Cold War in the second half of the 1940s was marked by the creation of a number of anti-American films, which represented America and Americans in an aggressively negative light. According to Maia Turovskaia, these films created the new image of America as 'the enemy' or 'the Other' in order to curtail the effects of Soviet

[100] For more on Soviet cinema during the Great Patriotic War, see, for example, Neia Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), pp. 251-290.

people's exposure to western culture as the result of the Second World War.[101] These films, as well as the so-called 'trophy' American films that appeared on Soviet screens after the end of the war, are beyond the scope of this thesis.[102]

## V. Methodology

The effect of cinema and the Americanization discourse of the 1920s on the formation of Soviet culture is the central question of this study. My work has been conceived as an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural inquiry, using methodologies and theoretical models derived from film, literary and comparative cultural studies. The insights of Mikhail Bakhtin on the dialogic nature of discourse play an important role in my examination of the role of American cinema in the formation of certain aspects of early Soviet culture. Bakhtin views all language as discourse and asserts that any discourse is dialogic in its nature.[103] He stresses the importance of the 'social life of discourse' of various social groups that constitute the context within which a text is conceived and which invariably imbues a text with 'a multiplicity of social voices

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[101] Maia Turovskaia, 'Fil'my "kholodnoi voiny" kak dokumenty emotsii vremeni', in *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino* (Moscow: Znak, 2004), pp. 202-217 (p. 205). The 'Cold War' films in question include Romm's *Russkii vopros* [*The Russian Question*] (1948) and *Sekretnaia missiia* [*The Secret Mission*] (1950), Alexandrov's *Vstrecha na El'be* [*Meeting at Elbe*] (1949), Kalatozov's *Zagovor obrechennykh* [*The Conspiracy of the Doomed*] (1950), and Room's *Serebristaia pyl'* [*Silver Dust*] (1953).

[102] For a discussion of these 'trophy' films and their influence on Soviet viewers, see Turovskaia, 'Fil'my "kholodnoi voiny" kak dokumenty emotsii vremeni', pp. 202-217.

[103] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch and others (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), p. 1200.

and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships'.[104] While Bakhtin focuses on dialogized heteroglossia in the literary genre of the novel, he leaves open the possibility of applying the same concept to all discourse, including cinema.

A parallel can be drawn between Bakhtin's concept of a 'concrete utterance' of a speaking subject, which is both individualized and participates in speech diversity, and a film text.[105] Due to film's potential ambiguity, polyphonic nature, and multiplicity of meanings and possible interpretations, a film text can be viewed as dialogized heteroglossia, potentially playfully involved with, or 'aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time'.[106]

Bakhtin's concept of dialogized discourse has significantly expanded the field of inquiry of film semiotics and film studies in general. Robert Stam points out the fruitful suggestiveness to film studies of the Bakhtinian idea of a dialogic relationship between elements and codes within a film text, as well as between a film and its spectator.[107]

For the purposes of the present study, the Bakhtinian approach to film text provides insights into the nature of the interaction between multiple voices present in early Soviet films, which in part stem from American cinema and popular culture, as will be argued in my study. Examining this interplay of multiple voices can, in turn, shed light on the mechanisms of formation of early Soviet culture. Bakhtin argued that, 'A meaning only reveals its depth once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue [...] Such a dialogic

[104] Ibid., p. 1190 and p. 1193.
[105] This parallel has been noted by film scholars, including Robert Stam. See Robert Stam, 'Film and Language: From Metz to Bakhtin', in *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches*, ed. by Barton Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1989), p.20.
[106] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 1200.
[107] Stam, 'Film and Language: From Metz to Bakhtin', p. 20.

encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched.'[108]

The concept of dialogue as an important aspect of the dynamic functioning of culture has been central to the work of the Soviet semiotician Iurii Lotman. Lotman defined culture as 'the whole of uninherited information and the ways of its organization and storage', adding that an important aspect of culture was its ability to generate new texts (the creative dimension).[109]

In his later works, Lotman revised and expanded his earlier conception of culture and formulated the new concept of the semiosphere, a specially organized continuum in which all cultural phenomena are immersed. He saw the semiosphere as a system which is 'seen as one mechanism, if not organism'.[110] According to Lotman, the universal law that stipulates how the semiosphere exists, is dialogue. This dialogue includes cultural contact on the national and international scales.[111] Consequently, intercommunication and reprocessing of information is seen as the essence of cultural and social life.[112] Lotman envisioned culture as a dynamic system, and considered assimilation of material from outside the system as a process vital for its function.[113] This understanding of the dynamic quality of culture is important to my thesis.

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[108] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Unviersity of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 6-7.
[109] Iurii Lotman, *Stat'i po tipologii kul'tury,* vol. 1 (Tartu, 1970), p. 5-6.
[110] Iurii Lotman, 'O semiosfere', in *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, 17 (1984). Also, see Iurii Lotman, *The Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans. by Ann Shukman, intr. by Umberto Eco (New York, 1990).
[111] Zylko, 'Culture and Semiotics', p. 399.
[112] Julia Kristeva, 'On Iurii Lotman', *PMLA*, 109.3 (May 1994), pp. 375-376 (p. 376).
[113] Zylko, 'Culture and Semiotics', p. 403.

Film semiotics was among the number of areas of inquiry for Lotman. In his conception of film and its relationship with culture, a film text is situated within the particular culture of its time, and thus is engendered by various cultural movements, documents, and surrounding languages of that particular time.[114] Furthermore, a text is a 'reduced model of culture', an 'interactive activity that creates meaning.'[115] Lotman asserts the necessity of two or more languages, or the necessity, for a particular culture, of the Other (the other language or the other culture) in order to be able to express the world fully. He perceives the necessity for a multiplicity of languages as one of the fundamental traits of culture.[116] The idea that culture is built upon dialogue among various languages represented within it, is applied in my work, so as to shed some light on the key issue of the relationship between American and Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, and the effects of this relationship upon the formation of Soviet culture.

In examining Soviet audiences of the 1920s and their response to American and Soviet films, this study follows the cultural studies approach of focusing on the social rather than the psychic identity of the spectator. On the question of spectatorship and cinematic identification, the present inquiry applies Jackie Stacey's argument that such identification is not based entirely on the early psychic developments of the viewers, and thus trying to conceptualize it psychoanalytically would not be as fruitful as understanding it as a cultural process, within the social

[114] Iurii Lotman, *Semiotika kino i problemy kinoestetiki* (Tallin: Eesti Raamat, 1973), p. 55; Kristeva, 'On Iurii Lotman', p. 376.
[115] Kristeva, 'On Iurii Lotman', p. 376.
[116] Iurii Lotman, *Kul'tura i vzryv* (Moscow: Gnosis-Progress, 1992), pp. 9-10.

context of the cinema.[117] While Stacey's work is concerned primarily with female audience-star identification, her thesis can be applied to male identification as well. Stacey's approach to cinematic identification as a 'cultural process with social meanings beyond the cinema'[118] is employed in this study. I will contextualize the Soviet spectators' response historically, using articles published in Soviet cinema magazines of the time, Soviet audience studies and questionnaires, and memoirs of Soviet filmmakers, who, on one level, were also spectators.

Comparative cultural studies is a relatively recent field of scholarship that combines methodologies from comparative literature and cultural studies and emphasizes the need 'to move and to dialogue between cultures, literatures, and disciplines'.[119] Among scholars working in this field is Jola Skulj, whose article 'Comparative Literature and Cultural Identity'[120] has been informative for my study. Using Bakhtinian terminology, Skulj argues that the identity principle of individual cultures is established through the principle of dialogism. She posits that literature is 'an intercultural historical phenomenon of mutual artistic and other influences from several cultures [...] and thus of mutual reception of Otherness.' Cultural identity is seen as 'a meeting point of several cross-cultural influences.'[121] The above description of literature can be equally applied to cinema, while Skulj's argument on

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[117] Jackie Stacey, 'Feminine Fascinations: A Question of Identification?', in *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies,* ed. by Philip Simpson and others (Taylor and Francis, 2004), p. 134.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, 'Constructivism and Comparative Cultural Studies', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/ccsconstructivism [accessed on 12 April 2009].
[120] Jola Skulj, 'Comparative Literature and Cultural Identity', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.4 (2000), http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol2/iss4/5/ [accessed on 18 April 2009].
[121] Ibid., para. 2 and 12.

the cross-cultural and dialogic nature of cultural identity provides an important angle from which the construction of early Soviet culture, and the role of American cinema and culture in this process, is viewed in my study.

# CHAPTER 1
# POPULARITY OF AMERICAN FILMS AND STARS IN SOVIET RUSSIA IN THE 1920S

The 1920s were a difficult decade for Soviet Russia. The Revolution of 1917 was followed by several years of Civil War. Hunger ravaged vast areas of the country. The economy was in disarray, with several years of War Communism being replaced by the more liberal New Economic Policy (NEP). This was followed at the end of the decade by the radically different economic approach of the First Five-Year Plan and the beginnings of a planned economy. Russian society was going through changes on an unprecedented scale, with whole classes of people being virtually exterminated.[122] Throughout this tumultuous decade with its many changes, one popular trend remained the same: the Russians, especially those living in urban areas, actively went 'to the movies', particularly the ones imported from America.[123] This ardent movie going during times of such hardship in Soviet Russia can be compared to the tremendous popularity of cinema in America during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

## I. BEFORE AND AFTER 1917: AMERICAN ADVENTURE SERIALS AND THE 'DAREDEVIL' PEARL WHITE

Russian fascination with American cinema pre-dated the Revolution. American films were first imported into Russia in 1915, and by 1916 they became

[122] Aleksandr Iakovlev's memoirs are a helpful source of information about this process. See Aleksandr Iakovlev, *Omut pamiati* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001).
[123] Ball, *Imagining America,* 91.

Russia's main foreign import.[124] From that time, American adventure serials enjoyed vast popularity among Russian audiences. Most of these serialized films were structured around an active female lead character, played by the 'serial queens' Pearl White, Cleo Madison, Kathlyn Williams, Ruth Roland, and Helen Holmes.[125] These fast-paced films abounded in chases and fight scenes and showed the latest American technology such as airplanes and automobiles. Of all the 'serial queens', Pearl White gripped the imagination of Russian viewers the most. [126]

The Russian press in the years preceding the Revolution documented the great popularity of American adventure and detective films. In 1917, M. Moravskaia wrote in *Zhurnal zhurnalov*,

> [Cinema's] calling is to take one away from everyday life, to let one forget it. And also to imitate life, to create an illusion of great activity, a mirage of a different, foreign [*ne nashei*], full life, which anyone can experience for a small price, without moving from their seat.[127]

A few years earlier, in 1915, a journalist in *Petrogradskii kurier* noted that the audiences enjoyed watching chases, 'sensational murders', and 'mind-boggling stunts' of imported films.[128] The combination of the modern, daring physicality of actors and actresses who performed the stunts, the fast pace of chase scenes that often

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[124] Boris S. Likhachev, 'Materialy k istorii kino v Rossii (1914-1916)', in *Iz istorii kino (Materialy i dokumenty),* vol. 3 (Moscow, 1960), pp. 65 and 86.
[125] For further information on the Russian critical reception of the 'serial queens' other than Pearl White, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 204-207.
[126] Among the Pearl White films shown in Russia prior to and soon after 1917 were *The Perils of Pauline* (USA, 1914), distributed in Russia under the name 'Pod gipnozom millionov'; *Exploits of Elaine* (USA, 1915) distributed in Russia as 'Tainy Niu-Iorka'; *The Iron Claw* (USA, 1916) distributed in Russia as 'Maska, kotoraia smeetsia'; *House of Hate* (USA, 1918), distributed in Russia as 'Dom nenavisti'; *Fatal Ring* (USA, 1917), distributed in Russia as 'Sviashchennyi brilliant'. See Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 61; Likhachev, 'Materialy k istorii kino v Rossii', p. 66; Elena Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', in *Kino i vremia*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1960), pp. 213-325.
[127] M. Moravskaia, 'Liubov'-usypitel'nitsa', *Zhurnal zhurnalov,* 9 (1917). My translation (of this and all following quotations from early Soviet cinema publications).
[128] *Petrogradskii kurier,* 580 (1915).

involved the latest technology, and the possibility of experiencing a different kind of life was what attracted wide numbers of male and female viewers to imported American films. While some journalists attributed these preferences to an 'unhealthy' psychology of the masses, others pointed out the healthy roots of these films' popularity. For example, Vladimir Zhabotinskii wrote in 1915,

> Cinema is alive mainly due to the drama of its 'sensational' contents. Its strength and attraction are the jumps from a plane into a car, the shooting of bandits on the roof of a courier train, and so on. [...] This popularity is, in essence, very healthy. It simply shows that *the degree of individuality has risen in Europe*. The human soul has become tired of the *fish-like life* that we lead in our police states; it wants, at least in pictures or on paper, to entertain itself with the smell of the physical struggle of strained muscles and blood.[129]

This telling analysis stressed not only the attraction to the speed and dynamism of modern American cinema, but also the newly arising Russian (as well as European) desire to see more individualized heroes in films, as well as the need for physical engagement and struggle. The contrast that Zhabotinskii, an intellectual and one of the main authors of a cadet newspaper,[130] perceives between the inactive, 'fish-like' existence in pre-revolutionary Russia and the dynamic individualism of American films not only demonstrates the reasons for the popularity of American cinema in Russia, but also points to some of the social and psychological reasons for the attraction to the revolutionary ethos among the young Russian intellectuals. There is a definite parallel between the sense of modernity and struggle embodied in American adventure detective films and the leftist discourse of the Russian Revolution. As Lev Kuleshov insightfully explained in his book *The Practice of Film Direction*, written in 1935, 'in our time [in the late 1910s and early 1920s] we were convinced that

[129] *Russkie vedomosti*, 210 (1915). My italics.
[130] Ginzburg, *Kinematografiia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii*, p. 239.

American montage invariably inculcated boldness and energy, indispensable to revolutionary struggle, to revolution.'[131]

Pearl White was one of the earliest of Hollywood celebrities, at the very beginning of the evolution of the star system.[132] In America, adventure serials were most popular with female audiences, who saw in their female stars the embodiment of the new, modern woman. The heroines of films such as *The Perils of Pauline* (USA, 1914), *The Exploits of Elaine* (USA, 1915), *Hazards of Helen* (USA, 1914), and *House of Hate* (USA, 1918) undertook thrilling adventures and possessed great physical strength, dexterity and courage.

Within the narrative of many of these films, the independence of the strong female heroines was usually curtailed by marriage at the end of the serial, reflecting the traditional view of a woman's inability to combine marriage and the life of adventure. However, in their professional careers the 'serial queens' enjoyed a lot more independence than their filmic heroines and were able to achieve just such a combination of family and professional career. Moreover, the women's filmic accomplishments were seen not only as skills honed for film cameras, but as deep-seated character traits. Their courage was genuine.[133] They were independent,[134] fit,

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[131] Lev Kuleshov, 'The Principles of Montage (from "The Practice of Film Direction")', in *Kuleshov on Film: Writings of Lev Kuleshov* ed. and trans. by Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 191.
[132] Shelley Stamp, 'An Awful Struggle Between Love And Ambition: Serial Heroines, Serial Stars and their Female Fans', in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 210-225 (p. 217).
[133] Ibid., 219.
[134] Although many of the heroines of the serials were shown getting married in the last installment of the series (see Stamp, 'An Awful Struggle'), they nevertheless exhibited an independent spirit during their adventures.

and daring and performed dangerous athletic feats. For American female audiences, adventure serial stars like Pearl White became models of strong modern femininity.[135]

As Lev Kuleshov argued in his 1922 article entitled 'Americanism', what most attracted Russian audiences to these and other American detective-adventure films, was their 'maximum amount of movement' and 'primitive heroism'.[136] While this 'primitive heroism' was often displayed by a female heroine, it did not lead to a formation of a primarily female fan base in Russia, unlike in America. For the male, as well as the female members of the Russian audience, these films were the only alternative to the slow, static, and psychology-driven native films made in the Russian style. The gender of the main character seemed to be of less importance than her exceptional daring and ability to perform physical stunts, along with the excitement of the suspense and fast pace of the narrative.

A group of menacing-looking American 'Indians' in feather headbands bring a white woman to the edge of a cliff. An intertitle announces, 'Let her destiny be fulfilled!' Meanwhile, a white man appears on horseback, and hurries towards the cliff with a lasso in his hands. Two 'Indians' drag the woman down the slope, while the white man is hurrying to her rescue, in a parallel action sequence. Another intertitle, reading 'A race with death', raises the perception of impending danger. The woman is pushed to run down the slope, and a huge, heavy boulder is released to roll behind her. The duration of each shot becomes much shorter (from the nine-second-long opening shot to shots lasting under two seconds each), intensifying the sense of

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[135] Ibid., 217.
[136] Lev Kuleshov, 'Americanism' in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 73.

risk and suspense. In a breathtaking wide shot, the woman runs down a steep slope, followed perilously close by the enormous boulder that is gathering speed. At the last moment, a lasso is thrown, and the woman is saved, barely escaping being crushed by the advancing boulder.

This is a scene from an episode of *The Perils of Pauline*, featuring Pearl White. In this particular episode, White's character, Pauline, is saved at the last minute by her fiancé, Harry. In many other serials, however, Pearl White's character was not simply an adventure-seeking 'damsel in distress' who had to be rescued by a man, but an active pursuer of outlaws (such as, for example, in *Pearl of the Army* (USA, 1914)), or even a 'good outlaw' or a positive 'con-woman' herself, in dangerous pursuit of riches and treasures (such as in *The Lightning Raider* (USA, 1919)). The episode from *The Perils of Pauline* described above is a good example of the 'intensity in the build-up of the action', 'maximum amount of movement', and 'primitive heroism' pointed out by Kuleshov.

A telling article in a 1926 issue of *Sovetskii ekran* vividly describes the popularity of the films with Pearl White among the general audience in a provincial town during the Civil War:

> For the first time we saw a woman as a sportsman, a horseback rider, and a boxer. [...] Back then people ate little, it was a hungry time. Clothes were worn out [...] There was no electricity, sunflower oil was burnt in house lamps. [...] People burnt *makukha* – pressed sunflower seeds, or smelly *kiziak*, cow manure made into bricks, in their *rumynka* stoves. But everyone went to see Pearl White. We started watching the film under Skoropadskii, continued under Petliura, and finished under the Bolsheviks. It was shown non-stop for two months, including the days of fighting. [...] No one touched *The Mysteries of New York* [*Exploits of Elaine*]. The film was winning over the victors.[137]

[137] L. Slavin, 'Pirl' Uait', *Sovetskii ekran*, 33 (1926), p. 9.

Immediately before the Revolution, and soon after the Civil War when American films were brought back onto Soviet screens in 1922,[138] adventure serials with Pearl White attracted large numbers of viewers, especially intellectuals. According to Semen Ginzburg, just before the Revolution Russian newspapers reported that the long queues to see *Exploits of Elaine* consisted purely of the 'clean' audience, meaning members of the middle and upper, rather than lower, classes. Around the same time, a cinema journal *Vestnik kinematografii* reported that whenever foreign detective films were shown, one could see among the audience members the best representatives of the intelligentsia: writers, professors, actors, and famous lawyers.[139]

Among those intellectuals, enamored of the American adventure films, were many of the future Soviet avant-garde filmmakers. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, most of them were still very young, and the excitement of fast-paced, heroic adventures on the silver screen, as well as on the pages of books, attracted them tremendously. This attraction was at the root of their interest in American cinema, which they studied in-depth, before embarking upon creating their own, new Soviet films.

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[138] According to Yuri Tsivian, 'after an interruption in film traffic caused by the Civil War, "serial queen" melodramas reappeared on Russian (now Soviet) screens in 1922.' See Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', pp. 40-41. In his article 'Neulovimye diavoliata', A. Maksimov states that in 1922, the Bolshevik government banned import of foreign films 'under the threat of criminal responsibility.' Maksimov does not provide a reference for this information, and contradicts the data presented by Tsivian in the above-mentioned article about imports of new American films in 1922. See A. Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 21 (1994), p. 57. Maksimov's data also contradicts that of Vance Kepley and Betty Kepley. See Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens, 1922-1931', p. 431 and p. 433.

[139] Ginzburg, *Kinematografiia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii,* pp. 211-212.

Memoirs of the Soviet avant-garde filmmakers are perhaps the best source that can provide us with clues about the role that American adventure serials played in their formation as film artists. According to Leonid Trauberg, around 1922 or earlier, he and Grigorii Kozintsev, along with their Moscow visitors Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Iutkevich, gathered in Petrograd for a seven-hour-long viewing marathon of six episodes of *The Iron Claw* (USA, 1916), starring Pearl White. Trauberg points out, very tellingly, that '[f]or a full five years Pearl White was our idol.'[140]

Grigorii Kozintsev wrote in his memoirs that the passion for American adventure serials was widespread. He recalled that intellectuals like Ilya Ehrenburg kept 'diligently' going to see episodes of *The Iron Claw,*[141] and that Eisenstein described these films as 'the radiance of a dynamic celebration'.[142] Kozintsev also described the spirit and attraction of adventure serials, in which Pearl White, in pursuit of (or escaping from) a terrible criminal, 'rushed with mad speed [*mchalas'*]' in automobiles and airplanes, or descended into the depths of the sea in a submarine, while 'something burned, exploded, and flew with dizzying speed'.[143] Perhaps the youth of the future Russian filmmakers and the natural desire of the young for activity, adventure and excitement were partially responsible for both their attraction

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[140] Leonid Trauberg, 'Tea for Two', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 16 (1992), p. 111.
[141] There exists some confusion over which adventure serial was distributed in Russia under the name 'Maska, kotoraia smeetsia': Yuri Tsivian points out that the commentators of Grigorii Kozintsev's collected works (vol. 3) mention *The Iron Claw* as the original American film (see Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 61); Natalia Nusinova quotes Leonid Trauberg who states that the American name for 'Maska, kotoraia smeetsia' was *The Perils of Pauline* (see Natalia Nusinova, 'Leonid Trauberg: Pamiati uchitelia', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 63 (2005)). However, the confusion is clarified by watching an episode of *The Iron Claw*, distributed recently on the *Lost Serials* DVD by The Serial Squad: the main male character of this film is, indeed, called the Laughing Mask. Thus, the film in question is, indeed, *The Iron Claw.*
[142] Grigorii Kozintsev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh,* vol. 1, *Glubokii ekran* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1982), p. 74.
[143] Ibid.

to the revolutionary ethos and to American adventure serials. Incorporation of dynamism, American editing devices, and positive American human traits (examples of which we shall discuss further on) into the films created by Soviet directors in the 1920s and 1930s was a reflection of their personal admiration of the dynamism of American cinema and the attractive traits of its modern, athletic and optimistic heroes.

The love for adventure serials went hand in hand with the admiration of adventure fiction, either American or Americanized Russian. Soviet film director Sergei Iutkevich recalled how he, as a thirteen-year-old boy, spent his breakfast money on the issues of a magazine called *Mir prikliuchenii* ("The World of Adventures"), and on pulp fiction featuring the adventures of Nick Carter (the Russian version of the American dime novel character of the same name). Iutkevich pointed out that knowledge of adventure fiction helped him understand the workings of an engaging narrative and the structure of dramaturgy. He recalled that Eisenstein had a similar view of contemporary pulp fiction (*chtivo*) and considered it important for any future film and theatre director to know the laws and structure of adventure and detective novels.[144]

The fondness for adventure fiction was closely connected with the interest in adventure films, as the future Soviet filmmakers were quickly turning from viewers and students into film directors in their own right, eager to learn the best devices that made American cinema popular. They applied that knowledge in order to further develop the art of cinema, eventually engaging in a kind of cinematic dialogue with

[144] Sergei Iutkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990), pp. 22-23. Iutkevich also lists several other writers of adventure fiction that were influential in his youth.

their American counterparts and making groundbreaking discoveries in the field of montage. Soviet filmmakers such as Lev Kuleshov often referred to American directors and film stars, including D.W. Griffith, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Charles Chaplin, as their 'great teachers'.[145] It is important to understand that the relationship was seen not as that of influence, but of learning and dialogue. I am grateful to Naum Kleiman for pointing out this important aspect of dialogue, which is very different from the workings of direct influences. In fact, such a dialogue between teachers (or works of art that have provided inspiration) and students in any artistic medium is at the basis of the vast majority of artistic achievements.

While it is widely known that Soviet avant-garde filmmakers considered the above-mentioned American directors and stars as their teachers in the art of filmmaking, the role of American adventure serials from the 1910s, such as the ones featuring Pearl White, is often overlooked by scholars. It is important to remember this love for American adventure films and fiction among Soviet avant-garde filmmakers when analyzing their own films made in the 1920s. We shall return to this question later in this chapter.[146]

As was mentioned earlier, adventure films with Pearl White and other 'serial queens' were attractive for Russian viewers of both sexes not only because of their stunts and the speed of action, but also because they portrayed a new kind of modern hero(ine). While being a woman, Pearl White embodied attributes that could qualify as either male or female heroic traits: she was daring, physically agile and exceptionally brave, possessing a sense of adventure and performing her dizzying

[145] Lev Kuleshov, 'Konrad Veidt', in *Sobraniie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol.1, *Teoriia, kritika, pedagogika* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), p. 93.
[146] See p. 64 below.

stunts herself. On top of that, White's heroines possessed mastery over modern technology including automobiles, trains and airplanes. 'All over the world [Pearl White's] name has become a synonym for courage and daring', reported *American Magazine* in 1921.[147] This was certainly true in Russia in the years immediately preceding and following the Revolution.

Films with Pearl White portrayed an empowered heroine whose characterization on the screen was different from traditional portrayals of either a male hero or a female heroine in pre-revolutionary Russian cinema, at least in the films geared towards the middle class audiences. According to Oleg Usenko, the majority of positive protagonists portrayed in those films (especially in melodramas) were martyrs, people that courageously overcame all trials and tribulations, while at the same time embodying the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice.[148]

The above-mentioned positive qualities were characteristic not only of the female heroines, but also of the male heroes of American detective adventure films. For example, the beloved Laughing Mask of the Russian intellectuals (the male protagonist in *The Iron Claw*) possessed similarly heroic traits of daring, courage, and resourcefulness, as well as the skill of performing physical stunts.

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[147] Stamp, 'An Awful Struggle', p. 218.

[148] Oleg Usenko, 'Zhiznennye idealy i normy povedeniia russkikh v "nemom" igrovom kino (1909-1919)', in *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino* (Moscow: Znak, 2004), p. 41. Note the similarity between these positive cinematic heroes and the positive hero of the Socialist Realist novel. The self-sacrificing martyrs were mainly the positive heroes of melodramas, created for the middle and upper class audiences. At the same time, the protagonists of some of the detective films made specifically for the lower classes, such as *Anton Krechet* and others, were a lot more enterprising and daring, with a smaller degree of self-sacrifice. See Ginzburg, *Kinematografiia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii,* p. 211.

The only surviving episode of *The Iron Claw* to date is episode VII, entitled 'The Hooded Helper.'[149] In this serial, Pearl White plays Margery Golden, a young woman who is pursued by the 'criminal mastermind' Jules Legar, otherwise known as the Iron Claw. Margery is rescued and protected from Legar by the Laughing Mask, 'the mysterious enemy of criminals', as he is described in the intertitles. In the surviving episode, Pearl White's character appears quite passive and is of secondary importance to the action, as compared to the feats of ingenuity on behalf of her protector, the Laughing Mask.

Described in the intertitles as 'ever resourceful', the Laughing Mask outwits the Iron Claw and his criminal gang through a number of clever devices, including making a copy of an important document in disappearing ink, and disappearing himself after discreetly exchanging clothes with another man. His ingenuity is accompanied by physical dexterity, almost matching that of Pearl White herself and exemplified in a scene where the Laughing Mask has to climb up two floors of a building's outer wall and make his way into an open window.

The actor playing the Laughing Mask, Harry L. Fraser, was not revealed in the serial's credits (instead, his name was replaced by three question marks, as a suspense-building device), and thus probably remained unknown to the Russian audiences. After his role in *The Iron Claw*, Fraser went on to direct and act in a number of westerns in the 1930s and 1940s, including *'Neath the Arizona Skies*

[149] This episode was recently released on *The Lost Serial* DVD (produced by Eric Stedman, The Serial Squadron, 2006). The DVD release includes thirty-five episodes from serials dating between 1912 and 1929.

(USA, 1934) and *Randy Rides Alone* (USA, 1934) with John Wayne.[150] Thus, there existed a direct connection between the Laughing Mask character in the 1916 adventure serial so admired by the Russian audiences and the later American western films with their classic cowboy hero[151] - whether or not the Russian viewers were aware of this connection.

In a 1923 issue of *Kino*, a contemporary Russian critic attempted to explain the popularity of American adventure cinema, focusing on the human qualities of its characters:

> Lively and precise movement, expressive gesture, a human sportsman [*chelovek-sportsmen*], instead of the ordinary European actor-intellectual with frail muscles; a plot based on courage, dexterity, resourcefulness, and struggle with obstacles; the simple morality of a well-trained, healthy person-animal – that is a whole philosophy of life-based wisdom [...], a new psychology. [...] We see in the popularity of these films among the masses, and especially among the young, a sign of a revolution in tastes and worldview, and a serious ideological paradigm shift.[152]

One can easily perceive, in this description of agile and ingenious American cinematic heroes, the popular characters of Pearl White and Fraser's ever-resourceful Laughing Mask. While the article contained some negative and condescending connotations, it nevertheless admitted the higher popularity of American 'sportsman' heroes as compared to the European (and pre-revolutionary Russian) 'actors-intellectuals with frail muscles'. The article ended with announcing the demise of the old, pre-revolutionary Russian cinema, and called for the new Soviet cinema to be

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[150] See Harry L. Fraser entry in the Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com [accessed 12 March 2009].

[151] For more information on the critical reception of imported American westerns in early Soviet Russia, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 202-204. Among actors in American westerns most popular in Soviet Russia were William Hart, Tom Mix, and Sessue Hayakawa.

[152] Veronin, 'Kriticheskie zametki. Po povodu tekushchego repertuara', *Kino,* 1/5 (January, 1923), p. 11. The first name of the author is not indicated in the publication.

based on different plots and working methods, as well as different heroes, implying that these new heroes should be modeled on the energetic and resourceful characters of popular American adventure films. [153]

As we have already seen in the Introduction to this dissertation, the Soviet Americanization discourse of the 1920s included the emphasis on 'American' qualities as an inspiration for forging the New Soviet Man and Woman. An ideal American in the Russian imagination possessed such qualities as energy and ingenuity, as well as self-reliance, physical fitness and technological skills. We have also already seen that such an image of ideal 'American' qualities, which were to be cultivated by new Soviet citizens, stemmed both from American literature (such as the novels of Jack London and others)[154] and imported American films of the 1910s and 1920s. It is important therefore to consider the 'stunt queen' Pearl White and her acting partner Harry Fraser in the role of the Laughing Mask as being among the first American film actors who embodied, for the Russian audiences, the admired 'American' qualities that, throughout the 1920s and indeed the 1930s, were encouraged in the formation of the New Soviet Men and Women.

Pearl White's female heroines and the male Laughing Mask shared the quality of daring: Pearl White, referred to as a 'daredevil' by her American fans,[155] dared to perform dizzying physical feats, whereas the Laughing Mask dared to outwit the menacing criminals. This quality echoed the Nietzschean concept of the 'daring man' discussed earlier, which was also an important part of the New Soviet Man discourse in the 1920s, and which will be further discussed in the following pages.

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[153] Ibid.
[154] For a full treatment of this topic, see Chapter 2 below, p. 156.
[155] Stamp, 'An Awful Struggle', p. 219.

As early as the mid-1910s, film stars (of foreign and Russian cinema) were often perceived by the Russian viewers as role models. A 1917 Russian newspaper report claimed that cinema provided examples for imitation.[156] This was similar to the situation in America, where, as Paula Maranz Cohen has argued, 'the star system as it developed for movies was not about heroes and heroines but about role models and friends.'[157]

In addition to becoming role models for individual viewers, Pearl White, Fraser in his role as the Laughing Mask, and other stuntmen of imported American films became prototypes of the new positive heroes in early Soviet films. The fact that avant-garde filmmakers admired Pearl White and American adventure detective serials provides an insight into the roots of development of the positive filmic hero in the Soviet cinema of the 1920s, as we shall see in the following chapter. Additionally, the strong female characters in American adventure serials exerted a noticeable influence on portrayals of the new, modern Soviet woman in Soviet films of the 1920s and 1930s, as we shall see in Chapter 3 below.[158]

## II. After 1922: Soviet Reception of American Films

While importation nearly ceased between 1917 and 1921, in 1922 Lunacharsky and Lenin authorized the Commissariat of Foreign Trade to import vast numbers of

[156] *Moskovskie vedomosti,* 53 (1917).
[157] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 135.
[158] See pp. 186-247 below.

foreign films, in order to use revenues to rebuild the Soviet film industry.[159] American adventure serials, such as the ones with Pearl White, reappeared in 1922.[160] For the next five years, hundreds of new American films were brought into Russia and shown in Soviet theatres. In 1926, the numbers of imported films went down,[161] and in 1928 all foreign films, as well as Soviet films deemed 'bourgeois' in their content, were ordered to be pulled from Soviet screens after the Party Conference on Cinema Affairs.[162] Imports were fully banned in 1931.[163] Between 1922 and 1928, 746 American film titles were imported into the Soviet Union, as compared to 393 German and 180 French ones, and to 388 Soviet features produced in the same period.[164] Moreover, cinemas showing American films experienced consistently packed houses,[165] and American features often ran at least for two to three months, as opposed to much shorter runs of the Soviet features.[166] The biggest box-office hit of the 1920s was Douglas Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad* (USA, 1924), which ran for one year in Moscow's largest theatre.[167] I will examine its success at length in the following pages.[168] Other highly popular American films included Fairbanks' *The*

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[159] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 431 and p. 433.
[160] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 39.
[161] Viktor Shklovsky, 'Chemu nuzhno udivliat'sia?', *Sovetskii ekran*, 10 (1926), p. 3. Shklovsky writes, 'We need to film not only well, but also a lot. Importation of foreign films has been limited.'
[162] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918-1935*, p. 162.
[163] Denise J. Youngblood, '"Americanitis": The Amerikanshchina in Soviet Cinema', *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 19.4 (Winter 1992), pp. 148-156 (p. 151).
[164] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 431. Note that the figure Kepley and Kepley present for the number of Soviet features releases does not appear to include the films produced by private film studios. Compare, for example, with the information given in Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, pp. 423-427, and Oleg Usenko, 'Zhiznennye idealy i normy povedeniia', pp. 35-36.
[165] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 436.
[166] Youngblood, 'Americanitis', pp. 149-150.
[167] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 437.
[168] See pp. 90-118 below.

*Mark of Zorro* (USA, 1920) and *Robin Hood* (USA, 1922) the *Tarzan* movies,[169] forty-five Charlie Chaplin films,[170] the Buster Keaton films including *The General* (USA, 1926), the Harold Lloyd films, and the eleven Mary Pickford features,[171] among others. Additionally, American actors admired in Russia in the first decade after the Revolution included Lillian Gish, Priscilla Dean,[172] Dorothy Dalton, William Hart, Norma Talmadge,[173] as well as a number of other actors.[174] A telling early advertisement for American films soon to be imported into Russia appeared in a 1923 issue of *Kino*:

> Goskino Advertisement: We have signed an agreement with the largest American organization 'The United [Artists] Film Co. Ltd.' For a number of the biggest American hits with participation of: Chaplin, Talmadge, Pickford, Gish, King Baggot, Shorty Hamilton, Anita Keller, Douglas Fairbanks, Bessie Barriscale, Mae Marsh, Fatty and others.[175]

While Pearl White and a number of other 'serial queens' were well known to Soviet audiences since before the Revolution, this advertisement, which appeared following a five-year interruption in film imports, introduced a number of new American stars

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[169] According to Kepley and Kepley, these films included *The Romance of Tarzan* (USA, 1918), *Return of Tarzan, The Revenge of Tarzan* (USA, 1920), and *Daughter of Tarzan*. See Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 437.

[170] This figure is based on the listings provided by Kartseva (see Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie fil'my v sovetskom prokate') and contradicts the figure given by Kepley and Kepley, who mention forty imported Chaplin films (see Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', p. 435-437).

[171] Based on Kartseva's 'Amerikanskie fil'my v sovetskom prokate'; see also Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', pp 435-437; Ball, *Imagining America,* pp. 93-95; Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 150.

[172] For a further discussion of Priscilla Dean's reception in Russia, see Chapter 3 below, p. 198.

[173] *Kino*, 1(5) (January 1923) – see advertisements of films with Ruth Roland and Norma Talmadge.

[174] For more information on American actors popular in Soviet Russia in the 1920s, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 196-248, and *Zvezdy nemogo kino*, ed. by Vladimir Vesterman (Moscow: Ast Zebra E, 2008). There were also a number of European film stars admired in Russia at the time.

[175] *Kino*, 5/9 (October-December 1923), p. 49.

and proceeded to list some new films that were 'on their way and will arrive in Moscow in the next few days'.[176]

### i. Popular Preferences

At the time when Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein, were developing their new theories of montage, the Soviet movie-going public preferred American comedies and detective-adventure films to Soviet avant-garde films, many of them accused of being 'unintelligible to the millions'.[177] A 1926 Soviet study of film preferences among young people found that the young workers had few positive comments about the new, ideologically correct Soviet films, while they praised American adventure and 'stunt' films.[178] In fact, some Marxist American journalists of the time were disturbed by the pro-American taste of the Soviet audiences.[179] It is not surprising then that these American films left a strong legacy in Soviet popular culture.

Among the reasons for such popularity with the general public Youngblood lists the fact that American films depended on action to attract viewer interest; that they provided better escapist entertainment than did Soviet films; that they were seen as more 'life-affirming' and happy than Soviet films, and relied on the famous device

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), p. 39.
[178] Vladimir Vainshtok and Dmitrii Iakobson, *Kino i molodezh'* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), p. 18.
[179] Gary Carey, *Doug and Mary: A Biography of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), p. 172.

of a happy ending (called *kheppi-end* in Russian);[180] and, most importantly for our study, that 'Americans really knew how to create a hero', using charismatic actors for that purpose (such as, for example, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford), while Soviet heroes in films of the 1920s were not as interesting.[181] In the following pages we will examine the role of some American film stars in creating a cinematic role model for the new Soviet citizens.

There were a number of additional reasons for American films' popularity with the Soviet viewers, not mentioned by Youngblood. Firstly, American films often had a spectacular quality, due to further cinematic technological advances and thanks at least in part to larger budgets than were available to Soviet filmmakers at the time. Secondly, the popularity of American adventure films reflected a larger trend of fascination with the adventure and detective genre in literary fiction (both American and Russian). And thirdly, the film stars acting in these films often portrayed positive hero(in)es who possessed the admired 'American' qualities discussed above, such as ingenuity, energy, efficiency, and optimism, which were seen as exemplary human traits.

### ii. Popular and Professional Journals

The year 1922, when importation of American and other foreign films was authorized by Lenin, was also marked by a revival of professional and popular cinema journals

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[180] However, as Tsivian points out, the *kheppi-end* was often omitted in Soviet re-edited versions of American films in the 1920s. See Yuri Tsivian, 'The Wise and Wicked Game: Re-editing and Soviet Film Culture of the 1920s', *Film History,* 8 (1996), pp. 327-343.
[181] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, pp. 55-56. This is not entirely true, as Russian actors such as Batalov and Il'inskii enjoyed wide popularity and were considered the first Soviet film 'stars'.

and magazines, whose numbers grew throughout the decade.[182] In 1925, Soviet readers could choose among four cinema periodicals: *Sovetskoe kino*, *Kino-zhurnal ARK* that was later renamed *Kino-front* (both of these targeting mainly film professionals), *Kino* (that was entitled *Kino-gazeta* before 1925 and that included articles of interest to professionals, while also targeting the wider audience), and *Sovetskii ekran* (mainly targeting the wider audience).[183] In addition, *Kino-fot*, the journal of Constructivist artists, and *LEF* and *Novyi LEF* of the futurists often included articles relating to the cinema, such as the manifestoes of the kinoks.[184] Earlier in the decade, other cinema periodicals included *Kino-zhizn'* (that existed between 1922 and 1923) and *Kino-nedelia* (which ceased publication in 1925).

These cinema periodicals abounded in references to America and American cinema. If we take at random several issues of such publications as *Kino, Kino-zhurnal ARK,* or *Sovetskii ekran,* published between 1923 and 1928, we can see the large number of articles dedicated to American film directors and popular film stars such as D.W. Griffith, Fairbanks, Pickford, Chaplin and others; announcements of American film releases in Russia; and sometimes reviews of the latest American releases within America that had not yet reached Soviet Russia.[185] Some of the periodicals, especially prior to 1926, had a regular section devoted to foreign films: for example, *Kino* had a section entitled 'Abroad', and within it had a subsection 'America' which included publications about American cinema. As early as 1923, the 'Abroad' section of one issue of *Kino* opened with a three-page-long article entitled

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[182] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918-1935,* p. 2.
[183] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses,* p. 23.
[184] Published in *LEF*, 3 (1923).
[185] See, for example, *Kino* 5/9 (1923); *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 1 (1925); *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 4-5 (1925); and *Sovetskii ekran*, 14/24 (1925).

'American Cinema and Its Actors' that was followed by an article entitled '[Henry] Ford Plans to Get Involved in Cinema', and then another one with the title 'In the Country of Unlimited Possibilities', which, again, dealt with American cinema.[186] The strong emphasis on American cinema somewhat diminished in the year 1926,[187] but a number of related articles continued to appear regularly between 1926 and 1928.

*Sovetskii ekran*, too, featured a vast number of articles about the work of American film directors and stars. Nearly every second page of the mid-twenties issues of this popular magazine, especially prior to 1926, had references to and articles about American cinema. Similar to *Kino*, it included a section entitled 'News from the West', although references to American cinema were not confined to that section. A particular favourite topic in this popular periodical was explaining how the various stunts (*triuki*) in American films were achieved.[188]

Because this publication targeted a wider audience, its ideological content appears to have been more controlled than in the professional cinema periodicals, resulting in a larger number of articles referring to the negative sides of the American capitalist system, as opposed to the largely positive portrayals in the professional journals. Those articles in *Sovetskii ekran* that dealt purely with the technological achievements of American cinema were worded positively; however, others were often written with an overt anti-capitalist didacticism, and sometimes ended on an

[186] *Kino*, 5/9 (1923), pp. 38-41.
[187] Shklovsky, "Chemu nuzhno udivliat'sia?", p. 3.
[188] *Sovetskii ekran*, 6(16) (May 1925).

anti-capitalist note, reminding the readers of the ideological differences between Soviet Russia and America.[189]

The professional cinema journal *Kino-zhurnal ARK* had sections entitled 'Cinema in the West' and 'News about Western Cinema Technology'. One of its issues published in 1925 contained a list of cinema periodicals published abroad, including their postal address,[190] which gives us an idea of the potential for communication between Soviet filmmakers who had command of English and the listed foreign periodicals.

Practically every issue of these Soviet film periodicals, from 1923 until 1926, abounded in advertisements of the imported American films, using such luring phrases as 'exciting plots' (*zakhvatyvaiushchie siuzhety*)[191] and 'outstandingly interesting pictures' (*iskliuchitel'nye po interesu kartiny*).[192] The advertisements referred to American films and to the most popular Soviet films (often the ones made in the 'American' style and adventure genre) as *boeviki,* which in the context of the 1920s translated as 'hits'. This phenomenon reflects the fascination with America and American cinema among the general population, as well as among the filmmakers.

### iii. Bolshevik Officials: Importation Policies

The press-coined terms *amerikanshchina* and *inostranshchina* had both positive and negative meanings in the context of the 1920s. While the term *inostranshchina* in

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[189] See, for example, *Sovetskii ekran,* 1(11) (March 1925); *Sovetskii ekran,* 2(12) (March 1925).
[190] *Kino-zhurnal ARK,* 1 (1925), pp. 42-43.
[191] *Kino,* 1/5 (January 1923), pp. 50-51.
[192] Ibid.

particular appears to have had some pejorative connotations,[193] the term *amerikanshchina* was arguably a lot more positive. We can see this very clearly in the words of Leon Trotsky, who wrote in 1923, 'there is also a very important moral and by no means sentimental factor easing our cooperation with the United States of America. The words *Americanism* and *Americanization* are used in our newspapers and technical journals in an altogether sympathetic way, and by no means in the sense of reproach.'[194] In this context, the Bolshevik officials did not seem too concerned about the 'ideological dangers'[195] of importing hundreds of American films (let alone the possibility of American 'cultural imperialism' perceived by Youngblood).[196] On the contrary, they promoted such importation throughout the early and mid-1920s. We have already noted that American films noticeably outnumbered both the Soviet-produced films and films imported from other countries. The officials did make sure that the ideological messages of these films were at least somewhat suitable to the Soviet audience, by setting up a system of re-editing the imported films in the Montage Bureau.[197]

It may still seem somewhat strange that the Bolshevik state allowed such large numbers of American films to be imported into Soviet Russia. However, in addition to the general positive attitudes to America, and the temporary loosening of political and ideological controls during NEP, there exists a purely economic explanation. In

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[193] Youngblood argues that any Russian word ending with the suffix *–shchina* has a negative connotation. However, arguably, both terms are ambiguous and could be interpreted both negatively and positively, especially given the positive connotations of the adjective 'American' in the 1920s. See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses,* p. 50.
[194] Quoted in Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 241.
[195] Contrary to Youngblood's assumption in 'Americanitis'. See Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 149.
[196] Ibid., p. 148.
[197] Tsivian, 'The Wise and Wicked Game: Re-Editing and Soviet Film Culture of the 1920s', pp. 327-343.

the early 1920s, supplies of raw film stock were scant and the Soviet film industry had a hard time holding its own. The Commissar of Education Anatolii Lunacharsky then decided that in order to make the Soviet cinema into a viable economic institution, funds had to be raised through imports of highly popular films that would collect large sums at the box office. These films were purchased rather cheaply and then exhibited at relatively high prices to the Soviet audiences.[198]

Jay Leyda provides the following little-known curious fact from the early days of Soviet cinema's existence. During the years of the Civil War, pre-revolutionary Russian cinema theatres and studios stood nearly in ruins, most of them abandoned by their previous owners or lacking funds to operate properly. In order to revive the Soviet film industry (the importance of which to the cause of Bolshevik propaganda was already widely recognized), Lenin suggested looking for industrial support from abroad. In May 1922, an American lawyer, Charles Recht, was invited to visit a dilapidated film studio in Moscow, and had to listen to 'pleas for technical equipment of any sort, for any discarded or outworn American films'.[199] In return for helping rebuild the Soviet film industry, American film companies were offered an opportunity to make films in Russia 'with no further outlay of capital'. The first person to agree to do this was Joseph Schenk; however, no agreement was reached.[200]

Just as America itself became a trope for modernity and successful progress, American cinema became a 'measuring stick of success' for Soviet filmmakers. Youngblood points out that when a Soviet film was popular with the critics and the

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[198] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens', pp. 433-434.
[199] Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 162.
[200] Ibid.

audiences, it was praised as being 'as well made as' an American film.[201] However, it would be wrong to assume, along with Youngblood, that this indicated a 'cultural inferiority complex' of the Soviet filmmakers, critics, and viewers.[202] Rather, American cinematic devices, including dynamic editing and filming techniques, as well as the positive qualities of American filmic heroes, were actively used as part of the overall early Soviet propensity for cultural 'self-improvement' and as one source of inspiration, amongst a number of others, upon which the new Soviet society and the new identity of its citizens were to be built.

Hansen posits that Hollywood films were popular in various countries around the world partially because they 'advanced new possibilities of social identity and cultural styles'.[203] Therefore, some of the American films that were immensely popular with Soviet audiences, such as Douglas Fairbanks' *Thief of Bagdad* (1924) and other highest-grossing American films, should be examined in terms of their role in the shaping of the new Soviet identity, as opposed to the old, pre-revolutionary, imperial Russian identity. From this point of view, the effect on early Soviet audiences and filmmakers of imported American films and film stars who represented certain positive American qualities, can be seen as revolutionary.

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[201] Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 151.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses', p. 68.

## III. Avant-garde Filmmakers' Response to American Cinema

Contrary to Denise Youngblood's assumption that early Soviet filmmakers expressed serious concerns about the '"unfair" competition'[204] presented to them by the vast numbers of imported American films, there is a lot of evidence that Soviet filmmakers, especially the avant-gardists such as Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and the FEKSy Kozintsev and Trauberg, were greatly fond of the work of American filmmakers, just as the general audiences were. Hansen has argued that, 'hyperbolically speaking, one might say that Russian cinema became Soviet cinema by going through a process of Americanisation.'[205] The avant-garde filmmakers' relationship with American cinema needs to be examined in order to better understand their role in this process.

The fondness of Kuleshov, Kozintsev, Trauberg, Eisenstein, and Iutkevich for the 'lower genres' of detective and adventure serials and westerns has already been noted.[206] Among other notable connections between American cinema and the Soviet avant-garde cinema of the 1920s was the inspiration drawn by the Soviet directors from the films of D.W. Griffith and from the slapstick comedy genre. American montage and the general dynamism of plot construction (two elements that became a kind of a launching pad for the discoveries of Soviet avant-gardists such as Kuleshov, Eisenstein and Vertov), as well as thematic references to America, especially in films of Lev Kuleshov, were accompanied by the inspiration drawn from positive American film hero representations (the main focus of this thesis). In the following

[204] Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 149.
[205] Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses', p. 61.
[206] See p. 41-54 above.

pages, I will concentrate on the role of montage, dynamism, and the comedy genre, and the specific cases of D.W. Griffith, Richard Barthelmess, and Charlie Chaplin, in the development of the Soviet avant-garde cinema.

### i. D.W. Griffith and Richard Barthelmess

The role of the films of D.W. Griffith, and in particular *Intolerance* (1916), in the formation of the Soviet avant-garde montage aesthetics is well documented.[207] While pre-revolutionary Russian distributors refused to show *Intolerance* in Russia based on their belief that the film would not be understood by Russian viewers,[208] its post-Revolutionary screenings, first in Petrograd in 1918 and then in Moscow in 1919, were a great success.[209] *Intolerance* was praised by the Bolshevik officials for its social commentary, while the leftist Soviet filmmakers recognized the ideological potential of Griffith's parallel editing technique.

Vance Kepley, Jr. has pointed out that the film was 'as important to [the Soviet filmmakers] for its flaws as for its virtues'[210]: the main flaw of Griffith's film was seen in the fact that, while using the groundbreaking device of parallel editing, the American filmmaker failed to represent history as progressive and dialectical, and instead showed it as cyclical, with the continuous repetition of injustice. According to Eisenstein's analysis, *Intolerance* remained 'a combination of four different stories,

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[207] See, for example, Sergei Eisenstein, 'Dikkens, Griffit i my', in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968), pp. 129-180; Vance Kepley, Jr., '*Intolerance* and the Soviets: A Historical Investigation', in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 51-59; Naum Kleiman, 'Kadr kak iacheika montazha', in *Formula finala: statii, vystupleniia, besedy* (Moscow: Eizenshtein-centr, 2004), pp. 254-289.

[208] Ginzburg, *Kinematografiia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii*, p. 213, n.1.

[209] Kepley, '*Intolerance* and the Soviets', p. 53.

[210] Ibid., p. 58.

rather than a fusion of four phenomena into a single imagist generalization.'[211] In order to amend the film's shortcomings, its screenings in Soviet Russia were preceded by a live, dramatized prologue that allowed for an 'ideological improvement' of the film.[212]

Griffith's device of parallel editing was undoubtedly the largest influence on Soviet montage filmmakers, although this influence did not result in imitation but, rather, in further development of the Soviet montage aesthetics. In his article 'Dikkens, Griffit i my', Eisenstein points out that, when using montage in *Intolerance* and other films, Griffith 'remains at the *descriptive* and *subjective* level; nowhere does he attempt, through *juxtaposition* of shots, to work on the level of *meaning* and *image*.'[213] This descriptiveness was not enough for Eisenstein and other Soviet montage filmmakers: '*In contrast to the parallelism and the alternating use of close-ups of American cinema, our cinema offers a unity of these elements in fusion: the MONTAGE TROPE.*'[214] According to Eisenstein, Griffith did not understand that the most important aspect of montage was its metaphorical rather than purely descriptive possibilities, achieved through juxtaposition of shots.[215]

Naum Kleiman further explains that the difference between Griffith's method and that of Soviet montage filmmakers was both the ideological application and the function of montage: Soviet filmmakers used it as a 'meaning-making structure of the

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[211] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form,* p. 243.
[212] Kepley, '*Intolerance* and the Soviets', p. 54.
[213] Eisenstein, 'Dikkens, Griffit i my', p. 168.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.

spectacle [film]', rather than purely a device of psychological and plot development.[216]

In 'Dikkens, Griffit i my', Eisenstein discusses a number of other elements of Griffith's filmmaking technique that had been important to Soviet montage cinema. Among them, in addition to parallel editing, are Griffith's pioneering use of the close-up (Eisenstein points out the differences between Griffith's use of this device and its use by the Soviet leftist filmmakers)[217]; the urban dynamic tempo of some of his films, and the 'provincial' intimacy of others[218]; Griffith's use of flashbacks[219]; and his detailed and specific hero characterizations (*'neobychainaia rel'efnost' v obrisovke personazhei'*).[220]

According to M. Bleiman, Griffith's montage aesthetics was responsible for the development of a new system of acting, as it allowed actors to portray characters in development and to reflect their psychological depth.[221] Vera Kuznetsova points out that nearly all stars of American cinema of the 1910s and 1920s had worked with Griffith.[222] Among them was Richard Barthelmess, who acted in Griffith's *Way Down East* (USA, 1920) and *Broken Blossoms* (USA, 1919), imported into Soviet Russia in the 1920s, and who was admired by Soviet leftist filmmakers and film critics, more

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[216] Naum Kleiman, 'Effekt Eizenshteina', in *Formula finala*, pp. 185-216 (p. 194). See this article for an insightful and detailed analysis of Griffith's montage and of what Kleiman calls 'Griffith's effect'.
[217] Eisenstein, 'Dikkens, Griffit i my', pp. 142, 152, 165, and 168.
[218] Ibid., p. 146 and 162.
[219] Ibid., 152-153.
[220] Ibid., p. 147.
[221] Quoted in Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 199.
[222] Ibid.

so than by the general public.[223] Il'ia Trauberg saw the reasons for the cool reception of Barthelmess by Soviet viewers in the actor's strict and reserved acting style.[224]

Nevertheless, leftist filmmakers and film critics admired the decisiveness, energy, and 'typically American determination bordering on stubbornness' of the heroes portrayed by Barthelmess.[225] Leonid Trauberg explained the actor's popularity among Soviet filmmakers by the realism of his acting that stemmed from his work with Griffith.[226] Soviet filmmakers also valued the heroic, unsentimental way in which Barthelmess worked in the genre of melodrama. A member of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, Petr Sobolevskii, considered Barthelmess his teacher; according to Sobolevskii, melodrama as a genre was considered by members of FEKS as an 'embodiment of courage and strength of spirit, of nobility and purity, as the battle and the victory of good over evil.'[227]

Among Soviet admirers of Barthelmess was Sergei Eisenstein. An American journalist Betty Ross, who interviewed him in Moscow, wrote that, when asked about his favourite American stars, Eisenstein named Barthelmess (along with Gloria Swanson and Barbara la Marr). The journalist recounted Eisenstein's emotion when speaking about Barthelmess and referred to the actor as Eisenstein's 'screen idol'.[228] Ross quoted Eisenstein as saying,

> I am deeply interested in [Barthelmess]. He possesses a wonderful, calm acting technique. One sees something of a juggler in him, and not only his

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[223] Ibid., p. 222.
[224] Il'ia Trauberg, *Amerikanskie kino-aktery*, vol. 1 (Leningrad, 1927), p. 23.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Leonid Trauberg, *Devid Uork Griffit* (Moscow, 1981), p. 151.
[227] Petr Sobolevskii, *Iz zhizni kinoaktera* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 11-12.
[228] Betty Ross, 'Glavnyi rezhisser Evropy edet v Ameriku', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 84 (2007), pp. 155-160.

> heroes impress, but also his subtle work with his hands, his gestures. I don't know any other actor who could do that.[229]

When asked to list his favourite American films, Eisenstein included Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* with Barthelmess in the lead role, as well as another film with Barthelmess, Henry King's *Tol'able David* (USA, 1921).[230]

### ii. Lev Kuleshov's *Amerikanshchina*

An earlier and arguably more important influence than Griffith's *Intolerance* on the future Soviet avant-garde filmmakers came from the American adventure and detective films mentioned above. Between 1916 and 1919, when Russian cinema was nationalized, Russian production companies that wanted to boost the popularity and box office success of their films were faced with the American alternative to Russian filmmaking methods.[231] As Yuri Tsivian has pointed out, the pre-revolutionary Russian style of filmmaking was based primarily on the aesthetics of immobility, with static camera angles and as little physical motion by the actors as possible.[232] This was a direct opposite of what became known in Russia as 'American montage' and 'American shots', the terms that described short duration of shots, rapid editing, and economy of visual means within each shot.[233] The popularity of American adventure serials prompted some Russian production companies, prior to 1917, to start producing low-budget adventure films. For example, some smaller production companies such as Drankov, Libkin and Prodalent, started making such films as early

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[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 39.
[232] Yuri Tsivian, 'Early Russian Cinema: Some Observations', in *Inside the Film Factory*, pp. 7-30.
[233] See Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', pp. 39-45.

as 1915. Russian film reviewers at the time identified these films as a Russian variety of 'Americanism'.[234] This trend developed further under the Bolshevik regime in the 1920s, in the general atmosphere of admiration for modern American culture and technology.[235]

The first Russian filmmaker to have recognized the theoretical and practical importance of montage as cinema's defining element and the chief reason for the popularity of American adventure films was Lev Kuleshov.[236] Among scholars of Soviet cinema, Kuleshov is forever associated with the term 'Amerikanshchina' (translated by Ronald Levaco as 'Americanitis'[237]), the title of Kuleshov's article published in 1922 in the journal *Kino-fot*.[238] As we have already noted, in this article Kuleshov analyzed the reasons behind the wide popularity of American films, which he saw in their 'maximum amount of movement', the 'primitive heroism' of characters, an 'organic link with contemporary life', and what he called 'American shots': the shots that included 'only the element of movement without which the

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[234] Ibid., p. 39.
[235] For analysis of some early Soviet adventure films, see Chapter 2 below, pp. 126-144.
[236] This fact has been debated by Mikhail Yampolsky, who has argued that the term 'montage' was first used by Vladimir Gardin and then by Valentin Turkin in the late 1910s and early 1920s, in the context of the Delsarte-Dalcroze-Volkonskii method of training film actors. However, Yampolsky overlooks the fact that Kuleshov had made *Proekt inzhenera Praita (Engineer Prite's Project)* (1918), where he applied the principles of American montage, prior to meeting Gardin in the summer of 1918. In his writings, Kuleshov refers to having written about montage as the main means of affecting the viewer in 1916, two years prior to meeting Gardin. See Mikhail Yampolsky, 'Kuleshov's Experiments and the New Anthropology of the Actor', in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 31-50; Lev Kuleshov, 'Iskusstvo kino', in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), p. 167.
[237] *Kuleshov on Film: Writings of Lev Kuleshov*, ed. and transl. by Ronald Levaco (Berkeley, 1974).
[238] The most frequently cited English translation appears as 'Americanism' in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*, ed. by in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 72.

necessary action would not take place', or close-ups of action.[239] Interestingly, in an earlier version of the same article, entitled 'The Banner of Cinematography' and written in 1920, Kuleshov used a more positive expression 'heroic romanticism' in the place of the more derogatory 'primitive heroism'. The difference between the two terms has not been noted by scholars and is an important one for this thesis, which focuses on the development and roots of hero representations in early Soviet films.[240]

Kuleshov came to the conclusion that 'genuine cinema is a montage of "American shots" and the essence of cinema, its method of achieving maximum effect, is montage.'[241] Youngblood has described this discovery as having had an 'enormous impact on the history of cinema' in that it marked the beginnings of the Soviet montage theory.[242] Kuleshov concluded the article by arguing that the word *amerikanshchina (*Americanism) should not have any negative connotations but rather stands for the positive fact that American films present exceptionally valuable material to be studied by Soviet film innovators.[243] The difference between imitating and studying American films was crucial: as the following development of the Soviet montage theory showed, Soviet film theorists and directors, beginning with Kuleshov, did not simply imitate American techniques but, in their own films, engaged in an active dialogue with the American filmmakers and used what they called 'American montage' to achieve completely new, unique and unprecedented

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[239] Kuleshov, 'Americanism', in *The Film Factory*, p. 73.
[240] See Lev Kuleshov, 'Znamia kinematografii. 1 Chast': Sushchnost' iskusstva kinematografii; Teoriia montazha i amerikanizm', in Lev Kuleshov, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), p. 68. Also, see the note to 'Znamia kinematografii' on pp. 431-432, which explains that 'Amerikanshchina' published in *Kino-fot* in 1922 is a slightly changed version of 'Znamia kinematografii', written in 1920.
[241] Kuleshov, 'Americanism', in *The Film Factory*, p. 73.
[242] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era,* pp. 6-7.
[243] Ibid.

discoveries in the field of montage. (Viktor Shklovskii referred to American films as 'raw material'.)[244]

It was indeed several years prior to writing the 'Americanism' article that Kuleshov realized the importance of American films in terms of their use of montage. In his first theoretical article on the essence of cinema, written in 1918[245] and entitled 'The Art of Creating with Light [*Iskusstvo svetotvorchestva*]', Kuleshov wrote,

> Very few filmmakers (apart from the Americans) have understood that in cinema, the means of expressing the artistic thought is a rhythmic change of separate static shots or small sections with movement, or that which is technically called montage.[246]

He went on to describe the cinema as possessing 'unique technicity' and being the 'quintessence of the machine and electricity'.[247] Thus, for Kuleshov, cinema's specificity had a deep connection with the Americanization discourse from the start, for it possessed qualities associated with America, namely its technological advancement and the dynamism of modernity. In positing this primary connection, for Kuleshov, between cinema, montage, and America, I would like to point out what I believe to be a somewhat limited view of the development of Kuleshov's montage theory as suggested by Mikhail Yampolsky. In his article 'Kuleshov's Experiments and the New Anthropology of the Actor', Yampolsky has argued that Kuleshov's 'theory of montage derives genetically from the new conception of the anthropology of the actor [based on the Volkonsky-Dalcroze-Delsarte system of rhythm and body

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[244] Viktor Shklovskii, 'O kinematografe', *Iskusstvo kommuny*, 12 (1919), p. 1.
[245] Kuleshov wrote in the book *The Art of Cinema* that it was even earlier, in 1916, when he first 'announced' that montage was the main means by which cinema affects the viewer. See Kuleshov, 'Iskusstvo kino', in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 167.
[246] Kuleshov, 'Iskusstvo svetotvorchestva', in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 63.
[247] Ibid.

movement] and is based *completely* on it.'[248] While Yampolsky's article provides a highly valuable insight into the connection between Kuleshov's montage theory and the actor's bodily movements as captured and analyzed through the Delsartian and Dalcrozian prism, it overestimates the importance of this system as solely responsible for Kuleshov's montage discoveries, and overlooks the importance of American adventure films as another, earlier source for Kuleshov's thought. It was not until 1920 that Kuleshov began to study the new anthropology of the actor with Vladimir Gardin at the newly founded Moscow film school, whereas by then he had already completed his first feature, *Engineer Prite's Project* [*Proekt inzhenera Praita*] (1918).

In *Engineer Prite's Project*, which was recently restored by Nikolai Izvolov at the Russian Research Institute of Film Art,[249] Kuleshov applied his earliest observations of American films. The film, called in the Russian press at the time a 'super-American drama',[250] was also the first of a number of Kuleshov's features with the American theme: the action took place entirely in the United States, and all characters were American. A young American engineer Mack Prite has designed a peat-fuelled electric power station, with a 'simple, reliable and effective'[251] method of peat extraction, and thus alienated the owner of a large transnational oil trust. Kuleshov explained in his memoirs that his brother, Boris Kuleshov, who also acted in the film, came up with the idea to write a script based on a detective story that

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[248] Yampolsky, 'Kuleshov's Experiments', p. 31. My italics.
[249] *Das Projekt des Ingenieurs Pright [Engineer Prite's Project]*, dir. by Lev Kuleshov (1918, released on DVD by Absolut Medien in 2008).
[250] *Kino-gazeta*, 27 (1918), p. 11.
[251] *Das Projekt des Ingenieurs Pright,* Absolut Medien DVD.

unfolds around peat extraction and an electric power station.[252] According to Kuleshov, at that time he was eager to try his hand at making a film using the new artistic devices that he learned from American adventure films: 'close-ups, fast and energetic tempo, and montage'.[253] In fact, according to Kuleshov, *Engineer Prite's Project* was the very first Russian film structured around montage 'as a means of affecting the viewer, of organizing and directing his attention', as well as the first Russian film that used technology (American technology, we should add) as an active element of its plot.[254] The film also included a chase, fight scenes, and an element of suspense, as well as a love triangle, all elements borrowed from imported American adventure films.[255]

Most importantly, the film's wide use of rapid montage and American continuity editing, including close-ups of action (such as cutting from a medium shot of a young woman dropping a glove to a close-up of a man's hand picking up the glove) was a brand new achievement for Russian cinema. Yuri Tsivian has suggested that when editing this film, Kuleshov was possibly 'trying to beat Americans on their own ground', as its average shot length of less than five seconds exceeds the average cutting rate of American films from the 1918-1923 period by one and a half seconds.[256] Tsivian has also observed that imitation of American cinema was not Kuleshov's main purpose; rather, the film was polemically charged against the

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[252] Lev Kuleshov and Ekaterina Khokhlova, *50 let v kino* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975), p. 34.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid., 35.
[255] For a full treatment of Soviet adventure films of the 1920s, see Chapter 2, especially pp. 126-144 below.
[256] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 39. Tsivian uses Barry Salt's data for average American shot duration. Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Stratword, 1992), pp. 146-147.

deliberately slow pace of domestic productions.[257] According to Izvolov, in *Engineer Prite's Project* Kuleshov revolutionized Russian cinema aesthetics.[258] Izvolov credits Kuleshov with being the first Russian director to have brought the rationalist, industrial-based aesthetics to Russian cinema.[259] Understanding this modernist motif behind Kuleshov's assimilation of American cinematic practices is vital, especially in the light of the past tendency of Western scholarship to place Kuleshov in the 'right wing' of Soviet filmic narrative, as Vance Kepley, Jr., has pointed out. According to Kepley, Kuleshov's use of American cinematic conventions was out of 'self-consciously modernist motives'.[260] Kepley has also posited that Kuleshov fused the conventions of classical American cinema with the Russian Constructivist ethos, with the purpose of adapting received cinema conventions to the modernist ideal of scientific control and efficiency. For Kuleshov in the early 1920s, Hollywood filmmaking practices (especially the use of montage) and Constructivist ethos shared a similarity: as Kepley has put it, for Kuleshov, 'a film must *manifest* efficiency in order to *advocate* efficiency',[261] and that is what American films of the time succeeded in doing, in line with the Constructivist sensibility.[262] Kuleshov's attraction to American technological advancements and the machine aesthetic manifested itself

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[257] Ibid.
[258] Nikolai Izvolov, commentary track, *Das Projekt des Ingenieurs Pright,* Absolut Medien DVD.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Vance Kepley, Jr., 'Mr. Kuleshov in the Land of the Modernists', in *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Anna Lawton (London: Routledgem 2003), p. 133.
[261] Ibid., p. 136.
[262] More research needs to be carried out on the connections between Russian Constructivism and the inspiration drawn by Soviet avant-garde artists from American technology. For example, Hans-Joachim Schlegel, without naming the Constructivist movement, states that the 'Taylorist way of thinking defined avant-garde productionist art which worked on the rational-economic formation of everyday culture.' See Schlegel, 'Konstruktsii i izvrashcheniia', para. 10.

in his successful attempts to master the science of montage, as well as in his attraction to the American theme and his general attraction to technology (let us remember his early description of cinema as a 'quintessence of machine and electricity' and the choice to focus on technology in his first feature film).

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Kuleshov went on to make several more films where the American themes and settings were used to illustrate his new, landmark montage discoveries (including the famous 'Kuleshov effect' where a shot acquired its meaning based on the context of other shots in a montage sequence).[263] These films included *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), *Death Ray* (1925), *By the Law* (1926), *Gorizont* (1933), and *The Great Consoler* (1933).[264] Out of thirteen feature films directed by Kuleshov, almost half (six films) dealt with the American theme and had American characters. Sadly, while having made montage discoveries of vast importance to the young avant-garde directors of the Soviet montage school (Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, Boris Barnet, Sergei Komarov and many others studied with Kuleshov in the early 1920s), Kuleshov was attacked in the Soviet press for his open attraction to the American theme at the expense of revolutionary stories and spent most of his career after the 1940s unable to direct further feature films. While he loved America, he never got a chance to visit it, unlike other filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein and Grigorii Alexandrov.

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[263] For example, Kuleshov discovered that a close-up of an actor's face followed by a shot of a plate of soup was interpreted by viewers as hunger, whereas the same close-up followed by a shot of a young girl was interpreted as pangs of love. Thus, a shot acquired its meaning through montage. See, for example, Neia Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino* (Saint Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), p. 90.

[264] Several of these films will be discussed in Chapter 2 below, in relation to their representation of American characters. See pp. 145-149, p. 166-170, and pp. 170-172.

### iii. Sergei Eisenstein and Americanization

Many early Soviet filmmakers saw American cinema, with its fast cutting and economy of filming techniques, as epitomizing modernity.[265] In fact, the situation in Soviet Russia was not unlike many other European countries, where, according to Hansen, Hollywood figured 'as the very symbol of contemporaneity, the present, modern times.'[266]

The Soviet montage aesthetic originated equally in Russian avant-garde art, theatre and literature, as well as in American cinema.[267] The first three factors played a major role in the development of Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage, as he was deeply involved in theatre and well versed in world literature. In his later works he would credit both of these artistic fields as sources for his ideas on montage.[268]

It is important to realize that, in addition to the above sources, many aspects of the Americanization discourse of the 1920s informed Eisenstein's development as a filmmaker. We have already noted that in the early 1920s, Eisenstein together with Sergei Iutkevich, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg frequented American adventure serials and other imported American films, especially the Pearl White serials, and that Eisenstein described these films as 'the radiance of a dynamic celebration'.[269] We have also noted Eisenstein's high regard for dramatic structure of detective adventure dime novels as material to be studied by future filmmakers.[270] One of the first plays directed by Eisenstein at the Proletkult theatre in 1921 was *The*

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[265] See, for example, Lev Kuleshov, 'Americanism'.
[266] Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses', p. 65.
[267] Kepley, '*Intolerance* and the Soviets', pp. 51-52.
[268] Sergei Eisenstein, *Montazh* (Moscow: Muzei Kino, 2000).
[269] Kozintsev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh,* vol. 1, *Glubokii ekran,* p. 74.
[270] Iutkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

*Mexican*, based on a story of Jack London, pointing to his interest in London's prose. Around the same time, Eisenstein began studying performance and production methods with Vsevolod Meyerhold, a man whom he later described as someone he adored all his life, and whose influence on the young Eisenstein was undoubtedly very strong.[271] In his work with actors, Meyerhold applied Biomechanics, a method of 'standardized economy of movement that was meant to [...] anticipate the image of a "Taylorized man" of the future'.[272] Taylorism was a system of scientific management of labour that included rational economy of workers' movement, invented by the American industrialist Frederick Winslow Taylor in the early 1910s. Taylorism was widely promoted in Soviet Russia in the 1920s, especially through the work of Alexei Gastev at the Central Institute of Labour. As we have already noted, Gastev saw Taylorism not only as a method to rationalize production, but also as a way to forge the workers into a new kind of human beings, part of a unified 'mechanized collectivism'.[273] Just as Gastev's system was meant to teach workers to use their bodies in the most efficient manner,[274] so did Meyerhold's Biomechanics teach actors to efficiently utilize their bodies when moving on stage. The link between Meyerhold's Biomechanics and Taylorist thought provided yet another way in which Eisenstein came in touch with the broader Americanization discourse in the 1920s.

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[271] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Dama v chernykh perchatkakh', in *Memuary*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Redaktsiia gazety 'Trud', Muzei kino, 1997), p. 215.
[272] Schlegel, 'Konstruktsii i izvrashcheniia', para. 10; Jorg Bochow, *Das Theater Meierholds und die Biomechanik* (Berlin: Alexander, 1997), quoted in Schlegel, 'Konstruktsii i izvrashcheniia', para. 10.
[273] Ibid, para. 8.
[274] Julia Vaingurt, 'Wonderlands of the Russian Avant-Garde: Technology and the Arts in the 1920s', doctoral thesis (Harvard University, 2004), p. 36.

Eisenstein's montage theories developed throughout the 1920s were characterized by himself and his contemporaries as the method of an engineer.[275] It was highly scientific, based on formulas that Eisenstein perfected the way a scientist would. In Eisenstein's own words, published in America in 1927,

> I am a civil engineer and mathematician by education, and I approach making a film in the same way as I would approach equipping a poultry farm or setting up an irrigation system. I look at this exclusively from a practical, rational, materialistic point of view.[276]

Eisenstein did study engineering before becoming a filmmaker. But there is more to this obsession with precision than personal background in engineering. It is also a reflection of a larger trend in the Soviet culture of the 1920s, that of an enormous respect for science, technology and the machine. As noted earlier, in the 1920s, the Soviets, along with many other nations, viewed America as the country where science and technology had reached the highest development. This scientific advancement was in turn perceived as synonymous with modernity. Eisenstein's desire for precise scientific formulas in cinema can be better understood if considered within the framework of the broader Russian search for technological improvements and efficiency, and the perception of America and American technology as a model. The Eisenstein of the 1920s fits well into Sergei Tretiakov's 1923 description of the new type of a Soviet artist, a 'psycho-engineer' and 'psycho-constructor'. This concept was published in Tretiakov's LEF Manifesto and followed the pages devoted to his hopes for the 'new type' of the Soviet man and 'Americanization' of the

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[275] Sergei Tretiakov, 'Eizenshtein – rezhisser-inzhener', in 'Budetliane: o tovarishchakh po avangardu 20-kh godov', in *Strana-perekrestok* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), pp. 541-542.

[276] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Mass Movies', *The Nation*, 125.3253 (1927), pp. 507-508. Published in Russian as 'Kino mass' in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 84 (2007), pp. 145-147 (p. 145).

Russian personality.[277] In fact, American observers even noted that Eisenstein 'looked like an American'[278] (and this before his trip to America in 1929-1930).

In 1922 Eisenstein was involved with the FEKS (Factory of the Eccentric Actor) group in Petrograd.[279] The main method of this theatre and, later, film workshop of Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg was based to a large extent upon the 'mathematical precision of American comic and detective films'.[280] Involvement with FEKS, along with studies with Vsevolod Meyerhold,[281] inspired Eisenstein's interest in eccentrism, a style that mixed 'grotesque clownishness with mechanized acrobatic stunts in the manner of American cinema'.[282] In an article published in 1922 and co-authored with Sergei Iutkevich, entitled 'The Eighth Art. On Expressionism, America and, of course, Chaplin', Eisenstein engaged in a polemic with proponents of 'psychologizing' cinematic trends, both at home and abroad, while praising the American detective adventure and comedy genres. At the time Eisenstein found these genres most praiseworthy for they offered 'new opportunities for genuine Eccentrism'.[283]

Yuri Tsivian has pointed out another link between Eisenstein's aesthetics in the 1920s and American cinema: in his theoretical writings, Eisenstein used the

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[277] Tretiakov, 'Otkuda i kuda? (Perspektivy futurizma)', p. 201.
[278] Squier, 'Eizenshtein edet v Ameriku', p. 150.
[279] James Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 22.
[280] Sergei Gerasimov, 'Out of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor', in *Cinema in Revolution: The Heroic Era of the Soviet Film*, ed. by Liuda Schnitzer and others (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973), p. 114.
[281] Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History*, p. 20.
[282] David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 5.
[283] Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Iutkevich, 'The Eighth Art. On Expressionism, America, and, of course, Chaplin', in *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works*, vol.1, *Writings, 1922-34*, ed. and trans. by Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), p. 31.

example of Ruth Roland adventure serials in order to substantiate his principle of plotless cinema of attractions. He argued that these serials were successful without using coherent linear plot development, 'pil[ing] up [narrative] situations without regard for those preceding them.'[284]

It can be helpful to analyze some ways in which the Americanization discourse of the 1920s was reflected in Eisenstein's montage films of the period. This analysis can help further our understanding of the degree to which 'Americanness' pervaded the Soviet cultural imagination of the 1920s and became part of the developing Sovietness.

While Eisenstein for the most part did not use American cinematic devices such as chase scenes and slapstick comedy,[285] an important aesthetic quality conveyed by American films and perceived by his contemporaries as an essential component of 'Americanness' did make its way into Eisenstein's films of the 1920s. As in Kuleshov's films, that quality was dynamism. In his autobiography, in a chapter about his love for drawing, Eisenstein wrote,

> A line is a trace of movement... Dynamics of lines and dynamics of 'movement' rather than 'being', both in lines and in the system of occurrences as well as their changes from one to the next, remain my permanent passion. Perhaps this is also the root of my proclivity and sympathy towards teachings that proclaim dynamics, movement, and development as their founding principles.[286]

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[284] Aleksandr Belenson, *Kino segodnia: ocherki sovetskogo kino-iskusstva (Kuleshov-Vertov-Eisenstein)* (Moscow, 1925), p. 64. Quoted in Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p.43. Tsivian explains that Belenson's chapter on Eisenstein was based on Eisenstein's own manuscript.

[285] He did use these devices in his first short film produced for his theatre production of the play *Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man*, which parodied American and French detective stories. See Goodwin, *Eisenstein, Cinema and History,* p. 32.

[286] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Kak ia uchilsia risovat'' in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), pp. 262-263.

While many sequences in Eisenstein's 1920s films are highly dynamic, I would like to focus here on one particular sequence, the dance of the 'Savage Division' warriors in *October* (1928).

In defence against General Kornilov's troops who are about to attack Petrograd, a party of Russian Bolsheviks approaches the Kornilov supporters to try and dissuade them from attacking the city. The Kornilov supporters are a group of rough-looking men from the region of the Caucasus referred to as the 'Savage Division'. As the Caucasians read the leaflets that the Bolsheviks distribute, they find an attractive Bolshevik message inside: 'Bread, Peace, Land', the traditional Bolshevik offer to their followers. After some deliberation, the Caucasians put away their knives and sabres, and a dance evoking a sense of the new friendship among the Caucasians and the Russians begins.

In a montage containing quick close-ups and medium shots, several Caucasian men dance their native *lezginka* dance, as other men smile and clap. Soon, we see a Bolshevik who also starts to dance in the middle of a puddle. His is a traditional Russian dance, complete with squatting and jumping. Logically, two different dances are now going on, which cannot happen simultaneously in reality, as each of them requires a different kind of music. The sequence picks up momentum as feet, faces, and bodies of the Russians and the Caucasians fly by our eyes in a series of close-ups. By the end of the sequence, the editing pace becomes so fast that the length of individual shots is reduced to about one frame each. Shots are edited out of order, so that the Russian's face is often followed by the Caucasian's feet, and vice versa. This kind of editing discontinuity produces the ultimate visual unity, as if we see one man dancing. Two different dances become one. This highly dynamic montage becomes a

metaphor for unity. The Bolsheviks and members of the Savage Division become one in their way of thinking, as metaphorically portrayed by Eisenstein.

What stands out in this sequence is the high emphasis placed on movement. This is not simply a quick-paced sequence of events developing in linear time (such as a typical chase scene). Here, the sense of dynamism is tripled. The energetic dancing of the men is the first basic building block of dynamism in the scene. The sense of vigour is doubled by portraying the two disparate events, the Russian and the Caucasian dance (each requiring its own music and rhythm), as happening simultaneously. Dynamism is 'tripled' by the extremely fast editing, with the duration of certain shots being as short as one frame. This multi-layered dynamism of the dance sequence alludes to the fast pace of modernity, perceived by Eisenstein in the 1920s, as much as it was perceived by other Soviet avant-garde filmmakers. And this fast pace of modernity was directly associated in the Russian cultural imagination of that decade with America and American cinema, which Hansen has described as 'the very symbol of contemporaneity'.[287]

In 1929, Eisenstein, his assistant, Grigorii Alexandrov, and his cameraman, Eduard Tisse, were sent by the Soviet government on a trip to the West, in order to study the latest film technology, and especially sound technology. This trip included a visit to a number of countries in Europe and, from May until November 1930, a stay in Hollywood on a contract with Paramount. While in Hollywood, Eisenstein proposed three projects to Paramount, *The Glass House*, *Sutter's Gold,* and *An*

[287] Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses', p. 65.

*American Tragedy*, none of which ended up being made into films.[288] All three projects contain a commentary on America, either of the past or of the modern-technology present, a topic that fascinated Eisenstein and many other Soviet artists and intellectuals in the 1920s. Eisenstein's time in Hollywood is a topic that is outside the scope of the this thesis.

**iv. Chaplin: 'Mechanicity', Eccentrism, and FEKS**

Along with early adventure serials and dramas like Griffith's *Intolerance*, another American film genre that received a great deal of attention from the Soviet avant-garde filmmakers was slapstick comedy. Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, and Rosco 'Fatty' Arbuckle were among the most popular American comic actors in Soviet Russia in the 1920s.[289] For the avant-garde filmmakers, however, no other comic was of greater importance than Charlie Chaplin. As early as 1919, Mr. Jesse Seadeck of Community Motion Picture Bureau completed a record run of Chaplin's *A Dog's Life* (USA, 1918) in sixty-seven Siberian communities.[290] According to Vladislav Aksenov's data, the first time a Chaplin movie was shown in Russia was even earlier, in 1916.[291] However, Chaplin was not nearly as much

[288] For more on Eisenstein's American projects, see, for example, Naum Kleiman, '"Stekliannyi dom" Sergeia Eizenshteina', *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (1979); Ivor Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* (Berlin: Seven Seas Books, 1968); Oksana Bulgakowa, *Sergej Eisenstein. Drei Utopien – Architekturentwurfe zur Filmtheorie [Sergei Eisenstein – Three Utopias: Architectural Drafts for a Film Theory]* (Berlin: PotemkinPress, 1996).
[289] For more on the reception of Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, and other comic actors in Soviet Russia, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikansie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 209, p. 225, and p. 232-237.
[290] Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 145
[291] Vladislav Aksenov, '1917 god: sotsial'nye realii i kinosiuzhety', in *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino*, ed. by S.S. Sekirinsky (Moscow: Znak, 2004), p. 58.

appreciated by the pre-Revolutionary Russian audiences as by the 'new' Russians after the Revolution, and especially the avant-garde artists.[292]

Yuri Tsivian has argued that many avant-garde artists around the world, including Soviet leftist filmmakers, accepted Chaplin as 'one of their own', albeit for different reasons.[293] Thus, Soviet Constructivists saw in Chaplin a 'stern CONSTRUCTOR, who diligently works out the scheme of movements, the way a medieval juggler would. He makes one laugh not by simple movement but by applying a precise FORMULA.'[294]

While Chaplin was mainly known in Russia before 1924 by his earliest, pre-1920 films,[295] these were enough for the Soviet leftist artists to recognize in Chaplin a leading artistic role model and even a teacher. A 1922 issue of the Constructivist journal *Kino-fot* was dedicated to Chaplin and included articles by Aleksei Gan, Nikolai Foregger, Alexander Rodchenko and Lev Kuleshov, as well as drawings by Varvara Stepanova.[296] Kuleshov saw in Chaplin the best example of a model actor (*naturshchik*) who had 'trained his body in regards to the precise study of its

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[292] For an insightful analysis of the evolution of attitudes towards Chaplin in Russia, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikansie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 210 and p. 226.
[293] Yuri Tsivian, 'O Chapline v russkom avangarde i o zakonakh sluchainogo v iskusstve', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 81 (2006), http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2006/81/ci7.html [accessed 1 August 2009].
[294] Ilya Ehrenburg, *A vse-taki ona vertitsia* (Moscow, Berlin, 1922), p. 127. Quoted in Tsivian, 'O Chapline v russkom avantgarde', para. 20. Capital letters are used in the Tsivian article, following the original.
[295] Kartseva, in her 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', lists forty-five silent Chaplin films in total, forty of which were made before 1920, and more than half of which (twenty-seven) were imported after 1923. However, several sources point to the fact that quite a few Chaplin films were shown in Soviet Russia prior to 1923. See, for example, Tsivian, 'O Chapline v russkom avangarde', n. 45. In the same source, Tsivian also notes that Chaplin films were more expensive than other American films, which was one of the reasons why few of his later films were imported into Russia in the 1920s. See also Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 145. For the list of Chaplin's silent features in Soviet distribution, see Appendix, List 4 below.
[296] Tsivian, 'O Chapline v russkom avangarde', para. 29.

mechanical construction' and who channelled 'all of his power, strength and heroism into reality, so needed by the cinema instead of imitation.'[297] Such mechanically trained actors, 'extraordinary people' and 'monsters' (*chudovishcha*) were needed by the new Soviet cinema.[298] Kuleshov went on to state that the model actors in his collective, the experimental group at the Moscow film school, were being trained to become such 'extraordinary people' by studying the mechanism of their own bodies and by following Chaplin's example.[299]

The 'mechanicity'[300] of Chaplin's acting was perceived as similar in its goals to the proposed new, rational approach to acting. As Kuleshov explained, the reason to study the human body as a mechanism had its roots not only in the leftist admiration for the machine, but also in the scientific, rationalist approach to studying human movement:

> At the moment, based on precise calculations and experimental work, we are studying the human body as a mechanism, and not only because we love machines aesthetically, but because the human body is indeed a mechanism.[301]

It is important to note that many members of the Kuleshov collective who underwent the training inspired in part by Chaplin (or at least by the Kuleshovian understanding of Chaplin) went on to become prominent actors and directors in their own right, and to create the cinematic images of the 'new man' living in the new, Soviet reality. For example, Vladimir Fogel' acted in a large number of films in the

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[297] Lev Kuleshov, 'Esli teper'...', in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, p. 90.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Not only the avant-garde artists perceived Chaplin's 'mechanicity'; for example, an article published in a 1925 issue of *Kino-zhurnal ARK* noted the same quality of Chaplin's acting: 'Chaplin has created his own country, different from the countries known to us, inhabited not by people but by "charlots" who look like people, with mechanical movements and human hearts.' See V. Pozner, 'Komediia bez Chaplina', *Kino-zhurnal ARK,* 6-7 (1925), p. 15. 'Charlot' was a name by which Chaplin was known in Europe and Russia.
[301] Kuleshov, 'Esli teper'...', p. 91.

1920s, including *Chess Fever* (1925); Sergei Komarov directed *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* in 1927; Vsevolod Pudovkin and Boris Barnet went on to become leading Soviet film directors of the 1920s and 1930s. The legacy of Chaplin's 'mechanicity' can be perceived in their films.

For Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, the founders of FEKS, Chaplin was the key representative of eccentrism, a theatre and cinema movement discussed earlier in connection with Eisenstein. In their manifesto 'AB! Eccentric's Parade', written in 1922 (the year when the only Chaplin films shown in Russia were a few of his old Esseney and Keystone comedies, where Chaplin had not yet found his 'mask' of the Little Tramp), Kozintsev and Trauberg described eccentrism as having its roots in music hall, American cinema, and detective stories, and defiantly announced that 'Charlot's behind is dearer to us than the hands of Eleonora Duse!'.[302] Chaplin was equated with the lower genres, originating in America and destined to destroy the old culture of Europe and Russia.[303] For the members of FEKS, eccentrism meant the new, modern art based on the fast tempo that came from the 'rhythm of the machine, concentrated by America, and brought to life by pulp fiction.'[304] The actors' movements were to consist of the 'synthesis of acrobatic, sportive, dance, and constructionist-mechanical movements.'[305] (Note the similarity with Kuleshov's approach to the movements of a model actor). Artists were called to replace the culture of Europe by the technology of America, and a theatre play was to be built on stunts and chases, inspired by the adventure detective films of Pearl White, *The*

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[302] 'AB! Parad ekstsentrika', in Grigorii Kozintsev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh,* vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1983), p. 74. Eleonora Duse was an Italian theatre and film actress.
[303] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 228.
[304] 'AB! Parad ekstsentrika', p. 74.
[305] Ibid.

*Exploits of Elaine* and *The Iron Claw*, mixed with 'dance on the tightrope of logic and rational thinking', moving from the 'unthinkable' to the 'eccentric'.[306] This threshold between logic and 'the unthinkable' was something the FEKS members learned from the gags of American slapstick comedy. Kozintsev explained that the term 'gag' meant 'an off-balance system of thinking, it is cause and effect that have traded places, it is a thing that has been used against its purpose [...] It is an eccentric key that opens the door to a world where logic has been made redundant.'[307] For Kozintsev and Trauberg, the best example of eccentrism, with its 'age-old satirical elements connected with a wide, democratic audience' was Chaplin.[308]

What attracted the FEKS members to Chaplin's version of eccentrism was not only his ability to see the 'alogism of the ordinary',[309] but also his ability to turn 'eccentric nonsense into a frightening symbol of the nonsensical in reality'[310] and to turn 'the real into the fairy tale and the fairy tale into the real'.[311] As a contemporary writer observed in 1925, there was a difference between a light comedy (the so-called *komicheskaia*) and serious comedy, or 'social comedy' such as Chaplin's films made in the 1920s: 'Social comedy propagandizes an idea with the help of the weapon of laughter, it makes thought take the form of irony.'[312] Vera Kuznetsova has posited that through eccentrism Chaplin helped bring young Soviet filmmakers such as

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[306] Ibid.
[307] Grigorii Kozintsev, 'Narodnoe iskusstvo Charli Chaplina', in *Charl'z Spenser Chaplin* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1945), p. 73.
[308] Ibid., p. 84.
[309] Lenin's description of eccentrism, quoted in Kozintsev, 'Narodnoe iskusstvo Charli Chaplina', p. 89.
[310] Kozintsev, 'Narodnoe iskusstvo Charli Chaplina', p. 93.
[311] Ibid., p. 96.
[312] Khrisanf Khersonskii, 'Komicheskaia i komediia', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 11/12 (1925), p. 27.

Kozintsev and Trauberg to their later epic works.[313] To take this idea further, one can trace the roots of Kozintsev and Trauberg's famous screen hero, Maksim in the Maksim trilogy of the 1930s, back to the democratic and socially active eccentrism of Chaplin.

Among other leftist admirers of Chaplin was the theatre director Vsevolod Meierhold, mentioned above in connection with Eisenstein and Kuleshov. For Meyerhold, the American comic personified Taylorist notions of a man in control of his own body.[314] One actor who has been particularly associated with Chaplin and who came out of Meierhold's theatre was Igor' Il'inskii. Several scholars have noted the similarity of Il'inskii's early screen characters to Chaplin. For example, Kuznetsova has argued that 'without Chaplin, we would not have Igor' Il'inskii, even while his screen images are deeply unique.' [315] Kuznetsova has pointed out the link between Il'inskii's character Tapioka in Iakov Protazanov's *The Case of the Three Millions* [*Protsess o trekh millionakh*] (1926) and Chaplin in *The Kid* (USA, 1921).[316] Further influence of Chaplin on Il'inskii's characters can be traced in other comedies of the 1920s. For example, in Protazanov's *The Tailor from Torzhok* [*Zakroishchik iz Torzhka*] (1925), Il'inskii's character Petia Petel'kin exhibits connections with Chaplin on a number of levels. Youngblood has suggested that in many comedies of the 1920s Il'inskii portrayed the 'little man' pitted against the world.[317] *The Tailor from Torzhok* suggests a kind of dialogue between the Russian 'little man' pitted against the world and Chaplin's American 'little man'. The film contains a number of

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[313] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 229.
[314] Tsivian, 'O Chapline v russkom avangarde', para. 66.
[315] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 230.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses,* p. 96.

pastiches of Chaplin's film *Woman* (USA, 1915), released in Russia in 1923 as *Charli Chaplin – zhenshchina*[318]: in a scene at a party in Leningrad, Petia innocently sips on a stranger's drink through a straw, while the stranger looks away. In *Woman*, Chaplin manages to sip another man's drink through a straw twice while the man looks away. In another scene, Petia is embarrassed after touching the breast of a female mannequin while making a dress; in *Woman*, Chaplin accidentally touches the breast of a female mannequin while putting on a woman's clothes.

Il'inskii's acting style, coming from Meierhold's Biomechanics, includes elements of what Kuleshov saw as Chaplin's mechanicity, which was too much for a contemporary critic, Khrisanf Khersonskii:

> It's as if psychology and humanity is alien to [Il'inskii's] tailor, all one remembers is a biomechanically produced parody of a doll with wind-up movements. For a reality picture he 'over-acts' too much through automatism of movements and overall accentuated eccentrism of form.[319]

For today's viewer, this criticism might seem surprising: the most 'mechanical' of Il'inskii's movements, visually, is his particular way of walking, with a slight limp due to the toes of one foot being turned slightly inwards (reminiscent of Chaplin's famous way of walking). However, I would argue that our reception of Il'inskii's acting in this 1925 film is mediated by the image of Chaplin held in our memory. Thus, we are used to Chaplin's doll-like movements to the point where we do not perceive them as such, they appear to us as the norm for a comic actor in a silent film, while these movements appeared new and unprecedented to viewers around the world in the 1920s. Therefore, the doll-like element in Il'inskii's movements appears to a viewer in the early twenty-first century to be normal rather than too mechanical.

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[318] Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 320.
[319] Khersonskii, 'Komicheskaia i komediia', p. 28.

Something that, back in the early twentieth century was used by Chaplin as an estrangement device, to use Shklovsky's term in an American context, has lost its estranging function through repeated viewings over one hundred years.[320]

## IV. Douglas Fairbanks As the Prototype of the Positive Hero of Socialist Realist Cinema

As we have already noted, after a five-year interruption and in the atmosphere of a general lack of Russian-produced films in the years immediately after the Revolution, importation of new American films resumed in 1922. In the 1920s, several new American film stars, including Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford (the first star couple of Hollywood) became extremely popular among the Soviet audiences, just as they were at home. Their photographs often featured on the covers of popular cinema periodicals.[321] Among the male stars, the name of Douglas Fairbanks was encountered most often.

Fourteen of Fairbanks features were shown in Moscow between 1923 and 1932,[322] but it was largely thanks to his four hits imported since 1925, *The Thief of Bagdad* (USA, 1924), *The Mark of Zorro* (USA, 1920), *Robin Hood* (USA, 1922), and *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (USA, 1925), that Fairbanks became exceptionally popular

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[320] For a further discussion of Chaplin's reception in Soviet Russia, see p. 103, n. 372 below.
[321] See, for example, *Sovetskii ekran,* 9(19) 1925, and *Sovetskii ekran,* 6(16) 1925, that had the picture of Douglas Fairbanks as Ahmed the Thief in *The Thief of Bagdad* on its cover.
[322] For the full list of Fairbanks' features in Soviet distribution, see Appendix, List 1 below. The figure is based on the catalogue of silent American films in Soviet distribution compiled by Elena Kartseva: see Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate," pp. 212-325.

in Russia.[323] Russian paperback biographies of 'Doug and Mary' went through five re-printings in two years, and the quarter of a million copies sold exceeded the copies of all Soviet actors combined, including the most popular Soviet comedian of the decade, Igor' Il'inskii.[324] By 1928, when asked by journalists what they liked about foreign films, Soviet children most often mentioned Douglas Fairbanks, whose bravery they wanted to emulate.[325] A 1929 children's survey showed that Fairbanks' films *The Thief of Bagdad* and *The Mark of Zorro* were their top two favorites, followed by the Soviet adventure film *Little Red Devils* [*Krasnye d'iavoliata*] (1923).[326]

Contemplating the connection between cinema, modernity, and consciousness, Walter Benjamin wrote, 'Among the points of fracture in artistic formations, film is one of the most dramatic. We may truly say that with film *a new realm of consciousness* comes into being.'[327] For audiences around the world during the rise of the American star system in the 1910s and 1920s,[328] this new cinematic realm of consciousness included a link between the admired film stars, who were often perceived as role models, and the process of constructing the new modern self. As Paula Marantz Cohen has suggested, the rise of silent film and the star system 'represent a particularly powerful nexus for understanding the emergence of a new

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[323] K. Ter-Oganesov, 'Duglas Ferbenks', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 1 (1925), p. 33. Also, see 'Inostrannye kino-aktery', *Sovetskii ekran*, 2/12 (1925), [no page numeration].
[324] Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 150.
[325] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237.
[326] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 52.
[327] Walter Benjamin, 'Moscow 1927' and 'Reply to Oscar A.H.Schmitz', in *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927-1934* (Cambridge, Massachussetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 17.
[328] The emergence of the star system in America is associated with the 1910s; the first mention in print of the words 'motion picture star' was used in 1910 to describe Florence Turner. See Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 132.

kind of character – the "modern" self as we tend to think of it – for the twentieth century.'[329] For Soviet audiences in the 1920s, admiration of American film stars, including Fairbanks, played an important role in the formation of the new, modern Soviet self.

Fairbanks was one of the first film superstars. A number of his early films were based on the process of developing the 'truly American' character of the main protagonist, who started out as a simple and shy young man, but then transformed himself into a courageous and active hero, and achieved success.[330] In his lavish costume adventure films of the 1920s, his star image[331] evolved into something quite different. The Roaring Twenties were a time when traditional values, in America and elsewhere, were being uprooted, and the new heroes of Fairbanks' films made in that decade helped restore the American masculine ideal,[332] by combining certain elements of the heroic frontier heroes of America's past with the modern, urban traits of the present. In Soviet Russia, Fairbanks' heroes were perceived as 'modern to the bones'.[333] His 'swashbucklers' included elements of comedy and were always lit up by Fairbanks' flashing smile and imbued with humor, which greately appealed to the Soviet audiences, as we shall see shortly.

When Pickford and Fairbanks visited Moscow in 1926, they were greeted by thousands of enthusiastic admirers, who surrounded their train car and pressed on to the point where Pickford had to take a number of children inside, to protect them

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[329] Ibid.
[330] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 207.
[331] Richard Dyer defines a star image as constructed of media texts, including films, publicity, commentaries/criticism, and promotion. See Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979), pp. 68-72.
[332] A. Razumovsky, 'Duglas Ferbenks', in *Zvezdy nemogo kino*, p. 139.
[333] Ibid., p. 136.

from the pressing multi-thousand crowds.[334] A report in *Sovetskii ekran* went as far as to compare the event with the old times when Moscow greeted its tsars.[335]

The footage shot of the couple was used by Kuleshov's student Sergei Komarov to create a popular comedy called *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* (1926). Gary Carey, the Fairbankses' biographer, called their visit to Russia the 'high point' of their entire European trip. According to Carey, Fairbanks was planning to make two films in Russia, but did not receive approval from the Bolshevik authorities.[336] There is evidence that Sergei Eisenstein was going to make a film with Fairbanks in the lead role, and these plans were actively discussed in the American press in 1926.[337]

As Denise Youngblood has noted, the fact that Soviet screen stereotypes were politically dictated meant that most heroes of Soviet cinema in the 1920s were 'frankly dull, and it was difficult for even the best actors to breathe vitality into their roles.'[338] The three leading Soviet male film actors of the time, Nikolai Batalov, Vladimir Fogel and Igor' Il'inskii could not match the physical agility, healthy optimistic smile, and energy of American stars like Douglas Fairbanks.[339]

Soviet critic Khrisanf Khersonskii argued that American filmmakers were able to portray on the screen 'psychologically healthy people', individuals rather than 'mannequins'. The critic stated that 'the heroes of American cinema always fight and

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[334] Tseitlin, 'Kak ia snimal Ferbenksa i Pikford', in *Sovetskii ekran*, 32 (1926), p.14. First name is not indicated in the original publication.
[335] Vlad. Korolevich, 'Dovol'no Meri Pikford', in *Sovetskii ekran*, 32 (1926), p. 13.
[336] Carey, *Doug and Mary*, p. 172.
[337] Natalia Riabchikova, 'S. M Eisenshtein v amerikanskoi presse dvadtsatykh godov XX veka', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 84 (2007), pp. 135-160 (p. 136); Lucita Squier, 'Eizenshtein edet v Ameriku', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 84 (2007), pp. 149-154 (p. 150).
[338] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 95.
[339] Youngblood makes a similar point when she notes that Batalov did not look like a 'leading man' to audiences used to the heroes of imported films, whereas Fogel' played many different types of characters and thus did not establish a cohesive, recognizable screen persona. See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 96.

win, if they suffer then they do it courageously, if they cry then even through their tears one perceives joy and affirmation of life.'[340]

Another Soviet critic, Al. Abramov, started his 1926 book about Fairbanks with the following words: 'We do not have "our own" hero in cinema [...] The Americans are luckier than us. They have their "ideal". They have Fairbanks.'[341] Cohen, a present-day American cinema scholar, maintains that, for his own nation, Fairbanks, through his stunning athletic feats, unshakable confidence, uplifting cheerfulness, and heroic action, embodied freedom, individualism, and changeability – the qualities associated with the American West.[342] For the Soviet audiences, Fairbanks represented the positive 'American' qualities that, in the popular Russian imagination at the time, were seen as exemplary and worthy of embracing, and that were encouraged by the Soviet officials in the project of forging the New Soviet Man.

In order to better understand the unprecedented popularity of Fairbanks in Russia, the roots of his appeal to the Soviet audiences, and the role his star image played in the project of creating the New Soviet Man and, ultimately, in the formation of early Soviet culture, we shall focus on his film that was most popular in Russia, *The Thief of Bagdad.*

According to Youngblood, this film was 'probably the biggest box-office hit of the decade'.[343] It was released in the U.S. in 1924, imported into Russia in 1925, and shown in theatres all over the country. Youngblood reports that it ran for three and a half months in Moscow's largest film theatre, the Malaia Dmitrovka, which

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[340] Khrisanf Khersonskii, 'O poslednikh zagranichnykh lentakh', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 1 (January 1925), p. 30.
[341] Al. Abramov, *Duglas Ferbenks* (Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926), p. 5. The full first name of the author is not indicated.
[342] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth,* p. 103.
[343] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 20.

seated over a thousand viewers.[344] The film drew an overall audience of 1.7 million in the first six months.[345] Youngblood points out that, in the mid-1920s, *The Thief of Bagdad* was used as a 'benchmark of success' by which new Soviet films, especially in the adventure genre, were often judged.[346]

**i. Ahmed-Fairbanks the Folk Hero**

*The Thief of Bagdad* was based on the Eastern folk tale collection *Arabian Nights*. Part of the reason for the film's success in Russia lies in the fact that the magic adventures of Ahmed the Thief involved a number of elements that were very similar to Russian folk tales, and thus dear to the Russian viewers, children and adults alike. Similar to Ivan the Fool or Ivan-*tzarevich* of Russian folk tales, Ahmed undergoes various tests and performs heroic feats on a quest to win his beloved Princess. The film's structure closely follows the structure of Russian folk tales as analyzed by Vladimir Propp. Like the heroes of these tales, Ahmed sets out on a journey, on which he meets a number of 'helpers' (including the desert hermit who looks like a Russian Baba Iaga). These characters help him find several 'magical devices',[347] such as a hard-to-reach star-shaped key within an iron-bound box at the bottom of the sea (rather like the needle-key to the evil powers of *Koshchei Bessmertnyi* of Russian fairy tales, concealed within an egg in a very hard-to-reach hiding place); the invisible cloak (reminiscent of *shapka-nevidimka*); and the rarest treasure, the Magic Chest that has functions similar to a Russian *skatert'-samobranka* that grants limitless

[344] Ibid., p. 51.
[345] Ibid., p. 20.
[346] Ibid., p. 79.
[347] Vladimir Propp, *Morfologiia <volshebnoi> skazki* (Moscow: Labirint, 1998), pp. 33-40.

amounts of food, but also has wider abilities in that it can materialize wishes. With the help of the Magic Chest, Ahmed creates a whole army of white *bogatyr'*-like warriors, who help Ahmed defeat the main antagonist, the Mongolian Prince and his army. Another 'magical device' in the film is the flying carpet, or *kover-samolet* of Russian and Eastern tales, on which Ahmed and the Princess triumphantly fly towards their happiness at the end of the film.

On his quest for the Magic Chest, Ahmed heroically fights a number of 'hostile creatures':[348] he defeats a *Zmei Gorynych*-like dragon in the Valley of the Monsters and withstands the charms of a mermaid in the sea kingdom, not unlike *Sadko*. At one point, Ahmed flies on the Pegasus-like Winged Horse, reminiscent of *Konek Gorbunok*.

It might seem obvious that the film, being based on Eastern folklore, is a reminder of the similarity between Russian folk tales and those of the East, elements of which have found their way into Russian culture over the previous centuries. However, that was most likely not the connection that the Soviet audiences in the 1920s were aware of, while watching the film. To them, what had to be the most striking was the connection between American and Russian culture. It must have been amazing to see, in a movie imported from America, a cinematic representation of their beloved folk tales that they had heard or read as children. It also must have been fascinating to witness the magic of fairy tales coming alive on the screen, thanks to modern American film technology. Just the scene alone of Ahmed and the Princess flying on the magic carpet far above the earth must have been worth coming to the movie theatre again and again!

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[348] Ibid., p. 35.

**ii. Dynamism and Adventure**

In addition to the connection with Russia's own folk heritage, *The Thief of Bagdad* was popular among the Soviet audiences for a number of other reasons. Among them was its dynamism, including the energetic physical stunts of Fairbanks, as well as the element of suspense and the fast-paced fight and chase scenes, especially in the last thirty minutes of the film.

As we have seen, Lev Kuleshov highlighted the dynamism of American films as one of the main reasons of their success in Russia.[349] While *The Thief of Bagdad* appeared in Russia several years later than the popular American adventure detective films, it included the very 'dynamism of construction' and 'intensity in the build-up of the action' credited by Kuleshov as the main reasons behind American films' enormous domestic success.[350] In the beginning of the film, the events unfold in a rather unhurried manner, the highest degree of excitement provided by Fairbanks' physical stunts. Then, by the end of the film, the tempo builds up as the narrative focuses on the rush of Ahmed to save the Princess and the city of Bagdad from the evil Mongolian prince. Using the device of parallel editing, the film narrative switches between the fast-paced sequences of thousands of Mongolians overtaking the city, the Mongolian prince trying to force the Princess to marry him, and shots of Ahmed on horseback galloping back through the desert, about to restore justice (much like a cowboy hero of American westerns). The suspense is intensified by the fact that, for a while, Ahmed does not know about the perils that have befallen his beloved, while the viewers are well aware of them. The intensity of the build-up of

[349] Lev Kuleshov, 'Amerikanism', in *The Film Factory,* pp.72-73.
[350] Ibid.

the action is reinforced, throughout the film, by fight scenes, such as the fight between Ahmed and the dragon-like creature, and the grandiose fight within the walls of Bagdad between the Mongolians and Ahmed's magic White Army.

Interestingly, while attempting to save the Princess from the Mongolian prince, Ahmed puts on the invisible cloak and turns into a half-transparent… spinning top, or a spinning film reel! The visual image so similar to the trope used by Dziga Vertov as his nickname, in order to capture the dynamic atmosphere of the times, is quite curious.[351]

While the editing used in the most fast-paced scenes of the film is far from the best example of dynamic 'American' editing described by Kuleshov in a number of his writings, the film's popularity can still be partially explained by Kuleshov's comment on the roots of the Russian attraction to the dynamic aesthetics of American adventure films.

**iii. Athletic Feats and Physical Fitness**

Another reason for the film's popularity is the specific positive qualities of Douglas Fairbanks' star image. As Ahmed performs a number of difficult physical and psychological tasks on his 'road of trials', he exhibits a number of character traits that make his heroic victories possible. Some of these qualities make him strikingly similar to the future 'glorified' positive heroes of Socialist Realism.

One of Fairbanks' outstanding qualities was his physical fitness: throughout all of his films shown in Russia, he personally performed numerous stunts and

[351] I do not intend to argue that Vertov was influenced by Douglas Fairbanks in his choice of the nickname: rather, I believe this similarity points to the similar preoccupations with speed and rotation as part of the machine culture and the modern medium of cinema.

athletic feats. In *The Thief of Bagdad*, Fairbanks' character Ahmed climbs high walls, steals food that is being cooked on a balcony two floors high, and easily leaps over the heads of numerous Bagdadi men in prayer. Fairbanks creates an image of exemplary male physicality, overcoming physical obstacles with ease and sporting strong muscles, - which are a prominent visual attribute as Fairbanks is naked above the waist throughout most of the film.

Even prior to the appearance of Fairbanks' films in Russia, Soviet film journals praised American cinema for its focus on 'sportsmen' heroes and their plot construction that centered on courage, dexterity, and resourcefulness. As we have seen, an article in the 1923 issue of *Kino* juxtaposed the 'human sportsman' of American cinema to the 'European actor-intellectual with weak muscles'. The author of the article called for the new Soviet cinema to be based on the work of new actor-heroes, inspired by American cinema.[352] Another article, a review of the American *Tarzan* film series, stressed the need for adventure films that would 'demonstrate healthy people', as well as heroic deeds and energetic struggle.[353] With the appearance of the exceptionally fit, muscular Fairbanks on Soviet screens, it was natural for his star image to become a model for new Soviet film heroes.

Fairbanks' athletic and physically attractive characters, including Ahmed, as well as Robin Hood and Zorro, became role models of masculinity both for Soviet and American audiences. This was noted by a Soviet cinema publication, according to which, in a 1923 survey of thirty-seven thousand American students, Fairbanks

[352] Veronin, 'Kriticheskie zametki. Po povodu tekushchego repertuara', p. 11.
[353] 'Prikliucheniia Tarzana', in *Kino*, 3/7 (April-May, 1923), p. 15.

ranked as the top favorite actor among the male respondents.[354] In Soviet Russia, many young boys reportedly wanted to emulate 'the brave Doug', as was already noted earlier.[355]

In America, sports gained immense popularity in the 1920s, to the point where the decade became known as America's 'golden age of sports'.[356] In the United States, Fairbanks, with his stunning athletic feats and playfulness, represented in cinema the cult of sports and youth.[357] Soviet Russia soon recognized the importance of sports to the forging of the new kind of citizens. Throughout the 1920s and later, in the 1930s, physical culture and the corresponding 'sport for health' movement were considered a very important aspect of self-improvement in the USSR, and were given an important place in the official Soviet project of creating the new Soviet identity. As Attwood and Kelly point out, the physical culture movement was intended both to bring the Soviet population up to the fitness level necessary for citizens of a modern industrial state and to represent, by public parades of young sportsmen, the healthy and fit new Soviet society.[358] This movement found its apotheosis in the worship of

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[354] The majority of American female respondents preferred the handsome hero of melodramas Rudolph Valentino. See M. Smelianov, 'Amerikanskii kinematograf i ego aktery', *Kino*, 5/9 (October-December, 1923), p. 39. In Soviet Russia, Valentino was never as popular among women as he was in America. Kuznetsova has argued that Soviet women in general were more attracted to masculine and strong male stars, including Fairbanks. See Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zdevzy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 213. The film *Bed and Sofa* (1927) provides a small clue to Fairbanks' popularity among Soviet women: when Liuda and Volodia return from the movie theatre and Liuda is combing her hair, Fairbanks' photograph is pinned to the wall next to her mirror. (For a full treatment of this film, see Chapter 2 below, p. 185.) However, it is Fairbanks' popularity among Soviet men and boys that is of more importance to the present inquiry. For more on American female spectatorship and the sexual ambiguity of Valentino's star image, see Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship', *Cinema Journal* 25.4 (Summer 1986), pp. 6-32.
[355] See p. 91 above.
[356] David Pietrusza, *The Roaring Twenties (World History)* (Lucent Books, 1998), p. 60.
[357] Lary May, *Screening Out The Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 124.
[358] Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 269.

physical fitness in the 1930s. Fairbanks' agility and the stunts he was able to perform, viewed with admiration by Soviet film goers in the 1920s, fed into the growing awareness of the need for the building of strong physique, an ideal attribute of the future New Soviet Man.

The stunts of Fairbanks attracted a lot of attention in the Soviet film press. A very positive article in a 1925 issue of *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, which announced the arrival of *The Thief of Bagdad* and *Robin Hood* in Moscow, named *triuki* (stunts) as one of Fairbanks' special abilities; the same article called Fairbanks a 'sportsman' and an '*otchaiannaia golova*' (a daredevil), one who 'does everything that a hero of his type should do – and does it amazingly!'.[359] Another author stated that, with his physically strong appearance, Fairbanks could not but make audiences like him.[360]

In his essay on the genre of the western, André Bazin wrote, 'So we find at the source of the western the ethics of the epic and even of tragedy. The western is in the epic category because of the *superhuman level of its heroes* and the *legendary magnitude of their feats* of valour.'[361] While Fairbanks' films imported into Soviet Russia are not westerns, being most often referred to as 'swashbucklers' or adventure films, they are in a sense related to the western genre: Cohen suggests that Fairbanks' films are 'satires of western adventure' and represent Fairbanks' attempt to find 'alternative ways of representing the western spirit and new sites for exercising it.'[362] Thus, there is a similarity between Fairbanks' films and American westerns, in their

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[359] Ter-Oganesov, 'Duglas Ferbenks', p. 33. The editor's note to the article tempers Ter-Oganesov's admiration of Fairbanks, pointing out that his character portrayals are limited by the social structures of his native country, and that he could truly achieve mastery if he could 'step outside the limits of bourgeois society.'

[360] 'Inostrannye kino-aktery', *Sovetskii ekran*, 2/12 (1925), [no page numeration].

[361] André Bazin, 'The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence', in *What Is Cinema?* Vol 2, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 147. My italics.

[362] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 97.

portrayal of heroes who represent the 'western spirit' of freedom, individualism, and also changeability (between freedom and constraint, and between boyishness and heroic manliness),[363] as well as the fight for justice involving superhuman feats and qualities such as extreme physical fitness and dynamism. Therefore, Fairbanks' characters' popularity in early Soviet Russia can be attributed in part to the affinity felt by Soviet viewers towards the strong and healthy American frontiersman-like characters.[364]

Fairbanks' positive 'American' traits were somewhat similar to certain qualities that Russians have dreamed of for centuries, creating folk heroes such as the traditional Dobrynia Nikitich and other strong *bogatyr'* characters of Russian epics, who performed numerous physical feats and displayed resourcefulness and energy, all in good humour, while undergoing various tests and defeating evil forces.[365] This kind of a folk hero reflected the Russian ideal and provided a role model for otherwise mainly dormant Russians.[366] In her seminal analysis of the roots of the Socialist Realist novel, Katerina Clark points out that the new dynamic heroes of the Party rhetoric and literature of the 1920s (including Gleb Chumalov of Gladkov's novel *Cement*) were similar to the Russian folk *bogatyr'* ideal and were remarkable

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[363] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[364] American westerns were popular in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. For more information on their influence on Soviet cinema, see, for example, S.A. Lavrentiev, *Krasnyi vestern* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2009).

[365] Vladimir Propp identifies Dobrynia Nikitich, Ilia Muromets and Aliosha Popovich as the most beloved heroes of the Russian epics. See Vladimir Propp, *Russkii geroicheskii epos* (Moscow: Labirint, 1999), p. 181.

[366] The 'all-prevailing inertia of Russians of all classes' has been described, for example, by Hector Munro, an Englishman who spent two years in St. Petersburg in 1904-1906 as a foreign correspondent. See Dorothy Brewster, *East-West Passage: A Study in Literary Relationships* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1954), p. 199.

mostly for their fantastic feats.[367] As was already noted in the Introduction, in her study Clark names such hero qualities as energy, overcoming obstacles, and performing feats as stemming from the *bogatyr'* ideal, and dismisses their connection with the American cultural ideal of a frontiersman.[368] However, these same qualities were represented by film stars in American adventure films, of whom Douglas Fairbanks was the most popular,[369] as well as by heroes of American frontier and adventure literature, such as the novels of James Fennimore Cooper and adventure stories of Jack London, which were extremely popular in Russia both before and after the Revolution.[370] Consideration of the wide popularity in Russia of American film stars and heroes of American adventure literature helps shed new light on the roots of the change to the 'new man of action'[371] heroes in Soviet rhetoric and art of the 1920s.[372]

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[367] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 75.

[368] Ibid., p. 73. Clark does note that among the qualities of all heroes of the Stalinist thirties (who reflect the new image set in the 1920s) were traits 'rather like the "true grit" of the American frontier: "stickability" (*vyderzhka*), "hard as flint" (*kremen'*), and "will" (*volya*).' However, Clark dismisses this link with American culture. See also p. 27 above.

[369] Other film heroes exhibiting similar qualities are, for example, the cowboys of William S. Hart, who was also popular in Russia. See Ilya Trauberg, *Viliam Khart* (Moscow, Leningrad: Kinopechat', 1927).

[370] See, for example, S.G. Pushkarev, 'Russia and the West: Ideological and Personal Contacts before 1917', *Russian Review*, 24.2 (April 1965), pp. 138-164; Maurice Friedberg, 'Foreign Authors and Soviet Readers', *Russian Review*, 13.4 (October 1954), pp. 266-275. For a further discussion of Cooper's and London's prose, see Chapter 2 below, pp. 130 and 157.

[371] As was noted in the Introduction, Clark attributes this change from the 'static revolutionary martyr' to a 'dynamic man of action' to the extreme times of the Revolution and Civil War. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 73 and p. 68.

[372] It should be noted here that another kind of popular 'Americanness' was represented by the cinematic characters of Charlie Chaplin. Arguably, the Russians identified with Chaplin's hapless characters due to their similarity to the Russian national self-image (represented in such folk heroes of magical tales as Ivan the Fool), while Fairbanks' characters, were appealing because they provided a model of ideal masculinity. I use the term 'ideal' to denote a state of perfection that representatives of a people wish to achieve in the future, while 'self-image' signifies the traditional qualities that the majority of a people are understood to possess at present. This is the main reason why Chaplin's star image is not considered at

**iv. Optimism and Joyfulness**

Fairbanks' Ahmed, as well as his Zorro and Robin Hood, all share another set of qualities admired by Soviet viewers: optimism, joyfulness (*zhizneradostnost'*) and sense of humor. Contemporary descriptions of Fairbanks emphasize his ability to make the viewers laugh: 'Humor is an ever-present part of his pictures. Laughter, healthy and good laughter, traverses all his films as a kind of a central line', writes Ter-Oganesov in *Kino-zhurnal ARK*.[373]

American viewers also appreciated these qualities of Fairbanks: according to Cohen, Fairbanks was a figure of 'sublime cheerfulness and play', and his films were seen as 'cheerful and uplifting'. Fairbanks' compatriots admired his capacity for play as the visible expression of energy and youth.[374] This quality of Fairbanks appealed to viewers and critics around the world. The leftist French film theorist and critic Léon Moussinac was quoted in Russia as having noted Fairbanks' special and even extraordinary ability to transmit a sense of joy and liveliness to the viewers.[375]

Optimism and joyfulness were character traits that, in the 1930s, were officially encouraged in filmic portrayals of the New Soviet Man. Such human traits were best highlighted in the genre of comedy. Comedy was one of the genres most favored by Boris Shumiatskii, the head of Soiuzkino (the main organization overseeing cinema affairs in the 1930s), for the new Soviet 'cinema for the millions'.[376] He explained, 'We need genres that are infused with optimism, with the

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greater length within this thesis, which focuses on the roots of the New Soviet Man image as the ideal to be attained by Soviet citizens.

[373] Ter-Oganesov, 'Duglas Ferbenks', p. 33.

[374] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, pp. 97-103.

[375] Quoted in A. Razumovskii, 'Duglas Ferbenks', in *Zvezdy nemogo kino*, p. 134.

[376] Richard Taylor, 'Ideology as Mass Entertainment: Boris Shumyatsky and Soviet Cinema in the 1930s', in *Inside the Film Factory*, p. 208.

mobilizing emotions, with cheerfulness, joie-de-vivre and laughter.'[377] We shall further discuss the optimistic positive heroes of Socialist Realist films of the 1930s, in Chapter 4 below.[378]

In the first part of *The Thief of Bagdad*, Ahmed the Thief is rather similar to Ostap Bender, the 'lovable conman' of Il'f and Petrov's extremely popular satirical novel *The Twelve Chairs*. This book was published in 1928, after *The Thief of Bagdad* had its record run in Soviet theatres. Scenes in the beginning of Fairbanks' film, such as the one where Ahmed manages to ride underneath a rich man's carriage and dares to take a large ring off the hand of the man, while maintaining his smile and causing the viewers to smile at his playful ingenuity, are reminiscent of many of Ostap's illegal undertakings in the novel, done in a similar playful manner. The combination of resourcefulness, playfulness, and a good sense of humor in a 'lovable conman' were particularly popular with Soviet audiences in both cases.[379]

**v. Democratic accessibility**

The sense of humor and optimism in Fairbanks' portrayal of Ahmed in *The Thief of Bagdad* is part of a wider aspect of his characterization, that of democratic accessibility. 'I am a wretched outcast, a thief', he tells the Princess in the scene of their meeting. In another scene, he is flogged by soldiers on the Caliph's order, something that many older Soviet workers and peasants could identify with. Ahmed's

[377] Ibid.
[378] See p. 254 below.
[379] I am not suggesting that the fictional character of Ostap Bender was necessarily influenced by Fairbanks. If one were to trace influences, the more immediate one seems to be a connection with Andy Tucker, the 'loveable conman' of O. Henry's short stories (widely read in Soviet Russia), to whom Ostap alludes in the text of *The Twelve Chairs*. See 'Brilliant Smoke' chapter.

social role at the beginning of the film made his character all the more understandable for the lower classes among the audience members. Stanley Cavell has argued that, 'Because on film social role appears arbitrary or incidental, movies have an inherent tendency toward the democratic, or anyway the idea of human equality.'[380] This inherent democratic quality, and an arbitrary/changeable social role of the main protagonist can be perceived in *The Thief of Bagdad.*

In several other films, such as *Robin Hood* and *The Mark of Zorro*, Fairbanks fights against the wealthy villains and brings justice to the poor. While the main character of *The Mark of Zorro* is a nobleman, he is unhappy with his origins and assumes a different identity, that of the invincible, heroic, and always victorious Zorro, whose main objective is the fight against oppression. His motto is 'Justice for all!'. It was not surprising, then, that the Bolshevik authorities did not oppose the Soviet public's fascination with Fairbanks in any serious way.[381]

**vi. Transformation**

What also makes Ahmed similar to, and a predecessor of, the positive heroes of Socialist Realism is the transformation he undergoes as the film narrative progresses.[382] In fact, his is a double transformation: first, a petty thief, someone who is initially portrayed in a morally not-too-positive light (stealing, threatening a woman servant) becomes a tender lover and changes his ways. In Ahmed's words

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[380] Stanley Cavell, 'The World Viewed', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, Third Edition*, ed. by Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 279.
[381] This is based on the fact that the film ran continuously for several years in theatres throughout Russia. See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 20.
[382] For a further discussion of transformation in Socialist Realist films of the 1930s, see Chapters 3 and 4 below, especially pp. 222 and p. 286, n.905.

addressed to the Princess (in an intertitle), 'What I wanted, I took… but when I held you in my arms, the very world did change. The evil in me died.' This is a moral transformation under the effects of love.

Next, the thief-turned-lover undertakes a journey, by the end of which he becomes a prince and a hero (the trope of a 'prince' suggests a spiritual reading, as well as a social one). An ordinary man is made 'extraordinary' (signified by his command of the magic to which he has gained access after the road of many trials), through his individual efforts and enthusiasm. This is more than just a 'rags-to-riches' story: Ahmed does not only become wealthy in a materialistic sense, but undergoes a spiritual transformation, through love and, more importantly, individual heroic action. Such character development contained a message that was appealing within the context of the Soviet project of creating the heroic and brave new Soviet identity.

Having gone through the trials of the journey and achieved the status of a hero, Ahmed-Fairbanks makes a choice not only for personal benefit, but for collective good: upon learning about the Mongolian army's invasion of Bagdad, Ahmed chooses to use the magic that he has earned on his journey to create a large army capable of defeating the enemies and freeing the city, thus helping the masses, instead of focusing entirely on his personal goal of marrying the Princess (which he achieves as well). It can be argued that, in doing so (using the magic to help the collective), Ahmed becomes an agent of change for those around him, initiating the defeat of the enemy armies and liberation of the city and of his beloved. Ahmed's transformation from a thief into a hero, who not only achieves personal happiness but also helps bring about collective good, is reminiscent of the pattern described by

Clark as the hallmark of Socialist Realist fiction: that of a positive hero on the 'road to consciousness'.[383]

Contemporary Soviet reviews of Douglas Fairbanks' films emphasized that the way in which his star image embodied the 'ideal features of an American hero'[384] was through juxtaposing the polar opposite traits of human nature, in a transformation that took place during the progression of a film's narrative. For example, according to an anonymous reviewer in a 1925 issue of *Kino-zhurnal ARK,* Fairbanks' hero was often initially shown as an ordinary man, sometimes a weakling (*'rokhlia, golovotiap, miamlia'*) who, under extraordinary circumstances, turned into a 'courageous, physically strong and morally sound person, who does not know any obstacles.'[385] The 'ideal features of an American hero' embodied by Fairbanks were similar to some of the ideal features of heroes of the Bolshevik prose of the 1920s and Socialist Realist heroes of the 1930s, who, according to Clark, were 'all "struggle", "vigilance", heroic achievement, energy [...]' and who achieved these qualities having undergone a transformation on the 'road to consciousness'.[386] While Ahmed does not achieve political consciousness in the Bolshevik sense, his transformation can nevertheless be likened to that of literary positive heroes of the Bolshevik prose in the 1920s: in each case, a spiritual change is achieved, and a character acquires heroic qualities. Having undergone this transformation, the character becomes an agent of change for others.

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[383] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 65. Unlike heroes of Socialist Realist novels, Ahmed does not have one 'mentor' who helps him achieve his transformation; instead of a mentor, his inspiration for such a transformation is his beloved Princess.
[384] K.Sh., 'Chetyre, piat', shest'...', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 4/5 (1925), p. 25. Full name of the author is not indicated in the publication.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 73.

**vii. Individual Initiative, Resourcefulness, and Success**

In America, Douglas Fairbanks was known not only as a film star, but also as the author of self-help books on personal achievement, preaching the Horatio Alger code of success.[387] In these books, he addressed audiences comprised of both adults and children, including the Boy Scouts of America.[388] For example, in *Making Life Worth While* Fairbanks wrote,

> The greatest of human possessions are a well-trained mind, a body to match, and a love of achievement, without which a man is old before his time. After that comes energy – the great propeller![389]

Chapters in his other book, entitled *Laugh and Live,* include such titles as 'Energy, Success and Laughter', and 'Initiative and Self-Reliance'.[390] Fairbanks also frequently wrote for *Boys' Life,* the official Boy Scouts magazine.[391] Cohen posits that his advice on individual success, on keeping fit, on making a start and advancing, as well as his star image itself, created a dynamic ideal available for imitation for anyone, regardless of their class, religion, or political affiliation.[392] I have not had a chance to research the existence of translations of Fairbanks' self-help books in Soviet Russia; however, the qualities of 'energy', 'success' of a self-made man, and 'initiative and self-reliance' were clearly appealing to Soviet audiences in the 1920s.

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[387] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Horatio Alger, a writer and author of the 'Strive and Succeed' philosophy, wrote stories based on the rags-to-riches formula in the second half of the 19th century; 'he preached that by honesty, cheerful perseverance, and hard work the poor but virtuous lad would have his just reward.' See www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/14993/Horatio-Alger [accessed 19 May 2009].
[388] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth,* p. 104.
[389] Douglas Fairbanks, *Making Life Worth While* (Britton Publishing Co., 1918), p. 16.
[390] Douglas Fairbanks, *Laugh and Live* (Britton Publishing Co., 1917).
[391] Robert Gottlieb, 'The Silent Superstar', in *New York Review of Books,* 56.3 (February 26, 2009).
[392] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth,* p. 104.

In *The Thief of Bagdad*, the main aspect of Ahmed's character development is the process by which he 'makes himself'. The film begins and ends with a phrase written in the sky, which reads, 'Happiness must be earned'. By the end of the film, Ahmed the Prince is a self-made man.

Ahmed's story is essentially a story of success. Individual success was not a quality praised in the official press portrayals of 'Russian Americans', those exemplary workers who were presented as examples to others. However, as Jeffrey Brooks points out, the myth of success had gained a hold on the popular imagination in pre-revolutionary Russia, and this preoccupation carried over into the 1920s. Fairbanks, who personally succeeded in business just as his characters did in the imaginary space of his films, represented the myth of success for Soviet audiences, just as he did for the American ones.[393]

According to Viktor Shklovskii, during his 1926 visit to Moscow, Fairbanks remarked that he was surprised at the Russian popularity of his 'weakest' films, *The Thief of Bagdad* and *Mark of Zorro*. Shklovskii quotes Sergei Eisenstein's ironic reply to Fairbanks: 'We love you [...] because you jump well, you are a strong and joyful person, for the success of your hero on the screen. The hero on the screen is an extraordinary person who is able to do anything.'[394] Eisenstein was expressing irony in regards to the degree of admiration expressed by the domestic mass audience towards Fairbanks' agile screen heroes who were almost incredulously successful in all their endeavours.

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[393] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237.
[394] Viktor Shklovskii, *Eizenshtein* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), p. 133

The notion of individual success and individuality in general may not have been emphasized in the artistic and official Bolshevik discourse of the 1920s (where individualism was meant to be supplanted by the higher spiritual quality of collectivism). However, any talk of forging the New Soviet Man was bound to involve the process of individual self-improvement. According to Brooks, in many press references to the 'Russian American' ideal in the 1920s, the 'American' quality of individual motivation was indeed emphasized along with such qualities as energy and personal initiative.[395] According to Hellebust, in Soviet literary portrayals of exemplary persons in the 1920s, the qualities of individual initiative and enthusiasm were as important as self-control and submission to the collective.[396] Needless to say, in the Soviet context this individual motivation and initiative was to be applied to reaching the goals set by the Party. Among avant-garde artists of the 1920s, collectivist rhetoric often concealed deep-rooted individuality.[397]

The idea of self-improvement, and of America as an example of successful, self-made people, had been popular among Russian audiences since well before the Revolution of 1917, mainly through popular fiction based on American dime novels.[398] Therefore, when the films of Douglas Fairbanks appeared in Russia in the mid-1920s, they presented to the wider Soviet audiences a visual (rather than literary) role model of such personal success.

As for the intellectuals, the Fairbanks persona and his qualities of self-improvement and individual motivation, energy and daring, could have reminded

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[395] Ibid., p. 241.
[396] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal,* p. 81.
[397] Ibid., p. 164. For a discussion of individualism in Stalinist cinema of the 1930s, see Chapter 4 below, especially p. 303.
[398] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 236.

them of Nietzschean notions, widely discussed since the early 1900s, including the Nietzschean 'daring man' ideal. According to Rosenthal, the use of such character traits as selfhood and daring, as well as energy, joyousness, and enthusiasm, in the official Bolshevik rhetoric of the 1920s and 1930s signal an association with the philosophy of Nietzsche.[399]

The Bolshevik heresy of God-building in the early 1900s was based on Marxism and on Nietzschean views on myth and cult, among other sources. Its adherents believed that intellectuals and artists could create a new culture, which would engender a new man: strong, beautiful, creative, and loving.[400] As was mentioned in the Introduction, Anatolii Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Enlightenment, supervising all cinema affairs in the 1920s, had been an adherent of God-building prior to the Revolution. He had read Nietzsche, who provided him with a means to reconcile Marxism and aestheticism and to argue that art can change consciousness. Like other God-builders, Lunacharsky believed that in the future Socialist society, superior individuals could achieve true self-fulfillment by going beyond themselves in creativity and by performing heroic deeds.[401] Also central to the God-builders and other Russian Nietzscheans was the balance between the 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' impulses of culture, which signified, respectively, individuation and harmony, and collectivism and boundless energy.[402] These ideas must have still played a part in Lunacharsky's work overseeing cinema affairs in the 1920s: they would explain his interest in encouraging filmmakers to create heroic and

[399] Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, 14.
[400] Ibid., p. 4.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Ibid., pp. 15-16. Rosenthal points out that Nietzschean thought accommodated diametrically opposed opinions, including the 'Apollonian' notion of individuality and the 'Dionysian' notion of collectivism and loss of self. See Rosenthal, 'Introduction', p. 18.

daring characters on the screen. A similar process was taking place in Soviet literature, which Clark links to Gorky's earlier involvement with Nietzscheanism and God-building.[403]

In his initial identity as a thief, and in his new self, having been transformed by love and heroic action, Ahmed in *The Thief of Bagdad* is a daring man[404] who uses his self-reliance, resourcefulness and initiative to achieve personal and collective happiness. As a boyish, spontaneous thief, he dares to steal money, food, and other objects, and even attempts to steal the Princess (his initial motto is 'What I want – I get.') As a changed, love-struck, and devoted hero, he is not afraid to go through many hardships, including fighting evil forces without and within, so as to achieve individual happiness, as well as peace and independence for his city. This daring and its use in order to reach individual success would have been perceived by Soviet intellectuals as echoing the Nietzschean discourse.

Nietzschean ideas were widely circulated in translated American literature at the time, including the works of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Theodore Dreiser (the authors who were also very popular in Soviet Russia).[405] At the same time, for the American nation, Fairbanks' characters embodied the spirit of the American frontier, with its heroic action, individualism, freedom, and confidence[406] - qualities that make the American cultural ideal of a self-made 'frontiersman' somewhat similar to the Nietzschean model. This Nietzschean link helps partially explain the affinity

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[403] Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* p. 152. Also see Mikhail Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture,* pp. 256-286.
[404] Clark notes that 'daring' is a central concept in Nietzscheanism. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 152.
[405] Mikhail Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture,* p. 271.
[406] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 103.

felt by Soviet viewers (especially the intellectuals) for the 'American' qualities represented, in cinema, by Douglas Fairbanks.

Although Lunacharsky is credited with officially calling *The Thief of Bagdad* 'rubbish',[407] it is possible that he, along with the many Soviet admirers of Fairbanks, perceived in the characters of Fairbanks the Nietzschean qualities of an *Übermensch* ('superman'). This can help explain the approval by Lunacharsky of the wide distribution of *The Thief of Bagdad* and other Fairbanks films in Soviet Russia.

As was mentioned earlier, the 1929 survey of children's film preferences showed that many Soviet children (presumably mostly boys) considered 'Doug' their role model, wanting to be as brave as him. We should note the importance of this fact: in other words, a large percentage of the new, young Soviet generation who grew up in the 1920s had as one of their main role models an American film star, who, at the same time, represented for his own nation the 'western spirit' of freedom and individualism.[408] Film, being visual in nature and having a great power to affect the viewer's emotions, is an important tool in shaping identity, especially in the case of children (something the Bolshevik government recognized early on, declaring cinema 'the most important' of all the arts and quickly co-opting it to be one of the tools of indoctrinating the masses with socialist ideology).[409]

In her study of female audience-star identification in the 1940s and 1950s, Jackie Stacey considers not only the processes of identification that take place during the viewing of a film, but also the ones that involve transformation of a spectator's

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[407] Ball, *Imagining America,* p. 41.
[408] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, pp. 103-104.
[409] Attwood and Kelly point out the importance of children's education and children's literature to the Bolshevik project of identity building. See Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 257.

identity as a result of their admiration of their favorite star, through personal appearance and behavior changes.[410] Stacey posits that 'stars serve a normative function to the extent that they are often read as role models, contributing to the construction of the ideals of feminine attractiveness circulating in the culture of that time.'[411] The same principle can be applied to examining male audience-star identification and interpretation of film stars as role models in early Soviet Russia.

The humorous portrayal of Goga, who tries to look and act like Fairbanks in *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* [*Potselui Meri Pikford*] (1926), testifies to the instances of such audience-star identification in Russia. While satirizing the mass adoration of 'Doug and Mary' by Soviet viewers, the film is an important historical document of the male audience-star identification. The plot of the film revolves around a Chaplinesque movie theatre usher Goga Palkin (Igor' Il'inskii), whose sweetheart Dusia (Anel' Sudakevich) is an admirer of Douglas Fairbanks and rejects Goga after watching *The Mark of Zorro* with Fairbanks in the lead role. Throughout the film, Goga goes through a number of identity changes, trying to look and act like Fairbanks (practicing his smile and his leaps), and submitting himself to a number of uncanny tests so as to become a famous 'stuntman'. Upon receiving a kiss from the visiting Mary Pickford on a film set, he becomes a local celebrity, endlessly pursued by paparazzi and crowds of Pickford admirers, and finally wins Dusia's love.[412]

Goga's willingness to undergo an identity change so as to resemble Fairbanks both physically and in his celebrity status, and thus to win the love of his sweetheart,

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[410] Ibid., p. 135.
[411] Ibid., p. 145.
[412] For further information on *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* see, for example, Peter Christensen, 'An Ambivalent NEP Satire of Bourgeois Aspirations: *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*', in *Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash*, ed. by Andrew Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 51.

parodies (and thus proves the exitence of) similar tendencies on behalf of male viewers in Soviet Russia of the 1920s, while also representing female adoration of Fairbanks as an ideal of masculinity.[413] In the absence of outstanding Soviet male stars that could be perceived as a cinematic model of new Soviet masculinity in the 1920s, Fairbanks' star image became an ideal of physical attractiveness, as well as of positive 'American' qualities and modes of behaviour.

The New Soviet Man ideal was being shaped through various programmes of identity, of which cinema was an important part. This inquiry emphasizes the potentially higher degree of importance of cinema as opposed to literature in this process of constructing the new Soviet identity. First of all, cinema could potentially reach larger numbers of Soviet citizens than could literature (due to the fact that no literacy was required to watch a film). And secondly, viewers could arguably experience a stronger degree of identification with cinematic heroes than the literary ones, due to the visual immediacy of the former.

Andrew Tudor points out that imitation, as a form of audience-star involvement, is more often encountered among the young members of the audience.[414] This was clearly perceived by the Bolshevik officials, including Lunacharsky, who saw it as their duty not to simply educate the young, but to oversee the process of their moral and physical education and development (*vospitanie*) into the future New Soviet Men and Women. In a lecture given in 1928, entitled

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[413] Denise Youngblood provides an example of another film of the decade that satirically deals with the issue of female adoration of Fairbanks, as well as Pickford and other American stars. In the film *Odna iz mnogikh* [*One of Many*] (1927), the young female protagonist dreams of traveling to America and meeting her idols; in her dream, she arrives on a Hollywood set, meets D.W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, and most importantly, Douglas Fairbanks, who appears to her first as the Thief of Bagdad and then as Zorro. See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, pp. 58-59.

[414] Quoted in Jackie Stacey, 'Feminine Fascinations: A Question of Identification?', p. 134.

'Vospitanie novogo cheloveka [The Upbringing of the New Man]', Lunacharsky stressed the importance of the arts, including cinema, to this process. Lunacharsky argued that the arts 'make an indelible impression upon [children's] consciousness'. He went on to stress that art is 'the main disseminator of imitation'.[415] Lunacharsky also indicated that he, along with many other Bolsheviks and intellectuals, saw 'American' qualities as a positive example to the Russian population: in the above-mentioned lecture, he mentioned that the Russians 'still did not resemble Americans enough.'[416]

The 1925 description of Fairbanks in *Kino-zhurnal ARK* sums up the attitudes towards Fairbanks in Soviet Russia in the 1920s:

> Fairbanks can be called *an ideal of the positive screen hero*... In his face and figure, Douglas has embodied the best qualities of a true American: health, strength, and joyfulness. He is all dynamism [*stremitelnost'*], speed, and pressure [*natisk*] [...] Strength and action – these are the two words that best characterize Fairbanks.[417]

While there were few popular male lead actors in early Soviet cinema, which was noted in public surveys as one of the reasons why some viewers preferred American and other foreign films,[418] Fairbanks provided a visual role model for many Soviet men and boys, just as he did for his own male compatriots. At the time when exemplary individuals were praised as 'Russian Americans' in the Soviet press, Fairbanks became a role model for those who wished to become such exemplary

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[415] Anatolii Lunacharsky, *Vospitanie novogo cheloveka* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1928), p. 36.
[416] Ibid., p. 17.
[417] Ter-Oganesov, 'Duglas Ferbenks', p. 33. My italics.
[418] A participant in a 1925 survey of film-going public, published in *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, wrote, 'In the Soviet [films] I don't like the direction and performance of the actors, but I do like the content. In the foreign films, the opposite is true.' Another participant of the same survey wrote, 'Foreign films show a completely different everyday life than here in the USSR, and are interesting due to their magnificent direction, plots, and fantastic performance of the actors.' See A. Dubrovskii, 'Opyty izucheniia zritelia', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 8 (1925), p. 7.

individuals, the future ideal New Soviet Men. At the same time, his qualities made him one of the prototypes of the future positive heroes of Socialist Realist cinema, the 'glorified' inhabitants of the future Soviet utopia. We shall discuss the similarities between Fairbanks and some of the cinematic heroes of Stalinist cinema of the 1930s in Chapter 4 below.[419]

The popularity of Douglas Fairbanks in Soviet Russia was reinforced, at least in part, by his appeal to the tastes of the literate audiences who enjoyed reading Americanized Russian detective adventure dime novels, highly popular on the eve of the Revolution. Brooks compares Fairbanks to the heroes of such serialized novels, Nat Pinkerton and Nick Carter: like these characters, the heroes of Fairbanks, too, were physically agile, optimistic, and democratic, mixing freely with all classes and snubbing snobs and villains.[420]

In American popular culture, Fairbanks, along with Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*, was one of the sources of inspiration for the character of Superman, created in the 1930s by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.[421] It is fascinating, therefore, to note these similar roots, shared by of one of the unacknowledged models of exemplary Soviet masculinity and the Superman, the American cultural icon of the twentieth century.

The combination of Nietzschean notions of self-fulfillment, individual motivation and personal success with agility, optimism and democraticism, as well as a perceived connection between Fairbanks' star image (especially in *The Thief of*

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[419] See pp. 256-257, 257-259, 261-262, and 316 below.
[420] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237.
[421] Jeffrey Vance and Tony Maietta, *Douglas Fairbanks* (University of California Press, 2008).

*Bagdad*) and Russian folk heritage, played a part in Fairbanks' great popularity in Soviet Russia in the first decade after the Revolution. This popularity contributed to the widespread perception of an American positive hero as a role model for the New Soviet Man.

## Chapter 2
## American and 'Russian American' Characters in Soviet Films of the 1920s: Cinematic and Literary Connections

In addition to 'American montage' and 'American shots', as well as physical stunts, action-filled narratives, and prevalence of exterior locations – the main cinematic elements that, according to Tsivian, had been perceived in Russia as 'American' since the mid-1910s,[422] – many early Soviet films focused on active, dynamic characters, whose qualities were often inspired by portrayals of agile and ingenious heroes of American adventure films and literature. These American and 'Russian American' characters in early Soviet films will be at the centre of our inquiry in the present chapter.

Denise Youngblood has classified 'Americanized' Soviet films of the 1920s as falling into two categories, 'pictures on American themes' and 'pictures on Soviet subjects in the "Western" style' or the so-called 'export films'.[423] Among the former Youngblood includes Lev Kuleshov's 'American' features such as *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* [*Neobychainye prikliucheniia mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov*] (1924), *By the Law* [*Po zakonu*] (1926), and *The Great Consoler* [*Velikii uteshitel'*] (1933), as well as Soviet spoofs of American films[424] and films that featured characters who were American citizens.[425] Among

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[422] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 39.
[423] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 58.
[424] Among these Youngblood lists *Amerikanka iz Bagdada* (1931), *Vor, no ne bagdadskii* (1926), *Znak Zorro na sele* (1927). See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 58. To this list, we need to add *Bagdadskii vor* (1925). See *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*,vol. 1, p. 82.
[425] Among these Youngblood lists *Miss Keti i Mister Dzhek* (1927), *Naezdnik iz Uail'd Vesta* (1925), *Dzhimmi Khiggins* (1928), *Kolumb zakryvaet Ameriku* (1932), *Miss Mend* (1926), and *Odna iz mnogikh* (1927). See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 58-59. (Youngblood

'pictures on Soviet subjects in the "Western" style' Youngblood lists *Cross and Mauser* [*Krest i mauzer*] (1925), *Honor* [*Chest'*] (1926), *The Sold Appetite* [*Prodannyi appetit*] (1928), *Aelita* (1924), and a number of other films[426] that were 'Western' but not necessarily 'American' in style. She does not list *Little Red Devils* (1923) and other 'Red Pinkerton' adventure films in this category; however, the 'Red Pinkertons', which will be discussed below, were indeed made in the 'Western' and more specifically, American style.

For the purposes of my study, which focuses on hero representations, instead of applying Youngblood's classification I will analyze characters with 'American' traits in Soviet films of the 1920s, using the following classification: Americanized representations of the new type of Soviet hero in the 'Red Pinkerton' adventure films; early Soviet cinematic portrayals of contemporary Americans; representations of American heroes in film adaptations of American literature; and representations of 'Russian Americans' in Soviet *novyi byt* films of the late 1920s.[427]

As early as 1919, Viktor Shklovskii saw American cinema as a positive example, for Russian filmmakers, of exploring the possibilities of the new film medium, especially in its use of 'structures reminiscent of those found in adventure

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mistakenly lists the films as *Odin iz mnogikh* on p. 225). Other films that need to be added to this category, are *Serdtsa i dollary* (1924), *Ditia gostsirka* (1925), *Nepobedimye* (1927), *Paren' s beregov Missuri* (1932), *Chernaia kozha* (1931), *Negr iz Sheridana* (1932), and *Lavry Miss Ellen Grei* (1935). See *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*, vol. 1, p. 74, p. 88, p. 214, p. 436, p. 450, p. 463, p. 506.

[426] Ibid.

[427] Lev Kuleshov's films on American themes will be discussed in the present chapter within the categories of 'early Soviet cinematic portrayals of contemporary Americans' and 'representations of American heroes in film adaptations of American literature'. Due to the focus on character representations, some of Kuleshov's 'American' films, such as *Death Ray* (1925), will not be discussed in this chapter. Kuleshov's first feature, *Engineer Prite's Project* (1918) which also deals with the American theme and American characters, is discussed in Chapter 1 above (p. 71), in relation to Kuleshov's stylistic 'Americanism' including his use of American cinematic devices.

novels (kidnapping, chase, tardying rescue, etc.)'.[428] As Yuri Tsivian has suggested, for Shklovskii and other Formalists, Americanism was mainly useful due to its exploration of the innate specificity of film as a new art form.[429] At the root of the Soviet 'Americanist' adventure films in the 1920s there existed an important literary link with American culture, namely the inspiration drawn by filmmakers from American adventure literature.

American literature, both in its 'higher' and 'lower' forms, had enjoyed great popularity in Russia since the nineteenth century. Its most popular genres were adventure and detective stories and novels. We have already noted the popularity in Russia, since the early 1910s, of adventure stories by Jack London. The heroes of London's prose were often faced with physical challenges, sometimes finding themselves alone in the setting of wild natural landscape (including the physically challenging landscapes of the Gold Rush locations). Many of London's heroes had to perform feats of individual bravery and ingenuity in order to survive in such an environment.

The Russian fascination with the American adventure genre preceded the appearance of London's translated prose in the 1910s. Frontier adventure novels by James Fennimore Cooper had been widely read in Russia since the 1840s, and received high acclaim from the Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky, who believed Cooper to be greater than Sir Walter Scott and called his *The Pathfinder* a

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[428] Viktor Shklovskii, 'O kinematografe', *Iskusstvo kommuny,* 12 (February 23, 1919), p. 1.
[429] Ibid., p. 41.

'Shakespearean drama in the form of a novel'.[430] We shall return to the Russian reception of Cooper's main literary hero, Natty Bumppo, later in this chapter.[431]

Large numbers of American literary texts were available to Russian readers on the eve of the Revolution. According to Sergei Pushkarev, the 1911 edition of *Sredi knig* [*Among Books*], a bibliographic guide used for self-education and library acquisitions, listed 278 titles by 102 English and American authors (unfortunately, this is a combined figure). Among translations of foreign literature, those of English-language (including American) literature were the third most numerous, after French and German ones.[432] A post-World War Two Harvard survey of Soviet émigrés showed that, by the 1940s, American literature became the second most widely read in Russia among foreign literatures of various countries, following French and preceding British literature.[433] This figure, combined with the fact that, in the 1920s, American imported films outnumbered all other foreign imports and Russian-made films, sheds further light on the affinity perceived by Russian readers and viewers for American culture.

Among American adventure writers admired in Russia both before and after the Revolution were Mark Twain, Jack London, Thomas Maine Reid, O. Henry, Edgar Allan Poe, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, and Ernest Hemingway.[434] We shall return to the work of some of these writers in more detail later on in this chapter.[435]

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[430] Kay Seymour House, 'Introduction', in James Fennimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. xxv-xxvi.
[431] See p. 130 below.
[432] Pushkarev, 'Russia and the West', p. 150.
[433] Friedberg, 'Foreign Authors and Soviet Readers', p. 267.
[434] The 1920s were the time when translated works by these authors were widely available, while by the 1940s, works by some of them, such as Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis, were

Russian fascination with American adventure and detective fiction and its ingenious, brave and self-reliant heroes found its expression, first, in numerous Russian westernized adventure and detective dime novels (widely published in serialized form in the two decades prior to the Revolution), and later, in the Soviet adventure films of the twenties.

Russian detective stories and adventure novels, many of which focused on American characters, appeared after the Revolution of 1905, as a result of the general loosening of censorship, following the undermining of the tsar's authority. In the last two decades preceding the Revolution, the detective genre was one of the most popular genres among the lower urban classes, as well as the middle class and educated readers.[436] During that time, there appeared a large number of Russian serialized detective novels, which were devoted to the continued adventures of a particular character.[437] Adventure, crime, and the career of a bandit hero were at the centre of sixty percent of novels published in the St. Petersburg paper *Gazeta-kopeika* between 1908 and 1917.[438] Serialized detective novels were also sold in inexpensive installments.[439]

The two most popular series focused on the adventures of Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton, both of whom were fictional American private detectives. The Russian Nick Carter series was based on the American detective series about the character of the same name. The American Nick Carter first appeared in the 18 September 1886

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removed from the shelves of Soviet libraries. See Friedberg, 'Foreign Authors and Soviet Readers', p. 267.

[435] See p. 156 below.

[436] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 79 and p. 109.

[437] Ibid., p. 109.

[438] Ibid., p. 136.

[439] Ibid., p. xvii and p. xxvii.

issue of the *New York Weekly,* in a story 'The Old Detective's Pupil; or, The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square', written by John Russell Coyrell, who then wrote a few sequels and turned the character over to a number of other dime writers. According to Jess Nevins, from the late 1880s the Nick Carter character became so popular in America that the demand for stories about him outstripped the abilities of one writer to meet these demands.[440] One early American story described Nick Carter in the following way:

> Giants were like children in his grasp. He could fell an ox with one blow of his small, compact fist. Old Sim Carter had made the physical development of his son one of the studies of his life. Only one of the studies, however. Young Nick's mind was stored with knowledge – knowledge of a peculiar sort. His gray eyes had, like an Indian's, been trained to take in minutest details fresh for use. [...] And his handsome face could, in an instant, be distorted into any one of a hundred types of unrecognizable ugliness. He was a master of disguise.[441]

The American description focuses on Nick Carter's physical strength, intelligence, and ingenuity, expressed in his ability to be a 'master of disguise'. It also suggests his adventurousness and energy.

It is not clear how the Nick Carter stories found their way into Russia, but according to Jeffrey Brooks, between 1905 and 1917 the Russian Nick Carter stories appeared in millions of copies.[442] These stories were either adapted from, or inspired by the foreign originals.[443] Between 1907 and 1915, 3.1 million Russian Nick Carter stories were published at the price of fifteen kopecks or less.[444] In his memoirs, the

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[440] Jess Nevins, 'The Nick Carter Page', http://www.geocities.com/jessnevins/carter.html [accessed 7 April 2009]. See also the 'Stanford University Library Dime Novels and Penny Dreadfuls' website, http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/home.html [accessed 7 April 2009].
[441] Nevins, 'The Nick Carter Page'.
[442] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 142.
[443] Ibid., p. 143.
[444] Ibid., p. 142.

Soviet film director Sergei Iutkevitch recalled, as a young boy, spending his breakfast money on the latest installment of a Nick Carter story.[445] Iutkevich's memoirs provide an insight into the fascination of many Russian teenagers growing up in the 1910s by the fast-paced, dangerous and heroic life of the literary characters in American and Americanized Russian adventure and detective thrillers.

Even more popular than the Nick Carter series were the serial detective stories about Nat Pinkerton. Between 1905 and 1915, there were 6.2 million copies of these stories published in Russia.[446] The Russian Nat Pinkerton stories also focused on an American private detective and were loosely based on the figure of the nineteenth-century American detective Allan Pinkerton, who had published some detective stories himself. However, the Russian stories were not adaptations of his works. Brooks suggests that neither Allan Pinkerton, nor his son, also a writer, had ever created anything like the Russian Nat Pinkerton stories.[447]

The Russian detective serials about Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton presented a new experience of reading to the Russian readers: they were fast-paced and depicted their heroes always on the move, in particular within urban landscapes. In addition to their scientific, logical intelligence, adventurousness, and physical prowess, the detectives Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton possessed command of the latest technology, using trains, automobiles, and airplanes with ease.[448] For these characters, both technology and individual physical fitness were, in fact, becoming tools for seeking adventures and performing heroic feats. A curious distinction between the

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[445] Iutkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, pp. 22-23.
[446] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 142.
[447] Ibid., p. 143.
[448] Ibid.

Russian portrayals of American detectives and their American prototypes was noted by Kornei Chukovskii. He suggested that, while the American detective stories emphasized the logical abilities of their hero detectives, the Russian stories focused on their heroes' physical agility and abilities to chase and subdue the villains.[449]

Thanks to the memoirs of Sergei Iutkevich and others,[450] we can appreciate the eagerness with which Russian readers of various social standing immersed themselves in the fast-moving urban American landscapes (as imagined by the Russian dime novel writers) that were the settings of the Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton series. We can also appreciate the fascination with which Russian readers followed the adventures of these energetic, inventive and physically fit American characters. This appreciation sheds further light upon the fascination with American adventure-detective films in the 1910s and 1920s (such as the Pearl White serials) and the move towards the creation of adventure films by Soviet filmmakers in the early 1920s: many of them were teenagers on the eve of the Revolution, and loved the adventure genre in both literature and imported films.

Characters of such prose and films differed dramatically from the more traditional heroes of Russian literature, as well as from the protagonists of some of the more traditional pre-revolutionary films made in the 'Russian style' at the time.[451] This understanding of the literary and cinematic tastes of the Russian population, including their interest in following the exploits of a particular type of an

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[449] Kornei Chukovskii, 'Nat Pinkerton i sovremennaia literatura', in *Kniga o sovremennykh pisateliakh* (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp. 22-72.
[450] Iutkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol., pp. 22-23; Kozintsev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh,* vol. 1, *Glubokii ekran*, p. 74.
[451] The findings of Oleg Usenko's study on the prevalence of martyr heroes in pre-revolutionary Russian cinema have been discussed in Chapter 1. See Usenko, 'Zhiznennye idealy i normy povedeniia russkikh', p. 41.

adventurous, physically agile and resourceful hero, provides a valuable insight into the cultural background and personal ideals and preferences of the large sections of the Russian population (including members of the lower and middle class and intellectuals), on the eve of the Bolshevik attempt to create a new society and a new culture.

## I. 'Red Pinkertons': The Effects of the American Adventure Genre on Portrayals of the New Soviet Cinematic Hero

Bolshevik officials enjoyed reading American adventure literature (Lenin himself liked the adventure prose of Jack London),[452] as well as Americanized Russian detective and adventure dime novels (such as the ones about Nat Pinkerton and Nick Carter)[453]: in the early 1920s, the Party encouraged the writing of adventure novels with event-filled plots and fast paced narratives that focused on the new Soviet reality, and especially the romanticized struggle of the Civil War years.[454]

In an article published in 1922, Nikolai Bukharin initiated what became known as the 'Red Pinkerton' campaign in literature. Acknowledging the widespread popularity of adventure and detective stories among the masses prior to the Revolution, Bukharin suggested adapting the genre to the new revolutionary reality. He called for writers to turn to 'military adventures, our recent revolutionary activities in the underground, civil war episodes, the activity of the Cheka, of the Red Army and the Red Guard, and use them as material for revolutionary adventure

[452] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 102.
[453] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 43.
[454] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

novels.'[455] Production of Americanized adventure films soon followed the publishing of the new Russian adventure stories. A great number of Americanized adventure films were made in the early 1920s, of which Perestiani's *Little Red Devils* (1923) was the most successful example that remained popular among Soviet audiences for decades. Both American and Russian adventure and detective literature, and American 'detective-adventure' film serials of the 1910s influenced the creation of these new Soviet adventure films in the 'Red Pinkerton' style.

Bukharin's call was met in the cinema with an advertising campaign calling for adventure scripts. A 1923 issue of *Kino* magazine announced an all-Union competition for scripts, including ones with 'modern plots with stunts' that had to be based on 'dynamism and engaging narrative, possibly with elements of a detective story.'[456] The action had to take place in Russia in 1922-1923. The winners were to receive monetary prizes, from twenty-five to one thousand rubles.

In another issue of this journal, published in the same year, an article entitled 'About the "Red Pinkerton"' called for the creation of a Soviet version of adventure films, which would share only one quality with their American prototypes, that of dynamism, but would create a brand new, 'Red' version of Pinkerton-inspired plots. The main 'stunt' at the core of this 'Red Pinkerton' cinema would be based on class struggle. The author assumed that such 'Red' stunts would prove a lot more popular than the 'superficial, mechanical' stunts of American adventure cinema.[457]

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[455] Quoted in Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 45.
[456] *Kino*, 2/6 (1923), p. 48.
[457] Ivanych, 'O "Krasnom Pinkertone"', *Kino*, 5/9 (1923), pp. 7-8. For a further discussion of this article, see Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New'.

Denise Youngblood divides early Soviet adventure films into three categories, Civil War films, espionage films, and 'Easterns'.[458] However, I am going to use the classification suggested by the Soviet critic Edgar Arnoldi in his 1929 book *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino*. While the first two categories of Youngblood and Arnoldi correspond, the others differ. Arnoldi's classification is somewhat more vague (some of his categories interconnect) and leaves out the 'Eastern' category, but includes additional categories and reflects further nuances than does Youngblood's classification.

Arnoldi states that early Soviet adventure films were born as a result of an 'experiment, imitation of the West, erratic searching and parodying.'[459] He divides Soviet adventure films of the 1920s into the following categories: 1) Civil War films that followed the plot formula of *Little Red Devils* (1923), based on the battle between the Reds and the Whites, such as *Children of the Storm* [*Deti buri*] (1927), *Ukraziia* (1925), and *Order Number* [*Prikaz No.*] (1926)[460]; 2) films that followed the plot pattern of Kuleshov's *Death Ray* [*Luch smerti*] (1925), based on the stealing of an important Soviet invention,[461] including *Fight for the Ultimatum* [*Bor'ba za ultimatum*] (1924), *The Crime of the Shirvan Princess* [*Prestuplenie kniazhny*

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[458] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 77.
[459] Edgar Arnoldi, *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino* (Leningrad, Teakinopechat', 1929), p. 61.
[460] In the Civil War category, Youngblood also lists *Veter* (1926) and *Tripol'skaia tragediia* (1926). See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 78. A. Maksimov adds to this category the following films: *Propavshie sokrovishcha* (1924), and *Lesnaia byl'* (1927). Maksimov also lists the following early 'Red Pinkerton' adventure films of 1924 and 1925, not mentioned by Arnoldi or Youngblood: *Krasnye partizany*, *Krasnyi gaz*, *Krasnyi tyl*, *Krasnye Pinkertony*. See A.V. Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 21 (1994), p. 60. One more film to be added to the Civil War adventure film category is *V tylu u belykh* (1925), a film described as 'the best Soviet revolutionary adventure film after *Little Red Devils*'. See N. L., 'V tylu u belykh', in *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 3 (1925), p. 33.
[461] This corresponds to Youngblood's 'espionage' category. Youngblood includes *Krest i mauzer* (1925) in this category.

*Shirvanskoi*] (1926), *The Bag of the Diplomatic Courier* [*Sumka dipkuriera*] (1927), *Four and Five* [*Chetyre i piat'*] (a.k.a. *Steel Cranes* [*Stal'nye zhuravli*]) (1924), and *The Turbine Number 3* [*Turbina No.3*] (1927); 3) 'our "foreign" films', where action and adventures happen abroad, such as *Miss Mend* (1926),[462] *The Battle of Giants* [*Bor'ba gigantov*] (1926), *The Undefeatable Ones* [*Nepobedimye*] (1927), and *The Case of the Three Millions* (1926); 4) films parodying the devices of American adventure genre, especially Kuleshov's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924)[463]; and 5) films that focus on an individual's 'psychological' experience within the larger context of the Revolution and the Civil War, such as *Bay of Death* [*Bukhta smerti*] (1926), *Engineer Elagin* [*Inzhener Elagin*] (1928), *The Forty First* [*Sorok pervyi*] (1927), and *Leon Kutiur'e* (1927).[464] Youngblood adds another category of Soviet adventure films of the 1920s, the 'Easterns' (primarily Georgian ones), including Perestiani's *Arsen Dzhordzhiashvili* (1921) and *The Suram Fortress* [*Suramskaia krepost'*] (1922) (both films made prior to the 'Red Pinkerton' campaign), as well as Mikhen's *Abrek Zaur* (1926).[465]

Arnoldi argues that Perestiani's *Little Red Devils* was the founding point and the 'forerunner' of Soviet adventure cinema, while the first true Soviet adventure film was Kuleshov's *Mr. West*.[466] However, there were a number of adventure films that were made after 1917 and before *Little Red Devils*, in addition to the early Georgian 'Easterns' mentioned above. V. Kolodiazhnaia states that Soviet adventure cinema began with short adventure *agitki* such as Narokov and Turkin's *The Brave One*

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[462] For analysis of *Miss Mend*, see p. 152 below.
[463] For analysis of *Mr. West*, see p. 145 below.
[464] See Arnoldi, *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino*, pp. 61-71.
[465] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 79.
[466] Ibid., 63.

[*Smel'chak*] (1919), Perestiani's *During the Days of Struggle* [*V dni bor'by*] (1920), and Kuleshov's *On the Red Front* [*Na krasnom fronte*] (1920).[467] These short films were followed, in 1923, by *Little Red Devils* and a number of other feature length adventure films, including *A Diplomatic Secret* [*Diplomaticheskaia taina*], *For the Victory of the Soviets* [*Za vlast' Sovetov*] (a.k.a *Kniaginia Vasil'chikova*), *Upwards on Wings* [*Na krylyakh vvys'*], and *Man is Wolf to Man* [*Chelovek cheloveku volk*].[468] Kuleshov's *Engineer Prite's Project* (1918), discussed above,[469] needs to be considered as the earliest post-revolutionary adventure film, even if it cannot be called Soviet, due to the fact that it was produced at a private film company.

For the purposes of this thesis, I am going to focus on the case of Perestiani's *Little Red Devils* as an example of Americanized representations of the new Soviet hero in the 'Red Pinkerton' adventure films, as the heroes of this film created the most lasting legacy within early Soviet culture.

***Little Red Devils* (1923)**

The film was based on a 'Red Pinkerton' novel of the same name, written by Pavel Bliakhin.[470] In his memoirs, the director Ivan Perestiani recalled how, some time in 1923, Bliakhin came into his room at the Tbilisi film studio and gave him the typed manuscript. Perestiani read the novel twice and agreed to start production. During the

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[467] V. Kolodiazhnaia, *Sovetskii prikliuchencheskii fil'm* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1965), pp. 10-11.
[468] Ibid., pp. 11-12. These were among the first 'Red Pinkerton' films, even though Kolodiazhnaia does not use the term 'Red Pinkertons' to describe them.
[469] See p. 73 above.
[470] For an insightful analysis of the film, see Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', pp. 57-80.

filming, Perestiani conveniently 'lost' the script, which meant further artistic freedom for him.[471]

In their 1926 study entitled *Kino i molodezh'* [*Cinema and Youth*], Soviet critics Vladimir Vainshtok and Dmitrii Iakobson stated that, while young workers often praised American 'stunt' films over Soviet ones, they also loved the Soviet 'revolutionary romanticism' in films like *Little Red Devils*.[472] As was already noted above, a 1929 children's survey showed that *Little Red Devils* was the third top favourite among the young participants, following Fairbanks' films *The Thief of Bagdad* and *The Mark of Zorro*.[473]

While Perestiani himself disapproved of Americanism in the work of other Soviet filmmakers in the 1920s,[474] his film was a great example of the influences of American adventure cinema and literature on the new Soviet film culture at the time. The New York Times Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty described the film for his American readers as the 'Russian revolutionary version of *Huckleberry Finn* or *Tom Sawyer* produced in a Tarzan manner and tempo.'[475] Contemporary Soviet reviews praised this Americanized aspect of Perestiani's film. 'Undoubtedly, Perestiani has absorbed the work methods of American cinema,' wrote Soviet critic Strzhigotskii in a 1923 issue of *Kino*. The critic went on to say that all of Perestiani's artistic devices, including 'the use of *naturshchiks* [actor models], his idealization of

[471] Ivan Perestiani, *75 let zhizni v iskusstve* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1962), p. 313.
[472] Vladimir Vainshtok and Dmitrii Iakobson, *Kino i molodezh'* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), pp. 18-19.
[473] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 52.
[474] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 203.
[475] Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 168.

heroes, grotesque masks, and the manner of montage' had 'close analogs in the work of the best American directors.'[476] This, to Strzhigotskii, was a clearly positive factor.

Another contemporary critic situated Perestiani's film within the larger context of the search for ways to create the new, revolutionary cinema, which had to be based on the American model:

> The proletarian revolution has presented a demand to create a new cinema, the cinema of the revolution. Americanized technology and American tempo must be put at its foundation. Until now, all attempts to create an Americanized Soviet film ended with only partial success [...] *Little Red Devils* is a totally different story. It is a true Americanized film, with a quickly developing plot and stunts [...] it is a great victory on the front of Soviet cinema.[477]

The aesthetic link with American literary and cinematic adventure genre is engrained in Bliakhin's novel. The book is full of dynamic chase scenes and narrow escapes. For example, when the two main protagonists, the brother and sister Mishka and Duniasha, attack a group of young boys who are harassing the Chinese acrobat Iu-Iu (replaced by Tom Jackson in the film), the frightened crow flies away 'from the speed and unexpectedness of the attack.'[478] The dynamism of the narrative is emphasized by verbs of motion such as 'to rush madly', and 'to fly like a storm', which are used throughout and are applied to the positive heroes, their horses, and their automobiles.[479] In other scenes, the narrative refuses to provide answers to certain questions, due to the 'lack of time'. In the scene where Duniasha the Gadfly escapes the camp of Makhno, the author writes, 'But how did the Gadfly appear in Makhno's camp? Unfortunately, now there is no more time for an answer. Every

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[476] Strzhigotskii, '"Krasnye diavoliata" – postanovka I.N. Perestiani', *Kino,* 5/9 (October-December, 1923), p. 12. First name not indicated in the publication.
[477] 'Pobeda sovetskoi kinematografii', *Kino*, 5/9 (October-December, 1923), p. 13.
[478] Pavel Bliakhin, *Krasnye diavoliata* (Novosibirsk: Zapadno-sibirskoe izdatel'stvo, 1968), p. 15.
[479] 'Бешено мчаться'; 'лететь, как буря'. See Bliakhin, *Krasnye diavoliata*, p. 24 and p. 39).

second is dear to the Gadfly. They might find out any time that he is missing, and will most certainly chase after him.'[480] The use of present tense creates an illusion of lack of time both for the writer and the readers, as if they, too, are about to participate in the chase.

Perestiani recalled that, when working on the film, he strove to preserve the tempo of Bliakhin's novel.[481] The film abounds in visual parallels to American adventure detective films, as well as westerns, which were also popular during the turning point years following the Revolution[482] and which Arnoldi considers as a subcategory of the adventure genre.[483] Like Bliakhin's novel, Perestiani's film contains many fast-paced fight and chase scenes; these are often constructed using shots of fairly short duration. The sense of dynamism and dangerous adventure is reinforced by the numerous physical stunts, where the main protagonists run on top of moving trains, jump off bridges, and climb ropes at great heights, reminiscent of Pearl White and other imported adventure serials.[484] The actors playing Mishka and Duniasha, Pavel Esikovskii and Sofia Zhoseffi, were circus acrobats and had to perform their own stunts, which at times were quite dangerous. Perestiani recalls that Zhoseffi hurt her hands during the rope-climbing scene, and Esikovskii risked his life in the scene where he was thrown off a cliff.[485]

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[480] Ibid., p. 23.
[481] Perestiani, *75 let zhizni v iskusstve*, p. 318.
[482] See, for example, Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 196-248.
[483] Arnoldi, *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino*, p. 32. Arnoldi calls westerns 'the cowboy films.'
[484] Interestingly, an American film entitled *The Last of the Mohicans* (1920), based on one of Cooper's Natty Bumppo novels, was imported into Russia in the same year when *Little Red Devils* was released. See Kartseva, 'Americanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 286.
[485] Perestiani, *75 let zhizni v iskusstve*, pp. 322-323.

The sequence in which Mishka imagines himself as the Pathfinder is greatly reminiscent of a dangerous stunt scene from the popular imported American serial *The Perils of Pauline*, described in the previous chapter,[486] in which Pearl White runs down a mountain slope, followed by a large boulder released by a group of Indians. In *Little Red Devils*, Mishka the Pathfinder is shown, in a very similar wide shot, running down a slope, just before an Indian man shoots at him and he returns the shot.

The film is a unique dialogic example of interplay between literary and filmic hero images, and between American and Russian culture, on the eve of the creation of the new Soviet society. Novels by James Fennimore Cooper and Ethel Voinich play an important role within the book and film narratives. At the same time, as A. V. Maksimov points out, Bliakhin's novel itself was most likely inspired by the Americanized Russian adventure and detective dime novels mentioned above.[487] Both Bliakhin's novel and Perestiani's film emphasize the deep influence of heroes of American literature[488] on the self-fashioning of the main protagonists, who, in turn, have become role models for generations of Soviet children.

The identities of Mishka and Duniasha are forged by two main factors, the Civil War, on the one hand, and American literature, on the other. These two characters are portrayed from the start as avid readers: Mishka is absorbed by Cooper's *The Pathfinder* (written in 1841), while Duniasha is late for dinner because she is reading Voinich's *The Gadfly* (written in 1897). As each of them reads, the

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[486] See p. 45 above.
[487] Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', p. 63.
[488] While born in Poland, Voinich is considered an American writer as she lived and wrote her famous novel in America.

film cuts to the scenes in their imagination: Mishka imagines himself as the Pathfinder, the famous frontiersman scout of Cooper's adventure novel, while Duniasha imagines herself as the Gadfly, the Italian revolutionary hero in Voinich's book. In his daydreams, Mishka the Pathfinder courageously fights with Native Americans on the American frontier, while Duniasha the revolutionary throws a bomb at an enemy automobile on Italian streets. From this scene onwards, the identities of the two main protagonists are firmly entwined with and influenced by their literary role models.

In an almost uncanny way, the film narrative presents two models of the New Soviet Man discourse of the 1920s, and two potential role models for young Soviet viewers: an energetic, optimistic, and resourceful 'American', exemplified by Natty Bumppo the Pathfinder, and a self-sacrificial martyr ready to withstand torture and die for the revolution, exemplified by Voinich's Arthur the Gadfly. While Mishka models his identity fully on his literary role model, Cooper's Pathfinder, Duniasha's self-fashioning is more complex: she strives to resemble her literary role model, the Gadfly,[489] while throughout the film she is often portrayed as possessing both self-sacrificial and 'American' traits: just like her brother, she is optimistic, fit, energetic, and resourceful, often using the device of disguise, in the tradition of detective films and dime novels.

In a Bakhtinian manner, both in the novel and the film, the two main protagonists rely on a heteroglossic mix of Russian and Ukrainian colloquial speech,

[489] The masculinity of the Gadfly's traits, adopted by Duniasha (who is referred to as a 'he' in Bliakhin's novel, and cross-dresses, pretending to be a boy, in Perestiani's film), reflects the general fascination with 'masculine' femininity and the *travesti* image as one of the models of modern Soviet femininity. For a full treatment of this issue, see Chapter 3 below.

on one hand, and the use of Cooper-inspired American frontier phrases, on the other hand. Mishka calls himself the Hawkeye, as well as the Pathfinder (a direct reference to the main protagonist of Cooper's novel); smokes 'the pipe of war' and refers to the White Army soldiers as 'pale-faces' (*blednolitsye*). Throughout the film and the novel, the White enemies receive unexpected notes signed by 'the Pathfinder', written in a style reminiscent of Cooper's fiction mixed with rural Russian jargon. For example, in one scene Mishka the Pathfinder sends a note to Makhno, which says, 'I will show you, rascal, how to do banditry. Soon your scalp will be in my hands.'[490]

Interestingly, the novel suggests that the Pathfinder is a Native American chief, which betrays the ease with which Bliakhin altered Cooper's work for the sake of a convenient political color scheme. In Bliakhin's novel, Mishka refers to Lenin as the 'Great Chief of the Redskins',[491] while members of the White Army are called 'pale-faced dogs'. In this way, a parallel is established within the narrative between the Red Army and the 'redskins' (assuming that Mishka the Pathfinder is a 'redskin' himself), and the Whites and the 'pale-faces'. However, in Cooper's novel, the Pathfinder is, in fact, a white American frontiersman, a scout who fights with Native American enemies, while having only one close 'redskin' friend, Chingachgook. Perestiani was less willing to alter Cooper's work than Bliakhin: when in the film Mishka imagines himself as the Pathfinder, he is shown wearing a white man's clothes and shooting at a Native American man. In the film, therefore, Mishka's role

[490] 'Я тебе подлецу покажу, как разбойничать. Скоро твой скальп будет в моих руках.'
[491] In the original edition of the novel, and the first edit of the film, it was Trotsky who was referred to as the Great Chief of the Redskins. In further novel editions and the re-edited version of the film after 1927, Trotsky's name was replaced with Lenin's. See Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', p. 64.

model is closer to the actual protagonist of Cooper's *Leatherstocking's Tales,* the adventurous, brave and ingenious scout and frontiersman Natty Bumppo, the Pathfinder.

Maksimov has argued that, in Bliakhin's novel, 'the colorful attributes of the Pathfinder overpowered the revolutionary attractiveness of the Gadfly, and that was the main success of the author.'[492] Arguably, Mishka's identification with his American role model is also the most memorable aspect of Perestiani's film.

Sergei Eisenstein recalled in his memoirs,

> Red skinned Indians covered in feathers. Kings. And millionaires. One only knows about them from books. Fennimore Cooper, the Pathfinder and Chingachgook [...] I did indeed play [cowboys and] Indians.[493]

One did not have to have Eisenstein's broad education to have read Cooper's fiction in Russia. Many literate viewers of *Little Red Devils* would have been very likely to be familiar with Cooper's novel, which had been widely popular in Russia since the 1840s[494] and, as Bliakhin's novel suggests, was still popular in the 1920s. Contrary to the repeated claims made by the Bolsheviks, literacy was fairly high among the Russian young at the time of the Revolution, including children in rural areas: according to the 1920 census of children in European Russia aged between twelve and sixteen, 71 percent of the boys and 52 percent of the girls were literate.[495] In their love of American literature, Mishka and Duniasha, therefore, represented a large percentage of their peers.

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[492] Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', p. 64.
[493] Eisenstein, 'Millionery na moem puti', in *Memuary*, vol.1, p.44.
[494] House, Kay Seymour, 'Introduction', in James Fennimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. xxv-xxvi.
[495] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 4.

Many young Russian readers of Cooper's novels would have perceived the Pathfinder as their role model. His adventurous nature and heroism, his ingenuity in the face of many challenges and adventures on land and water, his speed and daring were qualities that were generally admired in Russia at the time. In Cooper's novel, Natty Bumppo the Pathfinder is often described as ingenious[496] and shown acting in a self-sufficient and resourceful way in many situations, saving his companions, where danger is only a few seconds away. For example, in order to outwit his Indian enemies, the Pathfinder builds a fire with a lot of smoke, or creates a safe haven for the canoe from natural materials on the bank of the river.[497] When faced with his enemies, the Pathfinder exhibits bravery and heroism (saving others from danger), combined with speed and daring: 'He knew that his safety depended altogether on keeping in motion'[498]; 'For the first minute, admiration of his promptitude and daring, which are high virtues in the mind of an Indian, kept his enemies motionless.'[499]

Mishka's admiration of Cooper's Pathfinder and his efforts to be and act like his hero were familiar to the young viewers of the film. In the film, Mishka is portrayed as ingenious, fast, and daring, exemplifying the qualities of Cooper's hero of the American frontier. Mishka's promptitude and daring are shown, for example, in the scene where, having fought the gigantic villain in Makhno's camp, Mishka escapes a whole group of enemies, jumps over the railing and onto a horse, and escapes on horseback. In this scene, he resembles not only the hero of Cooper's prose, but also a cowboy of imported American westerns. In Bliakhin's novel, the

[496] See, for example, Cooper, *The Pathfinder*, p. 52.
[497] Ibid., p. 32, p. 49, and p. 51.
[498] Ibid., p. 67.
[499] Ibid., p. 68.

word 'daring' (*derzkii*) is used in Mishka's description: 'His red hair stuck out in unruly locks, and his lively gray eyes were daring and jolly.' [500]

In Cooper's novel, the Pathfinder describes himself in the following way to his new acquaintance: 'I rather pride myself in finding my way where there is no path, than in finding it where there is.' [501]A trailblazer, a self-reliant hero on an individual path is central to American frontier literature and to the entire American culture, rooted in the concept of the frontier. In the words of an American literature scholar, Albert Gelpi,

> The pioneer of the frontier is the version of the universal hero myth indigenous to our specific historical circumstances, and it remains today, even in our industrial society, the mythic mainstay of American individualism. The pioneer proves himself a hero and claims his manhood by measuring himself against the unfathomed, unfathomable immensity of his elemental world.[502]

In the case of Soviet Russia, heroes of American frontier literature easily became role models for young Soviet readers, because the qualities considered heroic in the space of the American frontier were equally valued in the new cultural space created by the Bolshevik revolution.

There existed a duality in the Soviet attitudes toward the individualism of an American frontiersman hero. In the official Soviet rhetoric, especially in the 1920s, it was collectivism that was valued much higher than any form of individualism. The official Soviet press often attacked the individualism of contemporary American society. However, lone and brave individual heroes of American adventure literature, such as, for example, the heroes of Jack London's stories, were praised even by the

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[500] 'Рыжие волосы буйными вихрами торчали во все стороны, а живые серые глаза смотрели дерзко и весело.' See Bliakhin, *Krasnye diavoliata*, p. 6.
[501] Cooper, *The Pathfinder*, p. 18.
[502] Albert Gelpi, 'Emily Dickinson and *The Deerslayer*: The Dilemma of the Woman Poet in America', *San Jose Studies*, 3 (1977), pp. 80-95.

Bolshevik officials.[503] Individual initiative, bravery, and the ability to withstand trials and challenges were valued within the New Soviet Man discourse, especially in the 1930s. The new Soviet culture became a curious mix of individualist and collectivist values.[504] Individualism could be interpreted either negatively or positively. When it signified self-reliance, individualism was viewed in more positive light.[505]

In Soviet films such as *Little Red Devils*, the qualities of an American frontiersman, as well as the terminology of the American frontier discourse, were applied to the Revolutionary cause and to the shaping of the new Soviet cinematic hero. The Bolshevik state called for the formation of a new society, with its newly forged citizens able to conquer and populate the new frontiers of Soviet geography, on the material as well as spiritual level. Not surprisingly, a number of Soviet films made in the first two decades after the Revolution, beginning with *Little Red Devils*, presented heroes that possessed traits similar to the frontiersman heroes of American culture. Mishka the Pathfinder in *Little Red Devils* only reinforced the Russian viewers' personal admiration for the fictional hero of Cooper's American frontier novel.

Just like pre-revolutionary Russian viewers who, according to a newspaper article quoted earlier, were tired of their 'fish-like' existence and craved action, which they could experience by watching American adventure films, Soviet viewers in the 1920s expressed similar desires. According to a survey conducted in 1925, a number of respondents preferred foreign films to Soviet ones and wanted to see more Soviet

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[503] See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 102; Anatolii Lunacharsky, 'Sovremennaia literatura na zapade', in *Neizdannye materialy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), p. 327.
[504] See, for example, Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
[505] For a further discussion of this issue, see Chapter 4 below, p. 303.

adventure films.[506] Not surprisingly, the younger viewers expressed interest in more exciting adventures on the screen. A fifteen-year-old female student wrote,

> In the cinema I want to see not everyday life, which one can see all around oneself, but something exciting and interesting that can be found only in history and in adventures. I want the same from Soviet cinema, but unfortunately (!) Soviet cinema leans towards the everyday, which is considered more accessible for the masses.[507]

This honest reply to a survey question by a teenage student reflected the general interest of younger Soviet viewers in the adventure genre. Two years earlier, in a review of *Little Red Devils*, a Soviet critic summed up the connection between the yearning for the excitement of adventure films and the dynamism of modernity:

> New demands on the content of film art invariably bring about the revolution of its form. If a new plot and a new perception of life are needed, then a different dynamic of movement and acting, a different dynamic of construction of action, and a different montage are also needed. The new plot demands a new actor (*naturshchik*) and a new director.[508]

The critic went on to praise the 'live, real' characters in Perestiani's film that 'seem to embody life itself, youth, energy, and movement.'[509]

One additional connection of the two main heroes in Perestiani's film with America is established within the film narrative through the introduction of the Tom Jackson character, a young black man befriended by Duniasha and Mishka. In Bliakhin's novel, the two protagonists befriend a Chinese acrobat Iu-iu. However, according to Perestiani, he could not find a suitable Chinese actor, so he decided to employ a black acrobat from the local circus instead.[510] While according to Perestiani, his choice was due to pure chance, it does not appear so, considering that

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[506] Dubrovskii, 'Opyty izucheniia zritelia (Anketa A.R.K.)', *Kino-zhurnal ARK*, 8 (August 1925), p. 7.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Strzhigotskii, '"Krasnye diavoliata" – postanovka I.N. Perestiani', p.12.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Perestiani, *75 let zhizni v iskusstve*, pp. 313-314.

the name 'Tom Jackson' and the black skin of the actor were certain to produce a reading of the third protagonist as an American, thus adding a whole new element to the story and reinforcing its connection with American literature and popular culture. According to Jay Leyda, Walter Duranty compared the young black character in the film to someone who has 'fled to Soviet Russia straight out of the pages of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*'[511]

As we have already seen, American characters were quite prominent in popular Russian literature from the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in the serialized dime novels about Nat Pinkerton and Nick Carter.[512] Therefore, introducing an American character into the film was another way of ensuring the film's popularity with the masses. Moreover, the fact that the brother and sister are joined by a black American character with whom they share great similarities in most everything apart from their skin colour (such as inexhaustible optimism and ability to smile, physical fitness, youth, and bravery), reinforces the children's new imagined 'American' identity. The easiest way to openly establish this similarity between the new Soviet heroes and an American character, while avoiding official criticism,[513] was to use an American character who was black, using his skin colour to signify his class similarity with the positive Soviet characters.

American literature helped Mishka and Duniasha in the Revolutionary cause. While playing and pretending to be their American literary heroes, they fought

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[511] Walter Duranty, *New York Times* (December 1923), quoted in Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 168.
[512] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. xviii.
[513] While 'Russian Americans' were praised in the Soviet press of the 1920s and America was seen as a technological example to Russia, officially expressed attitudes towards America were dualistic. Both positive and negative attitudes were encountered in the official press. See Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', pp. 231-252.

enemies of the Revolution and became New Soviet heroes themselves. At the same time, American cinema helped Perestiani found the new 'Red Pinkerton' cinema of the 1920s and put the adventure genre at the forefront of early Soviet cinema.[514]

Curiously, characterizations of Mishka and Duniasha in the film are overall somewhat different from those in the novel. In Bliakhin's text, Mishka is portrayed as a lot more self-sacrificial than in Perestiani's film, where Mishka never stops smiling. There is a lot more violence and suffering in the novel than in the film.[515] The suffering of the brother and sister is emphasized in passages that describe the 'hunger and horrible frost, parasites and illnesses, unending dirt and lack of roads', all of which make the two heroes 'noticeably thinner and rougher' but also make them stronger and 'forge' their bodies and spirit. The two realize that war is not only about brave feats but that it demands 'iron strength' and 'self-sacrificial love for the Motherland.'[516] The film shows few of these troubles, especially in the case of the continuously smiling Mishka. It is Duniasha-Gadfly who, just like the Gadfly of Voinich's novel, is shown suffering in the film. But she, too, always regains her optimism and smile, even after having been tortured.

The two main protagonists in Bliakhin's novel reflect the presence of two modes of heroism and two New Soviet hero ideals in the new, forming Soviet culture:

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[514] Maksimov notes the 'countless imitations' that were produced at nearly all Soviet film studios after the box office success of *Little Red Devils*. Perestiani himself produced several sequels, which he envisioned in the manner of American film serials, including *Savur-mogila* (1926), *The Crime of the Shirvan Princess* (1926), *The Punishment of the Shirvan Princess* (1926), and *Illan Dili* (1926). See Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', p. 60 and p. 71. For more on *Savur-mogila* and the link it established between the young Soviet heroes and American film stars, see p. 201 of Chapter 3 below.

[515] Maksimov notes the 'overall sadistic tone of the narrative'. See Maksimov, 'Neulovimye diavoliata', p. 66. The first sequel to *Little Red Devils*, the film entitled *Savur-mogila* (1926) contained a lot more violence than the original film.

[516] Bliakhin, *Krasnye diavoliata*, p. 17.

on the one hand, the self-sacrificial martyr revolutionary, made of steel and ready to withstand any torture and face death in the name of the Revolutionary cause, the 'crucified' New Man (to borrow, once again, Hellebust's terminology)[517]; and, on the other hand, the joyful, energetic, ingenious, and active 'American'. However, it is the 'American' traits of the main protagonists that are given more attention within Perestiani's film, differing somewhat from its literary source.

In the film, Mishka becomes the New Soviet Man,and the new Soviet cinematic hero not only through his heroic fight in the Civil War on the side of the Bolsheviks, but through a combination of factors that include his initial identification with an American literary frontiersman hero. Through this identification Mishka acquires 'American' traits, which he then applies in fighting for the revolutionary cause. While Duniasha identifies with a revolutionary martyr hero of another American literary text, she acquires both the self-sacrificial traits and the 'American' traits of optimism, energy and athleticism that she shares with her brother. The protagonists' new 'American' identity is reinforced by their association with an American character, Tom Jackson, as well as by the very genre of adventure, where the protagonists perform dangerous stunts, are involved in chase scenes, and disguies themselves in the tradition of American detective-adventure films. The very dynamism of plot construction and of the main characters' actions further emphasizes their acquired 'Americanness'.

Furthermore, while Mishka's and Duniasha's immediate role models are literary, their representation in the film is reminiscent of the dynamic heroes of American adventure films. Edgar Arnoldi wrote of the importance, for Soviet cinema,

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[517] Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 59.

of portraying the new Soviet hero in ways similar to those used in western adventure films. According to Arnoldi, Soviet cinematic heroes were too schematic and presented a 'superhuman ideal' with which it was difficult for viewers to identify, whereas heroes of American adventure films were 'ordinary people'.[518] Arnoldi argued that the Soviet cinematic hero

> should present an attainable ideal that the viewer would sincerely want to strive towards, feeling a real possibility to attain this ideal. A hero should be a human being made of flesh, rather than of separate positive traits. He should be happy, joyful, strong in body and spirit, and attractive to every healthy viewer.[519]

While the heroes of *Little Red Devils* are still somewhat schematic, they do possess the joyfulness and athletic fitness of heroes of American adventure films, described by Arnoldi and praised by many other Soviet critics throughout the 1920s.

The elements discussed above make Mishka and Duniasha in Perestiani's film into the new type of Soviet cinematic hero. The two young heroes become Soviet by becoming 'American' first.

## II. Representations of American Characters in Soviet Films with Contemporary Themes

While adventure films like *Little Red Devils* and its sequels represented the new Soviet heroes who possessed positive American traits, Soviet cinematic portrayals of contemporary Americans (citizens of America) were very different. In fact, American characters in early Soviet films such as *The Extraordinary Adventures*

[518] Arnoldi, *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino*, p. 91.
[519] Ibid.

*of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) and *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* [*Papirosnitsa iz Mossel'proma*] (1924) were indeed almost 'un-American', if compared to the 'American' ideal of an inventive, active, physically fit, and efficient hero. In line with the official propaganda about the negative sides of America, especially its capitalist greed, these characters were often shown possessing an excess of material goods (such as Mr. West and Oliver McBride, both of whom arrived to Moscow with a countless number of bags), and either overweight (McBride) or overly gullible (Mr. West). However, even these American 'capitalist' characters were not shown as entirely negative.

### i. *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924)

In the case of Lev Kuleshov's *Mr. West*, its main protagonist, played by Porfirii Podobed, is an American senator visiting the Soviet Union, and is portrayed as the total opposite of the ideal 'American' of the Russian cultural imagination. Rather than being efficient, energetic, brave, and inventive, John West is gullible, passive, sentimental, effeminate, and naïve. The first time we see Mr. West, he is kissing two doves before setting out on his journey to Russia – a reference to bourgeois sentimentality and kitchiness.[520] Mr. West strongly resembled Harold Lloyd, both in mannerisms and in costume (complete with his characteristic round eyeglasses), and thus reminded the viewers of the comic heroes of American cinema, rather than the

[520] Kuleshov himself compared the shot of Mr. West with doves to 'Pearl White in her worst scenes'. This comment is interesting in its contradiction: as we have already seen, many Soviet leftist filmmakers admired the cinema of Pearl White for its dynamism; however, here Kuleshov sees necessary to bring up Pearl White as an example of a negative quality of American cinema and culture (its kitschiness). This must have been provoked by the critics' attacks on Kuleshov's overly eager 'Americanism'. See Lev Kuleshov, 'Mr West', in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*, p. 108.

heroic model of Douglas Fairbanks or cowboy heroes of American westerns, or indeed of the frontiersman heroes of American literature.

The other male American character in the film, cowboy Jeddy, Mr. West's 'faithful servant' from America, is portrayed as an active participant in numerous fight and chase scenes (Kuleshov's favorite elements of American detective and adventure cinema). Jeddy (played by Boris Barnet) lassoes a Moscow coachman to a tree and is then chased by the Moscow policemen on motorcycles. He also performs a number of stunts, such as climbing a rope between two buildings at a frightening height, akin to Douglas Fairbanks. Similar to Fairbanks, Kuleshov's actors perform the complex acrobatics themselves, with no doubles. Their presence in the film clearly points to the director's desire to fill the filmic space with a sense of engaging, energetic action. However, while being very agile and physically fit, Jeddy does not display much intelligence or true resourcefulness. Rather, he is a parody of a trigger-happy, belligerent and not-too-intelligent cowboy, a figure quite different from the positive and heroic American model.

It is important to note that, while both Mr. West and Jeddy are not represented as ideal American positive heroes, neither one of them is portrayed in an overtly negative way. With all his gullibility, Mr. West is shown prepared to bravely fight to the end in the scene where he is attacked by thugs pretending to be Bolsheviks.[521]

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[521] Julian Graffy also perceives this positive side of Mr. West, when he argues that Mr. West is 'identified as a positive character' in the film, a 'kind and well intentioned' one. See Julian Graffy, 'The Foreigner's Journey to Consciousness in Early Soviet Cinema: The Case of Protazanov's *Tommi*', in *Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema*, ed. by Stephen M. Norris and Zara M. Torlone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 4-5. For more on *Mr. West*, see Peter Christensen, 'Contextualizing Kuleshov's *Mr. West*', *Film Criticism* 18(1) (Fall 1993), pp. 3-19; Vlada Petric, 'A Subtextual Reading of Kuleshov's Satire *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924)', in

While Mr. West appears comic in his trousers that look like they are about to fall off, he nevertheless exhibits a degree of courage in taking on his attackers, instead of running away. The same is true of Jeddy: having appeared comic in the first chase scene, with his lasso and a gun, Jeddy turns out to be a positive character, as a later flashback scene shows him having saved Ellie, a female American protagonist, from attackers back in America.

In addition to portraying American characters, *Mr. West* contains numerous examples of Americanism on the aesthetic level. A number of cinematic devices point to Kuleshov's fascination with American films of the time, and particularly with slapstick comedy and adventure films. The fast pace of the film's montage is in itself an aesthetic quality that points to the positive influence of 'Americanness'.[522] The likeness of Podobed's facial features to those of Harold Lloyd is a cinematic device that creates an immediate stylistic link with American slapstick comedy. Another device linking *Mr. West* to American comedies is the scene where Ellie and Jeddy are shown falling in love, finding newborn kittens in a hat in Ellie's room. In Buster Keaton's 1920 short film *Neighbors*, a policeman who is looking for Keaton runs into a room and sees someone moving on the bed under the sheets; he opens the sheets and sees a cat with many small kittens. A shot of a cat with kittens is repeated in several other Soviet films of the decade, including Pudovkin's *Chess Fever* (1925) where Vladimir Fogel's character finds kittens in his pockets, coat sleeves and his shoe while preparing to meet his fiancée. Perhaps these kitten scenes were a device that, on the surface, was meant to expose the sentimental, 'bourgeois' character of

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*Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash*', ed. by Andrew Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 65-74.

[522] See earlier discussion of Kuleshov's 'Americanism' in Chapter 1 above, p. 69.

American cinema, while on the stylistic level being an homage to that cinema, and specifically to the comedies of Buster Keaton[523] by Soviet directors who were inspired by his work.

Another device harking back to American films of the time is the repeated use of close-ups rather than wide shots when only essential information needs to be conveyed (such as the close-up of a hand giving Mr. West his morning mail). Kuleshov praised American-invented close-ups for the ability to convey information efficiently and with a minimum of expenditure of time and finances that would be otherwise spent on constructing the sets for a wide shot.

Furthermore, *Mr. West* abounds in stunts, fights, and chase scenes characteristic of the American detective adventure cinema, which was so popular in Russia at the time. As we have already seen, Kuleshov's work in the adventure genre began with his first feature film *Engineer Prite's Project*.[524] As we have seen, Edgar Arnoldi suggested that *Mr. West* should be considered the first true Soviet adventure film, while he considered *Little Red Devils* as only a preparatory step in the process of the development of the genre in Soviet cinema.[525] Kuleshov's views on the reasons behind the vast popularity of American adventure cinema in Russia, especially its dynamism and fast editing, have already been discussed above. In Kuleshov's own words, *Mr. West* was a "verification of our working methods in montage and in the structuring of the frame."[526]

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[523] For information on the reception of Buster Keaton's films in Russia, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 196-248.
[524] See p. 73 of Chapter 1 above.
[525] Arnoldi, *Avantiurnyi zhanr v kino*, p. 63.
[526] Kuleshov, 'Mr West', in *The Film Factory*, p. 108.

The end of the film offers an insight into the reasons behind Mr. West's 'conversion' to supporting the Bolsheviks. The viewers are presented with a montage of documentary footage of a parade, workers in a factory, and a radio station. The camera tilts up revealing a Soviet radio tower, and then we see the smiling face of Mr. West. Shots of the radio tower suggest a reference to Soviet Russia's modernity. Mr. West is smiling because now he knows that the 'real Bolsheviks' are not savages, but in fact are people living in a developed country, populated by enthusiastic and energetic citizens, and possessing an advanced technology (such as radio), just like in America.[527] In fact, Mr. West finds himself in a Soviet 'America' – perhaps even a better one than his own, which lies to its citizens about the true nature of life in the Soviet paradise.

**ii. *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* (1924)**

Similar to Mr. West, Oliver McBride, the American businessman in Iurii Zheliabuzhskii's *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* (1924), is also portrayed as 'un-American' (not possessing any positive 'American' qualities), while not being rendered entirely negatively. Julian Graffy has noted the visual similarity between Oliver McBride and the caricatures of capitalists used in the revolutionary cartoons of the time, as well as in Eisenstein's *Strike* [*Stachka*] (1925):[528] McBride is overweight and excessively wealthy (he owns a private plane, and his luggage is too bulky for a Russian carriage to carry upon his arrival). One would expect an overweight and

[527] Vlada Petric offers a different reading of Mr. West's smile: he suggests that this smile is ambiguous and possibly reflects a hidden subversive message. Mr. West, Petric suggests, is in part smiling at the parallels between the thugs and the Bolsheviks' own methods. Petric, 'A Subtextual Reading of Kuleshov's Satire' (1924)', p. 71.
[528] Graffy, 'The Foreigner's Journey to Consciousness in Early Soviet Cinema', p. 5.

greedy 'capitalist' to be an antagonist within the film narrative, and at first, McBride's human qualities appear to match his economic status, from the Soviet ideological point of view. The film narrative initially suggests that McBride has arrived in NEP-time Russia so as to open a fashion shop in Moscow, thus contributing to the spread of petit-bourgeois values among Soviet women, and undermining their revolutionary spirit. McBride falls in love with Zina Vesenina (played by Iulia Solntseva), the cigarette-girl who dreams of being an actress and who agrees to live with McBride in exchange for a modeling job in his shop. At this stage in the film narrative, the American businessman is all but entirely repulsive to the audience, and can be easily perceived as the agent of Zina's fall.

Zina, on the other hand, is a troubling example of a young female Muscovite inspired by western cinema: she dreams of becoming an actress but fails, and instead of becoming a New Soviet Woman, she chooses wealth, money and a ruined reputation over a decent but routine job of a cigarette seller.

However, as the film narrative progresses, a cultural misunderstanding becomes apparent: it turns out that McBride has had positive intentions and wants to marry Zina. Nikodim Mitiushin (played by Igor' Il'inskii), who is also in love with Zina, is hired by McBride to translate the proposal; however, he deliberately translates the wrong message, causing Zina's indignation. McBride fights with Nikodim, and when the latter falls, McBride exhibits bravery and good-heartedness, as well as a surprising degree of agility, when he climbs out the window on a rope in order to save the hapless man.

As we can see, the perceived negativity of the wealthy American 'capitalist' turns out to be the result of a misunderstanding. The film refuses to portray McBride negatively and in a sense rehabilitates him.

Like Kuleshov's *Mr. West*, *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* contains similarities with American cinema on the aesthetic level, in addition to having an American character. Denise Youngblood has described this film as being 'among the most polished and "Western" films of Soviet production.'[529] In addition to a number of stunts (such as McBride saving Nikodim by climbing from the second-floor window), this connection can also be perceived in the self-referential nature of the commentary, within the film narrative, on the filmmaking process. The film points to the obsession among young Soviet women with cinema (mainly American cinema): the main heroine dreams of becoming an actress and is willing to 'sell' herself to an American businessman, who has the power and the funds to make her into a model and potentially a film star. Among McBride's projects in Moscow is an order to the film studio to make a film about the *novyi byt* (the new everyday life) in Moscow; Zina becomes a star of this film thanks to the actions of another man, a cameraman who is in love with her. The film contains numerous references to the filmmaking process, with the cameraman filming Zina obsessively. At the end of the film, queues of people are shown in front of a movie theatre, where they want to watch the film with a self-referential title, *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom*.

Early Soviet films contained a number of negative representations of foreign capitalists, including the ones in the films of the FEKSy Kozintsev and Trauberg, such as Coolidge Curzonovich Poincaré in *The Adventures of Oktiabrina*

[529] Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, p. 75.

[*Pokhozhdeniia Oktiabriny*] (1924), the spy Maddocks in *S.V.D.* (1927), and the capitalist Grasselin in *The New Babylon* [*Novyi Vavilon*] (1929). However, these characters were usually not identified as American but as more generic 'Western' capitalists.[530] It is important to note the difference between the expressed attitudes towards specifically American versus 'Western' capitalist characters in early Soviet films.

### iii. *Miss Mend*, Parts I-III (1926)

A very different example of early Soviet representation of Americans is Boris Barnet and Fedor Otsep's three part adventure serial *Miss Mend* (1926), loosely based on Marietta Shaginian's 'Red Pinkerton' adventure novel *Mess Mend*.[531] The action in the first two parts of the series takes place in Littletown, United States, while the third part is set in Soviet Leningrad. The four main protagonists of the film are Americans: Miss Vivian Mend (Natalia Gan) is a typist and a professional union activist at an American cork factory; Fogel' (Vladimir Fogel') and Barnet (Boris Barnet) are reporters at an American newspaper, and Hopkins (Igor' Il'inskii) is a clerk at the same factory where Miss Mend works. Each of the men is in love with Miss Mend, and all three become her companions in all the adventures. The two antagonists are

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[530] Theodore van Houten explains that the name 'Coolidge Curzonovich Poincaré was derived from the U.S. President Calvin Coolidge, the British foreign secretary George N. Curzon, and the French prime minister Raymond Poincaré; all three western politicians were involved in the Civil War on the side of the Whites. See Theodore van Houten, *Leonid Trauberg and His Films: Always the Unexpected* (s-Hertogenbosch: Art & Research, 1989), p. 43.

[531] The film has very little resemblance to Shaginian's novel, which is centered around a workers' organization called 'Mess Mend' and is focused on the idea of things serving their worker masters in the fight against capitalists. See Khrisanf Khersonskii, '*Miss Mend*', *Kino-front*, 9/10 (1926), pp. 25-26.

Cice (Sergei Komarov), the chairman of the 'Organization' (with strong fascist overtones) and Arthur Storn (Ivan Koval'-Samborskii).

Boris Barnet was a student of Lev Kuleshov, and the Kuleshovian approach can be strongly perceived in the film.[532] *Miss Mend* abounds in aesthetic references to American adventure and detective cinema of the time, including a great number of fight and chase scenes, stunts, and the growing dynamism and diminishing duration of individual shots closer to the end of each part (especially Part III). Everything seems to fly by the camera's lens with great speed: cars, trains, ships and boats. People run, jump, and climb ropes. The shot duration diminishes in scenes of particular importance in order to heighten the emotional involvement of the viewer. Technology and American popular culture play both positive and negative roles in the film, reflecting the dual attitudes towards them in Soviet Russia: for example, an automobile can save Miss Mend from the policemen chasing her, but a train can cover up the traces of a criminal act; radio can spread plague, and jazz music can cover up the sounds of a criminal at work.

What interests us the most here is the representation of positive American characters in this film, which is set in capitalist America. The most positive of the four protagonists is the female character, Miss Vivian Mend. From the very beginning of Part I, she is shown as an active, dynamic and physically fit character, who is also politically conscious: during a lockout at the factory, Miss Mend bravely attacks a policeman in the name of the workers' cause, and fights with the factory authorities in the very first row of the striking workers. An intertitle announces, 'Miss Mend's heroism has saved a worker from a policeman.' This is a clever device: it

[532] Youngblood makes a similar point in *Movies for the Masses*, p. 129.

allows the filmmakers to openly portray an American character as unambiguously positive within a Soviet film.

Miss Mend's dynamism and physical agility, her independence and resolve, her ability to run, jump into moving cars, and lift up a wounded man (for example, in Part III where she lifts Barnet after his fight with Arthur Storn) are qualities that make her similar to the characters of Pearl White and other 'serial queens', the active female stars of American adventure serials discussed in the previous chapter.[533] Moreover, these are the same qualities that make Miss Mend resemble the New Soviet Woman ideal of the 1920s, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.[534]

While Miss Mend exemplifies positive American qualities, praised as an example for the New Soviet Women, the three American reporters are not portrayed so positively. The social function of these three characters, that of making profit by writing sensationalist newspaper reports, is emphasized in the beginning of Part I. However, the film can be read as suggesting a certain transformation of at least one of the three reporters by the end of their trip to the Soviet Union. Barnet undergoes a change from a regular American reporter to a Soviet-looking man of 'steel-like' muscles, ready to heroically face all kinds of dangers in the name of his love for Miss Mend and in order to prevent a catastrophe planned by Cice in Soviet Leningrad.

Of the three reporters, Barnet looks the most 'heroic' (while Il'inskii plays his Chaplinesque self, and Fogel' has an appearance of a slim European intellectual, albeit with an ever-present American smile). Youngblood suggests that, in his role as

[533] See p. 41 above.
[534] See p. 194 below.

cowboy Jeddy in Kuleshov's *Mr. West*, Barnet 'looked American (or not especially Slavic).'[535] This visual quality also makes him stand out among the three reporters in *Miss Mend*. While not too different from the other two reporters in Part I, in Part II Barnet exhibits inventiveness and a degree of knowledge of technology, when he comes into Cice's house under the pretence of being an technician in order to fix the broken electricity supply. He then hides in Cice's house, concealed within a knight's armour (in a scene reminiscent of the highly popular American serial *The Iron Mask* with Pearl White). By the end of Part II Barnet is portrayed with a growing degree of positivity: he is strong, physically fit and brave enough to fight Artur Storn. By the end of Part III, Barnet's transformation is emphasized by his visual change: he has lost his shirt in the fight against Cice and his associates, and is now portrayed naked above the waist, sporting strong muscles. Such representation is reminiscent of the Soviet poster portrayals of revolutionary working-class heroes, who were often depicted as smiths, sometimes stripped to the waist.[536] Barnet's physical strength, illustrated many times throughout the three parts of the film in fight scenes, is emphasized in a scene where, in a Douglas Fairbanks fashion, Barnet performs a stunt of jumping out from the second floor window of Cice's house. Thus, in the Soviet Union an American reporter is transformed into a hero, exhibiting a blend of exemplary American qualities (dynamism, physical fitness, and inventiveness) and newly acquired Russian qualities, namely, the visual appearance of a Soviet worker and a potentially transformed consciousness of someone who is ready to risk his life in order to save the lives of Soviet citizens.

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[535] Ibid., p. 128.
[536] Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 22-23.

The fully positive portrayal of Americans in a Soviet feature was complicated by the duality of official attitudes to capitalist America. Thus, the four main American protagonists of *Miss Mend* could not be portrayed as the sole victors over the fascist plan of Cice and Storn. Instead, after a frenetic chase scene, the four are shown arriving too late to capture Cice, who has already been arrested by the Soviet policeman. Nevertheless, the degree of positivity with which the four American protagonists are portrayed throughout most of the film, is significant. The film enjoyed great popularity in Russia: according to Youngblood, more than 1.7 million viewers saw it in the first six months. This cinematic representation of American characters, especially Miss Mend and Barnet, both reflected and contributed to the development of the image of a positive 'American' in the Russian cultural imagination.

Soviet films of the 1920s showed a curious tendency of avoiding fully negative representations of Americans. Even American capitalists, such as Oliver McBride and Mr. West, were not shown in too negative a light, and the worst villains, such as Cice in *Miss Mend*, were not American but either Italian or German.[537] Marietta Shaginian's original novel *Mess Mend*, on the other hand, had another negative character, Jack Kressling, who was an openly evil American financial genius. This negative American literary character was omitted from the film. The case of *Miss Mend* suggests that early Soviet cinema, more so than literature, [538] tended to represent American citizens in a positive light.

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[537] Cice's last name suggests his Italian background.
[538] Another example of a negative American character in a Soviet novel is Rollings, an American billionaire in Aleksei Tolstoi's *The Death Ray of Engineer Garin,* written in 1925.

## III. Representations of American Characters in Soviet Film Adaptations of American Literature

A number of film adaptations of American literary works were made in Russia in the first two decades after the Revolution. Most of the films have not survived, which means that we often have to rely on analysis of the literary sources that were the inspiration behind these films, in order to achieve a further understanding of Russian attitudes towards the American heroes (in this case, literary heroes) and their potential example to the New Soviet Men and Women.

### i. Jack London

One of the most widely read American authors in early Soviet Russia was Jack London. London was truly popular among the masses, and endorsed by Soviet officials. Lenin himself admired London's short story 'Love for Life,' as has already been mentioned in the Introduction.[539] In the story, the main protagonist undergoes unimaginable hardships after getting lost near the Arctic Circle, but survives thanks to his power of will and inner strength, and manages to preserve a degree of spiritual dignity in the process.

In a lecture given in 1929 and entitled 'Contemporary Literature in the West', Anatolii Lunacharsky singled out Jack London as someone whose name was known to everyone and 'perhaps dear to many' in Russia. He described London as 'a writer of exceptional strength, exceptional poignancy, and exceptional power.'[540] Lunacharsky's admiration for London's works was reinforced by the fact that the

[539] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 102. See p. 18 above.
[540] Lunacharsky, 'Sovremennaia literatura na zapade', p. 327.

Commissar of Enlightenment, who was a longtime admirer of Nietzsche, perceived a similar affinity in London's prose. According to Mikhail Agurskii, 'no one had more of a Nietzschean influence on Soviet readers than Jack London.'[541] Lunacharsky's and Gorky's involvement with Nietzscheanism has already been discussed in the Introduction[542] and in Chapter 1.[543] The Nietzschean discourse remained active throughout the twenties, and the Nietzschean concept of a 'superman' played an important role in the development of early Soviet culture and its emphasis on strong, fit, and active literary and filmic heroes. The link between Nietzscheanism, the literature of Jack London, and the popularity of both of the above in early Soviet Russia, as well as the personal admiration for both by Lunacharsky can help shed further light on the tendency of early Soviet culture to model its positive heroes on the example of the strong, life-affirming, resourceful and frontiersman-like heroes of American fiction and film.

London's Nietzscheanism has been contested by scholars of American literature, Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman. These scholars argue that London's vision was much closer to that of the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson than to Friedrich Nietzsche.[544] From this perspective, the Londonian hero is closer to the Emersonian 'representative man', or the 'great average man' who represents the mass of common men who are also capable of greatness, than the Nietschean 'superman'.[545] This understanding of the Londonian hero is important to my study, as it shifts the emphasis from the Nietzschean influence and adds a new

[541] Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', p. 271.
[542] See p. 13 above.
[543] See p. 111 above.
[544] See Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Rereading Jack London* (Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 4.
[545] Ibid.

dimension to the understanding of strong Londonian heroes who are often self-reliant in an Emersonian way. Self-reliance was an important human quality praised by Emerson in his seminal essay, and we shall return to it when discussing Soviet cinematic heroes of the 1930s in Chapter 4.[546]

Publication of the multi-volume *Complete Works* of Jack London was begun in Russia as early as 1911, with the last volume coming out soon before 1917. In 1928-1929, a twenty-four volume collection was published. Additionally, a vast number of London's individual novels and short stories were published in numerous journals and as separate books.[547] It was not only the Bolshevik officials who were fond of London's works. The Harvard survey of Soviet émigrés in the 1940s found that, among their respondents who included people of various professions and backgrounds, Jack London was the most popular foreign author, and one of the most widely read authors in general, ranking not far behind Tolstoy and Pushkin.[548] The authors of the Harvard study indicated that the interest in London's works was explained by the desire of the Soviet readers to escape 'drab reality' and to experience the 'thrills, sensations, and exoticism' of his adventure stories and novels.[549]

Vil' Bykov, one of the leading Russian scholars of Jack London's legacy, confirms that the attraction of London's work for the Soviet readers was contained not so much in the writer's social protest and socialist views, as in the 'masculine,

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[546] See p. 303 below.
[547] Joan London, 'Dzhek London i nashe vremia', in Jack London, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Terra – Knizhnyi klub, 2001), p. 328.
[548] Friedberg, 'Foreign Authors and Soviet Readers', p. 276.
[549] Ibid.

active, and life-affirming spirit' of his writings.[550] As late as the 1980s, the Soviet writer Valentin Pikul' was quoted as saying that he loved London for the fact that 'he created the image of a strong person.' Pikul' went on to state,

> Our literature needs a strong hero of a Jack London type, who is not afraid of obstacles. We don't have such a hero, and we need him. Precisely a strong, willful person, who knows what he wants and who achieves what he needs.[551]

According to Bykov,

> When representing life's collisions, people and their fates, the American character, the initiative characteristic of the New World, and everyday activeness bordering on adventurism, Jack London is a realist and a romantic.[552]

It is this American initiative, activeness and the trailblazer spirit of a strong individual that attracted generations of Soviet readers to Jack London's stories. Among these admiring readers were the Bolshevik officials, intellectuals, and filmmakers in the 1920s that were involved in creating the exemplary image of a new Soviet hero.

In the years after the Revolution, attempts were made not only in Soviet literature but in cinema as well to create 'strong heroes of a Jack London type'. The attraction of Soviet writers and filmmakers to the Jack London heroes became apparent immediately after the Revolution, with two films based on London's novels released in 1918 and 1919. *Born Not For Money* [*Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia*][553] (1918) was based on London's novel *Martin Eden*. The second film, *Iron Heel* [*Zheleznaia piata*] (1919) was based on the novel of the same name. The works on

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[550] Quoted in London, 'Dzhek London i nashe vremia', p. 329.
[551] *15 vstrech v Ostankino* (Moscow, 1989), p. 207.
[552] Vil' Bykov, 'Neizvestnyi Dzhek London', in Jack London, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 8.
[553] Most often referred to in the English-language literature as *Creation Can't Be Bought*.

which these two films were based, remained among the most widely read by the Soviet readers at least until the 1940s.[554]

*a. Born Not For Money* (1918)

The script for *Born Not For Money* (1918) was written by Vladimir Maiakovsky. It was released in Moscow by a private film company 'Neptune', but no prints of the film have survived to this day. Jack London's novel was adapted to fit the Russian reality (and the personal interests of the Futurist poet Maiakovsky), where the sailor Martin Eden became the worker poet Ivan Nov, played by Maiakovsky himself.[555] Both the film and the original novel centered around a transformation of the main character: in the novel, the sailor Martin Eden first dreams of, and then undergoes an identity change from a simple, uneducated sailor to a well-read, famous and successful writer. This transformation occurs under the effects of love for Ruth, an upper class woman. Eden feels that the only way for him to achieve happiness with Ruth is to educate himself and, through education, to move up the social and class ladder. In the beginning of the book, the author emphasizes Eden's dream of class transformation and his associations of the life of the upper classes with the 'romance, and beauty, and high vigor' that he craves.[556]

At the same time, the personal qualities of Eden are vividly described, making him one of the 'strong, willful' heroes of Jack London that were praised for decades in the Soviet Union. Outwardly, Eden is described as possessing strong muscles

[554] Friedberg states that *Martin Eden* and *Iron Heel* were the two most frequently mentioned of Jack London's works. Friedberg, 'Foreign Authors and Soviet Readers', p. 276.
[555] For more information on the making of this film, see Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino,* pp. 86-87.
[556] Jack London, 'Martin Eden', in *Novels and Social Writings* (The Library of America: New York, 1982), p. 570.

(Ruth seems especially attracted to his muscular neck, 'heavy corded, almost bull-like, bronzed by the sun, spilling over with rugged health and strength').[557] Among his inner qualities are belief in himself and determination, including determination to become as well-educated as Ruth and people of her class. Eden is described as a 'burning, blazing man' filled with enthusiasm and 'fire', possessing a spirit of adventure, humour, and no fear of danger.[558] His previous life is described as full of 'danger and daring, hardship and toil'.[559] Elsewhere in the novel, Eden is described as someone who knows how to enjoy life, but can reject enjoyment if necessary and is able to 'command life.[560]

Through relentless self-education, Eden achieves the transformation he has dreamt of, and becomes a famous and wealthy writer. However, he realizes that he is unable to become part of the bourgeoisie, and suffers from the fact that people around him accept him due to his wealth and popularity, rather than his personal qualities or talent.[561] The novel ends with Eden committing suicide, having no more illusions.

In Maiakovsky's film, the tragic ending of the original is replaced by a much happier and optimistic ending with Chaplinesque overtones, where the poet Ivan Nov becomes famous but, having realized that his beloved is only attracted to his fame and money, fakes a suicide, puts on his old worker's clothes, and walks off 'homeless and free, like Chaplin.'[562] Thus, in the film, the protagonist's change of identity completes a full circle, from a poor worker to a famous and wealthy poet, and back to the 'homeless and free' member of the lower class.

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[557] Ibid., p. 566.
[558] Ibid., p. 574.
[559] Ibid., p. 580.
[560] Ibid., p. 587.
[561] Ibid., p. 899.
[562] Viktor Shklovskii, an unnamed article in *Kino* (April 11, 1937).

What attracted Maiakovsky, that great innovator and avid supporter of the new regime, to the Jack London novel? The obvious reason seems to be the novel's focus on the process of a writer's self-fashioning. Also, Maiakovsky, like other avant-garde artists of the time, must have been attracted by the rebellious side of the novel: according to David Burliuk, who claims that he was the one who wrote the main script with Maiakovsky making changes, 'all the rebellious and revolutionary features of the American's epic work were brought out.'[563] However, the personal qualities of the main protagonist as described by Jack London must have played an equally important role in Maiakovsky's attraction to this novel.

Bengt Jangfeldt has pointed out the Nietzschean influence on early Maiakovsky, with the latter identifying himself with Nietzsche's Zarathustra as a prophet and rebel.[564] According to Mikhail Agurskii, Maiakovsky was a Nietzschean and 'an important transmitter of Nietzsche to Soviet society', no less than Gorky.[565] Given Maiakovsky's familiarity with and affinity for Nietzsche's work, documented by Jangfeldt and Agurskii, the concept of a 'superman' must have been entertained by Maiakovsky. In his commentary to one of the recent Russian-language editions of *Martin Eden*, A. Gutorov compares Eden with the superman.[566] In addition to the Nietzschean overtones of the novel, there is a pointer to Eden's 'Nietzschean ideas' in the novel itself.[567] It is on this level, that of the exemplary human qualities, that Maiakovsky must have related to Jack London's story as well.

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[563] Quoted in Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 129.
[564] Bengt Jangfeldt, 'Nietzsche and the Young Maiakovsky', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p. 38.
[565] Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p. 264.
[566] A. Gutorov, 'Kommentarii', in Jack London, 'Martin Eden', p. 411.
[567] Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p. 272.

As early as 1914, in his essay entitled 'Budetliane' ['People of the Future'], Maiakovsky praised the birth of a new man, who is 'the maker of his own life' and 'an infinitely joyful optimist, an undefeatably healthy one', with 'powerful muscles of a Hercules.'[568] The Nietzschean 'superman' overtones of this essay combine with affinity for qualities of 'infinite joyful optimism', self-reliance, and physical fitness, so characteristic of heroes of American literature and adventure films popular at the time. Maiakovsky's interest in Jack London was thus another manifestation of the wider Russian affinity, in the first decades of the twentieth century, for both the Nietzschean concept of the 'superman' and the strong and self-reliant heroes of American adventure literature and cinema.

*b. Iron Heel* (1919)

Another favorite of Russian readers, London's novel *Iron Heel* was adapted for the half-stage, half-screen production at the Theatre of the Revolution in 1919 by Vladimir Gardin. The film part of this innovative production has not survived. The *Iron Heel* entry in the *Annotated Catalogue* of Soviet fiction films states that Lunacharsky was one of the authors of the screen adaptation, together with Gardin.[569] However, according to Leyda, it was Pudovkin who assisted Gardin in adapting the novel and also acted in the film.[570] The 1976 edition of Pudovkin's *Collected Works* confirms that it was indeed Pudovkin who authored the script and co-directed the film and play with Gardin, while Lunacharsky only wrote the introduction to the play. The

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[568] Vladimir Maiakovsky, 'Budetliane', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), pp. 329-332.
[569] *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1961), p. 10.
[570] Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 158.

play (and its film component) was performed sixty five times, a number pointing to its popularity with the public.[571]

In his lecture on contemporary literature in the West, Lunacharsky called *Iron Heel* 'fully proletarian' or fully in line with Bolshevik ideology.[572] In the same lecture, Lunacharsky pointed out that in some other works, London did not espouse socialism as he praised the freedom of individuality that 'spits on the bourgeois world and tries to make its own way'.[573] This statement is rather ambiguous. As we have already noted, the question of individualism and the role of individuality in the new collectivist socialist future was a difficult one for the Bolshevik officials and intellectuals, and elicited ambiguous and multiple interpretations.

Individuality in the new, socialist order was supposed not to be important on its own, but only as part of the greater whole of the collective. However, individuality in the form of an 'extraordinary personality', especially that of a Party leader, was praised and glorified (this was especially so in the 1930s, and we shall return to this issue in Chapter 4).[574] In another lecture, delivered in 1924 and entitled 'Heroism and Individualism', Lunacharsky explained that individual heroism can indeed exist in a socialist society, but only when 'there is a certainty that the individual has applied all his/her talents to the collective cause.'[575] Therefore, strong individuals who worked for the cause of the collective were encouraged, especially when they were members of the Party. This duality of attitudes towards individualism helps explain the fact that

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[571] Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), p. 491.
[572] Lunacharsky, 'Sovremennaia literature na zapade', p. 326.
[573] Ibid.
[574] See p. 303 below.
[575] Lunacharsky, *Geroizm i individualism: lektsiia, chitannaia v Leningrade v 1924 godu v pol'zu besprizornykh* (Moscow: New Moscow, 1925), p. 44.

strong American individualist heroes of the type represented by Jack London, who were active, enthusiastic, and displayed initiative, could be objects of admiration in early Soviet culture, at the same time as the official Soviet press often attacked the negative aspects of individualism in the American capitalist society.

The main protagonist of *Iron Heel*, Ernest Everhard, is that type of a strong individual hero, a leader acting for the greater good of the proletarian collective. He is described by London as 'simple, direct, afraid of nothing [...] He was a superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche has described, and in addition he was aflame with democracy.'[576] This fictional American revolutionary leader is very much like the strong and self-reliant individual leader hero described by Lunacharsky in his lecture. This Nietzschean link partially explains Lunacharsky's involvement in the film and play's production. Moreover, the interest of Lunacharsky, the man in charge of the ideological aspect of Soviet film production in the 1920s, in the strong, resilient, and ingenious Londonian type of individual provides an insight into the reasons behind the presence in Soviet films of the late 1920s (and, as we shall see, of the 1930s) of exemplary individuals possessing positive 'American' qualities.

In addition to Russian adaptations, a number of American film adaptations of London's fiction were imported into Russia in the 1920s. These included *White Fang* (USA, 1925), distributed in Russia as *The Voice of Blood* [*Golos krovi*] between 1925 and 1930[577]; *Sea Wolf* (USA, 1920), distributed in Russia from 1924[578]; and *Flame of the Yukon* (USA, 1917).[579]

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[576] Jack London, 'Iron Heel', in *Novels and Social Writings* (New York, 1982), p. 326. Apart from the above description, Everhard is described only schematically in the novel, resulting in a fairly simplistic image of a strong-willed revolutionary leader.
[577] Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 233.

Other Soviet film adaptations of Jack London's stories in the twenties included two films, both directed by Iurii Zheliabuzhskii and both based on the story called 'South of the Slot': *Two Souls* [*Dve dushi*] (1920) and *Who Are You?* [*Kto ty takoi?*] (1927). The story on which Zheliabuzhskii's two films were based, is in a certain way the opposite of *Martin Eden*, in that its main protagonist, an upper-class American sociologist Drummond undergoes a change of identity and transforms into a rebellious worker Bill Tots. But perhaps the best known of all early Soviet Jack London adaptations was Lev Kuleshov's film *By the Law* (1926).

*c. By the Law* (1926)

Jack London, along with Washington Irving and O. Henry, was among Kuleshov's favorite writers.[580] In their memoirs, Kuleshov and his partner Alexandra Khokhlova wrote that they were attracted to the 'strong people [and] noble characters' in the works of these authors, as well as the struggle and romanticism of their adventures.[581] However, the two attribute Kuleshov's choice for London's short story 'The Unexpected' as the basis for the film to the 'fullness of action' (*nasyshchennost' deistviiem)* in the story, rather than the strength of the characters. Another possible reason for this choice might have been the small expense that the film entailed, as it was centered around three main characters, while most of the action took place within one room and the rest was filmed outdoors.[582]

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[578] Ibid., p. 268.
[579] Ibid., p. 282. No information is listed about the date of import into Russia. The film was produced by Thomas Ince.
[580] Kuleshov and Khokhlova, *50 let v kino*, p. 68.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Ibid., p. 97.

'The Unexpected' is a story of a small group of gold miners in the Klondike, one of whom, an Irishman Michael Dennin, suddenly kills two of his partners, and the remaining couple, Edith (originally from England) and Hans (originally from Sweden) decide to judge Dennin according to what they see as traditional English law, which results in the two holding a trial and eventually killing Dennin by hanging him. Kuleshov wrote the draft of the adaptation in one day, and then invited Viktor Shklovskii (who called Jack London 'the most popular Russian writer')[583] to polish and finish the script.[584] Youngblood has called the resulting feature 'a sadly neglected masterpiece of silent film art.'[585] The film was viciously attacked in the Soviet press. It was deemed alien to Soviet ideology, mainly on the grounds of its 'depressiveness'. Kuleshov was accused of 'savoring depressive material continuously throughout the entire picture.'[586] Youngblood has offered an insightful analysis of the criticism of Kuleshov's film, in that it threatened the newly developing Socialist Realism with its necessary joyfulness.[587]

It is interesting that Kuleshov chose a story of London's that resulted in a film that was 'depressing' (and thus unacceptable for the Soviet critics), whereas most of Kuleshov's other films of the late 1910s and 1920s are filled with dynamism and youthful optimism.[588] Youngblood's comment that the harsh criticism of the film was

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[583] A. Arsen, 'Sotsial'noe znachenie kartiny "Po zakonu"', *Kino-front*, 9/10 (1926), p. 29.
[584] Kuleshov and Khokhlova, *50 let v kino*, p. 97. *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my* catalogue wrongly lists Shklovskii as the sole author of the script. See *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*, vol. 1, *Nemye fil'my (1918-1935)* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1961), p. 157.
[585] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, p. 91.
[586] Arsen, 'Sotsial'noe znachenie kartiny "Po zakonu"', p. 30.
[587] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, p. 94.
[588] See earlier discussion of Kuleshov's 'Americanism' in Chapter 1 above, p. 69.

partially due to its American source[589] is unfounded, considering the popularity of Jack London among Bolshevik officials and common readers. Had Kuleshov chosen a story such as 'Love of Life' (admired by Lenin), also arguably 'depressing' throughout, but ending in the victory of the main protagonist over the harrowing circumstances in which he finds himself,[590] the resulting film potentially would have also been 'depressing' but it's happy ending would have very likely won the Soviet critics' praise.[591]

The protagonists of 'The Unexpected' (especially Edith) and 'Love for Life' are strong individuals with great power of will. In 'The Unexpected', Edith is described as an English woman who, upon her arrival to America, transforms from a timid young girl steeped in tradition into a strong, independent woman who acquires the 'long stride of a mountaineer' and has 'mastered the unexpected.'[592] However, when faced with the murder of the two partners by Dennin, it is not her newly acquired American qualities that dictate Edith's actions, but 'some sense of law, an ethic of her race and early environment'.[593] It is not entirely clear whether London differentiates here between the ethics of the American versus the English 'race'. However, Edith is specifically described in the narrative as coming from English background, whereas Dennin is described as an Irishman. It is therefore highly

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[589] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, p. 93.
[590] Mikhail Agurskii has pointed out the connection between London's story 'Love for Life' and Boris Polevoi's classic Socialist Realist novel *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke,* which was partially inspired by London's story. See Agurskii, 'Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture', p. 282.
[591] This speculation does not take into consideration the fact that, at the time, Kuleshov was at the center of an all-out attack against him, based on his 'formalism' and an overt admiration of American culture. Perhaps even a 'Love of Life'-based film would have been criticized.
[592] Jack London, 'The Unexpected', http://london.sonoma.edu/Writings/LoveLife/unexpected.html [accessed 7 May 2009].
[593] Ibid.

probable that by 'an ethic of her race' London meant the English 'race', rather than the 'white race', which included the English, the Irish and the Americans, especially considering that London himself had Irish roots on the side of his father.

Kuleshov was aware of the 'Englishness' rather than 'Americanness' of Edith's actions and her understanding of the law: in his article '*West – Ray- By the Law*', he wrote that *By the Law* was about people from contemporary England.[594] In this sense, *By the Law* is not the best example of early Soviet films portraying protagonists with American qualities. However, the same article of Kuleshov's provides another clue for the reasons behind his interest in this particular story by Jack London: Kuleshov stated that contemporary Soviet cinema, focusing on the mass hero, did not provide enough portrayals of individuals, especially individuals in difficult psychological circumstances. He argued that the viewers had the right to watch films about individuals and their feelings, while Soviet cinema needed to improve the acting in its films, which tended to have 'quite mediocre' portrayals of individuals.[595] A contemporary critic Viktor Pertsov, one of the few supporters of *By the Law,*[596] equally stressed the value of the film in its focus on the individual. Pertsov argued that the 'problem of an individual' was 'exceptionally important' (*vazhneishaia*), and that the film brought this problem into the sphere of the Soviet cinematic consciousness.[597] For Kuleshov, London's portrayals of heroic and strong American individuals were equally as fascinating as the writer's more negative

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[594] Lev Kuleshov, '"Vest" – "Luch" – "Po zakonu"', in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), p. 116.
[595] Ibid., p. 115.
[596] Youngblood mistakenly states that Pertsov's article in *Kino-front* was an attack on Kuleshov's film, whereas the opposite was true. See Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, p. 93.
[597] V. Pertsov, 'Sotsial'noe znachenie kartiny "Po zakonu"', *Kino-front*, 9/10 (1926), p. 28.

portrayals of complex individuals such as Edith, facing extreme circumstances. However, for official Soviet culture, only the vividly heroic and ultimately positive individual heroes of Jack London's prose (such as Ernest Everhard, Martin Eden, and the hero of 'Love of Life') were acceptable, in that they could be used as positive examples and role models for the formation of the New Soviet Man.

**ii. O. Henry**

Sidney Porter (known under the pseudonym O. Henry) was another American writer widely known and read by Soviet readers. Deming Brown has pointed out several reasons for O. Henry's popularity in early Soviet Russia, including interest in the effects of urban life on 'little people'; exposition of American life itself; the interest of Soviet Formalists in O. Henry's stylistic approach such as 'adroitness of construction, a diversity of plot situations and denouements, compactness and swift action'[598] which reflected the pace of American existence; and the writer's ability to divert and amuse, including his device of a surprise ending.[599] Some Soviet critics in the late 1920s agreed that O.Henry's art was a 'retreat in the face of the terrible problems of life, from which you can hide only in a sentimental story.'[600]

[598] Boris Eikhenbaum, 'O. Genri i teoriia novelly', in *Literatura: teoriia, kritika, polemika* (Leningrad, 1927), p. I66-209.
[599] Deming Brown, 'O.Henry in Russia', *Russian Review*, 12.4 (October 1953), pp. 253-258.
[600] Sergei Obruchev, 'O. Henri. Volchki', *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, 7 (I925), p. 283.

*THE GREAT CONSOLER* (1933)[601]

According to Kuleshov and Khokhlova, the reason they happily chose the 'American material' of Jack London and O. Henry as the basis of their work was because 'these American writers were the heroes of the Soviet youth.'[602] Kuleshov's 1933 sound film *The Great Consoler* was based on a script written by Kuleshov and A. Kurs, which was a clever adaptation of some of O. Henry's short stories and the biography of the writer himself. The film is set in an American prison, during the time when O. Henry was imprisoned for embezzlement. The narrative focuses on the conflict between the injustice of reality and the happy, sentimental and idealistic picture of that reality painted by O. Henry in his stories.

The film's structure includes a short 'film-within-a-film' entitled 'The Metamorphosis of Jimmy Valentine', a device created by Kuleshov to visually diferrentiate the prison reality surrounding the writer and the happy and sentimental story he is writing. The short, semi-silent film vignette contains a number of stylistic references to early American detective films, so admired by Kuleshov in the early 1920s, including a fight scene, a clean-shaven and healthy looking 'good outlaw' Valentine with an American smile, and a detective who is pursuing him.

While the film is set in America and deals with the inability of a writer within a bourgeois society to fully unveil social injustice around him, at the same time it includes a highly courageous critique of Stalinist society and questions the inability

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[601] This film, as well as *Tom Sawyer* (1936) discussed below, was not made in the 1920s, the decade that is the main focus of this chapter; however, I include these two films here for the purposes of analyzing representations of American characters in film adaptations of American literature, and because the small numbers of films of this kind in the 1930s do not warrant a separate section in the following chapter, which is dedicated to Soviet cinema of that decade.

[602] Kuleshov and Khokhlova, *50 let v kino*, p. 165.

of most Soviet artists (writers and filmmakers) to document the truth of the regime's brutality. The film also includes an autobiographical comment on the fate of Aleksandra Khokhlova as an actress. She plays the role of Dulsie, a common American girl and admirer of O. Henry's fiction, who has lost her job and is forced to prostitute herself to the detective Price. In a highly emotional scene, Dulsie tells her housemate that she will never be able to get work again, due to being 'not pretty and too thin' (*nekrasivaia i khudaia).* This phrase is a direct quotation from the 'verdict' given to Khokhlova as an actress by the cinema authorities in the late 1920s, due to which she was unable to find work for several years, and she and Kuleshov went through a lot of hardships.[603]

The film poignantly ends with a shot of Porter (O. Henry, played by Konstantin Khokhlov) speaking from behind bars, as if appealing to Russian viewers from the future, 'Never, never will I be able to write what I know, that which needs to be written! Maybe some day there will come someone else, others will come!' Thus, the 'American' form, American characters, and the legacy of the American writer O. Henry, were used as a vehicle to offer a Soviet reading in a highly unconventional and courageous way, as a concealed critique of Stalinist reality. Peter Kenez made a similar point when he wrote, 'the film was so profoundly anti-Soviet that Kuleshov's critics did not even dare to admit that they understood it.'[604]

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[603] Ibid., p. 115.
[604] Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 118.

### iii. Mark Twain

Another great American writer who was very popular among Russian readers, especially children, since the end of the nineteenth century, was the author of adventure novels and short stories, Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens). Twain's multi-volume collected works in translation were published in Russia repeatedly from the 1890s, including multiple publications in the 1900s and 1910s.[605] The two of Twain's novels most cherished by Russian readers were *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). The young, adventurous, imaginative and freedom-loving heroes of the two novels, Tom Soier and Gek Finn were admired by generations of young Russian readers no less than Cooper's Pathfinder or London's Martin Eden. As late as 1974, the Soviet publishers of another Russian-language edition of the two novels asked their readers to tell them in writing, 'what character traits of the main heroes of this book, one of the most favorite books of the young readers of the entire world, you like, and why.'[606]

No films based on the works of Mark Twain were made in Russia in the 1920s. In 1925, an American film *Tom Sawyer* (USA, 1917), directed by William

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[605] E. Nemerovskaia, 'Tven, Mark', in *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia, Fundamental'naia elektronnaia biblioteka 'Russkaia literatura i fol'klor,* http://feb-web.ru [accessed 10 April 2009]. See Mark Twain, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 11 vols, (Saint Petersburg: Izdanie Panteleeva,1896—1899); Mark Twain, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. and transl. by I.F. Vasilevskii (Bukva), 3 vols. (Saint Peterbsurg, 1989); Mark Twain, *Sochineniia, prilozheniie k zhurnalu Vorkug sveta*, 7 vols. (Moscow, 1907); Mark Twain, *Sobranie sochinenii*, with an introduction by A. Averchenko, 11 vols. (Saint Petersburg: M.G. Kornfeld, 1910-1913); Mark Twain, *Sobranie sochinenii, prilozheniie k zhurnalu Priroda i liudi*, with an introduction by I. Iasinskii, 28 vols. (Saint Petersburg: P.P. Soikin, 1911); Mark Twain, *Izbrannye rasskazy*, 3 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1911-1912); Mark Twain, *Sobranie sochinenii,* ed. by P.K. Guber and K.I. Chukovskii, 6 vols. (Moscow, Leningrad: GIZ, 1927-1929); Mark Twain, *Izbrannye rasskazy*, transl. by S.G. Zaimovskii (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1936); Mark Twain, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1937).
[606] Mark Twain, *Prikliucheniia Toma Soiera, Prikliucheniia Gekl'berri Finna* (Moscow: Detskaia literatura, 1974), p. 462.

Desmond Taylor, was imported into Russia and remained in distribution there until 1931.[607] Tom Sawyer was played by Jack Pickford, Mary Pickford's brother. The presence of Jack Pickford in the leading role almost guaranteed success to the film in Russia, where Mary Pickford was idolized by Soviet film fans.[608] One of Taylor's two sequels to the 1917 film, *Huckleberry Finn* (USA, 1920) was also distributed in Russia in the 1920s.[609]

*TOM SAWYER* (1936)

In 1936, a Soviet version of Twain's *Tom Sawyer* [*Tom Soier*] was released, which was loosely based on both of the famous novels (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*).[610] As we shall see in the following chapters, by the mid-1930s, the official stance towards representations of America underwent some changes, with competitive attitudes replacing open admiration of the 1920s. Due to these changes, the film omits a lot of nuances from Twain's originals, focusing almost entirely on the critique of slavery and racism in America. The film opens with a scene of a brutal horseback and dog chase after a black boy, a runaway slave. The issue of injustice to black slaves remains central throughout the film, while the character traits of the two protagonists, Tom and Huck, are fleshed out only superficially.

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[607] Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 310.
[608] For more on Mary Pickford, see Chapter 3 below, pp. 208-247.
[609] Kartseva lists this film as released in 1919; however, Taylor's *Huckleberry Finn* was released in 1920. It was preceded by *Huck and Finn*, released in 1918. See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 231.
[610] In 1942, another Soviet film was made, based on a Mark Twain book, called *Prints i nishchii* [*The Prince and the Pauper*].

Tom's main feature emphasized by the Soviet filmmakers is his dream of becoming a pirate or a Robin Hood. In fact, not much remains of the inventiveness of the literary Tom (an important trait of Twain's Tom Sawyer and a trait perceived in Russia as innately American), while Huck Finn has been 'Sovietized': in the court scene where his father is judged for murdering Doctor Robinson, Huck gladly becomes a legal witness so that his father could be accused, reminiscent in his actions of Pavlik Morozov, the father-betraying Stalinist ideal for Soviet children. In the original novel, however, it was not Huckleberry's father who was the murderer, but Joe the Indian. The individuality and 'American' character traits of the main protagonists, including Tom's inventiveness and resourcefulness,[611] which truly attracted generations of Soviet readers to Twain's novels, are not emphasized in the film. However, it does retain a degree of 'Americanness' aesthetically, mainly in the fast chase scenes and a few physical stunts, such as the opening chase scene and the one where Huck runs away from his father over house roofs, in a long tracking shot.[612]

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[611] For example, the famous scene where Tom, who does not like to work, tricks his friends into painting the fence instead of him. Mark Twain, *Prikliucheniia Toma Soiera*, p. 14.

[612] Other American writers very popular in Russia in the 1920s were Upton Sinclair and Edgar Poe. In 1928, a film called *Jimmy Higgins* was made, based on the novel of the same name written by Upton Sinclair. In the 1840s, a new literary genre, the detective story, was invented by an American writer Edgar Allan Poe. Upon its invention, the detective story flourished in many parts of the world, including Russia. Poe's translated works appeared in print repeatedly from 1847 in Russia. (See Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. xvii). Russian educated readers enjoyed not only Poe's detective stories, but also his stories of adventures at sea and on land. In the 1920s, two Soviet films were made based on Poe's fiction: *Ligeia* (1922) and *Prizrak brodit po Evrope* [*A Ghost is Roaming Europe*] (1922).

## IV. Representations of 'Russian Americans' in '*Novyi Byt*' Films of the Late 1920s

Throughout the 1920s, the Soviet film industry was going through a search for the specifically Soviet style of filmmaking. This search included efforts to create a new, Soviet hero on the screen. We have already noted in Chapter 1 some of the suggestions and comments made by Soviet critics on the lack of Soviet film stars who could compete with the popularity of such American stars as Douglas Fairbanks.[613]

The question of the importance of the cinematic hero arose in the middle of the debates about creating the new style of Soviet cinema. Youngblood points out that the book *Iskusstvo ekrana (Art of the Screen),* written in 1924 by the scenarist and film critic Al. Voznesenskii, stressed that the foundation of cinema was not form, but 'man and only man.'[614] Thus, Voznesenskii was expressing a viewpoint that was significantly different from the one held by the majority of Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, who advocated montage as the primary principle of filmmaking. According to Youngblood, this book, which also promoted realism in cinema, 'significantly contributed to the formation of a Soviet cinema aesthetic.'[615] As was already noted in the Introduction, Voznesenskii saw Americanism as an essential part of the Soviet cinema of the future, playing an equally important role together with the Russian 'Dostoevsky-like', deeply philosophical approach to cinema.[616] In a manner reminiscent of the Nietzschean discourse, Voznesenskii posited that human will power had to be an essential quality to be represented on the screen:

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[613] See pp. 93 and 116 above.
[614] Voznesenskii, *Iskusstvo ekrana*, p. 103.
[615] Ibid.
[616] Voznesenskii, *Iskusstvo ekrana*, pp. 71-72. See also pp. 16-17 above.

> To want, to tense up one's power of will, to strive and achieve, to act against obstacles and counteracting elements – this is what should comprise the main content of life of the future people, the builders of the new reality, and it is what finds its expression specifically in the art of cinema.[617]

The traits of the 'future people' described by Voznesenskii were highly reminiscent of the descriptions in the Soviet cinema press of American film heroes, as well as of the willful and courageous characters in American frontier and adventure literature, including those of the stories by Jack London, popular at the time.

In 1925, another scenarist, Valentin Turkin, continued the trend of stressing the importance of the film actor, and called for the creation, in cinema, of 'a new hero, cheerful and courageous, physically strong and agile.'[618] If we compare this description with several Soviet descriptions of American film heroes quoted in Chapter 1,[619] it will be clear that the kind of new hero both Turkin and Voznesenskii wanted to see in the new Soviet films was to be modeled on the heroes created by American film stars, who 'always fight and win' and who express 'joy and affirmation of life.'[620]

Another critic, V. Mus'kin, wrote in 1927 about the need to show on the screen the 'everyday life of the new Soviet citizen' and the 'developing new woman'.[621] Mus'kin stressed the lack of 'real, live people' in Soviet films and argued that Americans were the best teachers for Soviet filmmakers: 'Americans [...] are able to harmoniously combine the collective and the individual. They can make the

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[617] Ibid., p. 23.
[618] Valentin Turkin, *Kino-iskusstvo, kino-akter, kino-shkola* (Moscow, 1925), p. 21.
[619] See pp. 52 and 93 above.
[620] Khersonskii, 'O poslednikh zagranichnykh lentakh', p. 30.
[621] V. Mus'kin, 'Podvodia kontsy', *Sovetskii ekran*, 15 (1927), p. 4.

viewer love their hero.' Mus'kin proceeded to contrast the skill of the Americans with that of the Soviet filmmakers: 'We have not learned to create our heroes well.'[622]

By the late 1920s, the phrase 'Russian Americans' was no longer openly used in public discourse.[623] The 'Americanness' of early Soviet culture started its gradual descent 'underground', continuing to manifest itself through character traits of efficient and energetic characters in Stalinist cinema of the late 1920s and 1930s, as we shall see in the following pages.

1928 became a turning point in the history of early Soviet cinema. The tendencies to turn it into a monopolistic structure serving the interests of the state came to fruition at the First Party Conference on Cinema Affairs in March 1928, amidst the new policies of the Cultural Revolution and the first Five Year Plan. Avant-garde filmmakers were attacked for their films being 'unintelligible to the millions', and a call was made for the Conference to

> take a categorical stand in favour of the specifically Soviet, in favour of socialist tendencies and trends in our cinema [...] *against* [any attempt] to turn Soviet cinema into an ideological colony of bourgeois cinema which is socially hostile and formally reactionary.[624]

This categorical approach was indeed accepted. Cinema was finally to be harnessed for the purposes of the Party.[625]

Soon after the Conference, most American and other foreign films were purged from Soviet theatres, along with domestic features that were deemed

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[622] Ibid.
[623] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 243.
[624] Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany*, p. 41.
[625] Ibid., p. 42.

ideologically incorrect.[626] From now on, the Party intended to keep cinema under its complete control, and to use it, more than any other art medium, for its purpose of moulding the Soviet citizenry into the New Soviet Men and Women.[627]

Although imported films were taken off Soviet screens, the purge could not affect the personal memory of millions of Russian viewers. It is reasonable to assume that children of the 1920s, who became the Soviet adults of the Stalinist 1930s and 1940s, never forgot their childhood role models, including Pearl White and Douglas Fairbanks, nor the 'Russian American' metaphor and its positive function of describing an exemplary individual. The same was true for the Soviet filmmakers who went on to create Socialist Realist cinema of the 1930s with its positive heroes, and who were striving to make their films popular and entertaining. Films and stars that had left a strong impression continued to have an effect on filmic representations of heroes, whether consciously or on a subconscious level.

The main characters of a number of Soviet films that appeared in the late 1920s were highly motivated men and women who brought modern technology to the world of the village. Nowhere in these films was it acknowledged that these types of people would have been recently referred to as 'Russian Americans'. However, this was precisely the term to which the Soviet audiences of the time would have been accustomed:

> By the late 1920s, Soviet 'Americanism' was subsumed by the Cultural Revolution. The notion of special people who worked like Americans, but for

[626] For an insightful discussion of the cinema purges during 1928-1930, see Ekaterina Khokhlova, 'Forbidden Films of the 1930s', in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 92-93.
[627] Peter Kenez, 'Soviet Cinema in the Age of Stalin', in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, p. 54.

> Soviet objectives, became part of the larger effort to reform people, to create a new kind of person.[628]

This 'subsuming' of Soviet Americanism in cinema started soon after 1928, coinciding with the time when domestic film production exceeded the amount of foreign imports, which were to be banned entirely in 1931.[629] Relegating 'Americanness' to the level of character development was accompanied by the decline in stylistic references to dynamism and modernity. Avant-garde filmmakers in particular were now accused of formalism, and experimentation on the formal level all but ceased in the 1930s.

A number of films made in 1929 and 1930, which deal with contemporary themes, reflect this tendency. Among them is Aleksandr Dovzhenko's masterpiece *Earth* (1930).

### *Earth* (1930)[630]

*Earth* [*Zemlia*] was released in 1930, but was shot and edited in 1929, the first year of the First Five Year Plan and of radical changes enforced by the Party within the Soviet artistic community. Elizabeth Papazian points out that because it was made during this turning point, the film 'reflects both the relative ideological and artistic pluralism and enthusiastic and radical utopianism of the 1920s, as well as the nascent, all-encompassing artistic method of Socialist Realism.'[631]

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[628] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 247.
[629] Kepley and Kepley, 'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens, 1922-1931', p. 431.
[630] Chronologically, this film could be discussed in Chapter 4, dedicated to films of the 1930s; however, I have chosen to discuss this film here, as, being a silent film and using elements of montage cinema, it partially still belongs to the previous decade.
[631] Elizabeth A. Papazian, 'Offscreen Dreams and Collective Synthesis in Dovzhenko's *Earth*', *The Russian Review* 62 (July 2003), pp. 411-428 (p. 414).

Although an ethnic Ukrainian, Dovzhenko was also a Soviet artist, a Bolshevik who had served in the Red Army during the Civil War. Vance Kepley, Jr., posits that recent attempts to portray Dovzhenko in solely national terms miss the most important quality of his work, 'the tension between his indigenous Ukrainian sources and those modernist (and modernizing) influences that were activated by the Bolshevik Revolution.'[632] Kepley suggests that both of these sources contributed to the pressures – one, to celebrate the new Bolshevik order, and the other, to honor the traditions of the Ukraine – that shaped Dovzhenko's films.[633]

The story of *Earth* is centered around the father and son in a peasant family living in a small Ukrainian village. The son, Vasil' Trubenko (Semen Svashenko), has joined the local Komsomol cell in their efforts to build a collective farm out of individual households and land plots. The father, Opanas Trubenko (Stepan Shkurat), opposes his son's views.

Vasil' and other young Komsomol members bring a tractor to the village, to the great excitement of the local peasants. In a standoff with the local *kulaks,*[634] Vasil' promises to break down the fences separating their land from the land of the collective farm. He is threatened by the young *kulak* Khoma Belokon' (Petr Masokha), but proceeds with his plan. The following morning, on his way home, Vasil' is killed by the revengeful Khoma. This murder brings about a transformation in Vasil''s father, who asks the Komsomol members to lead the funeral ceremony instead of a traditional priest, and to sing 'new songs about the new life.'

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[632] Vance Kepley, Jr., 'Ukrainian Pastoral: How Dovzhenko Brought the Soviet Avant-Garde Down to Earth', *Film Comment* 38.3 (May-June 2002), pp. 58-61 (p. 59).
[633] Ibid.
[634] Well-off peasants who, historically, came under a vicious and often ruthless attack around the time of the film's making.

Vasil' and his father Opanas are the central pair of the film's narrative, that may be read in terms of the 'mentor'/'disciple' dichotomy described by Clark as one of the central motifs that informed the development of Socialist Realist literary fiction.[635] Opanas' story follows the Socialist Realist 'master plot': while ignorant of the importance of the 'new ways' in the beginning of the narrative, Opanas acquires 'consciousness' through the death of his son. Vasil', on the other hand, is another type of a positive hero, the New Soviet Man who brings change to the people and the environment around him.

Speaking about his film in 1930, Dovzhenko urged his filmmaker colleagues to use cinema in order to 'talk about the social changes in the name of the new socialist man'.[636] For Dovzhenko, this new man needed to be represented in cinema as a 'man with good, strong muscles, with well-mixed blood', the hero who was not a slave but a 'master of machines'.[637] Even though Dovzhenko positioned himself as a filmmaker of the Ukrainian countryside and vehemently accused American cinema of being the 'political antithesis' of Soviet cinema,[638] his description of the new positive hero of Soviet cinema strongly resembled heroes of American adventure literature and the praised 'human sportsman'[639] of American films, whose health, courage, agility and strong muscles were juxtaposed by Soviet critics in the 1920s to the weak-muscled 'European actor-intellectual'.[640] Furthermore, Dovzhenko's emphasis on Vasil''s mastery over machines indicated another strong link with the

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[635] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 54-57.
[636] Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 'V nogu so vremenem', in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966), p. 262.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 'Mirovozzrenie i tvorchestvo', in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol.1, p. 275.
[639] 'Человек-спортсмен'.
[640] Veronin, 'Kriticheskie zametki. Po povodu tekushchego repertuara', p. 11.

Americanization discourse of the 1920s: new heroes who possessed mastery over technology represented an inspiration drawn, directly or by proxy, from America's achievements in modern technology, as well as from the technologically skilled heroes of American cinema.

Vasil''s qualities are best manifested in the scene where he and his Komsomol comrades bring the tractor, (that 'sacred object of the era',[641] in Maia Turovskaia's words), to the village. In an atmosphere of general excitement on the part of the peasants, the tractor, driven by Vasil', appears on the horizon. All of a sudden (just like in Eisenstein's *Old and New* (1929)), the tractor stops. In both films, the scene of an initial tractor breakdown is a device for emphasizing the primacy of human agency over the machine.[642]

Vasil' discovers that the cause of the breakdown is in the fact that there is no water in the tractor's radiator. Sad, disappointed men sit in silence around the impotent machine, in what appears to be scorching summer heat. All of a sudden, Vasil' takes initiative: he tells the men to urinate into the radiator. Thanks to Vasil's resourcefulness, and to human fluids that have merged with and activated the machine, the tractor comes back to life! Perhaps blood would have been a more poignant metaphor. As the tractor begins to move, it is surrounded by dreamy gray smoke. The New Soviet Man Vasil' has demonstrated his relentless resourcefulness and mastery over the new technology.

Modern technology and Vasil''s frontiersman-like ingenuity, optimism, and energy help transform the village into the idealized collective farm of the future. In

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[641] Maia Turovskaia, 'Fil'my kholodnoi voiny kak dokumenty emotsii vremeni', in *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino,* pp. 202-217), p. 210.
[642] For a full treatment of Eisenstein's *Old and New*, see Chapter 3 below, p. 203.

the following scene, the tractor becomes the center of a harvesting process, which normally takes weeks, but is compressed into a succinct number of shots. The scene is edited in a highly dynamic manner, with short duration of shots very much unlike the long, slow takes of the rest of the film – just as Vasil', with his optimistic energy and an ever-present smile, is unlike his more traditionalist, slower-paced father and the other villagers. As Papazian points out, the tractor becomes the core of the collective, bringing about a 'larger, dynamic, more efficient system'.[643]

Having driven the tractor over the fences separating the *kulak* land, Vasil' walks alone down a winding path and suddenly breaks out into a dance. As he dances forward, dust rises around his feet, reminiscent of the smoke that rose around the tractor earlier. It is as if both Vasil' and the tractor possess a quality of trailblazing, making way for the 'new life' and transforming others as they go. In his actions and in his dance, Vasil' is shown full of energy and youthful optimism. In Dovzhenko's script, Vasil's readiness for action, his determination and ability to achieve anything he wants,[644] and his energy and optimism are emphasized repeatedly.[645]

In the 1920s, the machine 'became the dominant cultural symbol for the new Soviet society.'[646] At the same time, it was associated with the technological advances made in America. The tractor is referred to as a 'Bolshevik steel horse' by one of Vasil''s comrades. In the same year, in an article entitled 'Cinema in America',

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[643] Papazian, 'Offscreen Dreams', p. 426.
[644] 'Нет ничего в человеческой деятельности, с чем бы не справился Василь, легко при этом улыбаясь дедовой улыбкой.' Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 'Zemlia', in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 1, p. 131.
[645] '[Василь] весь во власти своей радости и готовности к действию'; 'Весь его юный мир был так обращен к действию [...].' Ibid., pp. 118, 131.
[646] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 94.

Eisenstein compared America to a 'steel dragon'.[647] While being used as a common metaphor in the human transformation discourse of the 1920s and 1930s,[648] steel also represented industrialization and modernity. A steel tractor was a metaphor for modernity with its American technology, and for 'Americanness' in general, including energy and efficient methods of production.

Vasil' is one of the earliest examples of the new Soviet cinematic hero that the film critics continuously called for throughout the 1920s: he has strong will power, he 'strives and achieves' and 'acts against obstacles and counteracting elements',[649] similar to the strong, willful, optimistic and energetic heroes of American films and Jack London's prose. Moreover, Vasil' is one of the earliest Soviet cinematic representations of an efficient 'Russian American'[650]: his resourcefulness (especially in the tractor scene), and mastery over technology, his energy and optimism, and his frontiersman-like trailblazing quality that makes way for the 'new life' and transforms and modernizes the traditional peasants around him, make him similar to the press descriptions of 'Russian Americans', widely used in the 1920s but discouraged by the time of the film's making.

Vasil' represents aspects of both models of the New Soviet Man: the 'glorified' optimistic and energetic citizen of the future Utopia with 'American' traits, and the 'crucified' martyr for the Bolshevik cause, as he is killed by the *kulak* Khoma. However, Vasil's energy and optimism are given a much more prominent role in the film than his 'martyrdom'. The film suggests that his baby brother, born

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[647] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Cinema in America', *International Literature*, 3 (July 1933), p. 97.
[648] See, for example, Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*.
[649] Voznesenskii, *Iskusstvo ekrana*, p. 23.
[650] Perhaps it would be more fitting to call Vasil' a 'Ukrainian American' or a 'Soviet American'.

during Vasil''s funeral, is the New Soviet Man who will carry on Vasil''s trailblazing and optimistic energy into the future. Speaking about his film, Dovzhenko stated that he wanted it to embody the call to 'vitality and life', and spoke of his own 'great optimism' as being responsible for the choices he made in the film.[651]

[651] Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 'K bodrosti i zhizni', in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh,* vol. 1, p. 260.

# CHAPTER 3
# NEW SOVIET WOMAN IN SOVIET CINEMA OF THE 1920S, 1930S AND EARLY 1940S

The original Russian phrase *novyi sovetskii chelovek* is most often translated into English as New Soviet Man, and thus has become gendered in the process of translation. Most English-language inquiries into the New Soviet Man project tend to focus on the creation of the new Soviet masculinity.[652] When analyzing new Soviet femininity, the English phrase New Soviet Woman is usually employed.[653] However, the Russian word *chelovek*, while being grammatically masculine, presupposes inclusion of both sexes into the project of creating the new personality, and should ideally be translated as the 'New Soviet Person'. It would be all the more accurate to do so, considering that many of the newly encouraged human traits were not specific to one gender. Most of the praised 'American' traits, such as efficiency, self-reliance, resourcefulness, initiative, and optimism were not gendered and could be applied to either women or men. This linguistic equality assisted the Bolsheviks in their rhetoric of fostering women's equality to men, in the cause of building the new Socialist state. As Mary Buckley has pointed out, from the Marxist point of view, it was not gender but class that defined interests; the interests of working men and women were identical, and therefore some 'unnecessary differences' between men and women had to be eradicated.[654]

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[652] See, for example, Haynes, *New Soviet Man*; Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*; Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*.
[653] See, for example, Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity'.
[654] Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 63.

There were, indeed, a number of traits of the New Soviet Person, such as courage, athletic fitness, and mastery over technology, that were traditionally viewed as predominantly masculine, and were now to be cultivated in women, as much as in men. Thus, the image of the New Soviet Woman incorporated a number of traditionally male qualities, as well as the ones ascribed to either gender. The phrase *novyi sovetskii chelovek* when applied to a woman, created grounds for gender equality and eradication of gender differences; moreover, it acted as a linguistic masculinizing force.

The Bolsheviks considered women as inclined to support 'backward', traditional views.[655] Therefore, 'converting' women to the Bolshevik side was an important task, which underlay the Bolshevik campaign to give women equality with men.[656] This campaign was organized through *zhenotdely* (women's sections of the Party), and was undertaken through face-to-face agitation and centrally organized propaganda. The Party's primary concern was not to redefine women's domestic roles and encourage female self-determination but, first, to ensure their support for the Revolution, and then, in the late 1920s, to draw them into the work force.[657] The changes in women's rights in Soviet Russia took place not due to an independent women's movement, but to official moves on behalf of the Party, and were not always in the interests of women. Rather, the Soviet policy on women's status was fluid and changed according to the Party's preferences. Thus, when larger numbers of people were needed in the work force during industrialization, women's equality with

[655] Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 274.
[656] Ibid.
[657] Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*, p. 61.

men was emphasized; however, when the birth rates needed to be boosted, the images of motherhood prevailed.[658]

Forging the New Soviet Woman was part of the greater Bolshevik effort of transforming human nature and creating perfect builders and inhabitants of the future Socialist state. Attwood and Kelly define the New Soviet Woman as an 'economically and sexually independent professional'.[659] While emphasizing the new economic and domestic roles, this definition does not include the new psychological and physical traits that women now had to acquire.

Cinema became an important tool in the Party's attempt to forge the new female Soviet identity and in propagandizing women's equality with men. This was largely due to lower literacy rates among the female population, as well as due to their established attraction to watching films.[660] Through cinema, new role models and examples of new personality traits for women could be introduced. Attwood and Kelly point out that women's roles underwent a larger transformation than men's, which was reflected in the fact that representation of the new, transformed female heroines was more prevalent in early Soviet films, especially in the late 1920s and 1930s, than representation of New Soviet Men.[661]

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[658] Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 275.
[659] Ibid., p. 274.
[660] According to Attwood and Kelly, 25 percent of women were literate by 1920. See Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 274. The authors also state that the cinema attracted large numbers of the female population since before the Revolution. They do not provide any statistics. In the United States, the prevalence of female over male film viewers in the 1920s has been noted by scholars. For example, Sumiko Higashi states that between 1920 and 1927, the number of women among American film audiences rose from 60 percent to 83 percent. See Sumiko Higashi, 'The New Woman and Consumer Culture: Cecil B. DeMille's Sex Comedies', in *The Silent Cinema Reader,* ed. by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, p. 312.
[661] Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 276.

Before the late 1920s, however, Soviet critics perceived the lack of cinematic examples of the 'new women' in Soviet films. In 1926, T. Abramov wrote, 'The Soviet screen still awaits its heroine', the 'woman of the new land.'[662] For Abramov, this new cinematic heroine had to be 'simple and robust, a girl from the factory, a Komsomol member, joyful, a peasant woman [...] simply a girl from the new life, from the new land.'[663] She was to be the opposite of the 'lacey lady' (*kiseinaia baryshnia*), and was not to be a 'Soviet temptress', nor a woman from the street who has been broken by life. She had to have simplicity and a 'healthy, sincere' laughter.[664] With some exceptions, Soviet cinema did not offer many examples of such new heroines until the late 1920s. For the time being, it tended to reflect the reality of women's experience, sometimes portraying positive transformations, rather than representing the new, ideal Soviet woman. Such idealized representations were to find their apogee in Socialist Realist films of the 1930s.

## I. Reality and Transformation of a Soviet Woman in Films of the 1920s

Films such as *Kat'ka the Reinette Apple Seller* [*Kat'ka bumazhnyi ranet*][665] (1926) and *Prostitute* [*Prostitutka*] (1927) were structured around a woman's transformation through her finding work at a Soviet factory and other places of work. For example,

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[662] T. Abramov, 'Zhenshchina novoi zemli', *Sovetskii ekran*, 34 (1926), p. 6.
[663] Ibid.
[664] Ibid.
[665] According to *Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka,* 'бумажный ранет' is a particular kind of reinette apples. See entry for 'ранет' in S. A. Kuznetsov, *Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka*, 1st ed. (Saint-Petersburg: Norint, 1998). This is the kind of apples sold by Kat'ka (Veronika Buzhinskaia) in the film.

in *Kat'ka the Reinette Apple Seller*, by the end of the film Kat'ka gains a job at a factory, and her difficult relationship with Semka is resolved by the police, while her family future appears to be connected with Vad'ka who treats her and her baby with kindness and respect. In *Prostitute*, two of the three women, Liuba and Nadezhda, find jobs, one at a sewing workshop and the other at a tram depot, which changes their lives for the better. However, the character traits necessary for the New Soviet Woman are not emphasized as much as the female heroines' economic equality with men in their ability to find paid work and join the Soviet work force. As Ekaterina Khokhlova argues, the characters of *Kat'ka the Reinette Apple Seller* are not heroic builders of the new society, but victims of circumstances. Kat'ka comes to the factory not due to having acquired new values, but because she has no other choice.[666] Another example of a film that includes a strong female protagonist is Olga Preobrazhenskaia's *Peasant Women of Riazan'* [*Baby riazanskie*] (1927). Maia Turovskaia has called the main character of this film, Vasilisa, played by Emma Tsesarskaia, a 'new woman' due to her strong and freedom-loving character.[667] However, this is no New Soviet Woman. The film focuses on exposing the dire conditions of women in Russian villages.

Two other films of the 1920s stand out in focusing on the theme of exposing the on-going gender inequality in the domestic sphere. In Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* [*Tretia Meshchanskaia*] (1927) and Fridrikh Ermler's *Fragment of an Empire* [*Oblomok imperii*] (1929), female protagonists are portrayed as virtual slaves to their

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[666] Ekaterina Khokhlova, 'Kat'ka – bumazhnyi ranet', in *Russkoe kino*, www.russkoekino.ru/books/ruskino/ruskino-0020.shtml [accessed 2 June 2 2009].
[667] Maia Turovskaia, '"Women's Cinema" in the USSR', in *Red Women on the Silver Screen: Soviet Women and Cinema from the Beginning to the End of the Communist Era*, ed. by Lynne Attwood (London: Pandora Press, 1993), p. 141-148 (p. 142).

husbands, performing all the domestic work while being completely subordinate to the male head of the household. In *Fragment of an Empire*, Natasha (Liudmila Semenova) is a hard-working, tired wife of the 'cultural worker' who beats her and treats her like a servant. The same man reads a lecture to workers, where he says, 'Look at your wives! They are tired out by the kitchen, by the household chores [...] Look for a comrade and a friend in your wives!' His double standards are obvious. The film suggests that, even if the wife of a cultural worker (very possibly a Communist) is so down-trodden by her husband, the situation must be even worse in families with less educated husbands.

The reality of Soviet women's existence in the home is the central theme of Room's *Bed and Sofa*. Here, Liudmila Semenova plays a younger woman, Liuda, married to the worker Kolia (Nikolai Batalov). While exposing women's inequality and portraying Liuda's transformation, the film also offers some important evidence of the role of American cinema in the lives of Soviet women in the 1920s, and thus warrants a closer analysis.

Liuda and Kolia live in a small room that is cluttered with many things and has many photographs on its walls. Among them, there are pictures of Voroshilov, Tolstoi, and Stalin. Stalin's portrait hangs over Kolia's corner where he also keeps his ruler. Liuda, too, has her own small table, where, above her mirror and a number of small personal objects, a picture of the smiling and radiant Douglas Fairbanks is pinned to the wall. Next to it stands an issue of *Sovetskii ekran*. The photograph of Fairbanks appears in many shots, when action takes place inside the room. Thus, 'brave Doug's' unnamed but important presence in Luida's life can be perceived throughout the film, reminiscent of the admiration of Fairbanks by Dusia (Anel'

Sudakevich) in Komarov's comedy *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*, released in the same year as *Bed and Sofa*.[668]

Liuda's husband Kolia likes to display his big smile and big muscles, to which he pays quite a bit of attention. He lifts weights in the morning; when his friend Volodia (Vladimir Fogel') who has come to stay with the couple, hesitates to remain with Liuda while Kolia goes on a work related trip, he tells Volodia that no one could take Liuda away from him, because he is not *shchuplyi* (not a weakling). Kolia shows Volodia his muscles as proof of this, all the while retaining his broad and self-satisfied smile. There is a scene closer to the beginning of the film, where Kolia leans against a piece of furniture and smiles, both gestures performed in a manner highly reminiscent of Fairbanks' light-hearted and self-assured posture.[669] Also, Kolia works high above Moscow, restoring the exterior of the Bolshoi Theatre, and is once shown having lunch with his feet dangling off a great height, completely at ease – another reference to Fairbanks, who excelled at performing various stunts high above ground. The shot is reminiscent of a similar shot in Fairbanks' *The Thief of Bagdad*, where Fairbanks' character climbs up onto a balcony several storeys high and enjoys eating stolen food, dangling his feet off the balcony and completely lacking any fear of heights.

Taking into account Kolia's partial resemblance to Fairbanks, Liuda's initial attraction to Kolia can be interpreted as based on his 'American' smile, big muscles, and physical agility. The film suggests that in the reality of married life Kolia turns out quite different from Liuda's admired American film star who, in his films (such

[668] For a discussion of *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*, see p. 114 above.
[669] Julian Graffy describes Kolia as 'resourceful and enthusiastic.' Julian Graffy, commentary track, *Bed and Sofa* (on DVD, released by Film Preservation Associates, 2004).

as, for example, *The Thief of Bagdad* and *The Mark of Zorro*), is portrayed not only as a strong, athletic man with a joyful smile, but also as an attentive lover. Kolia, however, is less than attentive to his wife and treats her like his servant, showing no affection towards her. Kolia's smile is more indicative of what Julian Graffy has called his 'unthinking masculine narcissism'.[670]

Volodia, on the other hand, is initially very attentive to Liuda. He brings her an issue of the magazine *Novyi mir* (a signifier of the 'new world' opening to Liuda, including both the world of contemporary Soviet society and the new world of modern femininity); he takes her for a flight in an airplane (bridging the gap between Liuda and modern technology); and brings her to the movies (something Liuda enjoyed in the past, but has not experienced for a long time while married to Kolia).[671] We are not shown what film Liuda and Volodia watch. However, knowing that Liuda is a fan of Fairbanks, and that she enjoys reading *Sovetskii ekran* (a popular cinema magazine with a large number of articles dedicated to American cinema), it is very likely that the two watch an imported American film.

Initially Volodia seems to be a potential agent for Liuda's transformation into a new, modern woman. However, the narrative progresses to show that Volodia is no 'mentor' for Liuda on her 'road to consciousness', but is as much of a tyrant as Kolia. With either of the two men, Liuda takes on the role a domestic servant, subservient to the men economically and sexually.

When Liuda, already pregnant, decides to leave the two men and is packing her personal belongings, the film makes it explicitly clear that she packs away her

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[670] Ibid.

[671] Liuda tells Volodia, 'I have forgotten when I was at the movies last.'

own photograph, which used to hang on the wall. When the two men return home to see that Liuda has left, the absence of Liuda's portrait is made obvious by its empty frame. However, it is not clear whether Liuda has taken the picture of Douglas Fairbanks with her: the place where it was pinned to the wall is obscured by a leaning piece of furniture. The *Sovetskii ekran* issue, however, is definitely gone, its absence signifying its importance to Liuda's newly independent life, as well as a possibility that the photograph of Fairbanks has been taken by her as well.

What kind of a 'new woman' will Liuda become, upon finding her independence from the two men, and from the capital (as she takes the train out of the city)? The film suggests that Liuda, a single mother, is leaving the urban, newly constructed Soviet society and is returning to the traditional world of the village. Julian Graffy has noted that the film was criticized by the press upon its release, as it didn't show the Party helping Liuda to stay in Moscow. According to Graffy, the film suggests that the new Socialist order is suffocating for women and is only built for men.[672] Liuda will have to find a job, perhaps for the first time in her life, so as to support herself and her baby. As she is shown leaving the capital, her future job quite possibly will be on a collective farm. However, it is fairly certain that this Soviet woman, transformed by motherhood and by her decision to gain independence, will continue to watch films whenever possible, including American films, as long as they remain in Soviet distribution. It is also clear that Liuda has not found her ideal of masculinity among the Soviet men. She longs for a 'Russian American', while neither Kolia nor Volodia is able to be one. The New Soviet Man, for Liuda, has to not only visually resemble her favourite American film star, but also to treat women as equals.

[672] Julian Graffy, commentary track, *Bed and Sofa*.

## II. American Models of New Femininity as Applied in Soviet Films in the 1920s

In representing the New Soviet Woman, the Bolshevik authorities and filmmakers had to counter the ideals of femininity presented in pre-revolutionary Russian films. According to Usenko's analysis of representations of male and female characters in pre-revolutionary Russian cinema, positive female protagonists were normally portrayed as passive; if a woman was shown as active, then she was either a fully negative, sinful character, or she had betrayed her nature and high morals, and had turned to evil-doing.[673] An ideal positive female character was usually round rather than skinny, caring and affectionate, humble, and graceful. Wearing men's clothes and a tendency to imitate male behavior was disapproved of.[674]

One of the leading pre-revolutionary Russian film actresses was Vera Kholodnaia. Her screen heroines were often infused with suffering virtue.[675] According to Oksana Bulgakova, Kholodnaia's characters appeared invariably in dramas of seduction and adultery, where they were tempted, abandoned, then passively surrendered to their fate and died.[676] Bulgakova notes the curious fact that the kind of film heroine most popular in pre-revolutionary Russian cinema was a woman who was the victim of someone else's sensuality.[677] This pessimism in

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[673] Usenko, 'Zhiznennye idealy i normy povedeniia russkikh', p. 41 and p. 51.
[674] Ibid., 48.
[675] Neia Zorkaia, *Na rubezhe stoletii (*Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), p. 292.
[676] Oksana Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema: The Metamorphoses of the Soviet Film Heroine', in *Red Women on the Silver Screen*, p. 150.
[677] Ibid.

portrayals of female characters went along with the general Russian predisposition for unhappy endings in films, noted by Yuri Tsivian.[678]

This, then, was the kind of filmic ideal of femininity that had to be countered in Soviet films with the new image of a woman that would correspond to the new ideals of Soviet femininity and its newly encouraged equality with and likeness to the new Soviet masculinity. However, throughout most of the 1920s, Soviet cinema offered few examples of the ideal Soviet femininity. While Soviet films in that decade tended to focus on representing the reality of women's experiences, rather than offering examples of new modes of behavior, it was the popular imported American films that presented Soviet female viewers with new alternatives to both pre-revolutionary Russian and early Soviet portrayals of film heroines. American cinema's dominance in popularity over domestically produced films has already been noted, as well as the fact that large numbers of cinemagoers in the 1920s were women.[679] Therefore, large numbers of Soviet women were exposed to American films in the first decade after the Revolution.

In the United States, the concept of a 'new woman' meant, first of all, equality and economic as well as sexual independence.[680] American cinema provided a number of possible ways of representing new femininity. 'Serial queens' such as Pearl White and Helen Holmes provided the earliest cinematic examples of a daring, dynamic, and physically fit modern woman. The 'little girl' characters of Mary Pickford were always joyful, dynamic and optimistic (exemplifying, in her own

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[678] Yuri Tsivian, 'Early Russian Cinema: Some Observations', in *Inside the Film Factory*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, pp. 7-30, (p.7).
[679] See p. 188, n. 660 above.
[680] See, for example, Higashi, 'The New Woman and Consumer Culture'.

country, the 'new personality' that opposed the old Victorian values).[681] Mary Pickford herself was perceived as an independent businesswoman, responsible for her own financial fortunes; her personal example, as opposed to her star image, provided a model of modern, independent and successful femininity. Priscilla Dean created female characters on the screen that were daring, courageous, and at home in the modern, urban landscapes. Clara Bow and Mae Murray presented the new image of the flapper. Barbara la Marr was famous in Soviet Russia for her erotically appealing vamp heroines.[682]

Soviet cinema of the 1920s reflected the search for the ideal cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman, and presented a number of approaches to constructing this image. Several of these approaches were based on some of the models of modern femininity present in imported American films and listed above; others were affected by the broader Americanization discourse of the decade.

**i. 'Masculine Femininity' / *Travesti***

One of the approaches to constructing the new Soviet cinematic heroine was to model her image on the female protagonists of early American adventure serials, which were very popular with Russian audiences on the eve of the Revolution and for several years after 1917, as we have seen in Chapter 1.[683] In Russia, the daring and athletic fitness of the 'serial queens' Pearl White, Cleo Madison, Kathleen Williams, Helen Holmes, and Ruth Roland were perceived as unusual in a woman. Strong and

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[681] May, 'Screening Out the Past', pp. 119-146.
[682] For more on Soviet reception of these and other American female stars, including Paula Negri, Dorothy Dalton, Gloria Swanson, Greta Garbo, and Lillian Gish, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 201 and pp. 213-221.
[683] See p. 41 above.

active female protagonists were perceived as possessing a certain degree of masculinity. The appeal of such heroines and the stunts they performed played a part in spreading the new ideal of 'masculine' femininity across Russia.

This kind of film heroine, a 'girl sportsman' who is 'healthy, strong, beautiful, [and] is able to do anything' and who is 'not afraid of any dangers' because 'she can shoot well and has strong fists'[684] was admired by Soviet film critics. They encouraged filmmakers to create such heroines in new Soviet films. The term *travesti*[685] was sometimes applied to female heroines with what were seen as male character traits. In an article with the same name, a Soviet critic defined *travesti* as 'a woman appearing as a man, a woman with a masculine soul and character.'[686] It is noteworthy that this definition consists of two parts, one focusing on females in male roles, the other on female characters with masculine character traits. The second type of heroine fitted perfectly the goals of the Bolshevik version of women's emancipation, with its emphasis on equality in joining the Soviet work force. The author of the article emphasized that early American detective and adventure serials with active female protagonists were not as concerned with the heroine's costume (which was most often a dress and where the actresses only rarely wore trousers)[687] as

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[684] K. Oganesov, *Pirl' Uait* (Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926), p. 6.
[685] The Oxford Dictionary defines 'en travesti' as 'dressed as a member of the opposite sex, especially for a theatrical role.' The word originates from the French *travestir*, 'dressed in disguise.' See *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary,* Tenth Edition, ed. by Judy Pearsall (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 476.
[686] Iu.B., 'Travesti', *Sovietskii ekran*, 8/18 (1925) [no page numeration].
[687] The tendency in American films to show female heroines wearing trousers grew by the 1920s. For example, Dorothy Dalton played a female sailor and wore trousers in *Moran of the Lady Letty* (1922), imported into Russia in 1924 and shown under the names *Doch' moria, Doch' piratov* and *Korabl' piratov*. See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 260.

with her 'masculine traits of character', 'masculine logic', and 'masculine deeds'.[688] As examples of actresses who had included elements of the *travesti* type in various roles, the author listed several American (only American) film actresses of the 1910s and 1920s, including Pearl White, Ruth Roland, Dorothy Dalton, and 'even' Mary Pickford. It is important to note that no examples of European actresses were given in the article, which means that American film actresses were the best examples of 'masculine' femininity for the critic. He went on to praise the fact that 'in our revolutionary adventure films, in the portrayals of our heroine, the image of a woman-hero, a woman with a man's soul, character and deeds is already beginning to form.'[689]

Another American film actress praised by Soviet critics in the 1920s for her 'masculine' traits was Priscilla Dean. She was not considered a major star in America, but was quite popular in Soviet Russia.[690] According to the catalogue of imported American films compiled by Elena Kartseva, eleven films with Priscilla Dean were imported and shown in Russia in the 1920s, which is only one less than the number of imported films with Mary Pickford, the most admired American female star.[691] Vera Kuznetsova has pointed out that Dean 'destroyed order, she was a

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[688] Iu.B. 'Travesti' [no page numeration].
[689] Ibid.
[690] Similarly, Rudolph Valentino, a film star greatly admired by female audiences in the U.S., was never all that popular in Russia. See Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 213. This is explained by Richard Dyer's argument about star images being polysemic: they can be interpreted differently by different audiences. See Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979), p. 3; Robert C. Allen, 'The Role of the Star in Film History [Joan Crawford]', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Brady and Marshall Cohen, 2nd edn (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 606-619 (p. 607).
[691] Figures based on Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', pp. 212-325. For the full list of Priscilla Dean features in Soviet distribution, see Appendix, List 3 below.

hooligan who broke down the old forms of life', which is what Soviet film critics liked about her, along with her unique type of femininity that was more masculine.[692] In a brochure dedicated to Dean and published in 1927, K. Oganesov argued that Dean's popularity was partially the result of the link between her characters and the mysterious urban landscapes, which, for the critic, evoked memories of the stories by the American writer O. Henry. Oganesov wrote,

> Priscilla Dean has won over her viewers by responding to their attraction to the romanticism of the city. She embodies those images that one reads about a lot, but which one hardly ever meets; the images that arouse curiosity due to their enigma.[693]

Having noted this enigmatic urban quality of Dean's screen heroines, Oganesov went on to emphasize and praise her modern, 'masculine' femininity:

> [S]he is an actress of rather masculine traits. That is indeed so. She always plays women who possess purely masculine power of will, and who, when necessary, are not afraid of any obstacles, any dangers.[694]

In Tod Browning's *Outside the Law* (USA, 1920), for example, distributed in Russia under the title *Chernyi Bill'*,[695] Dean plays Molly Madden, the daughter of a man who was previously a part of the city's underworld but has decided to change his ways, until he is framed by his nemesis, the criminal mastermind Black Mike Sylva (Lon Chaney). When her father is arrested for a crime he didn't commit, Molly turns back to the life of crime and escapes Sylva while taking stolen jewels with her, accompanied by Bill, Sylva's assistant turned Molly's lover. Dean portrayed Molly as a powerful, dominating woman with willpower stronger than her male accomplice's. Her willful gaze, courage, and ability to fight Chaney's evil character were

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[692] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zdevzy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 219.
[693] K. Oganesov, *Pristsilla Din* (Moscow: Kinopechat', 1927), p. 11.
[694] Ibi., p. 12.
[695] Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 321.

complemented, in the end of the film, by her decision to give up the life of crime for domesticity – a message that would have fitted the positive attitudes of the Soviet critics to Dean's screen image.

Even though Dean mainly played the parts of female thieves and 'women of the night', nevertheless the character traits of her heroines, including the ones listed by Oganesov, were admired in Russia. Kuznetsova points out that this kind of 'masculine' femininity was encouraged in Soviet Russia at the time.[696] I have not located evidence of Soviet female spectators' responses to Dean's characters; what can be said with certainty is that her star image was liked and encouraged by the Soviet critics. However, the fact that Soviet distributors bought nearly as many films with Dean as with Mary Pickford, suggests that Dean's films were well attended (although it is not clear whether it was female or male audiences, or both, who enjoyed these films the most).

Among the earliest Soviet examples of 'masculine femininity' (a 'woman with a man's soul, character and deeds'[697] and a 'girl-sportsman'[698]) was Duniasha, played by Sofia Zhoseffi in Perestiani's Civil War adventure film *Little Red Devils* and its sequels.[699] Other early examples of strong, dynamic, and physically fit women in Soviet films of the 1920s appear most often in films dedicated to portrayals of contemporary Soviet reality (the *novyi byt* films). Such are the young, fit swimmer

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[696] Kuznetsova,'Amerikanskie zdevzy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 219.
[697] Iu.B. 'Travesti' [no page numeration].
[698] Oganesov, *Pirl' Uait*, p. 6.
[699] Yuri Tsivian notes the likeness of the costumes worn by Sofia Zhoseffi, who played Duniasha in *Little Red Devils*, and by Natalia Glan who played Miss Mend, as well as the costume of Oktiabrina in Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Adventures of Oktiabrina* (1924), to the costumes of Pearl White's and Helen Holmes' characters. See Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', p. 43. However, the likeness was not limited to costumes, but was also manifested in character traits. For a full discussion of *Little Red Devils*, see p. 130 above.

Mariia Ivanova in Komarov's comedy *Kukla s millionami* [*The Doll with the Millions*] (1928); the village girl Natasha who gallops on a horse to save her beloved aviator in Gardin's *Chetyre i piat'* [*Four and Five*] (1924), as well as Vera Popova's character in the film *Kirpichiki* [*Little Bricks*], noted by the critic Abramov in his article mentioned above.[700]

The most literal example of the influence of Pearl White on Soviet heroine portrayals is Perestiani's film *Savur-mogila* (1926), the first sequel to *Little Red Devils*. At the beginning of this sequel, Duniasha and her brother Mishka are shown watching the Pearl White film *House of Hate* (USA, 1918). Shots of the evil Makhno escaping from the Bolsheviks and setting a building on fire, in 'real life' outside of the film theatre, are intercut with shots from *House of Hate* on the screen, where a vicious fight takes place near a stormy sea, followed by shots of Mishka and Duniasha watching the film intensely. An intertitle announces, 'The birth of our own White and Moreno.'[701] The message of the filmmakers is clear: there is a parallel between life (the Civil War) and art (American adventure serials). As we have seen, in *Little Red Devils*, American literature inspired Mishka and Duniasha for their brave fight against the enemies of the Bolsheviks. Now, in *Savur-mogila*, it is American cinema that further prepares the Soviet teenagers to act heroically when surrounded by the dangers of the Civil War. In order to deal with new reality and the Russian version of modernity (the struggle for the new Soviet state), the Russian

[700] Abramov, 'Zhenshchina novoi zemli', p. 6.

[701] Antonio Moreno acted alongside Pearl White in *House of Hate*. *Savur-mogila* suggests his widespread popularity in Soviet Russia; Kuznetsova mentions him among the American film stars popular in Russia in the 1920s. See Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 206. Mishka's identification with Moreno, alongside Duniasha's identification with Pearl White, was most likely a device that made it easier for the filmmakers to convey both the male and the female identification with American stars of adventure films.

teenagers have to 'become', or acquire the skills and qualities of the athletic, brave and heroic American film stars. Duniasha, the New Soviet Woman, needs to 'become' Pearl White. The sequence ends with an intertitle that announces, 'The ones who entered [the cinema] were Duniasha and Mishka, but the ones who left were Pearl and Antonio. (Contagion).' [702] Thus, the rest of the film is colored by this suggestion of transformation of identity, of both the female and the male characters, even though no further reference to American film stars is made. In the case of Duniasha, the New Soviet Woman, a specific link is established within the film narrative between her newly acquired traits of dynamism, energy, physical agility, and heroic courage, and the traits of the female star of the American adventure film that Duniasha watches prior to engaging in the fight for the Soviet cause.

**ii. 'Russian American' New Soviet Woman**

Another approach to constructing the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman reflected the influence of the broader Americanization discourse of the 1920s, including the 'Russian American' trope used in the press to describe exemplary workers. Similarly to representations of male 'Russian Americans' such as Vasil' in Dovzhenko's *Earth*, Soviet cinematic representations of female 'Russian Americans', efficient and resourceful workers who possessed mastery over modern technology,

[702] The function of the word 'contagion' (*zaraza*), added at the end of the intertitle, was to appease those Soviet critics who were arguing against 'bourgeois' films on Soviet screens. (See, for example, Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 61.) Nowhere in the film was there any reference to the influence of American film stars on Soviet teenagers being negative.

appeared soon after the Party Conference on Cinema Affairs in 1928, and around the time when the use of this phrase was restricted in the press.[703]

While being traditionally viewed as a male quality, mastery over technology was also perceived in the Russian cultural imagination as an 'American' trait, because America was deeply associated with technological skills and achievements. Thus, while in the context of American culture, heroines such as the ones portrayed by Pearl White became modern, in part, through attaining equality with men by acquiring the 'masculine' quality of mastery over technology (and hence, the potential for economic independence),[704] in the context of Soviet culture female film characters who excelled at driving automobiles (or tractors) and at operating machinery became modern through attaining equality with men not only by mastering technology, but also by simultaneously acquiring 'American' traits. Thus, their 'Americanness', while not openly referred to as such within film diegeses or by film critics, was an important element of their new modern identity, their Sovietness.

One of the earliest examples of Soviet filmic representation of the New Soviet Woman as a 'Russian American' and a master of technology, equal to if not better than men in her skills and resourcefulness, is Marfa Lapkina in Eisenstein's *Old and New* [*Staroe i novoe*] (a.k.a. *The General Line* [*General'naia liniia*]) (1929). This heroine combines the 'American' traits of a 'Russian American' worker with the 'masculine femininity' of the strong, dynamic and technologically knowledgeable modern American 'serial queens'.

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[703] See Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message'.
[704] For example, Pearl White was praised for being an 'excellent driver' who, if necessary, 'can drive an airplane or a train.' See Oganesov, *Pirl' Uait*, p. 6.

In the beginning of the film, Marfa is a poor peasant, unable to plough her small plot of land for the lack of a horse. What Marfa does have, however, is enthusiasm and initiative, the 'pioneering spirit' that is behind the major transformations of the 'old' into the 'new' throughout the film. Having endured enough hardships trying to make ends meet on her own, Marfa passionately suggests that the peasants in her village unite. When a young Komsomol member and the village agronomist initiate the vote to create the future *kolkhoz*, she is the first one to vote in its favor.

The film displays tensions between the old and the new tendencies in the cinematic treatment of female characters, thus almost documenting the process of 'birth' of the new type. From the beginning of the narrative, Marfa possesses the qualities of the new type of Soviet woman – performing great feats of labor, displaying work enthusiasm, while concealing her sexuality and erotic appeal[705] – and yet throughout the film she is still assisted by men, representatives of the Party and the proletariat.

As the film progresses, Marfa turns from a passionate but passive participant of the changes into an active agent of change. When members of the new *kolkhoz* decide to share the money that has been earned with the help of the cream separator, Marfa angrily demands that they return the money, which the collective has been saving to buy a bull. But the peasants, guided by greed, attack Marfa and begin to

[705] Maia Turovskaia has noted how Soviet female stars of the 1930s such as Liubov' Orlova had to conceal their sexuality. See Maia Turovskaia, 'Woman and the "Woman Question" in the USSR', in *Red Women on the Silver Screen*, p. 139. Marfa Lapkina's case is more ambiguous vis-à-vis representation of her sexuality, as the film contains the famous separator scene that includes suggestive sexual imagery. Female sexuality was much more subdued in later Soviet films, and we shall return to the question of 'simplicity' versus sexuality in representations of the New Soviet Woman.

beat her. The beating is stopped by the agronomist who comes into the room just in time to save Marfa and the money. Triumphant, Marfa falls asleep hugging the box that contains the collective treasure, as she dreams of a bull that is to bring more prosperity to the *kolkhoz*. In this scene, Marfa is not the one who brings about success; however, it is her enthusiasm and individual motivation that is behind the initial attempt to protect the collectively earned money.

Her dream turns into reality when Marfa, accompanied by a male peasant, comes to a large model collective farm to buy the young bull Fomka.[706] Marfa is turning from an active participant into an agent of change, as buying the bull will bring about an important change in the *kolkhoz* affairs and prosperity.

When the time comes to collect the crops, the peasants realize how helpful it would be to have a tractor, to replace the tedious hand labour. However, when the *kolkhoz* sends a request for a tractor to the city, the urban bureaucrats initially reject it. At this point, the energetic Marfa steps in and decides to make the long journey to the city, in order to resolve the issue.

Her resourcefulness prompts Marfa to secure the help of a male worker, and the two storm into the bureaucrat's office, where the worker bangs his fists on the table demanding that the bureaucrat follow the 'general line' of the Party. The demand is so effective that an approval is signed at once. While it is the worker, and not Marfa, who brings about the immediate success, it is Marfa's enthusiasm, resourcefulness, and drive for success that are responsible for the final result. She is the 'manager' of the situation, delegating the execution of the task to the male

[706] Eisenstein used a document published by the American Department of Agriculture as an inspiration for the modern farm buildings. See Lucita Squier, 'Eizenshtein edet v Ameriky', p. 151.

worker, while being the primary agent of major changes that will be brought about in her *kolkhoz* with the help of the newly secured technology.

When the tractor reaches the *kolkhoz*, something immediately breaks within the all-powerful machine. While fixing it, the driver needs a rag and reaches for the small red flag fixed on top of the tractor. In a symbolic close-up, Marfa's hand stops the hand of the driver and saves the flag, fixed right above the inscription on the tractor that reads 'Fordson', the name that signifies the presence of American inspiration behind the technological changes taking place in the *kolkhoz*. This fictional scene documents an historical fact: during the 1920s, virtually all tractors within the Soviet Union were manufactured in the United States, with the Ford Motor Company's Fordsons accounting for 85 percent of the total number of tractors on the Soviet soil in 1927.[707] Tractors played an important role in the process of collectivization, virtually uprooting the traditional ways of working the land and inspiring awe (and at times, fear) in rural inhabitants.[708] A tractor became the symbol of modernization and 'Americanness': because most of the tractors were imported from that country, they turned into a kind of metonym for the 'American' qualities of those who had manufactured them.

When the machine is finally fixed, Marfa, whose participation has been vital to the success of the operation, sits next to the driver, triumphantly showing the local peasants the impressive power of the tractor's engine. Soon, we see many tractors

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[707] Ball, *Imagining America*, p. 74.

[708] Hellebust points out that people living outside America, including the Soviets, saw modern industry and technology as the essence of America more than the Americans themselves. He also suggests that, among European countries, only the Soviet discourse of the 1920s and 1930s displayed confidence in the possibility of a total cultural change in which technology would play an ultimately positive role. See Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, pp. 103-105.

ploughing the *kolkhoz* land and destroying the fences separating individual land plots (as if the original machine had offspring just like the bull Fomka). Marfa's persistent innovative spirit is perceptible behind all these changes. Had Marfa been the traditional peasant woman, and not the active 'Russian American', none of these changes would have come about.

In the last scene, which David Bordwell believes creates a pastiche of Chaplin's *A Woman of Paris* (USA, 1923),[709] the urban driver now turned into a peasant is sitting in a horse-drawn hay cart, while a tractor drives by. The tractor driver in goggles turns out to be – Marfa! She is smiling confidently, and as she takes off her goggles we realize that she is wearing makeup, for the first time in the film. Marfa's new, urbanized image, with its mixture of feminine and masculine features, represents the New Soviet Woman – innovative, energetic, and successful, the one who drives a tractor like a man and at the same time is attractive in an urban way, a 'fully-formed heroine with clear convictions, a developed character, with a mature appearance, [and] a carefully moulded figure',[710] to use Oksana Bulgakova's description of the new ideal *femina sovietica*. The various future incarnations of Marfa the New Soviet Woman and the female master of technology are to be encountered again in the Soviet films of the 1930s and 1940s, especially in Ivan Pyriev's *kolkhoz* comedies. She comes back as Mariana Bazhan in Pyriev's *The Tractor Drivers* [*Traktoristy*] (1939), and in *The Cossacks of the Kuban'* [*Kubanskie Kazaki*] (1949) she becomes the head of a *kolkhoz*, Galina Peresvetova.

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[709] David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 101.
[710] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 157.

Marfa's 'masculine' command of technology and, thus, the modern aspect of her femininity, are reminiscent of the screen heroines portrayed by Pearl White, admired by Eisenstein a decade earlier,[711] who were the first screen heroines able to drive automobiles and even fly airplanes if necessary. Created more than a decade later than the Pearl White serials, Marfa Lapkina is in fact much more of a 'modern heroine' than Pearl White's characters: she displays deeper equality with men in her ability to be an agent of change and to not only use, but show others how to use new technology. Marfa may not be the author of all modernizing ideas in the film, but she is the driving force behind the realization of these ideas. Her modern femininity is even closer to the male ideal of the time: once inspired by an idea, she never gives up – rather like Fairbanks' Ahmed in *The Thief of Bagdad*, whose motto is 'whatever I want, I get!'. Without her energy and pioneering spirit, the *kolkhoz* would not have been organized and developed, and the peasants around her would not have changed their old practices. Without her will power, the red flag on the Fordson tractor would have been turned into a rag. Instead, the Soviet flag is saved and the tractor is fixed. A combination, in the key close-up of the film, of the Soviet flag, a woman's willful hand protecting it, and the inscription indicating the American brand of the tractor are part of a unified message: Marfa is one of those exemplary peasants whom the Soviet newspapers of the 1920s called 'Russian Americans'. She and others like her are bringing about the 'new world', while shaping the new Soviet identity, especially that of the New Soviet Woman, combining heroic masculine and 'American' qualities.

[711] See earlier discussion in Chapter 1 above, p. 41.

### iii. Mary Pickford

Another ideal of the new femininity that was applied in constructing the image of the new Soviet cinematic heroine was the one presented by Russia's favorite female American star of the 1920s, Mary Pickford. In her films, Pickford portrayed vibrant young girls who stood up for the weak and unfortunate, who were optimistic and joyful (her star image often included a Chaplinesque comic element), and who often came from poor backgrounds but succeeded in transforming themselves and achieving success within Cinderella-like narratives. At least twelve of Pickford's films were imported into and widely shown in Russia from 1923 until 1929, some remaining in circulation as late as 1932.[712] The 'victorious innocence',[713] joyfulness and sweet simplicity of Pickford's star image were very similar to the 'poignant simplicity' that Soviet critics in the 1920s wanted to see in the new Soviet cinematic heroines.[714]

Her popularity in Russia coincided with the waning of her recognition in America. The peak of Pickford's popularity in the U.S. was between 1914 and 1920, the year when she, along with Fairbanks (her second husband), Chaplin, and Griffith formed United Artists.[715] During that time period, Pickford was known as 'America's Sweetheart' and enjoyed unprecedented fame, becoming the most popular star in film history; she was frequently voted 'the most popular girl in the world' in American newspaper polls.[716] Lary May has argued that, while playing the roles of 'sweet little

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[712] For the list of Mary Pickford's films in Soviet distribution, see Appendix, List 2 below.
[713] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 151.
[714] See, for example, the above-mentioned article by Abramov, 'Zhenshchina novoi zemli', p. 6, where the author praised the female face that was 'poignantly simple' and the ideal of the new heroine that was joyful and 'without hysterics'.
[715] May, *Screening Out The Past*, pp. 119-146.
[716] Ibid., p. 119.

girls' who outwardly appeared to be no different than the old Victorian ideals of femininity (especially in her earlier films directed by D.W. Griffith), Pickford personally did not fit that visual image at all. According to May, in her later films (and it was these that were mainly shown in Russia[717]),

> [Pickford] played a female role which made a fundamental break from the past, and embodied many of the aspirations of women in her generation. [...] Over and over again, she portrayed women striving to be economically free and morally emancipated.[718]

In Soviet Russia, film critics had to take into account the great admiration on behalf of the viewers for Pickford's talent. Kuznetsova demonstrates Soviet critics' cautious attitude to Pickford's popularity among the general public. She quotes M. Bronnikov, S. Mogul'skii, and N. Iakovlev, authors of brochures about Mary Pickford printed in 1926 and 1927, all of whom tended to highlight the 'sweet, bourgeois' ideology and 'ideologically unacceptable' characterizations of Pickford's heroines that were at the same time combined with great acting professionalism.[719]

Analysis of the popular publication *Sovetskii ekran*, aimed at the general public, reveals that critics before 1926 tended to express more positive attitudes towards Pickford. While paying lip service to the official anti-capitalist ideology, authors of this publication described Pickford as a highly talented performer. For example, an article entitled 'Meri Pikford' in a 1925 issue of *Sovetskii ekran* offered some weak criticism of Pickford's acting abilities that was contradicted by the main body of the article, including its conclusion.[720] The anonymous author started out by

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[717] See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', pp. 212-325.
[718] May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 119.
[719] M. Bronnikov, *Etiudy o tvorchestve Meri Pikford* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 6; *Meri Pikford: biograficheskii ocherk s posleslovieм i pod redaktsiei N.M. Iakovleva* (Moscow, 1927), p. 15.
[720] A.A., 'Meri Pikford', *Sovetskii ekran*, 6/16 (1925), [no page numeration].

describing Pickford's popularity in America as the 'queen of the screen' and 'the largest of stars in the skies of the United States'. He confirmed Pickford's American popularity by stating that she

> is indeed a truly great actress. An actress with great perception, with subtlety and sharpness of psychological approach, with a rare sense of humour in her characterizations, with the clarity [...], precision and depth of characterization.[721]

The author went on to offer his main criticism: he argued that Pickford failed in portraying the Spanish temperament in *Rosita* (USA, 1923). He proceeded to contradict his own criticism, finishing the article with the following conclusion: 'However, even given the most critical approach, one cannot but give in to the charm of this "star", her artistic grace and her subtle, delicate style.'[722]

Even an article written in 1926 (the year when the foreign importation policy changed, and the numbers of articles dedicated to American cinema sharply reduced),[723] entitled 'Enough of Mary Pickford!', was not as deeply critical as the title suggested. Criticizing the 'hysterics' of the public who went wild during Pickford and Fairbanks' visit to Moscow in 1926, the author, Vlad. Korolevich, admitted that Pickford was a 'great master'.[724] His main critique of the actress was the fact that in her screen characters Pickford 'always mechanically copies the previous version'. He criticized the actress for focusing on narratives where 'happiness follows unhappiness, which in the American way is equal to the formula that, after poverty comes wealth.'[725] Korolevich called Pickford the 'slave of her American consumer' who demands of her the same 'fairy tale about the angelic bourgeois Cinderella who

[721] Ibid.
[722] Ibid.
[723] See p. 55 above.
[724] Vlad. Korolevich, 'Dovol'no Meri Pikford!', *Sovetskii ekran*, 32 (1926), p. 13.
[725] Ibid.

finds her wealthy prince.'[726] A very similar Cinderella-like plot, however, was successfully used in Grigorii Alexandrov's Soviet musical comedies of the 1930s, where the plot structure, while not emphasizing the end goal of 'wealth', nevertheless included the basic end result of 'success' of the main heroine, also a simple, virtuous, youthful and optimistic girl with an angelic voice in place of angelic curls. We shall return to the analysis of Liubov' Orlova's heroines and their similarities with Pickford's characters later in this chapter.[727]

It is possible that Korolevich's article was in part influenced by the annoyance of the Party leadership at the royal[728] reception of Pickford and Fairbanks by the multi-thousand crowds of Soviet fans. Interestingly, the same issue of *Sovetskii ekran* had the large portrait and autograph of Douglas Fairbanks on its cover, and the preceding issue was dedicated 'to the arrival of Mary Pickford.'[729] Thus, the criticism of the article contradicted the overall spirit of admiration for the female star, expressed in the Soviet publication, which reflected the attitude of the general public.

Two years earlier, Al. Voznesensky pointed out a completely different side of Pickford's work, the fact that some of her films are 'imbued with the ideology of social and moral revolutionism.'[730] This was a very positive assessment, which highlighted the affinity of some of Pickford's democratic and rebellious characters (such as Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* (USA, 1919)) with the Soviet class ideology and revolutionary ethos.

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[726] Korolevich, 'Dovol'no Meri Pikford!', p. 13.
[727] See p. 221 below.
[728] Korolevich, 'Dovol'no Meri Pikford!', p. 13.
[729] *Sovetskii ekran*, 31 (1926).
[730] Voznesenskii, 'Iskusstvo ekrana', p. 138.

Commissar of Enlightenment Lunacharskii himself clarified the 'Party line' in regards to Pickford when he wrote, in 1928:

> No matter how much people laugh at the excessive adoration of film stars of both sexes, one cannot deny [...] that the touching performance of Mary Pickford in *Suds* is a true jewel of dramatic art.[731]

There is evidence that some Soviet filmmakers greatly admired Pickford for her talent. Lev Kuleshov considered her one of the 'great teachers' of Soviet filmmakers.[732] In his article about the work of Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Gerasimov wrote that in the 1920s Pickford and Fairbanks 'were an exceptional authority for the young [Soviet] filmmakers.'[733] However, few avant-garde filmmakers apart from Kuleshov and Gerasimov openly wrote about positive attitudes towards Pickford. Kuznetsova has argued that the Soviet avant-garde was cautious in its attitudes to 'America's Sweetheart', and has quoted Eisenstein's famous article 'Montage of Attractions' where the director called Pickford's work ideologically unacceptable.[734] Viktor Shklovsky, in his book about Eisenstein, quoted the director as ironically explaining to Pickford the love of the Russian audiences towards her because she was 'able to cry so well and to seem happy.'[735]

Kuznetsova points out that Eisenstein changed his officially pronounced negative attitude towards Pickford after having met her and Fairbanks in Moscow in 1926, when he felt proud that the American stars admired *Battleship Potemkin*

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[731] Anatolii Lunacharskii, *Kino na Zapade i u nas* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1928), p. 4.
[732] Kuleshov, 'Konrad Veidt', p. 93.
[733] Sergei Gerasimov, 'Slovo o Pudovkine', in Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), p. 14.
[734] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montazh attraktsionov', in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1964), p. 118.
[735] Shklovskii, *Eizenshtein* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1976), p. 133.

[*Bronenosets Potemkin*] (1925).[736] Nevertheless, in the 1930s, after his stay in Hollywood, Eisenstein referred to Pickford as a 'not very attractive person' who combined her screen image of a naïve and simple young girl with being a 'tough *business woman* and one of the most splendid speculators on land and oil in California', in real life.[737] It is interesting to note the ideological correctness of Eisenstein's negative statement within the context of the Soviet rhetoric, while in the American culture at the time, 'a strong woman who took charge of her own career in a tough business run by competitive men'[738] was admired by contemporary women. Eisenstein appeared to disregard the recentness of women's equality with men in both countries, and disregarded the role of Pickford's star image in American women's struggle for emancipation,[739] as well as its role in the re-evaluation of Soviet female viewers' self-image and traditional roles. Other Soviet leftist artists, including the participants of LEF, denounced what they contemptuously called the 'Pickfordization' of Soviet cinema in the 1920s.[740]

Whatever the attitudes of the leftist filmmakers and artists towards Pickford, the Soviet public adored her unquestionably. Jay Leyda quoted an American journalist who observed in 1925, 'in the leading workers' club and a dozen other places Mary Pickford holds forth.[741] This observation testified to the fact that it was

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[736] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 200.
[737] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Rezhissura. Iskusstvo mizanstseny', in *Izbrannye sochineniia v shesti tomakh,* vol. 4 (Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1966), p. 332.
[738] Jeanine Basinger, *Silent Stars* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), p. 15.
[739] For more on Pickford as a role model for American women, see Lary May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 119.
[740] Richard Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults', in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Derek Spring, p. 76.
[741] Paxton Hibben, 'The Movies in Russia', *The Nation*, November 11, 1925. Quoted in Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 185.

not only the 'petty bourgeois' *nepman* public that admired Pickford's talents, but the working class viewers as well. The Soviet fans' adoration was expressed in the multi-thousand attendance of the arrival of Pickford and Fairbanks to Moscow in July, 1926, noted earlier. The crowds were captured on film and the footage included in Sergei Komarov's film *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* (1927).[742] The film satirized this adoration of Pickford (mainly by women), by showing crowds of female fans attacking Igor' Il'inskii's character Goga Palkin and ripping off pieces of his clothes, after he had been kissed by Mary (in a scene staged specifically for the film during Pickford and Fairbanks' visit). Mary's kiss transformed Goga's life from a simple and hapless movie theatre usher to a famous star. The Soviet fans' adoration is satirized in a scene where Goga's sweetheart, Dusia, tired of Goga's new fame, attaches an electrical cable to the door handle, which sends an electrical current through the long queue of female admirers, signifying the electrical current-like spread of crowd mentality.

In the scene where Goga is kissed by Pickford, Dusia is upset at first, but is immediately reprimanded by a female friend, 'Dura, eto zhe Meri! (Fool! It is Mary [who kissed him)!)' The connotation of this remark becomes clear upon considering the kind of emotional response that Pickford's screen characters evoked in the female viewers. Paula Marantz Cohen has noted the non-sexual nature of Pickford's screen persona. She has also quoted Alistair Cooke as calling Pickford 'the girl that every man wants for a sister.'[743] Thus, Pickford's female fans did not experience jealousy towards their favorite star. A fan's letter quoted in a recent analysis of Pickford's

[742] This film is also discussed in Chapter 1 above, vis-à-vis its relevance to the popularity of Douglas Fairbanks in Soviet Russia. See p. 114 above.
[743] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 144.

popularity stated that it would be hard to find a woman who would feel jealous of Mary Pickford.[744] The above-mentioned scene from *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* confirms that this was as true of Soviet female fans as it was of American ones. In fact, it was common for women to experience the feeling of love for the female star.

A short story in a 1926 issue of *Sovetskii ekran*, published a few months before Pickford and Fairbanks' arrival to Moscow, satirized such love on behalf of female fans. Its central character is a fictitious young Soviet girl, Klavdiia Kovaleva, who lives in a tiny one-room flat, works at a glass factory, and has one ideal, Mary Pickford, whose portrait she keeps 'where others keep a lit candle or have portraits of leaders of the Revolution.'[745] Klavdiia has a bookshelf where she keeps all the books about Pickford, and a great number of postcards with Pickford's photographs that are torn from repeated kissing. Klavdiia is 'in love with Mary Pickford' and, having learnt of her planned arrival to Moscow, writes her a letter where she says, "I love you so much, I adore you. You are a genius of an actress, you are a bright lighthouse in the blind seas of the everyday reality.'[746] Klavdiia's character, who signs the letter as 'a poor working girl', signifies numerous female Pickford fans in Soviet Russia and sheds light on their social status. The title of the story, 'The Standard', suggests the normalcy of such admiration of Pickford among young working Soviet women.

In her study of American audience identification with film stars, Jackie Stacey has pointed out that many of the heterosexual American female participants stated their love of the female film stars they admired in their youth. For example, one of

[744] Basinger, *Silent Stars*, p. 16.
[745] S. Gekht, 'Standart', *Sovetskii ekran*, 28 (1926), p. 6.
[746] Ibid.

Stacey's respondents, a Patricia Robinson, thus describes her adoration of Deanna Durbin:

> I think perhaps that it would be considered to be a bit of a giggle today, if a large number of women confessed to feeling love for a girl. Nobody seemed to question it then. Just in case; I have been married since 1948! Have two sons and a daughter, one grandchild.[747]

Love for a female star often led to a number of identificatory practices, among which Stacey lists pretending to be the star (mainly among children), resembling (which includes recognition of similarities between the star and the viewer), imitating (including replicating behaviour and activities, such as gestures, speech and star personalities), and copying (replicating appearances).[748] While there is not enough evidence, such as studies of female Soviet viewers in the 1920s, to confirm whether similar practices were prevalent among the Soviet audiences, it is likely that a number of them could have existed among the Soviet female fans of American stars such as Mary Pickford. We do have the evidence that many young Soviet male viewers wished to be as strong and brave as Douglas Fairbanks;[749] considering Pickford's equal popularity in Soviet Russia, it would be right to consider the possibility that women who admired her star image, wanted to emulate her qualities in some ways. While we lack evidence of direct emulation of Pickford's qualities on behalf of Soviet female viewers, further in this chapter we shall consider the emulation of these

[747] Stacey, 'Feminine Fascinations: A Question of Identification?', pp. 138-139.
[748] Jackie Stacey, 'Feminine Fascinations: Forms of Identification in Star-Audience Relations', in *The Film Studies Reader*, ed. by Joanne Hollows and others (London: Hodder Headline Group, 2000), pp. 147-154.
[749] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237.

qualities on the Soviet screen, in representations of the New Soviet Woman by the actress Liubov' Orlova.[750]

One early example of the new Soviet heroine in the 1920s that incorporated Pickfordian qualities of a little girl's liveliness and delicate simplicity, was Anna Sten's portrayal of Natasha Korosteleva, the main female protagonist of Boris Barnet's *A Girl with a Hatbox* [*Devushka s korobkoi*] (1927).[751] Natasha's wide-open eyes and the sweet simplicity of her heroine, a young, somewhat naïve woman who makes hats and sells them in a small shop in Moscow and decides to help a poor peasant student, is visually reminiscent of Pickford's portrayals of 'victorious innocence'.[752] Additionally, the actress Nina Li (Nina Popova) who played Natasha Gai in *Four and Five* was billed as 'the Russian Mary Pickford' in the 1920s press.[753]

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[750] Yet another type of the new cinematic heroine of the 1920s that reflected the influence of American cinema can be seen in films of the Soviet avant-garde directors. Aleksandra Khokhlova in the films of Lev Kuleshov and Elena Kuz'mina in the films of Kozintsev and Trauberg presented a new type of an eccentric heroine, whose control over her body reflected the Taylorist aesthetics, as well as the avant-garde's perception of Chaplin's 'mechanicity'. For a more in-depth discussion of eccentrism, Chaplin, and the Soviet avant-garde, see Chapter 2 above, p. 83. For more information on the 'anti-stars' of leftist cinema, Khokhlova and Kuz'mina, as well as the 'Soviet film beauties' Ol'ga Zhizneva, Vera Malinovskaia, Iuliia Solntseva and Nato Vachnadze, see Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', pp. 154-156 and pp 151-152.

[751] I am thankful to Neia Zorkaia for pointing out this similarity. For more information on other popular Soviet actresses and their roles in the 1920s, see Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', pp. 151-153.

[752] The film incorporated elements of Americanism on other levels (Boris Barnet having been a student of Kuleshov's), including the dynamism of its cutting, chases and fight scenes, as well as elements of slapstick comedy, evident in scenes such as the fight scene between Fogelev (Vladimir Fogel') and the husband of Madam Iren (P. Pol').

[753] I am grateful to Richard Taylor for this information.

## III. New Soviet Woman in Films of the 1930s and Early 1940s

As we have seen, Soviet cinema of the 1920s experimented with various models of femininity, several of them being inspired by models of modern femininity presented in imported American films, as well as by the broader Americanization discourse and the 'Russian American' trope. In the 1930s, the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman became much more defined. Socialist Realist films focusing on the 'glorified' female inhabitant of the Great Utopia presented the new Soviet female heroine that exemplified 'the beauty of simplicity' and 'exceptional ordinariness'.[754] According to Oksana Bulgakova, the change from the screen heroines of the 1920s to the new screen heroine of the 1930s was first defined by Ada Voitsik in Protazanov's *Forty First* [*Sorok pervyi*] (1927), who blended the 'plebian type of the 1920s' with 'the smooth beauty' of pre-revolutionary queens of the screen.[755] Bulgakova also argues that at the root of the new heroine of the 1930s was the fact that Soviet art now had to offer a visual demonstration of an ideal life, and therefore the simple, ordinary 'boy and girl next door' had to be transformed into ideal citizens on the screen.[756] The New Soviet Woman in films of the 1930s, according to Bulgakova, turned from the 'victim who had just woken up to her position', portrayed in films of the 1920s, to director of an enterprise or an accomplished shock worker – the new 'stereotype of womanhood'.[757]

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[754] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 156.
[755] Ibid.
[756] Ibid., p. 157.
[757] Ibid.

There was another factor, however, in the development of the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman. The change from the multiple models of Soviet femininity presented in films of the 1920s to the more unified model of the 1930s started to take place in the late 1920s, soon after the time when most foreign films were purged from Soviet screens and when open references to the positive value of Americanization were curtailed. While Soviet films of the 1920s presented a number of models of femininity that were either inspired by or contradicted by images of a modern woman presented in imported American films, Soviet cinema of the 1930s was free from competition of foreign films; with the Party control over the ideological side of Soviet cinema tightening after the end of NEP, filmmakers had to present a more unified version of what the New Soviet Woman was to be like.

The Cultural Revolution put an end to the exposure of the Soviet audiences to the multiplicity of voices and opinions, expressed in various artistic and literary movements, as well as foreign films. But admiration for American film stars, including Mary Pickford, could not and did not disappear overnight from the memory of Soviet film viewers, as well as film directors and critics,[758] nor indeed did the 'Russian American' trope. Taking into consideration the recent widespread admiration of Mary Pickford, it was preferable, in the 1930s, to focus the admiration of the female audiences on a new, Soviet rather than American female star.[759]

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[758] While the Soviet viewers were deprived of the ability to watch imported films in the 1930s, Stalin continued to enjoy watching American films in his private screening rooms, and was reported to have made sure that leading Soviet filmmakers were able to watch these films as well. See Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Phoenix, 2004), pp. 524-531.

[759] For the explanation of the application of the term 'star' to Stalinist cinema, see Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults', in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*.

The unified model of Soviet femininity in the 1930s was a result of a decade-long process of searching for the best cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman, and echoed the critics' call, exemplified in Abramov's article, written and 1926 and quoted above, for a 'simple and robust' girl from the factory, 'a Komsomol member, joyful, a peasant woman [...] simply a girl from the new life, from the new land.'[760] Furthermore, it was constructed, I suggest, using the three main American-inspired models from the 1920s discussed above: the Pickfordian type of femininity, the 'masculine' femininity of a Pearl White-like 'girl-sportsman', and the traits of a 'Russian American' efficient master of technology. While I do not argue that these American models of femininity fully accounted for the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman in the 1930s, I do suggest that these models from the previous decade played an important role in the process, a role that has been largely overlooked by scholars in the past. Soviet female stars such as Liubov' Orlova and Marina Ladynina, and other popular film actresses of the decade such as Ianina Zheimo[761]

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[760] Abramov, 'Zhenshchina novoi zemli', p. 6.

[761] Ianina Zheimo started her film career in Kozintsev and Trauberg's Factory of the Eccentric Actor: she played in *Mishki protiv Iudenicha* [*Mishki against Iudenich*] (1925), *Chertovo koleso* [*Devil's Wheel*] (1926), *Shinel'* [*The Overcoat*] (1926), *S.V.D.* (1927), and *Novyi Babylon* [*The New Babylon*] (1929). In the 1930s, Zheimo created a screen image of a little Soviet schoolgirl, named Lenochka, in a series of films for children, including *Wake Up Lenochka* [*Razbudite Lenochku*] (1934), and *Lenochka and the Grapes* [*Lenochka i vinograd*] (1936). Other films where Zheimo played a little girl included *Friends* [*Podrugi*] (1935) and *A Soldier Returned from the Front* [*Shel soldat s fronta*] (1939). Zheimo, like Pickford, was repeatedly cast in parts as a young girl, including a ten-year-old character Asia-Pugovitsa in *Podrugi* at the time when the actress was twenty-six years of age. Zheimo's screen image of the lively little school girl Lenochka visually resembled Pickford's Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* due to her small height and two vivacious plaits, while her character traits of great optimism and energy alluded to similar traits of Pickford's character. Furthermore, Zheimo famously played Cinderella in the first Soviet film adaptation of the French fairy tale, *Cinderella* [*Zolushka*] (1947) (as opposed to Orlova's 'Soviet Cinderellas'), the fact that demonstrates a further link between Zheimo and the 'American Sweetheart' Mary Pickford, who, in addition to the many Cinderella-like narratives, also played the part of Cinderella in the 1914 American adaptation of the fairy-tale. See Aleksandr Karaganov, *Grigorii Kozintsev: Ot 'Tsaria Maksimiliana' do 'Korolia Lira'* (Moscow: Materik, 2003); I.L. Dolinskii, 'Razvitie

and Tamara Makarova, often portayed female characters that were constructed using exemplary 'American' qualities, such as the ones embodied by Mary Pickford, Pearl White and other female American film stars in the 1910s and 1920s. Additionally, Orlova and Zheimo possessed visual similarities to the Pickfordian image. In the following pages, I will examine the case of Liubov' Orlova, the leading female 'red star'[762] of the 1930s; I will analyze the New Soviet Woman image created by Orlova, including the 'American' traits incorporated in that image.[763]

### i. Liubov' Orlova: The Pickfordian Model of Femininity and the 'Russian American' Ideal

Orlova was the wife of Grigorii Alexandrov, Eisenstein's former assistant and director of popular Soviet musical comedies. She first appeared on the screen in a small role in Boris Iurtsev's comedy *Aliona's Love* [*Liubov' Aliony*] in 1934,[764] two years after the last feature with Mary Pickford was taken out of Soviet distribution.[765] After appearing in another film, *Petersburg Night* [*Peterburgskaia Noch'*] (1934), Orlova was discovered by Alexandrov and acquired acclaim thanks to the role of Aniuta in Alexandrov's first musical comedy, *Happy Guys* [*Veselye rebiata*] (1934).

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detskogo kino', in *Ocherki istorii sovetskogo kino*, vol. 2, *1935-1945* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1959), pp. 494-544 (pp. 520-523); Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 199.

[762] Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes, and Personality Cults', p. 76.

[763] For more information on the heroines of Marina Ladynina and Tamara Makarova, see Bulgakova, "The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', pp. 159-160; Richard Taylor, 'Singing on the Steppes for Stalin: Ivan Pyr'ev and the Kolkhoz Musical in Soviet Cinema', *Slavic Review*, 58.1 (1999), pp. 143-159; Maia Turovskaia, 'I.A. Pyr'ev i ego muzykal'nye komedii: K probleme zhanra', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 1 (1988), pp. 111-146.

[764] *Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog*, vol. 1, p. 492.

[765] According to Kartseva, Pickford's *Rosita* (1923) continued to be shown in Soviet Russia until 1932. See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 294.

Orlova's screen image has been described by a Soviet film critic as the 'ideal woman of the 1930s, the *femina sovietica*.'[766]

Oksana Bulgakova has suggested that Mary Pickford's popularity in the Soviet Union was due to her 'unerotic teenage image, which was similar to the type of prettiness being promoted in the Soviet cinema.' Bulgakova went on to state that Liubov' Orlova was Soviet cinema's direct response to Mary Pickford.[767] While stating that Orlova, like Pickford, played 'Cinderella' types that appeared in distinctively Soviet versions of the story, Bulgakova stops short of further analyzing the similarities between Pickford's and Orlova's cinematic images of femininity.[768] I am going to analyze the similarity of traits exhibited by several of Pickford's and Orlova's screen heroines, in order to further our understanding of the role of Pickford and the 'American' traits in the newly constructed cinematic image of exemplary Soviet femininity, presented in the Socialist Realist musical comedies of the 1930s.

Pickford's star image has been described by her biographers as 'a picturesque urban guttersnipe', representing 'angels with dirty faces' who by the end of a film were usually rewarded for their virtue by either attracting the love of a rich man or discovering that they had wealthy relatives.[769] The image of the spunky 'Little Mary' was democratic and funny, and has been compared to the Little Tramp of Charles Chaplin.[770] Soviet critics have emphasized the fact that a large number of Pickford's films were structured around a Cinderella-like character from the lower classes, who,

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[766] Sergei Nikolaevich, 'Poslednii seans, ili sud'ba beloi zhenshchiny v SSSR', *Ogonek*, 4 (1992), p. 27. Quoted in Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults', p. 77.
[767] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 158.
[768] Ibid.
[769] Eileen Whitfield, *Pickford: The Woman Who Made Hollywood* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1997), p. 123
[770] Basinger, *Silent Stars*, p. 16.

after some suffering, achieved happiness by marrying a wealthy and loving man.[771] Pickford's 'Cinderella' was usually a simple, poor, and somewhat naïve young girl, who was at the same time extraordinarily joyful and optimistic, and whose optimism played an important part in her transformation into a successful and often famous woman. Such, for example, was Pickford's Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* (USA, 1919) and Polyanna in the film of the same name made in 1920 (both of these films were shown in the Soviet Union).

Orlova's New Soviet Woman characters (Aniuta in *Happy Guys* (1934), Strelka in *Volga-Volga* (1938), and Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path* [*Svetlyi put'*] (1940)) were Pickford-like 'Cinderellas' who, like a number of Pickford's characters, including Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* (one of the first roles in which Pickford became famous in Russia),[772] went through a transformation that brought them from poverty to fame and individual success.

From a simple and naïve orphan girl (her characteristically naïve facial expression with wide open eyes is best seen in the scene where Judy and her little friend accidentally drink some alcohol),[773] Pickford's Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* turns into a self-made woman, who, in an act of resourcefulness, decides to write a book about her childhood in an orphanage, in order to pay back her benefactor, Mr. Jarvis

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[771] Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', p. 199; *Mary Pickford* (Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926), p. 9; V. Kolodiazhnaia, 'Mary Pickford', in *Zvezdy nemogo kino,* ed. by Vladimir Vesterman (Moscow: Ast Zebra E, 2008), p. 61.

[772] *Daddy-Long-Legs* was one of the first Pickford films imported into Soviet Russia. See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 241.

[773] In the scene, Judy and the little boy are punished by the orphanage mistress and have to remain without food, sitting on a bench outdoors. By chance, a thief steals a bag nearby and throws two packages over the nearby wall (the wall of the orphanage), as he is not interested in food. The two packages land in front of Judy and the boy, who eat and drink its contents. As the liquid contains alcohol, the two become intoxicated, and so is a little dog, who licks the remaining liquid off the ground. As the dog performs a comical 'dance', Judy looks at her, with a characteristically wide-eyed, naïve look, in disbelief.

Prendleton, for having financed her education. Judy transforms herself into a female writer and thus a new, modern woman who, thanks to her newly acquired fame, is accepted in high society. The film suggests that Judy is already a successful and financially independent woman by the time the mutual love between her and Mr. Prendleton is revealed. In addition to her resourcefulness, signified by her decision to write a book, another trait that helps Judy in her transformation is her joyfulness and optimism in the face of various difficulties. It is this trait that sets Judy apart from her peers in the orphanage, so that the orphanage mistress recommends her to Mr. Prendleton as the one whose education he should finance. Thus, Judy's resourcefulness and optimism characterize her as a modern 'Cinderella' who, unlike the original prototype in the French fairy tale, is an active agent of her own transformation. The end goal of this transformation is upward mobility, fame and individual success. Unlike the original Cinderella, Pickford's Judy is a modern, self-made woman; it is her own resourcefulness and optimism, rather than the Fairy Godmother, that helps her achieve her transformation.

In her real life, Pickford was known as a highly successful and self-made businesswoman who made the Horatio Alger code of success viable for women, just as Douglas Fairbanks, her second husband, promoted it for modern American men.[774] In Soviet Russia, part of Pickford's fame stemmed from her being a woman of economic independence and moral autonomy, while at the same time enjoying the

[774] May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 119.

luxury of financial success.[775] Thus, to Soviet viewers, Pickford was an example of self-made success both personally and through her screen characters, such as Judy.

The end goal of the Cinderella-like transformation of Orlova's heroines in *Happy Guys*, *Volga-Volga*, and *The Shining Path* is also upward mobility, fame and individual success, even if that success is draped in the Socialist 'clothing' of being achieved for collective good. An additional parallel to the traits of Pickford's Judy, as well as her other characters,[776] is the joyful optimism and resourcefulness of Orlova's heroines, and the role these traits play in their transformation.

Aniuta in *Happy Guys* bears a visual similarity to Pickford's Judy: she has the same little girl's plaits, signifying her young age as well as that age's simplicity and sincerity. The first time we see Aniuta is during the famous opening tracking shot where Kostia Potekhin (Leonid Utesov) walks through the village and sings 'The March of the Happy Guys'. Svetlana Boym has described this song as a 'mass song about the importance of mass singing' and one of the 'passwords for alternative communities' within Stalinist culture.[777] What is most important for the present thesis, however, is the definition offered within the lyrics of the song of one of the important qualities of the New Soviet Man: '[T]he one who walks through life with a song, will never perish.'[778] In other words, singing, an act that signifies an optimistic approach to life, has a function of preserving life under any circumstances. As traditional Russian songs have been most often linked with expressing states of mind such as

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[775] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 237. Soviet women were familiar with Pickford's business activities as early as 1923 from publications in film magazines, such as 'Stranichka is dnevnika Mary Pickford', *Kino*, 3/7 (April-May 1923), p. 12.

[776] For example, Pickford's Polyanna in the film of the same name is a joyful little girl whose optimism in any situation is the central trait of her characterization.

[777] Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 110.

[778] 'И тот кто, с песней по жизни шагает,|Тот никогда и нигде не пропадет.'

sadness and melancholy, this approach to a song is culturally different. One can perceive a link with the optimistic and self-reliant American culture in the words of this song. Thus, Kostia Potekhin is singing about the optimistic 'Russian Americans' who also happen to love music (including American-inspired jazz), such as Kostia himself and his future colleagues in the jazz band 'Friendship'. Aniuta, who watches Kostia as he marches through the village, is attracted to Kostia's optimistic song and approach to life.

In another scene, Aniuta's young and energetic spirit is conveyed through an allusion to Pickford's *Daddy-Long-Legs*: just like Judy in the orphanage, Aniuta, still wearing plaits, slides down the banisters of a staircase, before she sets the table for her mistresses' dinner party. In her portrayals of young, energetic girls, Pickford was one of the leading exponents of the youth cult for female American audiences in the 1910s and 1920s, just as Douglas Fairbanks was for male viewers.[779] The youth cult, and especially physical culture in the form of parades of young Soviet athletes, became a large part of Soviet culture during the 1930s. The athletic and agile women in Soviet films of the 1920s (especially in the adventure genre), inspired by the dynamic American 'serial queens', were precursors to Orlova's youthful and athletic heroines. The physically fit Aniuta who is able, in a slapstick comedy scene, to ride a large and unruly bull out of the house while sitting backwards; Strelka who cycles, dances, swims and walks long distances; and Tania Morozova who works from dawn to dusk, swiftly moving among hundreds of machines, reflect the Soviet version of

[779] May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 124.

the youth cult in the Stalinist context.[780] Pickford's youthful *joie-de-vivre*, love of life and optimism, admired by the Soviet audiences in the 1920s and perceived as a quality exemplified first and foremost by American stars, was 'picked up' and continued its existence on the screen in the heroines of Orlova in the 1930s, when films with Pickford were no longer available to the Soviet viewers. Orlova's young and optimistic characters were a complete opposite of the suffering female protagonists in pre-revolutionary Russian films, as well as many of female characters in the *novyi byt* films of the 1920s, such as Liuda in *Bed and Sofa*.

In *Happy Guys*, Aniuta, who describes herself as the one who doesn't drink alcohol, is forced to drink some vodka so as to warm up during a rainstorm. When she enters the Bolshoi Theatre, intoxicated, a close-up reveals the simplicity and 'girlish' naïvete of her facial expression, reminiscent of the expression of Pickford as Judy in the scene in *Daddy-Long-Legs* where she and her small friend accidentally become intoxicated after drinking alcohol. Both Pickford's and Orlova's characters have been described as non-sexual. We have already noted this quality in the case of Pickford's screen persona.[781] This apparent lack of sexual appeal was a quality of Pickford's image (as opposed to the 'vamps' portrayed in American films of the 1920s by such actresses as, for example, Theda Bara) that was pleasing to the Soviet critics in the 1920s, who called for 'simple, almost not pretty' faces in women representing the New Soviet Woman.[782] Stalin himself, the main 'Kremlin Censor' of

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[780] Vladimir Nil'sen, Alexandrov's director of photography on *Happy Guys, Circus,* and *Volga-Volga*, found it challenging to film Orlova in close-ups (especially during the filming of *Volga-Volga*), so as to make her look younger than her real age. See Arkadii Bernshtein, 'Gollivud bez kheppi-enda: Sud'ba i tvorchestvo Vladimira Nil'sena', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 60 (2002), pp. 213-259 (p. 234).
[781] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 144.
[782] Abramov, 'Zhenshchina novoi zemli', p. 6.

cinema,[783] disliked displays of sexuality on the screen,[784] which had major repercussions for representations of gender relations in Soviet cinema for decades to come. This was another reason why Pickford presented a good model for portrayals of ideal Soviet women on the screen; Orlova's representations of such an ideal woman included this aspect of Pickford's childish asexuality.[785] Maia Turovskaia has described Orlova as continually having to 'conceal her healthy sexuality under the guise of a simpleton.'[786] Richard Taylor has quoted the Russian film critic Sergei Nikolaevich who compared Orlova to Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo.[787] While this description might apply to one particular heroine of Orlova, Marion Dixon in *Circus* [*Tsirk*] (1936), the comparison does not apply to the rest of her characters in Alexandrov's comedies, who were largely nonsexual (apart from the last scene in *Happy Guys*, which will be discussed shortly). Nevertheless, Orlova's screen heroines possessed a delicate angelic quality, best expressed in her voice and in what was seen as her angelic beauty.[788] This elegant asexual charm was a perfect trait for a Soviet screen heroine who was able to play the roles of a lover within the context of Soviet fairy-tales and at the same time not annoy the 'Kremlin Censor'.[789] This kind

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[783] See Grigorii Mariamov, *Kremlevskii tsenzor: Stalin smotrit kino* (Moscow, 1992).
[784] Solomon Volkov, 'Stalin i Shostakovich: Sluchai "Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda"', *Znamia*, 8.10 (2004), http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/2004/8/vol.10/html [accessed on September 25, 2009].
[785] The facial expressions of Orlova's wide-eyed heroines, such as, for example, Strelka in Volga-Volga, sometimes had a wide-eyed look very similar to Pickford's.
[786] Turovskaia, 'Woman and the "Woman Question" in the USSR', in *Red Women on the Silver Screen*, pp. 133-140, (p. 139).
[787] Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes, and Personality Cults,' p. 77.
[788] For example, the great Soviet actress Faina Ranevskaia described Orlova as having a special elegance (*gratsiia*) and 'amazing charm' (*divnaia prelest'*). See *Liubov' Orlova: sait-portret,* http://orlovamuseum.narod.ru [accessed 9 June 2009].
[789] Volkov, 'Stalin i Shostakovich'.

of charm was of a similar quality to 'Little Mary's', with her angelic curls and 'sisterly' personality.

Just as Judy's 'rags-to-riches' story is a modern woman's journey towards individual success and fame, so are the stories of Aniuta in *Happy Guys*, Strelka in *Volga-Volga*, and Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path*. Bulgakova has argued that the Cinderella narratives of Orlova's heroines in Alexandrov's musical comedies are distinctly Soviet, in that the Soviet heroine is not striving towards marrying her Prince Charming or towards social mobility.[790] However, upon closer analysis, it becomes clear that the opposite is true.

In *Happy Guys*, Aniuta expresses her aspirations for success in the words of a song, 'One wants to know the future and wants to achieve happiness.'[791] The film's narrative progresses along three main axes: from the rural to the urban setting, from peasant origins to the higher social status of musicians (who often were members of the intelligentsia), and from being an unknown Russian 'little man' and woman to becoming a successful foreign-like star. The film opens by drawing a parallel, through a series of titles, between Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and Buster Keaton, on the one hand, and Utesov and Orlova, on the other. By including the names of the Soviet actors after the American actors' names, the film creates a link between American and Soviet cinema within one filmic structure, and acknowledges the popularity of American stars among Soviet audiences. While the list of American stars does not include Pickford, the reference to Chaplin, Lloyd and Keaton

[790] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 159 and p. 161. Bulgakova indicates that upward social mobility was 'absent from the consciousness of the heroines' and 'went unnoticed by the critics'.

[791] 'И хочешь, знать что ждет впереди, | И хочется счастья добиться.'

nevertheless endows Utesov and Orlova with the legacy of highly popular Hollywood actors, and gives them credibility as the new Soviet 'red stars'.[792] Read against the progression of the narrative, the above words from Aniuta's song can be interpreted as her dream of attaining the 'good life' and the success of American stars.

The Cinderella-like transformation takes place in the last scene of the film, when, through a series of close-ups and medium shots that dissolve one into another,[793] Aniuta is transformed from the poor and self-conscious Russian servant girl into a confident, sexy, successful foreign-looking star. Arguably, this transformation takes place only within Aniuta's imagination – after all, in this scene she is intoxicated by vodka. Just as in the beginning of the film Kostia was twice mistaken for a foreign musician, Aniuta now fashions herself to be (mis-)taken for a foreign singer. The performance is accompanied by a jazz band – something unheard of for the classical stage of the Bolshoi Theatre. Jazz as a musical style came to Soviet Russia from America, and underwent stages of first being encouraged, then prohibited, and once again briefly encouraged in the early thirties.[794] Aniuta's performance with a jazz band on the stage of the Bolshoi underlines her implied 'Americanness'.

Once Aniuta is transformed, her costume changing from the ridiculous-looking attire made up of a torn blanket and a lampshade into a slightly grotesque outfit of a stage diva, she confidently sings the song about happiness. As Kostia joins her, the song turns into a love song. Aniuta's second dream comes true: Kostia

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[792] See Taylor, 'Red Stars, Positive Heroes, and Personality Cults'.
[793] The transition to the last, most 'star-like' medium shot is a cut rather than a dissolve.
[794] For more information on jazz in the Soviet Union, see Ball, *Imagining America*, p. 96 and p. 111.

forgets Elena and reciprocates Aniuta's love. As they sing together, they do not appear at all to be the peasants they had once been.

The refined song of love and happiness turns into a scene of rather crazy dancing, with the jazz band, still wearing bruises and bandages from an earlier fight, joining in. The dance is a mix of: Western music-hall, with Orlova performing a dance resembling a can-can; an American musical comedy, with one of the musicians tap-dancing like Fred Astaire, while Orlova joins him akin to Ginger Rogers; a traditional Russian song-dance *chastushka*[795]; and a drunken tavern dance of the jazz musicians in their ragged, torn clothes. This last dance of the film has a carnivalesque quality and is tinged with sadness. It suggests that for a poor Soviet girl, attaining the success and happiness equal to that of American jazz musicians and film stars is only possible under the influence of alcohol – which makes Aniuta forget the reality of her torn clothes and umbrellas, and in her imagination reinvent herself as having achieved the fame of stage (and screen) stardom.[796]

Aniuta has achieved the Soviet version of 'stardom' among the mayhem created by male jazz musicians (jazz here signified modernity in music), who were busy destroying the art of the 'old world' from within the Bolshoi Theatre.[797] These men, bruised and in tatters from fighting in one of the previous scenes, have an uncanny visual quality: their bruises and ragged clothes, persistently emphasized

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[795] 'Тюх-тюх-тюх, | Разгорелся мой утюг, | [...] Все равно он будет мой, да никуда не денется.'

[796] As Leyda points out, this was Liubov' Orlova's second film role, and it established her as the first recognized 'star' of Soviet cinema. Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 308.

[797] Bolshoi Theatre was associated with the art of the old, tsarist Russia, rejected by the leftist artists and filmmakers in the 1920s. Read in this light, the scene of mayhem on the stage of the Bolshoi in *Happy Guys* continues this leftist trend of the 1920s and resembles the visual destruction, through montage, of churches and palaces in Eisenstein's *October* (1928) or, though split-screen, of the Bolshoi itself in Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929).

within the last quarter of the film, seem to parody the 'maimed' New Soviet Man,[798] as well as signifying degradation and poverty within the Soviet society, on one hand, and hinting at the concealed reality of the Stalinist labor camps (as the tattered musicians resemble prisoners), on the other. Read on this subtextual level, the male prisoners of Stalinist reality in *Happy Guys* attempt to forget their condition through performing the music of the 'land of freedom', while the New Soviet Woman, who in reality is drunk and is also wearing rags, imagines herself turning from a Soviet Cinderella into a sexy Marlene Dietrich-like star. The film was a unique and subtle parody of Socialist Realism, with its call to portray 'reality in its revolutionary development': life as it was, was in sharp contrast to Aniuta's dream of American-like stardom, success and fame.[799]

In *Circus* (1936), made two years after *Happy Guys*, Orlova's heroine Marion Dixon undergoes a transformation which can be seen as the opposite to Aniuta's: Marion starts as an American star (this time, a star of the circus) but is persecuted at home in America for having a black baby and comes to the USSR, where she finds a tolerant home for herself and her child, as well as her true love, the Superman-like Soviet stunt artist Ivan Martynov (Sergei Stoliarov) who becomes her partner and thus helps develop her professional career in the Soviet context. The transformation from an American to a Soviet star underlines the theme of Soviet actors and

[798] On maimed masculinity of the New Soviet Man, see Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*.

[799] In addition to the subversive messages in *Happy Guys* mentioned above, the male protagonist, Kostia Potekhin, is the opposite of the 'American' energetic and self-confident Fairbanks-like hero, and instead is more Keatonesque and Chaplinesque in his comic haplessness. The film practically lacks 'Sovietness'. Apart from Kostia's and Aniuta's peasant origins, everything in the film's narrative speaks of the 'other' life, for which both characters long. No wonder this film was highly criticized by the 'proletarians' at the First Writers Congress: perhaps they sensed its underlying 'bourgeois' aspirations. In fact, it is surprising that it was not banned.

filmmakers reinventing themselves to be equal to, and better than American film stars and directors, within the context of the new task given in the 1930s by the Stalinist slogan to 'catch up with and surpass America' (*dognat' i peregnat' Ameriku*). Even though official rhetoric of the time emphasized the importance of the collective over the individual, the film suggested that stardom, fame and professional success, as well as individual happiness for oneself and one's child, were still an important part of the end goal of the main heroine's transformation.[800]

In *Volga-Volga* (1938), Orlova's heroine Dunia Petrova, or Strelka, is again a Soviet 'Cinderella' who transforms into a star. Like Pickford's Judy and other characters played by 'Little Mary', the wide-eyed and charming Strelka, who is dynamic and optimistic in an American way, is striving towards and achieves individual success and fame – even if the film deliberately tries to represent her fame as drowning in the collective, when her song about the river Volga is appropriated by the masses of people (they pick up the pieces of paper with Strelka's music written on them, lost in the storm and made 'accessible to the millions' by the Volga itself). Nevertheless, it is Strelka who, after a long journey to Moscow, is finally found among the myriads of other 'Dunia Petrovas' (the characteristically Russian first and last name underlying her belonging to the collective of talented and optimistic New Soviet Women throughout the country). It is Strelka who is individually honoured on the big stage in Moscow. It takes a great effort, including a long journey across the country; resourcefulness in trying to persuade the bureaucrat Byvalov; never-ending optimism, expressed in her singing; and energy in competing with her male

[800] For a further discussion of *Circus*, see Chapter 4 below, p. 257. Also, see Moira Ratchford, '*Circus* of 1936: Ideology and Entertainment Under the Big Top', in *Inside Soviet Film Satire*.

counterpart. However, Strelka succeeds in overcoming the obstacles of bureaucracy, gender stereotyping, and Russia's geography, and achieves her goal. Thus, another one of Orlova's Soviet Cinderellas is a high achiever, a resourceful and optimistic 'Russian American'.

In Alexandrov's last Cinderella-like musical, *The Shining Path* (1940), Orlova played Tania Morozova, the ultimate Soviet 'Cinderella', who turns from an illiterate peasant girl into a female hero, an exemplary Stakhanovite 'shock worker'.[801] Petr Vail', the Russian journalist and critic, recently described this film as a 'cult film [...] because using it, one can build one's life and choose one's model of worldview and behavior.'[802] The New Soviet Woman representation in this film warrants closer analysis.

**ii. Orlova as the New Soviet Woman in *The Shining Path* (1940)**

The film repeatedly presents parallels between its own plot and the traditional Cinderella story.[803] The main heroine is called 'Tania *Zolushka*' (Tania Cinderella) in the opening credits. The Cinderella story is summarized within the diegesis by the male protagonist, engineer Lebedev, who explains to Tania (and the viewers) her

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[801] The term 'Stakhanovite' comes from the name of Aleksei Stakhanov, a worker who broke the record in coal mining in August 1935, and became a praised example to other workers. The term 'shock worker' (*udarnik*) was used since the 1920s to describe workers who over-fulfilled their work assignments. See Stephen Kotkin, 'Coercion and Identity: Workers' Lives in Stalin's Showcase City', in *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity*, ed. by Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 282; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941,* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 40.

[802] Petr Vail', '"Svetlyi put'": Petr Vail' o fil'me', in *TV Kul'tura*, http://www.tvkultura.ru/news.html?id=115216&tid=3442&cid=4604 [accessed 15 June 2009].

[803] The original title of the film was *Zolushka (Cinderella)* but Stalin disliked it and suggested the title *Svetlyi put'*. See Anatolii Volkov, 'Veselye rebiata', in *Rossiiskii illiuzion* (Moscow: Materik, 2003), p. 128.

resemblance to Cinderella. While repeatedly presenting parallels between Tania's journey and the Cinderella fairy tale, the film narrative also emphasizes the difference between the two stories and the supremacy of the Soviet fairy tale over the traditional one (one of the songs at the end of the film claims that what used to seem like a fairy tale-like dream of the future, has already been achieved in the glorious Soviet present).[804]

There are a number of parallels between Tania's character and Pickford's Judy, in addition to her Cinderella-like transformation.[805] Orlova starts out portraying Tania as a young and lively girl with two plaits, similar both to Pickford's Judy and to her own portrayal of Aniuta in *Happy Guys*. Like Judy, Tania brims with optimism and is able to stand up for herself. Also like Judy, Tania strives for and achieves fame, success, and upward mobility within the context of Soviet society, changing from a young lively girl into a self-made modern woman. However, the film contains a much deeper link with American culture than the level of resemblances between its main heroine and the characters portrayed by Mary Pickford. Orlova's characters were far from simply being imitations of Mary Pickford; they did, however, draw an important inspiration from Pickford's portrayals of the young modern woman. More importantly, the character of Tania, the ultimate New Soviet Woman in *The Shining Path*, contains vivid evidence of the continued admiration for the positive American

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[804] 'Все то, что было песней | О чем мы грезили и что любили, | Стало еще чудесней | В живой сегодняшней советской были!'

[805] Pickford once played the role of Cinderella in a film of the same name, made in 1914. However, as we have already noted, a number of her other films, including *Daddy-Long-Legs*, were structured around a Cinderella-like plot. Dina Iordanova has also perceived the connection between Orlova and Pickford, stating, 'Originally fashioned after Marion Davies [...] Orlova can be best described to Western audiences as a cross between Mary Pickford [...] and Ginger Rogers (even though she looked like Marjorie Reynolds).' See Dina Iordanova, 'Lyubov Orlova: Stalinism's Shining Star', *Senses of Cinema*, 23 (2002), http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/23/orlova.html [accessed 15 June 2009].

traits, signified by the 'Russian American' metaphor of the 1920s. Tania is, in fact, a female 'Russian American', the efficient, optimistic and resourceful woman worker.

As we have already seen, the term 'Americanization' was often used as a metaphor for modernization in the 1920s. According to American observers who visited Russia during that decade, for the Russians 'America meant to work steadily and efficiently, with economy of materials and of energy, but also with daring inventiveness and a readiness to depart from routine and bureaucratism.'[806] People who worked in that way were referred to as 'Russian Americans'. In *The Shining Path*, Tania Morozova represents a perfect example of a woman who works in the way described in the above quotation. While the metaphor was no longer used in the 1930s, and open admiration of American efficiency and technology was replaced with Stalin's competitive formula 'to catch up with and surpass America', screen images of exemplary Soviet citizens, such as Tania Morozova, confirmed the continued importance of the American inspiration and its role within the construction of Soviet culture.

The character of Tania Morozova was a clear example of what a new Soviet woman could and should be like. The new Soviet femininity represented by Orlova's heroine in this 1940 film drew upon the three main American-inspired models of femininity, namely the 'Russian American' ideal of the 1920s and the two main cinematic models, the Pickfordian femininity and the 'masculine' femininity of the agile and dynamic modern women in Pearl White serials and Priscilla Dean films that were still remembered by the filmmakers and the viewers. The film is a narrative of transformation into a modern Soviet woman, a female hero equal to men in her feats,

[806] Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', p. 382.

the driving force behind which are the dream of self-made individual success and American-inspired mentality of hard work and efficiency.

In the film, Tania undergoes a series of transformations, or stepping stones to her ultimate fame and happiness. She starts out as a young, uneducated peasant girl who is an energetic, hard-working servant of a refined and lazy NEP woman. Visually, Tania is characterized by a traditional peasant scarf on her head and soot on her nose, from cleaning a samovar.

In the opening scene, Tania wakes up to the sounds of the radio transmission of a sports exercise program from Moscow. As the voice on the radio invites the listeners to follow a set of exercises, Tania performs her morning chores of starting up a samovar, peeling potatoes, and warming a bottle of milk for her mistress' baby. The rhythm of Tania's life and work in a small town is structured according to the energetic, urban and dynamic rhythm sent from the country's center. As the voice on the radio suggests to 'work with your hands more energetically', Tania displays feats of efficiency, quickly peeling potatoes and throwing the peeled ones into the pot, using a well-organized system with Chaplinesque comic and endearing inventiveness[807]: she presses on a mechanism that opens the cover on the pot, throws the peeled potatoes into it, and throws the peelings into the rubbish bin, without having to get up, and thus working quickly and efficiently.

The radio transmission that encouraged all Soviet citizens to follow a set of morning exercises, reflected the physical culture movement of the 1930s, which was

[807] The scene is reminiscent of Chaplin's scene in *The Kid* (USA, 1921) where Chaplin invents a mechanism whereupon the baby can feed itself from a hanging kettle while Chaplin can do other chores.

in part inspired by the dynamism of American culture in the 1920s.[808] The transmission connects the centre and the periphery, where Tania lives, thanks to modern radio technology.[809] The radio transmits the new, modern rhythm of dynamism, which first reached Moscow from America in the 1920s. Now, Moscow transmits this rhythm into the far away rural corners of the country. Thus, both the modern technology of radio and the modern movement of physical culture, with their roots in American culture and technology of the 1920s, are at the basis of Tania's energy and efficiency. The rhythm of modernity becomes Tania's own rhythm, and remains the driving force behind her transformation into the ultimate exemplary New Soviet Woman by the end of the film. Tania is, in essence, a 'Russian American' from the very start of the film. The opportunities presented to her throughout the film only help bring forward and refine those traits that she already possesses.

After Tania meets the young, handsome and urban-looking engineer Lebedev (Evgenii Samoilov), she falls in love with him but feels below him in the level of her education and professional status. She soon resolves to change into a professional woman, so as to reach Lebedev's level. Interestingly, the very human motivation of

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[808] For a further discussion of this, see Chapter 4 below, p. 262.

[809] Radio had been successfully used by the Bolsheviks ever since they came to power; Lenin recognized the importance of radio for propaganda, and as early as the first few years after the revolution several powerful radio transmitters were built. However, as late as the 1930s, Russia was still technologically behind in terms of building radio receivers. Often, a receiver consisted of a dish made of black paper; in the countryside, these were usually located at the *selsovet* (the village Soviet). In the early and mid-1930s, Soviet engineers were sent to America to learn modern radio technology, at such places as the RCA. My grandfather, Efim Levitin, was a leading Soviet radio engineer who went to the U.S. in the mid-1930s in order to learn the latest radio lamp technology; he then wrote numerous books on the subject, which were used as textbooks at radio colleges. The film begins in 1930; statistically, in 1927 only 2 million Soviet citizens had access to the radio. While radio as a medium was not directly associated with America in the 1920s and 1930s, the latest radio technology indeed had that connotation. See 'Ocherk po istorii sovetskogo radioveshchaniia i televideniia', in *TV Museum*, http://tvmuseum.ru [accessed 16 June 2009]. Also, Leonid Levitin, in interview by the author, 16 June 2009.

reciprocated love is at the root of Tania's resolve for self-improvement – a motivation that might seem strange within the context of a didactic Socialist Realist film. In her resolve, Tania is assisted by the Soviet 'fairy godmother', a local female Party boss (secretary of the Party committee) Maria Sergeevna Pronina (Elena Tiapkina), who first helps Tania attend a school for adults (and thus overcome her illiteracy) and then get a job at a factory. Here, Tania becomes a part of the collective, but all the while is portrayed as different from the group of young women in her dorm, being a high achiever and spending all her time studying the textile machines, while other women sing love songs and make themselves look pretty. She also undergoes the first visual transformation, where she no longer wears the village headscarf.

Tania is portrayed as strong and brave, unusually so for a young woman (she is compared within the narrative to her frightened female friend): she stands up to and fights with a violent and threatening male saboteur who has attempted to set the factory on fire.

Tania's love for engineer Lebedev and the sense of inadequacy she experiences are underlined in the scene where Lebedev attempts to kiss her, but Tania runs away, crying, because 'he is an engineer, an educated person', whereas she is not. Her friend encourages her to strive for further self-improvement, suggesting that once Tania becomes a textile worker, everyone will respect her. In order to earn the love of Lebedev, Tania, the ever-striving achiever, has to become better than others in her work, and to achieve fame and success.

Having learned how to work the mechanical loom, Tania figures out the way to operate sixteen machines alone. She goes as far as writing to Molotov, secretary of the Soviet of People's Commissars, about her plan, and receives his blessing in a

form of a telegram from Moscow. The timing of her effort within the film narrative conveniently corresponds to the beginning of the Stakhanovite movement, as noted by Pronina in a conversation with the factory director. The next level of Tania's transformation is represented by the change of her look to incorporate more masculine features, signifying her growing equality with men and with Lebedev in particular: Tania now has short hair (an urban look, which, in America in the 1920s signified the emancipated woman).[810] Her manner of walking changes to become more confident, and she begins to lose her rural pronunciation (signifying a change from rural and traditionally feminine identity to an urban and more masculine one).

Tania's hard work, blessed by Molotov, is now recognized by the factory collective: she receives a *premiia*, a material reward in the form of a new apartment and various gifts. The material nature of Tania's reward is emphasized in the shot where the cart on which she drives to her new apartment is full to the brim with cases and plants. Thus, success is expressed in the form of material goods – a fact that may seem surprising within the context of Socialist ideology, and is more befitting a capitalist system and the 'American dream' of material success.

The new, successful and financially independent Tania sings a song that expresses her own awe at her new identity: '*Delovitaia, znamenitaia*! (Efficient, and famous!)' This phrase is key for Tania's characterization. The word *delovitaia* (efficient) signifies the connection with the 'Russian American' metaphor: as we have already noted, in 1925 Stalin defined an exemplary Soviet worker as one who

[810] May, *Screening Out the Past*, p. 126.

combines 'American efficiency' with 'Russian revolutionary sweep'.[811] Stalin also stated that 'American efficiency is that indomitable force which neither knows nor recognizes obstacles [...] and without which serious constructive work is impossible.'[812] The adjective *znamenitaia* (famous) signifies the importance of individual fame to the kind of a New Soviet Woman that Tania Morozova represents. It is reminiscent of the determination to become a *znamenitost'* (a famous star), parodied in Komarov's *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*, where Il'inskii's character Goga goes to unimaginable lengths in order to become famous and thus earn the love of his sweetheart. Similarly, Tania's delight in her newly fond fame suggests that it is important for Tania to become famous, in order to win the love of Lebedev. The joy Tania experiences from the knowledge of her individual fame is, again, surprising within a Soviet film that one would expect to promote the rhetoric of collectivism. It thus proves the fact that individual success and fame were an important part of the Stalinist culture of exemplary individuals, contrary to the mostly collectivist rhetoric of the 1920s, and more in line with the American cultural striving for individual success, known in Soviet Russia largely from imported American films. Read on that level, Tania's joy caused by her newly acquired fame is a self-referential comment on Orlova's own American-like stardom and the fame she has achieved, along with the unprecedented love of the Soviet viewers.

Tania's fame is further emphasized in the scenes that follow, where Tania becomes a record-breaking shock worker weaver, operating one hundred and fifty

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[811] I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1952), pp. 186-88.
[812] Joseph Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow, 1954), p. 111; Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6, p.188.

machines at the same time. Her portrait is now displayed on the walls of the factory, and stories about her feature in central Soviet newspapers. Her further visual transformation to a more masculine modern Soviet woman is signified by a change in her attire: while operating the machines, Tania wears overalls. Her work related enthusiasm is emphasized by Tania's shining gaze and optimistic smile. She is now equal to men, and is indeed better than the male director of the factory: Tania is the master of technology, able to single-handedly operate hundreds of machines, whereas in the previous scene the male director is filmed through a cutout of a woman's body. This device suggests that he is now in the female role, more passive and traditional, while Tania is in a more male role, an active agent of change at the factory, the initiator of record-breaking work, which also leads to breaking down old factory walls in order to accommodate so many mechanical looms in one hall.

Having succeeded in operating one hundred and fifty machines, Tania is becomes a hero of industrial labour. Her mastery over technology bears a strong American connotation, considering the recent introduction of American technology to Soviet Russia in the 1920s, as well as the link in some imported American films of the 1920s between technology and modern women such as Pearl White's characters. As she performs her feat, Tania breaks out into a song, which became an exceptionally popular Soviet song that was played during May Day parades and other Soviet holidays for decades to come:

> There are no obstacles for us either in the sea or on land,
> We are not afraid of ice or the clouds,
> We shall carry through the worlds and the centuries
> The flame of our souls and the flag of our country![813]

[813] 'Нам нет преград ни в море, ни на суше, | Нам не страшны ни льды, ни облака, | Пламя души своей, знамя страны своей | Мы пронесем через миры и века.'

Thus, while performing her feat of labour, Tania becomes equal with the male heroes of the Stalinist thirties, including the aviators and Arctic explorers (the gender difference between those who 'are not afraid of ice or the clouds' is blurred within the song). The song also includes the following phrase: '*Trud nash est' delo chesti, est' podvig doblesti i podvig slavy.*' ['Our labour is a matter of honour, it is a feat of glory and a feat of fame.'] Thus, the song further underlines the importance of individual 'feats of fame', reinforcing the rhetoric of fame and success as part of transformation into a modern Soviet citizen.

Tania's song proceeds to describe the Soviet dream as a beautiful but as of yet an unclear one, a dream that calls one foreward.[814] Upon comparison, the Soviet dream appears to be not so different from the American dream: individual fame and success, and material rewards that follow it, are elements of this dream, and are achieved through hard work, efficiency, resourcefulness, and an optimistic outlook on life.

As Tania completes her feat, she looks out the window that opens onto a fairy tale-like view of the factory where Tania works, followed by a shot of the sunrise, as Dunaevskii's music comes to a triumphant ending. The shot of the factory bears significance within the film's narrative: this is the place where Tania performs her feat and thus transforms into the exemplary New Soviet Woman. In the context of the 1930s and early 1940s, a factory also signified Tania's transformation from a peasant into the worker (known as *smychka*, or the connection between the two classes). However, two and a half decades earlier, the image of a factory had another meaning:

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[814] 'Мечта прекрасная, еще не ясная, уже зовет меня вперед.'

it signified modernity and, first and foremost, the model of modernity presented by America, with its technological advances. In 1913, Alexander Blok wrote a poem entitled 'New America' which included the following lines:

> There is no end to the way through the steppes,
> Steppe and wind, and wind – and suddenly
> There is the multilevel building of a factory,
> And towns of workers' huts.
> [...]
> The coal is moaning, and salt is white,
> And the iron ore is howling...
> That's the star of the New America
> Which is shining for me above the empty steppe.[815]

The multilevel building of the factory in Blok's poem is a signifier of Americanization of Russia, turning Russia into a 'new America' as early as 1913. The shot of the factory building in the scene of Tania's feat in *The Shining Path* evokes a similar reading of enthusiastic reception of modernity in the form of a factory.

While in theory, the Soviet utopia was supposed to be built on the principle of collectivism, the film places a lot more emphasis on individual achievement than on the collective goal. Even though the Party 'fairy godmother' Pronina does reprimand Tania for feeling discouraged due to another woman's higher achievement, in the end it is Tania's personal achievement (reminiscent in spirit of the Horatio Alger 'Strive and Succeed' philosophy preached by Douglas Fairbanks in the 1920s, and of the stories of personal success represented in Pickford's films such as *Daddy-Long-Legs*)

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[815] 'Путь степной - без конца, без исхода, | Степь, да ветер, да ветер, - и вдруг | Многоярусный корпус завода, | Города из рабочих лачуг [...] | Уголь стонет, и соль забелелась, | И железная воет руда... | То над степью пустой загорелась | Мне Америки новой звезда.' Aleksandr Blok, 'Novaia Amerika', http://blok.lit-info.ru/blok/stihi/rodina/015.htm [accessed 5 June 2009]. My translation. While some scholars see Blok's description of a factory as negative, it clearly has positive connotations of modernity arriving to the 'empty steppes' of Russia.

that brings her to the top of the Soviet social and professional life: Tania is invited to Moscow and receives the Order of Lenin, the highest reward for feats of labour. [816]

As Tania finds herself in Moscow, receiving the Order of Lenin at the Kremlin, she looks like a princess surrounded by the crystal chandeliers. A parallel is again drawn with the Cinderella story, only the Soviet 'Cinderella' doesn't meet her Prince Charming here yet; instead, she meets Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Mikhail Kalinin, who, off camera, presents her with the medal. More importantly, after the ceremony, while looking at herself in the mirror Tania meets a number of her doubles, including her own past identities (the peasant girl with a soot-covered face and the Stakhanovite master of technology in masculine overalls), as well as her future self who has a strange, undefined dream-like appearance (reminiscent of the 'beautiful dream, which is not clear yet' from an earlier song that Tania sings). This double is Tania's dreamed future identity. She combines traditional Russian features with modern traits associated with Americanness: she wears a traditional Russian headdress and looks somewhat like a *tsarevna* (princess) of Russian folk tales, and at the same time is able to drive a car and simultaneously operate an aeroplane (as the car, ZiS-101, which was modelled on the American Buick,[817] takes off the ground and essentially turns into an airplane).

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[816] In the scene mentioned above, Pronina raises her voice and orders Tania to get out of bed, asking, 'Who exactly are you producing the product for, for yourself personally or for the state?' Tania replies that it is indeed for the state. Pronina tells her she should be happy that another woman, too, is breaking records in the name of the state's goals. However, while Tania agrees to this verbally, she proceeds to challenge the other woman's record, and pledges to operate two hundred and forty machines. The spirit of competition and personal achievement wins over the rhetoric of feeling happy for the collective results.

[817] The Soviet automobile ZiS-101, manufactured at *Zavod imeni Stalina* (known as AMO until 1925) in the late 1930s, was based on the Buick prototype. See the official website of the factory, http://www.amo-zil.ru/test/history.htm [accessed 17 June 2011].

Oksana Bulgakova has argued that 'the young peasant woman of Russian folklore, the national ideal of beauty' played an important role in the creation of the new image of the ideal Soviet woman in the 1930s, who was strong, had a 'sporty figure', 'dimpled-cheeks and a contagious smile', as well as blonde hair and white teeth.[818] However, as I have illustrated, this new sporty and smiling ideal image owed more to the American film stars of the 1920s and the image of 'Russian Americans' of the Soviet press of that decade, than to the Russian national female ideal. The athleticism, optimism and self-reliant resourcefulness of the new Soviet woman had very little to do with the image of the traditional Russian peasant woman, usually portrayed as having a plump figure and often associated in the Russian cultural imagination with sad traditional folk songs. Tania's future self, represented as a Russian folk *tsarevna* who is able to drive a car and fly an airplane, contains references both to the traditional Russian folk culture and to the American technology and popular culture.

Looking in the mirror in the Kremlin, Tania sings of her dream of becoming an engineer and learning all possible sciences, indicating that her drive for success and for equal status with that of engineer Lebedev has not been exhausted by the high reward she has just received. Her continuous drive for individual success – which on a certain level signifies the competitive motivation to 'surpass and overcome America' characteristic of the entire country in the 1930s – is expressed in the words of a song, repeated throughout the film, 'Oh, I'm afraid I might fall behind, I'm afraid I might not make it!'[819]

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[818] Bulgakova, 'The Hydra of the Soviet Cinema', p. 157.
[819] 'Ой, боюсь, боюсь, отстану! Ой, боюсь, не долечу!'

Tania asks her ideal future self in the mirror to show her the future,[820] and the narrative switches to dream mode, in which Tania from the future invites Tania from the present to step into the mirror, and into the flying car. As we have already noted, Tania's dreamed future self is able to operate this American made car-airplane, akin to the admired heroines of Pearl White's serials shown in Russia in the early 1920s. In the early 1940s, this was still unusual, because few Russian women, and even not so many men, owned and were able to operate automobiles.[821]

In this dream mode, the two fly above the Kremlin and then above snow-covered mountains, while Tania greets the 'country of heroes, dreamers and scientists', in the words of Dunaevskii's song that became exceptionally popular throughout the following decades. Thus, in her dream, Tania has figuratively 'reached the top' and surpassed all the highest mountains, including the peaks of American efficiency and technological skills. In the context of the late 1930s and early 1940s, Tania the 'Russian American' embodies the Stalinist slogan 'to catch up with and surpass America'. In a way, she is more 'American' than Americans themselves.

While in flight, Tania's future double disappears and Tania moves into the driver's seat, representing the gradual temporal switch into the future. The borders between dream and reality remain blurred throughout the remaining part of the film, a device that perfectly embodies the Socialist Realist aesthetics of portraying reality as it 'ought to be'. As Tania's car circles around the statue of Worker and Peasant Woman by Vera Mukhina, the film narrative visually operates on an oneiric level, the level of dreams both personal and collective. As the car lands and Tania, who is now

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[820] 'Что было, я знаю, что будет, хотелось бы узнать!'

[821] Driving a car, let alone flying an aeroplane, was considered predominantly a man's skill well into the 1990s.

alone, is portrayed in an official black suit, she sings about the dreams of the past, which 'have now become even more miraculous in today's living Soviet reality.'[822] However, the visual images challenge the optimistic lyrics of the song: Tania the Soviet 'Cinderella' is still flying around in a car, an impossible proposition and a visual trope reminiscent of the Russian expression '*stroit' vozdushnye zamki*' (translated as 'to build castles in the air' and signifying improbable dreams of the future). In the context of high Stalinism and the recent Great Terror, the statement, given from a flying automobile, that Soviet reality has become 'even more miraculous' than the initial dream of the Soviet utopia, had an ironic connotation.

In the last scene, Tania, who is now an engineer and a member of the Supreme Soviet, as well as a famous textile worker, opens the new textile pavilion at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition. Thus, Tania has 'flown' as high as possible within the Soviet context. She has become an engineer and mastered technology and science, she has achieved fame and the highest political status and thus surpassed her male sweetheart and competitor, engineer Lebedev, as well as her Party 'godmother' Pronina. Now that she is far above him in social, political and professional status, Tania is finally able to admit her love for Lebedev. In essence, Orlova's heroine is a self-made modern woman with an American work ethic, who at the same time is someone whose drive for success and high achievement is, at the core, motivated by love for the male protagonist, the Soviet Prince Charming. Tania has to prove to herself that she is indeed a modern woman, equally if not more capable of difficult labour and professional achievements than the New Soviet Man of her choice.

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[822] 'Все то, что было песней | О чем мы грезили и что любили, | Стало еще чудесней | В живой сегодняшней советской были!'

In *The Shining Path,* Orlova's heroine, the ultimate version of Soviet 'Cinderella', becomes a New Soviet Woman - master of technology and famous hero equal to and better than men – thanks to her 'Russian American' traits of efficiency, energy, optimism, and resourcefulness, as well as her American-like drive for success. As we have seen, Douglas Fairbanks was the model of optimism and individual success for Soviet male film viewers in the 1920s, and Mary Pickford was the model of the same qualities for Soviet female viewers in that decade. In the 1930s and early 1940s, when the American role models were no longer present on Soviet screens, Liubov' Orlova, the female 'red star' of Alexandrov's musicals, became the domestic model of Soviet femininity. Orlova's portrayal of Tania Morozova represents the Soviet inspiration drawn from American culture through her similarity not just with Mary Pickford (which is present in Tania's Cinderella-like transformation, her simple, unerotic charm, the pattern of a lively young girl changing into a strong, self-reliant woman, and the achievement of individual success), but also with the 'Russian Americans' of the Soviet press discourse in the 1920s, as well as with the 'masculine' model of modern femininity presented by American cinema in the 1910s and 1920s.

# CHAPTER 4
# 'AMERICANIZED' NEW SOVIET MAN ON THE SCREEN IN THE 1930S AND EARLY 1940S

By the late 1920s, the term '*po-amerikanski*' ('in an American way') was more and more often replaced in the press by the term '*po-bol'shevistski*' ('in a Bolshevik way'). By the beginning of the 1930s, the trope 'Russian Americans' disappeared from public discourse.[823] However, the 'Americanness' of early Soviet culture continued to manifest itself through character traits of optimistic, fit and efficient heroes in Stalinist films of the late 1920s and 1930s.[824] The present chapter will focus on male film heroes of the 1930s and their concealed 'American' traits that had their roots in the dialogic cultural processes of the 1920s.

One of the outcomes of the Cultural Revolution was that America itself, with its modern technology and superior production methods, was openly praised less often. Representing America in the press as the 'class enemy' was further encouraged.[825] This tendency coincided with the advent of the Great Depression in the United States, which allowed the more fierce adepts of the Cultural Revolution to point out the weaknesses of America over its strengths.

Nevertheless, since the official recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States in 1933, the new Stalinist formula of 'catching up with and surpassing'

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[823] Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 243.
[824] 'Americanness' was also present in films of the 1930s on the stylistic level (especially in musical comedies of Alexandrov and in some adventure films and the so-called 'Easterns', such as Romm's *Thirteen* [*Trinadtsat'*] (1936), as well as on the thematic level (in Alexandrov's *Circus*, Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler* and *Gorizont*, and the adaptation of Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, discussed in Chapter 2 above). American-inspired production practices were also encouraged by Boris Shumiatskii, as we shall see in the following pages.
[825] For example, Eisenstein had to describe America in the article 'Cinema in America' as a 'class enemy'. See Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Cinema in America', *International Literature*, 3 (July 1933), p. 105.

America temporarily led to a greater exposure of Soviet intellectuals to the United States. Delegations of Soviet specialists in different fields were sent to the U.S. in order to learn from the more scientifically advanced Americans. These delegations included engineers, writers, and filmmakers. Among them were Sergei Eisenstein, Eduard Tisse and Grigorii Alexandrov (who spent a year in Hollywood in 1930); Boris Shumiatskii (who, together with Vladimir Nil'sen and Fridrikh Ermler, visited the U.S. in 1935), and writers Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, who described their journey in the book *Odnoetazhnaia Amerika (Single-storey America).*[826]

At the same time, American specialists were invited to the Soviet Union in greater numbers than before, with Americans serving as advisors and instructors in numerous branches of production.[827] This presence of American specialists was reflected in a number of theatrical plays and some films, where they figured as *spetsy*, as they were referred to in the vernacular. Although these *spetsy* sometimes turned out to be spies within the plot of a play or a film,[828] the underlying importance of America as a country to compete against rose to the surface. The implicit message of such films and plays still reflected the earlier message of the 1920s, that American work practices were a good example for Soviet workers. Thus, Pogodin's play *Poema o topore (A Poem about an Axe)* illustrates how Soviet workers should work according to the American doctrine of Fordism, and Macheret's film *Deeds and*

[826] Some famous writers and artists visited the U.S. in the 1920s as well. See, for example, *America Through Russian Eyes*, ed. by Hasty and Fusso.
[827] Ball, *Imagining America*, p. 132.
[828] Neia Zorkaia, in interview by author, July 2004, Moscow.

*People* [*Dela i liudi*] (1932) portrays a Soviet worker literally catching up with and surpassing an American specialist.[829]

When Boris Shumiatskii, together with Vladimir Nil'sen, advocated the creation of 'Soviet Hollywood' or *Kino-gorod* in the mid-1930s, after their trip to Hollywood in 1935, he was motivated by a number of factors. Among them was the need for more efficient production methods, of which Hollywood was seen as the best example, and the need to have a large cinema base in a sunny location and mild climate, where filming could continue for the most part of the year (similar to the location of Hollywood).[830] Richard Taylor has noted Shumiatskii's eagerness to learn from the West, to the point where the entire organization of *Kino-gorod* was going to be based on the best of American practice.[831] In terms of the content of films that were to be produced in the 1930s, Shumiatskii stressed the need for reliance on more accessible and entertaining plots with linear, conventional narrative structures; emphasized the importance of the scriptwriter; and stressed the significance of the role of the actor in creating 'living' characters with whom the viewers could identify.[832] While the montage dynamism and energy of the Soviet avant-garde cinema of the 1920s arguably was an aesthetic reflection of 'Americanness' and modernity, in the 1930s, a new kind of aesthetic 'Americanness' manifested in the form of the newly enforced narrative linearity of filmic structure, akin to the structure of the new Hollywood talkies.[833]

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[829] This film will be discussed further in this chapter.
[830] See Richard Taylor, 'Ideology as Mass Entertainment: Boris Shumyatsky and Soviet Cinema in the 1930s', in *Inside the Film Factory*, pp. 193-216.
[831] Ibid., p. 214.
[832] Ibid., p. 205-206.
[833] After their trip to Hollywood, Shumiatskii and Nil'sen co-wrote a book entitled *Amerikanskaia kinematografiia*, which was meant to provide inspiration for the creation of

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Shumiatskii's eagerness to learn from America, as well as to encourage better acting and more vivid portrayals of individual characters in Soviet films, was preceded by more than a decade-long discussion that took place mainly on the pages of Soviet cinema periodicals, about the superiority of American film production methods and the higher quality of acting in imported American films. Throughout most of the 1920s, American films and film stars were seen as an inspiration for Soviet filmmakers in their attempts to create the Soviet filmic hero. In the light of this information it becomes clear that Shumiatskii's call, in the mid-1930s, for 'optimism [...] cheerfulness, *joie-de-vivre* and laughter',[834] as well as 'living man'[835] characters in Socialist Realist cinema, had its roots in the long-existing admiration by the Soviet critics, as well as filmmakers and audiences of the optimistic and life-affirming heroes of American cinema.

One might wonder whether the image of an enthusiastic, inventive, and dynamic positive hero was truly new for the Stalinist Soviet cinema, as compared to pre-revolutionary Russian cinema. However, a recent study conducted by Oleg Usenko confirms that Stalinist film hero portrayals differed from the pre-revolutionary ones. As was already mentioned in Chapter 1,[836] according to Usenko, the positive heroes in the majority of pre-revolutionary Russian films were martyrs, embodying the ideal of sacrifice, and thus continuing the Russian literary tradition. Goodness, peacefulness and repentance were emphasized in these characters.[837] The self-sacrificial nature of the protagonists was further emphasized by the prevalence of

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the Soviet Kino-Gorod, but was never published. For more on the fate of Vladimir Nil'sen, see Bernshtein, 'Gollivud bez kheppi-enda', pp. 213-259.

[834] Ibid., p. 208.

[835] Ibid., p. 205.

[836] See p. 51 above.

[837] Usenko, 'Zhiznennye idealy i normy povedeniia russkikh', p. 41.

unhappy endings, as analyzed by Yuri Tsivian.[838] In Stalinist cinema of the 1930s and early 1940s, one does encounter many male and female heroes with self-sacrificial tendencies (for example, the pilot Sergei Kozhukharov in *Fighter Pilots* [*Istrebiteli*] (1939), Natasha in the *Maxim* trilogy, Chkalov in *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), and many others). However, even in those films the customary happy ending differs from the tragic endings of pre-revolutionary films, thus throwing a light of optimism on the hero's act of self-sacrifice and redeeming it in the end. Additionally, the young and active heroes of musical comedies and films about the youth (such as *Goalie* [*Vratar'*] (1936), *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov* [*Chastnaia zhizn' Petra Vinogradova*] (1934), Alexandrov's and Pyriev's comedies, *The Path to Life* [*Putevka v zhizn'*] (1931), and others) tend to exhibit the new ('American') traits such as efficiency and optimism in larger measure than the traditional Russian trait of readiness for self-sacrifice.

While America itself was no longer officially praised since the late 1920s, 'American' qualities were still highly respected among the Soviet population. The positive attitude towards these qualities existed long after the twenties among Russians. Pitirim Sorokin wrote during World War II that well-executed tasks were still described at that time as 'done in the American way', and 'wherever there appear[ed] among Russians an unusually energetic, efficient, inventive, and optimistic type of person he [was] often nicknamed "our Russian American."'[839]

Soviet films of the 1930s reflected the presence of the two New Soviet Man ideals in Stalinist culture: on one hand, the self-sacrificial, brave martyr ready to die

[838] Tsivian, 'Early Russian Cinema: Some Observations', pp. 7-30.
[839] Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Russia and the United States* (New York, 1944), pp. 170-171.

for the Socialist cause (Hellebust's 'crucified' hero,[840] and Kaganovsky's 'disabled' hero)[841] that had its roots in pre-1917 revolutionary prose, pre-revolutionary Russian cinema and the Christian ideal of martyrdom,[842] and on the other hand, the new energetic and technologically skilled hero (the 'glorified' inhabitant of the Socialist Utopia).[843] This second type of hero was encountered more often in Socialist Realist films than literature. I posit that this image of a new hero was inspired, at least in part, by American stars in imported American adventure films and swashbucklers of the previous decade, the heroes of American frontier and adventure literature, the images of the technologically skillful American specialists presented in Soviet literature and the press, and the 'Russian Americans' of the Soviet press in the 1920s.

While Shumiatskii attempted to model Soviet cinema in the 1930s on Hollywood cinema of the time, none of the sources of inspiration listed above were acknowledged or referred to in his project. Shumiatskii's 'Americanization' of Soviet cinema in the 1930s was centered around production methods and acting techniques of contemporary Hollywood as witnessed by Shumiatskii during his trip in 1935. However, there existed a deeper underlying connection with American culture, which predated Shumiatskii's model. The 'desire for exemplary masculinity' in the Stalinist culture of the 1930s, which was 'obsessed with pilots, arctic explorers, steel workers, and other models of ideal manhood',[844] drew at least a partial inspiration from the

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[840] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 58.
[841] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 7.
[842] The pre-revolutionary Russian films did not necessarily portray the disablement of the martyr hero; Lilya Kaganovsky has demonstrated this as a unique tendency of Stalinist culture. However, the concept of suffering and martyrdom was at the root of both the cinema heroes described by Kaganosvky and the martyrs of Russian pre-revolutionary films. The idea of martyrdom for a higher cause had its roots in the Christian mentality.
[843] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal,* p. 59.
[844] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 155.

American culture and American masculinity (as it appeared in imported films and translated literature), which was perceived as deeply connected with the dynamism and energy of modernity and mastery over new technology. The focus of the present chapter is thus not Shumiatskii's plan of the 'Americanization' of Soviet cinema in the 1930s, but the on-going dialogue with American cinema, literature and technology that continued from the previous decade. I will not be examining American influences on Soviet cinematic production methods, and will only briefly touch upon the subject of influences of the American genres such as comedy and the musical on Stalinist musical comedy.[845] The main focus of this chapter is the filmic image of the New Soviet Man in Stalinist cinema of the 1930s and its connection with American culture that has its roots in the Soviet Americanization discourse of the 1920s.[846]

[845] For studies that have dealt with this subject, see, for example, Robin La Pasha, 'Snimaia komediiu. Muzykal'nye fil'my Aleksandrova i bratia Marks', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 41 (1999) http://www.kinovedcheskiezapiski.ru/article/756/ [accessed June 4 2009]; also, a number of scholars have made observations on the similarities between Alexandrov's comedies and the films choreographed by Busby Berkeley and other American musicals. See, for example, Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, p. 81.

[846] I am aware of the possible relevance of the Soviet adventure genre in the 1930s and early 1940s (including border guard films, sea adventure films, and Soviet 'Easterns') to my thesis; however, with a few exceptions, I am not going to examine films made in this genre, as their male protagonists (such as, for example, Tkachenko (Nikolai Makarenko) in Vladimir Shneiderov's *Dzhul'bars* (1935)) often lack strong characterizations and are not the main focus of the film, as opposed to action and suspense elements, and therefore add little to my thesis which focuses on the construction of the new Soviet cinematic hero. For further information on these genres, see Lavrentiev, *Krasnyi vestern*; Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, pp. 147-155; V. Kolodiazhnaia, *Sovetskii prikliuchencheskii fil'm* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1965).

## I. Optimism

The dream of Russian artists and intellectuals about the creation of the new, modernized kind of human being predated the Revolution. As was noted earlier, in 1914, Maiakovsky described the 'new man' as 'the maker of his own life' and 'an infinitely joyful optimist, an invincibly healthy one', with 'powerful muscles of a Hercules'.[847] As we have seen, throughout the 1920s film critics called for film heroes that would possess the optimism, health and fitness described by Maiakovsky. For example, Valentin Turkin wrote about the importance of the creation, in cinema, of 'a new hero, cheerful and courageous, physically strong and agile.'[848] The new Soviet masculine ideal was to be modeled on American screen heroes who, in the words of Khrisanf Khersonskii, 'always fight and win, if they suffer then they do it courageously, if they cry then even through their tears one perceives the joy and affirmation of life.'[849]

It took some time for this kind of new cinematic male hero image to come into being; as we have noted in Chapter 2,[850] this process truly started in the late 1920s, especially with films such as Dovzhenko's *Earth*. It was in the 1930s, however, that the new Soviet cinematic hero finally began to achieve the qualities that the Soviet critics in the 1920s called for. However, its links with American culture and popular American film stars of the 1920s were no longer acknowledged.

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[847] Maiakovsky, 'Budetliane', in *Polnoe sobraniie sochinenii*, vol. 1, pp. 329-332. This was mentioned on p. 163 above.
[848] Valentin Turkin, *Kino-iskusstvo, kino-akter, kino-shkola* (Moscow, 1925), p. 21.
[849] Khersonskii, 'O poslednikh zagranichnykh lentakh', p. 30.
[850] See pp. 175-179 above.

The genre that seemingly was best suited to portray the new 'joyful optimist', who, like American film heroes, could enjoy life even through tears, was comedy, one of Shumiatskii's favoured genres for the new Socialist Realist cinema.[851] However, an optimistic hero did not have to be confined to the limits of the comedy genre, as we have seen in the case of Vasil' in *Earth*. Another example of such a hero, this time in one of the eariest Soviet sound films, was Nikolai Sergeev, the organizer of a commune for homeless boys, played by Nikolai Batalov in Nikolai Ekk's film *The Path to Life* (1931). Sergeev is portrayed as an indefatigable optimist, whose ever-present smile, coupled with energy and inventiveness (also qualities that would have been perceived as 'American'), as well as a genuine trust that he exhibits towards the boys, help transform the street orphans from thieves into honest and hard-working young men who genuinely enjoy their new life. Sergeev is an energetic and enterprising optimist: he is the one who initiates the idea of inviting the boys to come to the commune on a volunteer basis; he is also the initiator of the new project for the boys – the building of a railway between the commune and the nearby town. Sergeev's optimism, outwardly portrayed though his smile, is reflected in his trust that the boys would not run away from the commune. His joyfulness is mirrored in the smiles and laughter of the orphan boys, especially Mustafa Fert (Yivan Kyrlia) whose laughter rings in many scenes throughout the film. As Mustafa, who has accepted Sergeev's optimism and made it part of his own new life, speeds down the newly built railway and sings his joyful song just before being murdered by the

[851] See Taylor, 'Ideology and Entertainment'. There is evidence that Shumiatskii, in his call for the creation of the Soviet comedy genre, voiced the personal preference of Stalin. See '"A driani podobno *Garmon'* bol'she ne stavite?..": Zapis' besed B.Z. Shumiatskogo s I.V. Stalinym posle kinoprosmotrov 1934 g.', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 61 (2007): pp. 281-346.

bandit Zhigan (Mikhail Zharov), he resembles Vasil' who, in Dovzhenko's *Earth*, happily dances down the road before he is killed by the *kulak* Khoma.

Even though *The Path to Life* does not have a happy ending, and in the end Sergeev is shown, along with the boys, crying over the death of Mustafa, nevertheless the overall optimism of the film's narrative is encapsulated in the message that the project of the boys' transformation has been successful. Sergeev is the agent of change for the orphans. The 'unhappy ending' transcends its own 'unhappiness' and offers a sense of hope for the many orphans on Soviet streets of the possibility of happy integration into society.

In the case of Batalov's portrayal of Sergeev, his everpresent smile was too unique and well recognized from his films of the 1920s[852] to directly remind one of the famous smile of Douglas Fairbanks; however, his qualities of optimism, inventiveness and energy fit perfectly into Khersonskii's description, quoted above, of American film heroes of the 1920s, whose joy and affirmation of life could be perceived even through their tears.

As for Soviet comedies of the 1930s, they abound in optimistic and energetic male heroes. One immediately thinks of such key characters of Stalinist musical comedies as Kostia Potekhin (Leonid Utesov) in Alexandrov's *Happy Guys* (1934), Ivan Martynov (Sergei Stoliarov) in Alexandrov's *Circus* (1936), Klim Iarko (Nikolai Kriuchkov) in Ivan Pyriev's *The Tractor Drivers* (1939),[853] and Musaib (Vladimir Zel'din) with his shining southern smile in Pyriev's *The Swineherd and the Shepherd*

[852] For example, Room's *Bed and Sofa* (1927) and Protazanov's *Aelita* (1924).
[853] For a full discussion of Klim Iarko, see p. 290 below.

(1941). The smiling faces of Nikolai Kriuchkov and Sergei Stoliarov became iconic images of the virile and joyful New Soviet Man on the screen.

Stoliarov's Ivan Martynov in *Circus* is a good-looking, muscular and self-confident former Soviet sailor[854] turned into a circus director and stuntman. The concept of a stuntman could not but evoke memories of American film heroes of the 1920s, and in particular the man whose stunts were written about continuously in Soviet film press and inspired imitation that was satirized in Komarov's film *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*: Douglas Fairbanks. Martynov is characterized by the combination of a muscular physique, a broad optimistic smile, strong nerves (he repeatedly reminds everyone to 'be calm'), and the ability to perform fantastic stunts (prior to the Flight into the Stratosphere, Martynov performed feats at 'the limits of human courage' on a motorcycle, as Marion Dixon reads on a postcard found in her room). John Haynes has argued that Martynov is 'barely distinguishable from countless other, equally depersonalized New Soviet Men on billboards and in literature.'[855] However, this is an argument of a Western scholar, taken out of context of Soviet culture. In fact, for several generations of Soviet viewers, the image of Sergei Stoliarov (as Martynov in *Circus* or as a hero of Russian folk tales in several films such as *Ruslan and Liudmila* (1938) and *Vasilisa The Beautiful* [*Vasilisa*

[854] Richard Taylor states that when Martynov first appears, he 'has just been demobilized from the air force.' See Richard Taylor, 'The Illusion of Happiness and the Happiness of Illusion: Grigorii Alexandrov's *The Circus*', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 74.4 (1996), pp. 603-620 (p. 611.) However, nothing in the film's narrative clearly indicates this. When Martynov first appears, he says that out of four hundred possible aims, he can shoot 396 (which does not necessarily mean having served in the air force), whereas when Marion Dixon finds a photograph of Martynov on the floor of her room, in that photograph he is depicted as a sailor on the ship 'Sebastopol'.

[855] Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, p. 86.

*prekrasnaia*] (1939)) stood out starkly among other actors of the Soviet screen and became associated with the new young and optimistic positive hero.[856]

The joyful Martynov teaches his American sweetheart Marion Dixon a song that includes the words 'And no one in the world can laugh and love like us', and takes an active part in her transformation from an American circus actress into a New Soviet Woman. The rhetoric of 'catching up with and surpassing America' is embodied in Martynov, the Soviet Superman who is more American than his American female counterpart: he is more optimistic (he smiles a lot more than the fearful Marion who is afraid of persecution for having a black child), and he performs a better flight stunt than she (although Marion the American 'specialist' assists him in fulfilling his stunt). In the beginning of the film, when the circus manager asks him to create a stunt similar to the one performed by the American star, Martynov replies, 'If we are going to do that at all, we shall do it better!' This phrase reflects the rhetoric behind most of the Soviet industrialization efforts in the 1930s and indeed throughout the Cold War era. While historically the country was struggling with the task, cinema went on to bolster the myth of the success of the famous Stalinist formula.

While the American star can only fly up to the ceiling of the circus cupola, the Soviet Superman can magically fly horizontally above the heads of the circus audience, thus beating the American 'record'. The English letter 'S' on the front of Martynov's costume could be interpreted as standing for 'Soviet' or even 'Sergei Stoliarov'. However, it being an English rather than a Russian letter and being part of a costume of a man who is able to fly, strongly evokes the image of Superman, the

[856] On the connection between the new Soviet hero and the *bogatyr'* hero of Russian folk tales, see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 73-77, and Chapter 1 above.

American comic strip character turned into cultural icon, introduced in the 1930s.[857] The Nietzschean roots as well as the partial inspiration of Douglas Fairbanks in the creation of Superman were discussed in Chapter 1.[858] A link with Hollywood cinema of the 1930s in the stage performance that follows the Flight into the Stratosphere has been noted by scholars including Richard Taylor, who has pointed out that this sequence is 'straight out of Hollywood, more particularly out of Busby Berkeley, and more particularly still out of *Gold Diggers of 1933*.'[859] However, what interests us the most here is the link with the American film heroes of the 1920s, popular among Russian viewers (who, in the 1930s, were not exposed to any new American films, as imports were banned in 1931), and in particular the connection with the all-American optimism represented in that decade by Douglas Fairbanks, 'a figure of sublime cheerfulness'.[860] Thus, Martynov, the Smiling Soviet Superman, catches up with and surpasses American achievements thanks to his 'American' traits, including his joyful smile and a stuntman's athleticism, which help him win the American female star

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[857] Alexandrov's film was made two years before the first publication of Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel's Superman comic strip in 1938; however, a number of other superhero characters were in existence in America in the 1920s and early 1930s, including Buck Rogers, who was a superhero able to fly, and who first appeared in a short story by Philip Nowlan in 1928 and then as a comic strip character in 1929; and Flash Gordon, first appearing in a comic strip published in 1934. Moira Ratchford has noted that Martynov's costume was 'Flash Gordon-like'. See Moira Rachford, '*Circus* of 1936: Ideology and Entertainment under the Big Top', in *Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash*, ed. by in Andrew Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 83-94 (p.89.) However, Flash Gordon did not have the letter 'S' on his chest, nor a cape. Superman, on the other hand, had both of the above – and so did Martynov. I have not had the opportunity to research the roots of Martynov's costume design and whether Alexandrov and Eisenstein might have met Shuster and Siegel during their trip to the U.S. in 1930, nor whether the two American artists might have discussed their plans to create Superman with the Soviet visitors, so this hypothesis remains on the level of speculation. However, the visual similarity between Martynov's costume and the American Superman is striking and calls for further research.

[858] See pp. 111 and 117 above.

[859] Taylor, 'The Illusion of Happiness', p. 616.

[860] Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth*, p. 103.

over to the Soviet side, and then surpass her achievements with the record-breaking 'red' flying stunt, with its connotations of Soviet aviation records.

One less widely known comedy of the 1930s that is centered around a male hero with an ever-present smile is Aleksandr Medvedkin's banned film *New Moscow* [*Novaia Moskva*] (1938).[861] The film's main protagonist, Aliosha Konopliannikov (Dmitrii Sagal) is a Moscow engineer living and working far away from the capital: together with his fellow engineers he participates in building a new town in the middle of a Siberian forest. Aliosha and his friends have built a 'live' model of Moscow, and Aliosha is sent to present the model at an exhibit in Moscow. On the train, he meets Zoia (Nina Alisova), who is on her way to visit her friend Fedia (Pavel Sukhanov), a Moscow painter who paints the streets in the process of the city's reconstruction. Aliosha also meets Olia (Mariia Barabanova), a swineherd who is going to show her exemplary piglet at the Moscow exhibit.

Most of the film's action takes place in Moscow and is centered around the love triangle between Aliosha, Zoia and Fedia. After a number of scenes, Zoia chooses the main protagonist, Aliosha, over Fedia and leaves Moscow so as to live with Aliosha in the remote town he is building. At the same time, Fedia and Olia meet and fall in love. The film is peppered with slapstick, eccentric gags and elements of the grotesque, such as the scene where Fedia puts on the clothes of a scarecrow and scares off two young lovers in a field.

The film has gained the attention of scholars in recent years due to its ambiguous treatment of the issue of Moscow's reconstruction in the 1930s: in a scene

[861] For more information on this film, see Emma Widdis, *Alexander Medvedkin: The Filmmakers Companion 2 (The KINOfiles Filmmakers Companions)* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005).

where Aliosha presents the 'live' model of Moscow at the exhibit, initially a mistake causes the model to work backwards, showing the footage of Moscow's architectural destruction in reverse motion and creating an illusion of Moscow reverting to its old self. The mistake is quickly fixed by Aliosha, who correctly operates the model, allowing the audience to see the animated (and rather awe-inspiring) version of Moscow of the future.

Throughout the film, Aliosha the Soviet engineer retains his joyful smile, strongly reminiscent of the famous American smile of Douglas Fairbanks. A reference to Fairbanks, the American icon of optimism and youth in the 1920s, is made explicit in the scene where Aliosha meets Zoia at the carnival: as he jumps out in front of her, he wears a cape and a black mask, and makes a sweeping gesture with the side of the cape, clearly signifying that his costume is that of Zorro, played a decade earlier by Fairbanks in the popular imported American film of the same name. Aliosha's likeness to Fairbanks is reinforced by his dark hair (somewhat of an anomaly for the Soviet screen, dominated by light-haired positive male heroes).

Aliosha's link with the Fairbanks prototype is also evident in his energy and fitness: he is able to chase Olia's runaway piglet, jump over high fences, return to the train that is taking off, jump off the train again so as to pick up the kettle that was lost during the chase, catch up with the fast moving train again, and jump off once more in order to help Zoia who has been left behind. Together with his agility, Aliosha's smile and good looks win the heart of Zoia. Zoia herself looks and acts like a light-hearted flapper of Hollywood films, easily changing her preference from Fedia to Aliosha. In one scene, Zoia and Aliosha sit in a beautiful urban café that looks more like an American than Soviet location, having drinks and listening to jazz, while Zoia

wears a hat and outfit reminiscent of American female film stars. The Fairbanks-like optimistic and fast engineer who constructs Moscow's architectural future wins over the unhappy painter Fedia, whose profession connotes the link with Russia's artistic past, and who cannot keep up with the fast pace of advancing modernity.

The film was banned, and thus cannot be included in the category of Soviet films that helped shape the new Soviet identity; however, it illustrates the more general trend of portraying optimistic male heroes on the Soviet screen, and shows that American screen heroes of the 1920s were far from forgotten by Soviet filmmakers as late as 1938.

## II. Fitness and Fame: Sportsmen Heroes

Sports and what was known as 'physical culture' (*fizkul'tura*) were an important part of culture in the 1930s in the Soviet Union. As Attwood and Kelly point out, the sports movement had utilitarian and symbolic overtones: one of its goals was to bring the Soviet population up to the fitness level of citizens of a modern state, including their preparedness to defend the motherland, and another goal had to do with representing, through the mass sports parades, the health and fitness achieved by the new Soviet society.[862]

Many Soviet films of the 1930s showed young, fit and healthy Komsomol members, both women and men, engaged in swimming, diving, running and discus throwing, and often wearing swimsuits or shorts and sleeveless tops, deliberately

[862] Attwood and Kelly, 'Programmes for Identity', p. 269.

displaying their trained and muscular bodies. Such scenes are present in films such as Igor' Savchenko's *A Chance Acquaintance* [*Sluchainaia vstrecha*] (1936), Abram Room's *Strict Young Man* [*Strogii iunosha*] (1936), Aleksandr Macheret's *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov* (1934), and, most famously, in Semen Timoshenko's *Goalie* (1936).

The Soviet Union was not the only country consumed by the sports movement in the 1930s. In England, the League of Health and Beauty engaged large groups of people in training drills, while members of the British YMCA clubs displayed group spectacles of fitness not unlike the Soviet ones.[863] In Germany, similar displays of physical culture by the youth took place,[864] and the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin were captured on film by Leni Riefenstahl in *Olympia* (1938), which was meant to build 'a human bridge between classical Greece and the New Germany.'[865] It was America, however, that was the most successful competitor in the Olympics in 1936.[866]

The modern sports movement began to flourish in America during the Roaring Twenties, the decade that has been referred to as the 'golden age of sports'.[867] That decade in America saw 'the public mania for vicarious participation in sports', which had become an American obsession.[868] The post World War I decade saw more American men playing golf than ever before (there existed five thousand

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[863] Nick Yapp, *1930s: Decades of the Twentieth Century* (Getty Images, Konemann, 2004), pp. 154-159.
[864] Ibid., p. 167.
[865] Steven Bach, *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl* (London" Abacus, 2007), p. 174.
[866] Ibid., p. 172.
[867] Pietrusza, *The Roaring Twenties*, p. 60.
[868] Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2000), p. 69 and p. 181.

golf courses in the U.S. at that time and, allegedly, over two million players were engaged in golf), while sporting heroes like Babe Ruth in baseball and Jack Dempsey in boxing stole the hearts of millions of fans.[869]

The American passion for sports in the post-war period went hand in hand with the cult of youth, health, and play. The modern, fit and healthy hero was represented in American cinema of the late 1910s and 1920s. As we have seen, as early as 1923 Soviet film critics praised American cinema for its focus on the dexterous 'human sportsman'.[870] It was not only Douglas Fairbanks, the actor most popular in Russia in the 1920s for representing fit and agile heroes, who was able to perform great physical stunts on the screen: dynamic cowboys in American westerns, including the ones played by William Hart and Tom Mix, were masters of horse-riding at great speeds, an athletic feat of its own.[871]

In the Soviet Union of the 1930s, an important element of the physical culture movement was *zakalka*, or tempering oneself to be as robust and strong as steel. It had physical and psychological connotations, for physical training helped one attain psychological strength and self-discipline. While in the 1920s, the Bolshevik intellectuals saw mass physical culture as one of the potential ways to forge the New Soviet Man,[872] in the 1930s, the process of forging oneself, or making oneself into the New Soviet Man and Woman through techniques such as sports training, was at least partially given over into the hands of the individual (although mass participation in sportive events was the norm). In his insightful essay on the techniques of personality

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[869] Ibid., p. 179 and p. 194.
[870] Veronin, 'Kriticheskie zametki', p. 11. See p. 52 above.
[871] For more the Soviet reception of William Hart and Tom Mix, see Kuznetsova, 'Amerikanskie zvezdy v strane bol'shevikov', pp. 196-248.
[872] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 23.

forging in the Stalinist 1930s, Vadim Volkov has pointed out that the terms *soznatel'nost'* (awareness), *kul'turnost'* (being cultured), and *distsiplinirovannost'* (self-discipline) were used in the cultural discourse of the 1930s to signify an individual's work of self-improvement.[873] Sport was one of the ways through which an individual could make him/herself stronger (*zakaliat'sia*) and forge him/herself into a better citizen. Volkov argues that such activities as parachute jumping (a part of physical culture), widespread among the Soviet youth in the 1930s, were personality building techniques, whose end goal was overcoming oneself and mastering oneself.[874]

In the 1930s, as in the 1920s, cinema (along with literature) continued to play an important role in propagandizing the types of heroes whose examples were to be followed by the general public in their quest for forging themselves into the new citizens of the modern Soviet state. The call of the Soviet critics, in the 1920s, for actors and directors to follow examples set by the American 'sportsman' film heroes, resulted in the fact that in the following decade, the Soviet screen saw more and more healthy and fit male heroes. Among such heroes was Anton Kandidov, the famous Goalie (played by Grigorii Pluzhnik) in the 1936 film of the same name, who became the beloved hero of Soviet boys in the 1930s.

The song 'March of the Sportsmen' on the soundtrack of this film suggested that if one wanted to stay young in body and in spirit, one had to temper oneself like

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[873] Vadim Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva i tekhniki lichnosti stalinskogo vremeni', in *Kul'tural'nye issledovaniia. Sbornik nauchnykh rabot*, ed. by A. Etkind and P. Lysakov (Saint Petersburg and Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo Universiteta v Sanktpeterburge, Letnii Sad, 2006), p. 194.
[874] Ibid., p. 199.

steel through physical culture.[875] However, the film's protagonist Anton Kandidov does little to temper himself, as his agility and talent for catching ball at great speed are innate qualities, as exemplified by his ability to catch an endless amount of watermelons being harvested in a village, where Anton is found by his future friends from Moscow. Instead of showing the process of tempering oneself and self-improvement, the film focuses on another issue, also important to the cultural discourse of the 1930s: striving for success and individual fame within the culture of praised heroes and Socialist competition. The film engages the viewers in the process of improving their physique not through portraying the process of the main hero's physical self-improvement, but through presenting the main hero as already physically attractive and able to achieve individual success, and thus appearing as an inspiring ideal towards which to strive.

As we have seen in the case of Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path*, the desire for fame and success through exemplary work achievements within the context of the Soviet 1930s can be traced back to the similar desire in the 1920s that was often associated with the fame of motion picture stars (a public obsession reflected in *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* and *The Cigarette Girl of Mosselprom*). Striving for individual success, a concept deeply associated with American culture and reflected in American films, was criticized as a bourgeois notion in the collectivist discourse of the 1920s. However, the 1930s saw a gradual cultural shift from the collectivist to the individualist values,[876] a shift reflected in the ambiguous treatment of the theme of

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[875] 'Чтобы тело и душа были молоды, были молоды, были молоды, | Ты не бойся ни жары и ни холода, закаляйся как сталь!'

[876] See Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*; also, Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva', p. 192.

individual success of sportsmen, Stakhanovite workers, and aviator heroes) in a number of Soviet films made in the mid-1930s.

In *Goalie*, Anton's aspiration for becoming famous is first introduced in the opening sequence of the film. While Anton is sitting in a small sailboat that transports watermelons across a river, he sees a ship named after Aleksandr Pushkin, the great Russian poet. Anton exclaims, 'What a great lad he was!' and compares Pushkin's name with his own: 'What is Kandidov? Why has he been given a last name?' He proceeds to shout out his last name, listening to the echo reflected from the banks of the river. His female colleague asks whether he would like for his last name to 'ring all across the district', to which he replies positively. He then carves out his name on a watermelon and throws it into the water: 'Let people know that there exists an Anton Kandidov in the world!' Thus, Anton's aspiration for fame is presented as the main goal of the protagonist.

The film narrative proceeds along the periphery-to-center axis, with Anton moving from the village on the Volga river to Moscow, after being recognized as a potentially excellent sportsman by the visiting young engineers who invite him to come with them to Moscow and join their football team as a goalie, and to work with them at the hydroplane plant 'Gidraer ('Hydro Air').

During a training session in Moscow, Anton proves himself as an active and exceptionally fast and precise sportsman who never misses the ball. Success is soon followed by fame, as Anton is shown carrying flowers after his first major football game victory; he is surrounded by people who congratulate him while film cameras film him and the radio announces that Anton is 'the best goalie in Moscow'. Anton is a kind of a male 'Cinderella' who abandons the life of picking watermelons in a

village and finds himself living a completely new life in the 'palace' of fame and success in the capital.

Haynes has argued that the film makes clear the limits of individual aspiration, and that Anton 'is only admitted to the national squad when he curbs his own personal ambitions of glory, and works as a true team player on his local side.'[877] However, this interpretation of the film is misleading, as we shall now see. As Anton basks in the glory of his first success, surrounded by young women with whom he sips soft drinks in a summer café, he finds out that his picture and name have been printed on the cover of the *Sport* magazine. This is Anton's dream come true: he is enjoying individual success and fame, and his name is now known to thousands, if not millions of football fans across Russia. However, when he arrives to work so as to share his good news with his friends the engineers, it turns out that the collective is first and foremost unhappy with his work at the plant, and appears not to care about his newly found fame. The film narrative switches into a reprimanding mode, but this turn is temporary and superficial, since at no point prior to this event did the engineers stress the importance of Anton's contribution to the work at the plant; all they wanted from him initially was to be their goalie. Therefore, their criticism of his work that takes precedence over celebration of his success as a goalie, which brings success to the team, appears unnatural.

In the same scene, Nastia, Anton's girlfriend, sees the traces of lipstick on his cheek (he was previously kissed by a girl in the café), and, overcome with anger, tears apart the magazine with Anton's picture. She accuses him of not paying enough attention to the collective, but her motivation is clearly personal jealousy. The fiery

[877] Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, p. 98.

Anton rushes out of the room and moves out of the apartment that he shares with engineer Karasik, nevertheless leaving several watermelons behind for his former friends. The group immediately regrets loosing Anton, and when the friends find the watermelons left for them by Anton, they agree that, 'Even though he is a rascal, he is not too bad'. The friends begin devising various plans of bringing Anton back. Thus, the confused and ambiguous attitude towards individual fame and success first manifests itself in the film.

Anton proceeds to play on the side of a rival team, Torpedo, against his own team. However, his caring attitude towards his friends is shown in his concern over engineer Karasik who is injured during the game. Anton is clearly only playing against his former team due to being rejected by them. He ends up being sent off the field by the referee for rough play (another ambiguous scene, as there is a suggestion that other Torpedo players might have been responsible for the roughness in question), and Torpedo loose to Gidraer.

While his new team celebrate their victory, Anton is sad and lonely, while Nastia suggests to the Gidraer team that they have been too hard on Anton ('zatravili parnia!'). When Anton eventually returns, it is clear that he never did anything wrong, and his friends realize they have made a mistake. This is not a case of curbing personal ambitions, as Haynes suggests. Rather, it is an example of the collective welcoming back the man who is truly exemplary in his field. Any negative connotations of Anton's satisfaction with seeing his own photograph on the *Sport* magazine cover, or of sipping drinks with girls in a western-like café, is nullified by the fact that his actions and behaviour are never truly reprehensible. Anton is just a

victim of circumstances, a man rejected by his friends and then reinstated within the collective.

Haynes suggests that Anton is only admitted to play on the national squad after he curbs his ambitions.[878] However, nothing in the film's narrative suggests this. Instead, it is Anton's innate sporting talent and his resulting fame that secures his place as a goalie on the Soviet squad in the international match against 'the best Western team, the Club of the Black Oxen'. In the last sequence of the film Anton performs a heroic feat: he manages to save a penalty and then scores a goal against the Western team during the very last minute of the match. This is a true personal achievement, independent of the actions of the collective. It becomes clear that this Soviet sportsman hero would be able to defend his motherland if such a necessity arose. He is the kind of ideal goalie who, in his high level of fitness and dexterity, embodies the ideal defender of the motherland, having followed the advice of the 'March of the Sportsmen': 'Hey, goalie, get ready for battle, you are a guard at the gate. Imagine that behind you is the border of the state!"[879]

Thus, Anton's individual aspirations for fame and success are realized, and the initial mistake of the collective is corrected. Anton's fame within the film's diegesis is doubled by his fame among the young Soviet viewers in the 1930s. As Oleg Kharkhordin has suggested, the cult of personality in the 1930s encompassed not only Stalin himself, but was a reflection of a more general cult of exemplary individuals.[880] These individuals (including outstanding sportsmen, aviators, workers,

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[878] Ibid.

[879] 'Эй, вратарь, готовься к бою, | Часовым ты поставлен у ворот. | Ты представь, что за тобою | Полоса пограничная идет!'

[880] Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia.*

and explorers), referred to as heroes, were examples that the general public could follow in forging themselves into the new kind of citizens.[881] The difference between real individuals and heroes of cinema and literature was somewhat blurred in the 1930s,[882] and in this cultural atmosphere Anton the Goalie became one of the exemplary individuals to be emulated.

This cinematic character was the result of a decade-long search of Soviet filmmakers for the new, dynamic hero modelled on the 'sportsman' heroes of American cinema. Anton's quest for individual fame had a strong link with American culture. However, the existence of this connection with American cinema and culture was obscured by the mid-1930s and has not been recognized in previous analyses of the film.

## III. Mastery over Technology: Engineers-Inventors

Alexis de Tocqueville remarked in his book *Democracy in America* that a typical American was 'a man of burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and above all, an innovator.'[883] With the advent of industrialization in Stalinist Russia, people capable of creating technological innovations that would foster the development of the new Soviet industry were greatly valued. There existed, I suggest, a cult of the engineer in

[881] Volkov, "Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva," p. 200.
[882] Katerina Clark has pointed this out in *The Soviet Novel* (p. 146). Also, as Vadim Volkov indicates, literature was part of Soviet practice and was closely connected to real events. See Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva', p. 193. The same can be said of Soviet cinema.
[883] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. by Mayer and Lerner, p. 370.

the 1930s' Soviet Union.[884] This widespread admiration of engineers, the Soviet masters of technology, had its roots in the machine cult of the 1920s and the admiration of American technology and character traits of those who created and mastered that technology in the United States.

Until the late 1920s, the term 'Americanization' was often used to signify 'industrialization', the two terms being interchangeable within the context of the planned Soviet economic and technological development.[885] Contemporary American observers noted that America signified daring inventiveness, the triumph of the machine, and efficient work practices that included such technological innovations as the assembly line.[886] American technological achievements continued to be praised in the 1930s.

Soviet engineers were sometimes sent to America to learn new technology and production methods. They also often worked alongside their American counterparts who were invited to the Soviet Union in great numbers,[887] as was mentioned earlier, in order to help move forward the development of Soviet industry and technology.

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[884] When writing about the Stalinist Thirties, scholars often talk about the cult of the aviator heroes and explorers (see, for example, Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, and Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva'); however, the concept of a 'cult of the engineer' that I posit here has not received due attention.

[885] As Hans Rogger has pointed out, an American observer wrote in 1928 that in the Soviet context, 'the word for industrialization is Americanization.' See Anne O'Hare McCormick, *The Hammer and the Sickle* (New York, 1928), p. 26; Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', p. 382.

[886] Maurice Hindus, *Humanity Uprooted* (New York, 1929), pp. 355-369. Quoted in Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', pp. 382-383.

[887] According to Rogger, there were thousands of American engineers and technicians working in Russia in the 1930s. Rogger also points out that, even though in practice there were even greater numbers of German engineers who were invited as well, it was the American specialists and work practices that were praised the most. Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', p. 417.

This is not to say that Soviet engineers escaped the purges and arrests of the 1930s. On the contrary, engineers often turned out to be scapegoated by Party officials for the inefficiencies of Soviet industry.[888] Between 1927 and 1931, seven thousand Soviet engineers were arrested and some executed on charges of conspiring with foreign agents.[889]

Nevertheless, engineers and scientists continued to be praised in the public discourse, and Soviet films of the 1930s reflected the cult of the engineer and the general admiration of innovators and scientifically minded individuals who have mastered modern technology. For example, in Medvedkin's *New Moscow*, the main protagonist, Aliosha Konopliannikov (discussed above) is an engineer from Moscow and one of the designers of the 'living model' of Moscow. In *Goalie*, the group of young professionals who invite Anton Kandidov to Moscow are engineers at a Moscow hydroplane plant. One of them, engineer Karasik (A. Goriunov), is once briefly shown working on a hydroplane design. In his spare time, he has also designed a robot, described as a 'mechanical man and an electric housekeeper' that includes radio and photo technology.

In Igor' Savchenko's *A Chance Acquaintance* (1936), the female protagonist, Irinka (Galina Pashkova), is an engineer of children's toys. One of her inventions is a toy automobile factory that makes miniature cars out of separate parts that are put into the opening at the structure's top. The joy expressed by children who see the toy factory at work signifies the joy of the entire country at the workings of new technology, including the new efficient automobile plants with assembly lines that

[888] Scott W. Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia,* http://quod.lib.umich.edu.elib.tcd.ie/ [accessed 1 July 2009], para.334.
[889] Ibid.

produce cars and tractors (such as the Gorky Automobile Factory, or GAZ, built by the American Austin Company in 1930.)[890]

In the comedy *It Happened One Summer* [*Odnazhdy letom*] (1936), the screenplay for which was written by the writers Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, the two main characters Zhora (Leonid Kmit) and Teleskop (Igor' Il'inskii) are amateur car engineers in a small town. Using a lost tyre that fell off a foreign car that drove by, they construct a self-made automobile and drive it all the way to Moscow, once being mistaken for winners of an All-Union automobile race. Curiously, the grotesque creation of the provincial amateurs becomes a vehicle for a little boy from the small town to reach his dream destination: the little boy dreams of becoming an explorer hero in the Arctic Circle (inspired by the famous Cheliuskin expedition heroes) and hides in the boot of the car. He manages to outwit the two self-made mechanics, stays in the car all the way until it arrives to Moscow, and later Zhora and Teleskop learn from a newspaper that the little boy was found and accepted on a Soviet icebreaker in the Arctic ocean.

The theme of engineers and inventors is continued in Aleksandr Macheret's detective-adventure film *The Mistake of Engineer Kochin* [*Oshibka inzhenera Kochina*] (1939), where the main protagonist is an aeroplane designer who brings home his latest design of an aeroplane, in order to work on it late at night, against the rules of the construction bureau. The opportunity is immediately taken by a spy, who steals the designs by photographing them in Kochin's apartment, assisted by Kochin's neighbour and sweetheart, Kseniia Lebedeva (Liubov' Orlova). Kochin's

[890] For the history of building the GAZ factory, see Richard Cartwright Austin, *Building Utopia: Erecting Russia's First Modern City, 1930* (Kent and London: The Kent State University Press, 2004).

mistake notwithstanding, the continued official admiration and support of engineers is reinforced throughout the film: in an early sequence, an fighter pilot says, 'I love Kochin!' ('*Liubliu Kochina*!') As the film narrative progresses and Kochin finds himself being questioned by the NKGB (the former OGPU) detective, he is not arrested even though he has broken the rules of the construction bureau. Rather, the detective states, 'We shall never let people like Kochin be mistreated.'[891]

The film that stands out as possibly the best example of portraying a Soviet inventor and his American traits is Aleksandr Macheret's *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov* (1934). In addition to the implicit link with the Americanization discourse, contained in the main protagonist's profession of an inventor-engineer, the film abounds in explicit signifiers of Petr Vinogradov's 'Americanness', while never openly using the words 'America' or 'American'.

Petr Vinogradov (Boris Livanov) is a young Soviet student who, along with his two male friends, goes to Moscow where the three young men find jobs at an automobile factory, while studying at a university. The film reinforces the notion of the priority of an engineer's invention over his personal faults.

On his way to Moscow, Petr leaves behind his girlfriend, Valia (Galina Pashkova) who is planning to join him in the capital once she applies to the Moscow Conservatory. In the opening sequence that takes place in Petr's small town prior to his trip to Moscow, Petr reads a poem he has written, that describes his ambitions: 'I am not great at writing lyrics, and I do not seek the fame of Pushkin, my friends, but I

[891] This positive attitude of the NKGB officer towards the engineer in the film is at odds with the historical treatment of engineers in the Soviet Union, especially in the early 1930s, when, as we have seen, large numbers of them were accused of being foreign spies. The official, openly expressed attitudes were often at odds with reality, which was more complex than what was portrayed in the cinema.

do have a great technological idea, and I will realize it for the good of Socialism.'[892] The difference from Anton Kandidov in *Goalie* is immediately made clear: while in Anton's case, Pushkin's name was used as a metaphor for fame, in Petr's case, comparing by the main protagonist of himself with Pushkin signifies his belief in his own talent. Petr specifically states that he 'does not seek fame', while Anton wants his name to 'ring throughout the district'. In the following sequence, this is further clarified when Petr tells Valia that even though his lyrics are bad, he is a 'Pushkin in technology', or in other words, he is technologically gifted. The rest of the film narrative confirms that Petr indeed has an innate talent for technology, coupled with great energy to realize this talent and ideas.

At the automobile factory in Moscow,[893] Petr soon excels at work, due to a rationalization suggestion that he presents to the shop foreman. Thanks to this (unspecified) suggestion, Petr is immediately promoted to be the supervisor of the tyre conveyor belt, advancing faster than his two friends. This is the first clear signifier of Petr's active engagement in the Americanization discourse: rationalization of production was a concept that had its roots in the so-called Fordization of mass production, or making production methods more efficient and yielding better and faster results, a method pioneered by the American businessman Henry Ford and enthusiastically embraced by Lenin in the early 1920s.[894] Petr's promotion to the level of supervisor of the conveyor belt is another clear indication of

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[892] 'Стихом я, правда, не очень-то владею и славы Пушкина, ребята, не ищу. | Но я имею большую техническую идею, и я ее для пользы социализма воплощу!'

[893] The main automobile factory in Moscow at that time was AMO (Avtomobil'noe moskovskoe obshchestvo), or ZiS (Zavod imeni Stalina) as it was renamed in 1931. The fact that Petr, Kotia and Senia work at AMO is confirmed by the second female protagonist, Tonia, who says that her father is an AMO worker.

[894] Rogger, 'Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia', p. 419; Austin, *Building Utopia*, p. 9.

his connection with the Fordization movement, as the conveyor belt was Ford's best-known invention.

Petr's ideals are further clarified in the scene where he is shown working at home in his room. The wall above Petr's bed contains a number of photographs and a large piece of paper with a printed quote, Petr's motto: 'A person ought to show the power of his thinking by applying it in practice'. Thus, making a suggestion of rationalizing production at the plant is an instance of Petr putting his ideas into practice, following his motto. Even though Petr is not an engineer (he is still a student), he is already a thinker, who is concerned both with technological inventions (his 'great technological idea' will be discussed further) and with improving the plant's efficiency.

Petr's wall also contains a number of portraits of people whom he admires. We may remember here Liuda's room in Room's *Bed and Sofa*, a film made seven years prior to *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov*, where Liuda's ideal (not for emulation but for admiration) was Douglas Fairbanks, represented by his photograph on the wall above her mirror. Petr's ideals are: Lenin, Stalin and Sverdlov (role models that were supposed to be shared by all Soviet people at that time, representing their political alignment with the Soviet cause), Maiakovskii (representing Petr's love of poetry), and, in the center of the portraits' arrangement, the great scientists, including Thomas Edison, Robert Fulton and Michael Faraday. In the following scenes that show Petr working on his invention, it is the portraits of the scientists that he addresses asking for help and inspiration. Importantly, both Edison and Fulton were American scientists and inventors, Faraday being an English physicist and sharing the same language with Edison and Fulton. At one point in the film, Petr tells

a friend that he 'lives the life of Fulton and Faraday', clearly indicating that the American and English inventors are his primary role models.

Next to the portraits, Petr's wall contains a detailed timetable, where every hour of every day is assigned a specific activity. Every day of the week has an hour dedicated to a 'heroic deed'; three out of the five days[895] include two or three hours dedicated to 'working on the invention' and fifteen minutes for studying English; one day a week has an hour scheduled for listening to the radio, and another day has two hours scheduled for going to the cinema. Most of the time each day is taken up by work at the plant and studying. The precision with which the events of each day are scheduled is reflected in the fact that some activities begin and end not on the hour but several minutes before or after the hour. Petr's dedication to following the timetable is humorously illustrated by the fact that, when he realizes that he is eight minutes late for an English lesson, he beats himself on the neck.

Petr's timetable reflects the discourse of rationalization of labour, with its roots in the doctrine of Taylorism that was actively applied by Alexei Gastev in the Central Institute of Labour. This is another signifier of Petr's 'Americanness'. His gesture of beating himself on the neck for being late contains a parody of the over-rationalized routine of workers promoted by Gastev and adherents of Taylorism. It is reminiscent of a scene in Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *10 L.S.*, where the writer mocks a young Soviet manager who has recently visited the United States and lives by a strict

[895] In the 1930s, the usual seven-day week was temporarily abandoned in favor of a five-day week, the 'piatidnevka' referred to in Alexandrov's *Volga-Volga* (1938).

timetable.[896] However, the approval of Petr's ideals is a lot stronger in the film narrative than their criticism, as we shall see shortly.

Petr's decision to live by a timetable is but one element in his overall resolve to 'become a great man'. When his friend Senia (V. Tsishevskii) asks him why he has scheduled an 'heroic deed' every day, Petr replies that he wants heroism to become his habit: 'I want to develop the behavior of a great person [*velikogo cheloveka*]. I believe that everyone in the USSR should do the same. By the age of thirty we should become great people!' This plan is a perfect representation of the widespread Soviet rhetoric of tempering oneself into an exemplary individual. As we have already noted, the process of forging oneself into the New Soviet Man was considered the work of each individual and had the connotations of self-improvement through self-discipline.[897] In this context, the Taylorist concept of living by the timetable was part of the overall effort of establishing self-discipline and as such was shown as a positive undertaking. This partially explains why Petr's adherence to the strict timetable is not criticized more strongly in the film. It is important to note that, unlike Anton, Petr's wish to become a 'great man' does not signify his desire to become distinct and famous, but rather his belief that every Soviet citizen should become an outstanding individual, a heroic New Soviet Man. As we have seen, Petr's ideal of an outstanding man is an inventor, a scientist and master of technology like Edison or Fulton.

Petr's way of becoming a 'great person' is through applying his talent to the sphere of technological inventions, specifically within the automobile industry

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[896] Ilya Ehrenburg, *Das Leben der Autos [10 L.S.]* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 262-275.
[897] Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva', p. 195.

(beginning in the 1920s, the automobile signified American technology and modernism). To achieve this goal, he needs to learn English.[898] He is shown practicing such English words as 'industrial building' which he repeats several times. The desire to know English indicates Petr's implicit interest in either visiting the Unites States, or being able to communicate with American engineers and technicians in Russia. In this scene, Petr is reminiscent of the character Stepan in Nikolai Pogodin's play *Tempo* written in 1929, who spends his nights conjugating English verbs and planning a trip to America, while his friend Maksimka, head of the Bureau of Rationalization at a tractor plant, is studying Fordism and Taylorism and believes that one has to 'master Americanism and suffuse it with Communist principles.'[899]

The greatest passion of Petr's life is the work on his invention, the 'great technological idea' he described in his poem. When asked by Senia to give some examples of heroic deeds that he plans to accomplish, Petr describes his invention as the greatest one (following the two heroic deeds already performed, overfulfilling the production plan and sacrificing his coat for his girlfriend). As he shows Senia a model of a mechanism he is working on, Petr says, 'This model is going to create a revolution in the field of realizing the dynamic qualities of the automobile.' Petr's resolve to improve the dynamic qualities of the automobile, already one of the fastest technological inventions and symbols of modernity and dynamism, along with aeroplanes and trains (and associated in the popular imagination with American

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[898] In another Soviet film, *Amerikanskaia istoriia [An American Story]* (1931), the main character, Vas'ka, who works at a factory and spends a lot of time studying English and learning modern technology, is actually referred to within the diegesis as the 'American' (*'Vas'ka-amerikanets'*). See Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my: Annotirovannyi katalog, vol. 1, p. 417.

[899] Nikolai Pogodin, 'Temp', in *Sobraniie dramaticheskikh proizvedenii,* vol.1 (Moscow, 1960), p. 46 and pp. 77-78.

technological prowess), functions as another signifier of Petr's 'Americanness'. Later, Petr spends hours and a lot of his energy working on his invention, which still needs to be perfected. As he writes dozens of formulas, paces throughout the room energetically, falls deep into serious thought, talks to the portraits of his heroes the scientists, and goes back to work at his desk, Petr appears driven, hard-working and enthusiastic, a trailblazer in the field of technology and a deep thinker dedicated to seeing his innovation through to the end.

While a large part of the film's narrative revolves around Petr's personal relationships with the two young women, one of whom, his girlfriend Valia, he betrays for his friend Kotia's new sweetheart, an independent urban architecture student Tonia (Nadezhda Ardi), his invention is nevertheless more important to him than either of the two women. An unsuccessful date with Tonia is disturbed by the arrival of Valia, which ends with both women leaving Petr's apartment. However, the only moments when Petr misses the companionship of the young women are the moments of jealousy towards his male friends, Senia and Kotia (K. Gradopolov), who are now courting Valia and Tonia. Although he now misses Tonia, Petr continues to work on his invention, referring to it as a 'stronger magnet' than the young woman, quoting the Russian translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

In the final scene of the film, all the main characters attend 'The Concert of the Young Masters of Technology, Science, Art and Physical Culture'. During the concert, the entire audience in the concert hall is shown reading a fresh newspaper, with Petr's portrait and a large article about him. The article announces Petr's new invention and its usefulness to the country, as it will save the automobile industry six hundred thousand rubles per year. Petr is described in the article as an already well-

known young inventor and author of a number of rationalizing innovations. When Petr realizes that hundreds of people in the concert hall are applauding him, he remains unchanged, and even disregards his fame at first. When he finally comes out on stage, all he can do is recite his ill-rhymed poem, repeating the line about not seeking fame. Being in the limelight is not an end goal for Petr, but only a by-product of being able to apply his talent and realize his ideas. Petr has earned the praise he now receives, even though his personal morals are compromised. As everyone applauds, Petr is not basking in glory but simply wonders why his friends, who used to think his poem had no merit, suddenly praise him.

The film narrative clearly approves of Petr and his professional inventions, taking the side of the applauding audience and exonerating Petr of the mistakes he has made in his private life. In the film's happy ending, both young women are clearly happy, as they are now married to Petr's friends.[900] The final sequence reflects the somewhat confused message of the film: Petr is now an exemplary individual and perhaps even a 'great man' he so wished to become, while not being an entirely positive hero and having 'weaknesses on some fronts', as his friend Senia puts it. As Senia asks Petr to describe to everyone 'how you reached the state of complete heroism', Senia's ironic attitude is the one that appears most closely aligned with that of the filmmakers. At the same time, the audience in the concert hall applauding Petr

[900] The three young men are friends again, following Petr's suggestion that they work on a new invention together (even though he is capable of doing it himself). Petr pronounces that 'nothing can break up the true friendship of three lads', and Senia agrees that 'the three of us together are invincible.' Male friendship, as well as male ability to invent useful technological innovations and to reinvent oneself as a heroic New Soviet Man, is presented as more important than relationships with women. The priority of male friendship, connected with male technological and military contribution to the state, over relationships with women is confirmed in the words of a song in the film *Sky Barge [Nebesnyi tikhokhod]* (1943): 'Aeroplanes come first, come first, and as to girls, girls will have to wait until later!'

invites the film viewers to join them in their approbation, which is aligned with the official attitude of the state that over-fulfilling the production plan and creating technological inventions useful to the country constitutes heroism and is more important than mistakes in private life. According to the notes made by Boris Shumiatskii during the private screening of the film for Stalin, Kaganovich and Voroshilov, all present at the screening expressed their approval and agreed that the film was a 'new success' of Soviet filmmakers.[901]

Within the film narrative, Petr Vinogradov is an exemplary individual not only because he is someone who has answered Stalin's call, voiced in a speech given in front of engineers and managers in 1931, 'to study technology, to master science, and to develop a Bolshevik tempo',[902] but because his passion to study technology and master science, as well as his dynamism and energy, are innate qualities that happen to coincide with the Party's official tasks. In other words, Petr is a genuine innovator whose talents and interests (inspired, no doubt, by technological innovations and rationalization principles originating in America) happen to be very timely and useful for the state. The praise Petr earns by the film's finale is largely the result of his 'American' traits of efficiency, energy and inventiveness, as well as his self-discipline and dedication to reinventing himself in the image of great scientists, engineers and technological innovators.

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[901] '"Kartina sil'naia, khoroshaia, no ne *Chapaev*...": Zapisi besed B.Z. Shumiatskogo s I.V. Stalinym posle kinoprosmotrov 1935-1937 gg.', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 62 (2003), pp. 115-188 (p. 122).

[902] I.V.Stalin, 'On the Tasks of the Industrial Administrators', in *Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev: Voices of Bolshevism*, ed. by Robert McNeal (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1963), pp. 99-102. This translation uses the word 'technique' which I have replaced with 'technology', a correct translation of the Russian *tekhnika*.

The idea of the 'collective' of the three young men, who at the end of the film agree that they have no weaknesses when they are together, appears to be unnaturally 'pinned' upon the film's ending, perhaps because otherwise Petr's individual achievements would stand out too much from the collective. This reflects the mixed attitudes towards individualism in the first half of the 1930s.[903] Instead of offering a critique of individualism, the film ends with the notion that collectivism and individualism are intertwined and suggesting that each of the two has its benefits. The words of Grisha, the main protagonist of Room's banned film *Strict Young Man* (1936), help shed light on the growing positive attitude towards individualism and individual achievement in the 1930s.[904] In that film, Grisha writes,

> There aren't and cannot be people who are alike, that is a bourgeois equality. The very concept of competition [*sorevnovaniie*] cancels out the concept of equality. Equality means lack of movement, competition means movement. Keep up with the best, help the ones who fall behind and achieve common ascent. The best are our leaders, the builders of Socialism. The best are those who create thoughts, science, technology, and music. These are the high minds, those who fight with nature, winners over death.[905]

Thus, the technical intelligentsia, artists, scientists and political leaders are the exemplary individuals, and it is perfectly natural for them to be ahead of others, who should strive to catch up with them. This was the approach accepted by the mid-1930s, which differed from the maximalist equality rhetoric of the 1920s. Similar to *Goalie*, *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov* reflected the complexity of attitudes towards outstanding individuals who acquired fame within Soviet society, and, also

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[903] Vadim Volkov has pointed out that after 1935 individualism became a lot more acceptable than collectivism, and was even celebrated. See Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva', p. 192.

[904] Although this film was banned, the words written by Grisha are much less subversive than they might first appear to be, given the generally positive attitudes towards individualism in the mid-1930s.

[905] My translation of the original Russian text as it appears in the film.

similar to *Goalie*, the moderate criticism of the main protagonist in the film was greatly outweighed by his approval.

## IV. Efficiency and Rationalization of Labour

Other films of the decade that dealt with the issue of individual success were a number of films about shock workers and Stakhanovites. We have already discussed portrayals of women Stakhanovites, in particular Tania Morozova in Alexandrov's *The Shining Path*. Tania was portrayed by Liubov' Orlova as a Soviet 'Cinderella' who possessed the traits of a 'Russian American', including efficiency, resourcefulness, and energy. The personal success and fame that she achieved was portrayed as fully positive, with no negative connotations whatsoever: as a reward for her record-breaking work and efficiency, Tania achieved the position of a member of the Supreme Soviet of the Communist Party, as well as the affection of her beloved man. Other women Stakhanovites, heroines of musical comedies such as Marina Ladynina's characters Mariana Bazhan in *The Tractor Drivers* (1939) and Glasha in *The Swineherd and the Shepherd* (1941), were also fully positive heroines, who did not necessarily seek fame but who were rewarded by fame, along with other material and spiritual rewards, for their hard work and efficiency.

The self-fashioning of a Soviet shock worker who acquires 'American' qualities of efficiency and mastery over technology when faced with a challenge from an American specialist, is represented in Aleksandr Macheret's film *Deeds and*

*People* (1932).[906] Neia Zorkaia has pointed out that in the 1930s, the image of an American specialist typically presented in Soviet cinema and theatre was that of an 'intelligent, open-minded, excellent worker, but slightly too pragmatic person' who didn't believe in *russkii razmakh* and was thus beaten in kind-hearted and friendly competition.[907]

The film opens with the arrival to the Soviet Union of an American specialist, Mr. Klines (Viktor Stanitsyn), who has been invited to provide assistance in Soviet construction work. Meanwhile, a shock worker Zakharov (Nikolai Okhlopkov) is being praised for the record-breaking work of his brigade at a workers' meeting at a large Soviet construction site. Male workers discuss Zakharov's extraordinary work achievements, while young women discuss his youth and good looks.

However, when the American specialist arrives at the construction site, Zakharov learns that the standards considered high by him and his fellow Russian workers, appear too low to the American. As the female interpreter (Sofia Yakovleva) struggles to translate the term *udarnik* (shock worker) and *sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie* (Socialist competition) to Mr. Klines, pointing to Zakharov as an example of exemplary worker managers, the American understands her in the directly opposite way. He says, 'Yes, my good friend, I quite understand. You mean that these people don't know how to work! I saw that at once.' The American proceeds to laugh. The Russian translation of his words sparks anger in Zakharov, and the Russian and American find themselves in opposition, ready to fight each other.

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[906] This was one of the first Soviet sound films, and the first feature directed by Aleksandr Macheret. Jay Leyda translated the name of the film as *Men and Jobs*. See Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 288.
[907] Neia Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), p. 196.

Instead, however, the Russian worker asks the American to show him how he works. Thus begins the process of Zakharov's transformation, resulting from the challenge by the American.[908]

As Mr. Klines sees a crane lifting a heavy load, he points out that it takes the worker operating the crane nine minutes to do a job that should only take three minutes. The Russian workers lack efficiency and knowledge of machinery they are operating, and thus lag behind in their tempo and production achievements. The American proceeds to operate the crane himself, telling Zakharov to time him, and accomplishes the task in the promised three minutes. The following sequence of fast cuts between shots of the crane lifting and unloading materials and the American operating it with ease and competence signifies American efficiency and mastery over modern technology. As Mr. Klines triumphantly finishes the task, the Russian crane operator, an elderly worker, spitefully pronounces, 'So what? It's not America here, but Russia!'

The American challenges Zakharov to try and accomplish the same task, but Zakharov is unable to operate the machine: he is a foreman, not a crane operator. However, Mr. Klines argues that 'the foreman ought to know how to work the machinery, even if the men can't.' An innovative use of sound (here, machine sounds repeated in a rhythmic pattern) signifies Zakharov's inner feelings, as he realizes his initial inability to compete with the American. Zakharov's embarrassment is

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[908] The transformation of the positive hero is an essential part not only of Socialist Realist narratives and traditional folk tales, but also of early American films, in particular the ones with Douglas Fairbanks (most famously, in *The Thief of Bagdad*) and Mary Pickford (for example, in *Daddy-Long-Legs*) that were widely shown in Russia in the 1920s. Emphasis on individual motivation and optimism of the main protagonist who actively participates in his or her own self-fashioning and transforms him or herself while bringing about the film's happy ending, adds an additional aspect to the similarity between a large number of Soviet films of the 1930s and early American films of Fairbanks and Pickford.

exacerbated by the fact that the American notices the banner, fixed high above the construction site, with the words, 'We shall catch up with and surpass America!' Noticing the contrast between this overly optimistic slogan and the backwardness of the Russian workers (one is shown yawning, while another uses a horse and cart to transport cement), Mr. Klines walks away laughing out loud.

The encounter with the competent and efficient American, someone seen at the time as 'a superior being, accurate, punctual, clever, daring, persistent, gloriously successful in everything he undertakes, a worker of prodigious miracles',[909] initiates a personal crisis in Zakharov. In a bout of drinking on his own in his room, Zakharov realizes the backwardness of the Russian work methods ('It turns out that shock workmanship is worth nothing',[910] he tells himself) and resolves to catch up with and surpass the American.[911]

Zakharov's first step on the road of transformation into a 'Russian American', someone who is better than the American himself, is to interest the workers in his brigade in furthering their technical education. At first, the workers are not enthusiastic, but their pride is hurt when the interpreter translates an article from the American *Times* newspaper that describes Soviet labour as forced by the security police.[912] Zakharov's initiative to further their education is amplified by the

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[909] Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 149.
[910] 'Вот и выходит, что ударничество, оно как корове под хвост!'
[911] Zakharov's transformation into an efficient worker is similar to the transformation of Semen Babchenko in Ermler and Iutkevich's *Vstrechnyi [Counterplan]* (1932).
[912] This is a highly ambiguous scene that can elicit multiple interpretations. The interpreter reads, 'Our correspondents had a conversation with [...] the witnesses of unheard-of violence used by the Cheka over the scientists that work at new construction sites. The unfortunate people are forced, under the threat of revolvers, to work at night, under heavy rain, during storms, with danger to their lives. Not many live through it, the stronger ones lose their mind.' As she reads out these words, the workers that listen to her are shown frowning, their

indignation caused by the article, and the workers sign up to participate in the newly organized class that takes place on the train. Zakharov is now described through the eyes of the female interpreter who is in awe of his new self: 'What amazing energy Zakharov has, it takes my breath away!'

As the workers acquire knowledge in the newly organized school, Zakharov leads the way in becoming an expert in theory. His new knowledge, as well as his growing efficiency is signified by a dynamic sequence in which the tempo of Zakharov's answers grows along with the speed of the moving train. However, he still lacks practical skills. Finding out that the crane operator has come to work intoxicated, Zakharov and his colleague Vasia fire the crane operator, and Zakharov applies his newly acquired knowledge in practice. Starting out slowly and unsure of himself, Zakharov gradually gains control and mastery over the crane and is shown enjoying operating the complex machinery, as well as the new speed with which he is able to work. Zakharov is in essence becoming like the American specialist, acquiring technical knowledge, efficiency and dynamism. He has learned to operate the crane himself, but he did it thanks to the challenge posed by the American specialist. Thus, in a way Mr. Klines the American is Zakharov's 'mentor' on his road to becoming a 'Russian American' New Soviet Man, who possesses efficiency and mastery over technology.

After Zakharov's brigade competes with that of Mr. Klines, Zakharov manages to win the competition in laying cement. At the workers' meeting that follows, Zakharov explains his collective's victory by the following factors: adopting

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frustration gradually growing. The workers' reaction can be interpreted either as frustration over the lies in a capitalist newspaper, or as an upset upon learning the truth about the Cheka practices.

the rationalization methods used by Mr. Klines (these are unspecified),[913] learning to use modern technology efficiently, and exhibiting enthusiasm. The last factor appears to be presented as an innate trait of the Soviet workers and the one that tipped the scale and allowed the Russian brigade to win over the one headed by the American. However, the American also headed a brigade of Soviet workers; why these lacked enthusiasm, remains unclear.

In a gesture of friendship, Mr. Klines applauds Zakharov and his brigade, and the two men who are now friends attempt to hold a conversation, using gestures and handshakes instead of words. The head of the construction site announces that the reason for Zakharov's brigade's victory[914] was due to their 'combining American efficiency with Russian revolutionary sweep', thus interpreting the film as an illustration of Stalin's famous slogan, originally pronounced by Stalin back in 1925.

Having taught the Soviet workers efficiency, Mr. Klines, repeating the steps of Mr. West in Kuleshov's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), writes a letter to his wife in New York saying that 'Bolsheviks are gentlemen after all' and stating that he will not be coming back to America any time soon. As Zorkaia has pointed out, the assumption in many plays and films of the 1930s that involved American specialists was that many of them would choose to stay in the USSR.[915]

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[913] According to Stephen Kotkin, the term 'rationalization' in construction work was usually associated with applying extra effort. See Kotkin, 'Coercion and Identity', in *Making Workers Soviet*, p. 282. However, the term also implies a higher degree of order in a process that used to be more chaotic. The film does not make clear what kind of rationalization methods Mr. Klines teaches the Russian workers.

[914] The construction head uses the word 'we' to indicate that Zakharov's victory over Mr. Klines signifies Russia's victory over America in friendly competition.

[915] Zorkaia also points out that portrayals of Americans in the films and plays of the 1930s were usually positive, and even when an American specialist was shown as a spy or enemy,

The film ends with a scene that shows Zakharov's friend, the worker Vasia, visually fashioning himself based on the example of the American. Vasia is a member of Zakharov's brigade and has already acquired the American traits of efficiency and mastery over technology. However, to complete his self-fashioning into a 'Russian American', Vasia now wears an American-looking checkered cap, says 'Ho!' just like Mr. Klines, and attends to the cleanliness of his shoes as well as the cleanliness of the machine that he operates. The intercutting of the actions of Vasia and Mr. Klines suggests that the Soviet worker has become a 'Russian American', while Mr. Klines has acquired a Russian worker's habit of spitting, which presumably has done no harm to his innate American efficiency.

Another example of a shock worker with 'Russian American' qualities can be seen in Ivan Pyriev's *kolkhoz* comedy *The Tractor Drivers* (1939). A former tank driver Klim Iarko (Nikolai Kriuchkov), who has just completed his military service in the Soviet Far East, sees a newspaper article about a record-breaking female *kolkhoz* worker Mariana Bazhan (Marina Ladynina) and decides to meet her. He arrives at her Ukrainian *kolkhoz*, only to find that Mariana is engaged to a local idler Nazar Duma. However, this is a fictitious engagement, as Mariana has made a secret deal with Nazar in order to ward off her numerous admirers.

From the beginning, Klim proves to be highly resourceful and skillful. When he first meets Mariana, who has fallen off her motorcycle, he proceeds to bandage her leg and to fix the motorcycle with the ease of a professional.[916] Due to his mechanical

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there was always another American character within the play or film that was portrayed as positive. See Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino*, p. 196.

[916] John Haynes has analyzed the film and this particular sequence in terms of its sexual politics. See Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, p. 129.

skills, Klim soon wins the respect of the female tractor brigade led by Mariana. The women value efficiency, discipline and enthusiastic work, and Klim soon proves to be endowed with all of these values. The male brigade, however, is portrayed as utterly disorganized, with its tractors in poor condition as the men spend their time in idleness. At one point, Klim inadvertently witnesses Nazar, the leader of the male brigade, stealing fuel for their tractor. As the incident becomes known, Nazar is fired from his position.

In the meantime, Klim, who believes Mariana and Nazar's engagement to be true, loses hope of winning Mariana's heart and decides to leave the *kolkhoz*. But Mariana, who has already fallen in love with him, convinces the *kolkhoz* chairman to bring Klim back by any means. The chairman, too, is fascinated by Klim's qualities, which are highly helpful to the *kolkhoz*. He entices Klim to return and gives him Nazar's old job.

In the key scene of the film, Klim must win the hearts of his new brigade, the slackers who are alienated by the dismissal of their former boss. Ingeniously, Klim begins by outdancing his new subordinates, as well as his rival Nazar, in a vivacious folk dance. Furthermore, in a trial offered to him by the men, Klim proves that his head works as well as his feet: he is presented with a broken tractor and, simply by listening to its engine, is able to define the reason for the breakdown. Klim's ingenuity and mastery over technology earn him immediate respect among the men.

The next two main actions on the part of Klim make him a local hero, both among his male subordinates and among the female brigade. First, Klim – the resourceful 'Russian American' – helps transform the former idler Nazar into an exemplary worker. He fixes an additional piece of plowing equipment onto Nazar's

tractor, making his work more efficient. Nazar soon becomes an exemplary Stakhanovite farmer, whose picture appears in *Pravda*, making him worthy of Mariana. In a sense, Klim's role in the *kolkhoz* in *The Tractor Drivers* is similar to the role of the American specialist in *Deeds and People*: just as Mr. Klines teaches Zakharov and his brigade efficiency and mastery over technology and turns them into truly exemplary workers, Klim teaches Nazar's brigade similar skills and helps turn Nazar into a Stakhanovite.

The second action that raises respect for Klim and further illustrates his 'Russian American' qualities, is his initiative in teaching the workers about the functioning of a tank. As we remember, Klim is a recently demobilized tank driver. The film was made in 1939, on the brink of World War II. Klim instructs the local tractor drivers in driving and fixing tanks.

In the end, Mariana and Klim declare their love for each other and are married, Nazar is transformed into an exemplary worker, and the *kolkhoz* is ready to fight off the Germans. The New Soviet Man Klim Iarko has been the primary agent for these transformations. The changes in the *kolkhoz* occur largely due to Klim's 'American' qualities of efficiency, inventiveness and mastery over technology, as well as optimism. At the same time, the tractor – which was considered a symbol of modernization – has now been equalled to a tank,[917] one of the main tools used to protect the country against the German invasion. Thus, qualities of 'Americanness' have been conscripted in the cause of defending the Motherland.

[917] In the film, the *kolkhoz* chairman endorses Klim's idea by stating that 'a tractor is a tank'. Later, while making a toast to the newly married couple, the chairman suggests, 'If necessary, you will move from tractors onto tanks.'

## V. Trailblazers in the Skies: The Cult of the Aviator Hero

In the 1920s, the word 'stunt' (*triuk)* was widely used by popular Soviet film magazines to attract viewers to see imported American films. If stuntmen were objects of admiration whom Soviet viewers wanted to emulate (the general tendency that was satirized in *The Kiss of Mary Pickford*), then who was the ultimate stuntman but the aviator, and what was a more spectacular stunt than aeroplanes fighting in the skies and setting world records in speed and distance? In Soviet Russia of the 1930s, the image of an aviator combined in itself key elements that represented the dynamism of modernity, mastery over modern technology, individual glory, and dangerous adventure, all concepts deeply connected with American cinema and culture. The cultural shift from emphasis on the 'real' to emphasis on the 'heroic' in the early 1930s, described by Katerina Clark,[918] needs to be assessed keeping in mind the context in which it took place, that of modernization which in the previous decade was seen as equal to 'Americanization', accompanied by popularity of American cinema and adventure literature with its athletic and adventurous heroes.

The cult of the aviator hero did not originate in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It was a world phenomenon that came into being during the World War I and encompassed many countries, including Great Britain, Germany, Italy, France, America, and Russia.[919] Successful air fighters in many countries during that war

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[918] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 34.
[919] Michael Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun': Aviation, Nationalism, and Popular Cinema* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 2-3. See also Marc Wortman, *The Millionaires' Unit: The Aristocratic Flyboys Who Fought the Great War and Invented American Air Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006).

were soon turned into national heroes, using cinema to promote their heroic image.[920] Germany was the first country to do so,[921] but it was through major Hollywood productions of the late 1920s and early 1930s that the image of the mythic aviator hero reached the widest audience. According to Robert Wohl, the close relationship between cinema and the aeroplane has been instrumental in shaping the worldwide aviation imagination of the twentieth-century.[922]

Between the two world wars, aviation was exceptionally popular in the United States, turning into a 'love affair between millions of Americans and the flying machine'[923] that was manifested through attendance at aviation shows, as well as magazines, novels, comic books, and, most importantly, cinema. According to Michael Paris, after 1919 Hollywood produced more feature films related to aviation than all other nations together.[924] By the 1920s, the aviator had become 'the ultimate modern hero' in American culture.[925] The most famous of such American aviator heroes was Charles Lindbergh who flew over the Atlantic in a solo flight in 1927, linking 'the promise of the triumph of the machine age and the continuation of virtues of frontier individualism.'[926] By the end of the 1920s, the latest technological innovations meant that America became the world's preeminent aviation superpower for decades to come.[927]

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[920] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[921] Ibid., p. 25.
[922] Robert Wohl, *Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 109–56.
[923] Joseph Corn, *The Winged Gospel – America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York, 1983), p. vii.
[924] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* p. 108.
[925] Ibid., p. 109.
[926] John Ward, 'The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight', *American Quarterly*, 10 (Spring 1958), pp. 3-16.
[927] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 184.

The public obsession with aviator heroes and setting world records was present in Russia just as much as in the United States in the 1930s. Similar to the American hero Charles Lindbergh, in Stalinist Russia of the 1930s, aviators were central hero figures. In the Soviet context, these individuals were long exalted as examples of heroism and service to the Socialist fatherland. Clark has referred to the Soviet aviator heroes (along with other heroes of the 1930s including sportsmen, explorers and Stakhanovites) as 'supermen' and the chosen 'sons' in the Stalinist 'Great Family'.[928] Clark has pointed out that in the cultural discourse of the time, it was the human superiority of the aviator heroes that was emphasized even more than the superiority of Soviet aviation.[929] This fact confirms that the aviators' individuality played a great role in the development of their hero image. According to Vadim Volkov, the heroism of record-breaking individual aviator heroes, such as Valerii Chkalov, Mikhail Vodopianov, Aleksandr Beliakov, Georgii Baidukov, Valentina Grizodubova and others, was repeated on a smaller scale by the masses of 'little people' who strove to perform the feats of the 'great heroes'.[930]

Stalin's personal interest in aviation has been described as originating in 1933 (more than a decade after the beginning of the 'love affair' with aviation in America, and five years after the trans-Atlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh).[931] According to K. E. Bailes, it was in 1933 that Stalin praised the development of an aviation industry as one of the best accomplishments of the First Five Year Plan and established a new

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[928] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 121 and p. 125.
[929] Ibid., p. 125.
[930] Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva', pp. 190-191.
[931] In my argument about the connection between American and Soviet aviation culture, I do not intend to suggest that America was the only state from which the Soviets learned and borrowed aviation technology. In fact, as Palmer has indicated, until the mid-1930s Soviet Russia also learned a lot from Germany in the field of aviation technology. See Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 160.

national holiday, Aviation Day. By the autumn of 1933, the Soviet Union entered the international competition for air records.[932] However, as Scott Palmer has pointed out, four years earlier, in 1929, the Soviet Union sent an aeroplane called *Land of the Soviets* on the first Soviet long-distance flight from Moscow across Siberia, the Bering Straits, and then crossing the United States and reaching its final destination of New York. The enterprise was the earliest attempt to demonstrate Soviet achievements in aviation, as well as to cultivate helpful contacts with U.S. aviation enterprises, at the time when the Soviet Union was not yet officially recognized by the United States government.[933]

Throughout the 1930s, a number of attempts at breaking world records in flight speed, distance, and height were made by the Soviet aviators, dubbed 'Stalin's falcons'. According to Bailes, the Soviet authorities noted the publicity potential of American aviation efforts, including that of Lindbergh, as well as of Wiley Post and Amelia Earhart, and gave massive publicity to their own aviators.[934] Many scholars have noted the role of the aviator heroes in setting examples for ordinary Soviet citizens in transforming themselves into New Soviet Men and Women.[935] Additionally, Bailes has argued that the systematic air race for world records begun in the USSR after 1933 had the function of legitimizing the regime that, at the same time, was undertaking massive purges of millions of its citizens.[936] Between 1933 and 1938 the Soviet authorities claimed that Soviet aviators had set sixty-two world

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[932]K. E. Bailes, "Technology and Legitimacy: Soviet Aviation and Stalinism in the 1930s," *Technology and Culture,* 17.1 (January 1976), pp. 58-59.
[933] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para.309.
[934] Bailes, 'Technology and Legitimacy', p. 59.
[935] See, for example, Clark, *The Soviet Novel*; Volkov, 'Pokoreniie vozdushnogo prostranstva'.
[936] Bailes, 'Technology and Legitimacy', p. 65.

records, including the first landing at the North Pole and the first flight between the Soviet Union and the United States by a polar route.[937]

In the U.S., many Hollywood films throughout the 1920s and 1930s glorified the aviator hero. The three major productions that dealt with aviators during the First World War were William Wellman's *Wings* (USA, 1927), Howard Hughes' *Hell's Angels* (USA, 1930) and Howard Hawks' *Dawn Patrol* (USA, 1930).[938] *Wings* was acclaimed as Best Picture of the Year during the first Academy Award ceremony;[939] *Hell's Angels* was made by the millionaire and aviation enthusiast Howard Hughes and was enormously successful upon its release;[940] and *Dawn Patrol*, examining the problem of leadership in combat, was exceptionally popular with audiences and critics alike.[941] Paris has pointed out that cinema was the most effective channel to glorify aviation and 'because of Hollywood's domination, carried this propaganda to an international audience.'[942] Some of the main themes dealt with in American aviation films included individualism, change, and technical progress, themes that have been at the centre of American culture as a whole. Paris has observed that in

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[937] Ibid., p. 60. Valerii Chkalov and his team were the first to reach America by a polar route and a non-stop flight from Moscow in 1937. They landed in Vancouver, Washington.

[938] None of these three major productions were in distribution in Soviet Russia. See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie khudozhestvennye fil'my v sovetskom prokate'. Two aviation films that were indeed distributed in Russia in the late 1920s were *Flying Fleet* (USA, 1929) and *The Night Flyer* (USA, 1928). See Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie khudozhestvennye fil'my v sovetskom prokate', p. 227 and p. 275. I have not been able to establish whether *Wings, Hell's Angels,* or *Dawn Patrol* were shown to Stalin during his private screenings in the 1930s; however, one is tempted to speculate that, given Stalin's interest in both cinema and aviation (see, for example, Grigorii Mariamov, *Kremlevskii tsenzor: Stalin smotrit kino* (Moscow: Konfederatsiia soiuza kinematografistov 'Kinotsentr', 1992)), and given the wide acclaim of the three above-mentioned aviation features in the U.S. (one of them having won the very first Academy Award), it is highly likely that Stalin would have been interested in seeing one or more of these films. I do not have evidence to support this, however, and the question remains open to further research.

[939] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* p. 37.

[940] Ibid., p. 38.

[941] Ibid., p. 39.

[942] Ibid., p. 110.

later decades, young American airmen 'modeled their behavior on the screen images of the heroes of *Wings* and *Dawn Patrol.*'[943]

Just as in America Hollywood played a major role in disseminating the image of the aviator hero, cinema in the Soviet Union in the 1930s played a similar role. Kaganovsky has analyzed the representation of disciplined and controlled masculinity in Soviet films about aviators. Using such films as *The Pilots* [*Letchiki*] (1935) and *Valerii Chkalov* (1941) as examples, she has argued that the aviators in these films, including the famous pilot Chkalov, become exemplary men and women only when they achieve discipline and 'consciousness' (following Clark's 'spontaneity' / 'consciousness' dichotomy).[944] This argument of Kaganovsky expands Clark's interpretation of the figure of Chkalov in fiction and non-fiction as one of the 'gifted but high-spirited children' of Stalin who 'needed greater discipline and self-control ("consciousness")'.[945]

Palmer has argued that Soviet flight-related films made in the 1920s and 1930s 'served as complementary tools in fostering social conformity and supporting authoritarianism.'[946] He has demonstrated that the themes of discipline and consciousness, as well as the collective, were central to many Soviet aviation features, including *Gogi: The Courageous Flyer* [*Gogi otvazhnyi letchik*] (1929), *The Pilots* (1935),[947] *Victory* [*Pobeda*] (1938) and *Air Mail* [*Vozdushnaia pochta*] (1939).[948] Palmer has argued that most Soviet aviation films of the time focused on

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[943] Ibid., p. 53.
[944] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade,* pp. 92-95.
[945] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 126.
[946] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 458.
[947] Palmer calls this film *Fliers*. The original Russian title is *Letchiki*.
[948] Among other Soviet aviation films of the decade are *Intrigan* [*The Troublemaker*] (1935), *Muzhestvo* [*Courage*] (1939), and *Istrebiteli* [*The Fighter Pilots*] (1939).

two major patterns: either the submission of an undisciplined man to Party authority, or the overcoming of the forces of nature by a conscious and tenacious pilot who then brings glory to his or her people.[949]

It is important to note that, while Palmer and other scholars tend to see Soviet pilot films as fundamentally different from those made in the West[950] due to their emphasis on the value of discipline and the collective over the individual initiative of a pilot, the Soviet Union was far from the only country to focus on these values in its aviation films. In Germany, similar themes were at the cenre of films about pilots: for example, *D111 88* (1939) promoted the aviators' 'spirit of sacrifice for the nation' and depicted pilots being grounded for breach of discipline. Michael Paris points out that the airmen in the film 'learn that individualism constitutes danger' and also learn of the need for discipline.[951] In Fascist Italy, the importance of 'control' for a pilot was equally emphasized.[952] However, it was not only totalitarian states that promoted discipline and service to the country as important traits of their nation's pilots. In the United States, Hollywood films such as Howard Hawks' *Air Circus* (USA, 1928) focused on aviators who, in order to become successful pilots, needed to learn about discipline and self-control, as well as about loyalty to the group and male camaraderie.[953] In Hughes' *Hell's Angels* (USA, 1930), one of the two main protagonists sacrifices the life of his brother and his own life, so that information essential to his fatherland is not divulged to the enemy. According to Paris, during the

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[949] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air,* para. 510.
[950] For example, Palmer argues with the view expressed by Richard Stites that certain Soviet aviation films, notably *The Pilots*, are similar to American aviation films of the time. See Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, p. 87; Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 495.
[951] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,* pp. 94-95.
[952] Ibid.
[953] Ibid., p. 60.

1930s, the screen image of the American war flier demonstrated the qualities of self-sacrifice, duty and patriotism,[954] traits deeply connected to the idea of loyalty to the collective. Thus, discipline and loyalty to the collective are not unique to Soviet aviation culture, but appear to have been promoted as ideal traits of a successful airman in a number of western countries, both totalitarian and democratic, including the United States.

Rather than focusing on what other scholars have described as unique features of Soviet aviation films, I will analyze the similarities between these films and American aviation films, and explore the roots of these similarities. In particular, I will focus on Mikhail Kalatozov's *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), a film that portrays the most outstanding of 'Stalin's falcons' and that has been instrumental in creating the myth of Chkalov as the ultimate hero of aviation and an exemplary New Soviet Man in the Soviet popular imagination.

The film is structured around several of the famous feats of Chkalov (played by Vladimir Belokurov), beginning with his daredevil flight underneath the Troitskii bridge in Leningrad, and ending with the heroic record-breaking flight of his team from Moscow to the United States via the North Pole. The pattern of Chkalov's character development throughout the film follows the Socialist Realist master plot, described by Clark, of a 'spontaneous' character attaining 'consciousness' and self-discipline with the help of the ultimate mentor and 'father', Stalin himself. However, there is another side to Chkalov's mythic figure as represented in Kalatozov's film, one that has a deeply rooted connection with American culture and that has not been analyzed by scholars of Soviet cinema so far. In order to analyze this connection, I

[954] Ibid., p. 52.

will engage with Wilbur Zelinsky's model of American identity and culture, and will apply certain elements of this model to the cinematic portrayal of the greatest Soviet aviator hero.

Zelinsky proposed that the four central themes in American culture are individualism, mobility and change, a mechanistic vision of the world (or, love of technology), and a messianic perfectionism (or, a belief that the United States is a nation with a world mission).[955] The first two of these themes, individualism and dynamism, are closely connected with the frontier theory first formulated by Frederick Jackson Turner who saw movement as the dominant fact of American life.[956] In the 1920s and 1930s, it was the sky that was seen as the final American frontier, and aviators were considered the ultimate embodiment of rugged frontier individualism, fighting with the elements and conquering space, alone and face to face with nature.[957]

Some scholars of Soviet culture and cinema have briefly noted a certain degree of similarity between the Soviet culture of the 1930s and the American frontier mentality. For example, Katerina Clark has stated that the hero image set in the 1930s possessed some qualities of a frontiersman, such as will, 'true grit' and 'stickability'. While perceiving this similarity, Clark did not explore the parallel further, based on the fact that the heroes of the 1930s were not likened to frontiersmen.[958] Richard Stites also perceived the parallel between the Soviet aviator

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[955] Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 40.
[956] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' 1893, reprint, *The Annals of America,* 11 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968), p. 478.
[957] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun'*, p. 109; Ward, 'The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight', pp. 3-16.
[958] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 73.

heroes and American frontiersmen, stating that the Soviet pilots 'embodied the leading edge of applied science and technology, the frontier spirit, bravery and adventure in distant and forbidden locales, and spirited youth tempered by fatherly mentors.'[959] However, Stites, like Clark, did not examine this link between the Soviet and American culture further.

In his discussion of the film *Valerii Chkalov*, John Haynes refers to the above comment by Stites and suggests that 'it is worth considering in more depth the theme of the "frontier spirit"'; however, he does not complete what he set out to do. Haynes proceeds to state that in Soviet Russia 'as in American culture of the time, with the conquest of the land seen as complete, a new frontier was sought-out and established – that of the skies.' He follows this statement with an overview of Susan Faludi's observation that during the Second World War it was the 'undifferentiated mass' of infantrymen that became the American nation's icon, rather than the showy and individual 'flyboys' of the Air Corps. Stating that the implications for his study 'should be clear', Haynes stops short of clarifying the relevance of Faludi's comparison of the American infantrymen and the flyboys to his analysis of *Valerii Chkalov* and the subject of Soviet aviation heroes, and fails to analyze the parallel he draws between the two cultures. Instead, he erroneously calls the American infantrymen of the 1940s the 'prototype to the "living man" championed throughout the Soviet Cultural Revolution by RAPP' (an event that took place over a decade

[959] Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, p. 69.

earlier) and focuses on comparing Chkalov's representation in the film to the 'ornamental masculinity' of the Apollo 11 astronauts, described by Faludi.[960]

In the following paragraphs, I will examine the connection between Chkalov's representation in Kalatozov's film and the American frontier mentality, including individualism (one of Zelinsky's key elements of American culture) as its main element. Chkalov in Kalatozov's film initially appears as a frontiersman of the skies, and fits Paris' description of a pilot as a 'rugged individualist' who is more alone than anyone 'when a mile above the earth and a thin canvas or metal between him or her and eternity.'[961] Here I am not using the word 'individualist' in the negative sense in which it was used by Soviet rhetoric, that of someone who consciously opposes society and pursues his or her own advancement to the detriment of the collective. Rather, I use the word to signify someone who does not need the assistance of the collective, someone who is self-reliant and feels empowered when having to face and overcome danger alone. Both meanings are implied in the term 'individualist'.

In his study of the collective and the individual in Russia, Oleg Kharkhordin has applied two definitions of the term 'individualism', one suggested by Steven Lukes and the other by Michel Foucault. For Lukes, individualism combines four core ideas: dignity of the individual human being, independence or autonomy, privacy, and self-development.[962] For Foucault, individualism consists of assigning absolute value to human individuals, a positive valuation of private life, and

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[960] Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, pp. 56-57. Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1999), pp. 452-468.
[961] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* p. 109. This description fits Chkalov in scenes where he flies an aeroplane alone.
[962] Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (London: Blackwell, 1973), p. 42.

intensification of one's relationship with oneself.[963] Both of these definitions of individualism seem to overlook self-reliance, an attitude of firm belief in one's own ability to face nature and the Other (it is somewhat related to Lukes' idea of independence). Self-reliance is an important element of individualism both in American and Soviet culture. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines self-reliance as 'reliance on one's own powers and resources rather than those of others.'[964] And no one had to be more self-reliant than an aviator flying an aeroplane alone and having to rely on his or her own resources while facing the elements and controlling technology.

In American culture, self-reliance was first advocated by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's essay 'Self-reliance', according to Robert D. Richardson, Jr., was 'not a blueprint for selfishness or withdrawal' and was not anti-community.[965] Rather, it advocated integrity of one's own mind and the importance of independence of one's own thought. In the opening scene of Kalatozov's film, Chkalov is the only man able to overcome the elements, flying in heavy fog and finding a lost Soviet naval ship. Prior to this flight, he is shown being under military arrest for reckless flying, singing a song that contains the words, 'It's all the same to me whether to suffer or to enjoy life!' (*'Mne vsio ravno, stradat' il' naslazhdat'sia!'*). This song also contains the words (not included in the film), 'and if my enemies tell lies about

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[963] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 42. Kharkhordin points out that the three elements described by Foucault correspond to the last three elements of individualism as defined by Lukes; see Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia*, p. 4.
[964] *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary,* Tenth Edition, Revised, ed. by Judy Pearsall (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1301.
[965] Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 322.

me, it's all the same to me.' [966] Thus, Chkalov is immediately characterized as a socially autonomous individual, someone who does not depend on society and relies on his own resources while making daring personal choices, which in his case include daredevil risks in flight. The words of the song sung by Chkalov echo the lines from Emerson's essay:

> What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. [...] It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.[967]

Chkalov is self-reliant and individualist in the Emersonian way,[968] but it would be wrong to describe him as an individualist in the Soviet, negative sense of the word that presupposes egotism and a lack of concern for the collective. In a conversation with his commander 'Batia' Aleshin (Boris Zhukovskii), Chkalov tells Aleshin that the reason he performs reckless stunts in the air is because he wants to be a good fighter pilot in the case of a war, so as to defend his fatherland from enemies. His later encounter with Stalin effects an attempt at personal transformation on Chkalov's behalf. Delegating the power to initiate one's transformation to 'the Big Other', Stalin himself, does not entirely fit into the positive definitions of individualism mentioned above. Thus, in Chkalov's case, individualism and

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[966] 'Мне все равно: враги ль, друзья ль найдутся, | Я к клеветам привык уже давно! | Пускай бранят, пускай смеются, | Мне все равно, мне все равно!' See 'Mne vsio ravno: stradat' il' naslazhdatsia', in *Ochi chernye: Starinnyi russkii romans* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2004).

[967] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', in *The Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Random House, 1944), p. 32.

[968] It would be an oversimplification to suggest that Emerson's ideas expressed in the essay 'Self-reliance' could be applied wholesale to the Bolshevik project of creating the New Soviet Man. For example, some sentiments expressed by Emerson are the direct opposite of the Bolshevik rhetoric, such as 'Nature is not slow to equip us in the prison-uniform of the party to which we adhere.' However, the Emersonian idea of a strong and self-reliant exemplary individual was attractive to generations of Soviet readers and viewers.

collectivism find a balance. Nevertheless, his individualism and self-reliance are at least as important, within the film's narrative, as his collectivist values.

Imported American films and the translated adventure novels and stories of Jack London presented Soviet readers with various examples of self-reliant heroes. London's prose has been analyzed by scholars in relation to its proximity to Emersonian values.[969] As was illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2, Soviet viewers craved Londonian-Emersonian self-reliant and willful heroes on the screen, but were at the same time limited by forced conformity to the totalitarian regime in their everyday life, a value precisely the opposite of Emerson's self-reliance. On the screen, however, the heroic New Soviet Man, especially the larger-than-life aviator hero Valerii Chkalov, could be self-reliant in a way that few ordinary Soviet citizens could be in the Stalinist reality.

The conquering of new frontiers through feats of skill and endurance is a theme that is repeated throughout the film, the significance of the feats growing progressively. At the beginning of the film, Chkalov tests the limits of the possible in controlling a fighter plane by flying underneath the Troitskii bridge in Leningrad, a forbidden action that leads to his twenty-days arrest and being fired from the ranks of military aviation. Later, having become a recognized test pilot, Chkalov, together with a team of two more men, Georgii Baidukov (Petr Berezov) and Aleksandr Beliakov (Sergei Iarov) successfully achieves a trailblazing landing on Udd Island in the North Pole, expanding the geographical frontier of Soviet aviation. Chkalov's frontiersman spirit is pushing him to go even further: he expresses a hope to fly to

[969] See, for example, *Rereading Jack London*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 2-4.

America over the North Pole, and he and his team are eventually allowed to do so by Stalin. The film suggests that it was Chkalov who initiated the idea: during the party scene, Chkalov's mechanic tells the guests that they 'decided' to fly to the North Pole, and then 'one man' (Stalin) suggested the perfect route. When the flight is initially postponed by Stalin, Chkalov personally tries to persuade the leader to let him and his team perform the flight. Thus, within the film's narrative, the initiative for the flight and for expanding the frontiers of the possible lies at least partially with Chkalov himself.

Having achieved the heroic feat of successfully flying from Moscow to America over the North Pole, Chkalov is shown continually envisioning further frontiers of flight. In the final scene of the film, when asked by his mechanic where else he is thinking of going, having already flown to so many destinations, Chkalov replies, 'We shall fly wherever human thought can reach!' This epic-sounding reply that foresees the future space race between the Soviet Union and America two decades later, signifies the Soviet frontier mentality, which is similar to the American frontier spirit that since the 1920s had shifted its focus from land to the skies. Paris, for example, has referred to the achievements of American airmen as 'the conquering of new frontiers'.[970] Thus, being an aviator is inherently connected with the frontier spirit (and with Zelinsky's categories of individualism and mobility) not only within American culture, but within Soviet culture as well. It is worth noting that the motto of the Soviet Arctic fliers in the 1930s, 'Ever higher!' described by Clark as a key political image of the thirties,[971] has similar overtones of initiating further changes

[970] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* p. 111.
[971] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 137.

and improvements to the 'bigger, better, faster' motto used during construction of new planes of the American Air Corps during the 1930s.[972]

In Kalatozov's film, Chkalov not only represents his real-life aviator prototype, but also embodies the spirit of Arctic exploration and the drive to 'conquer' nature. Emma Widdis has suggested that in Soviet aviation films of the 1930s, the aerial perspective 'was granted to the extraordinary individual [...] whose controlling gaze was implicitly aligned with the totalizing, heroic vision of *osvoenie* [conquest/knowledge of the land].'[973] As Clark has pointed out, in the mid-1930s, the 'struggle with nature' became a central Stalinist image and an important attribute of the New Soviet Man and Woman, who have now proven themselves 'superior to all men who had existed before by combating [...] water and ice',[974] the two elements that had to be faced by explorers of the Arctic.[975]

Clark has further pointed out that exploration of the Arctic became an important theme of Soviet literature in the 1930s.[976] In discussing the importance of the theme of conquering nature, Clark presents an argument that is important to this thesis, namely that Jack London (whose influence on Soviet culture in the 1920s was discussed in Chapter 2)[977] was a particularly hallowed source for Soviet writers, due to Lenin's fondness of London's story 'Love of Life'.[978] In this story, a man finds himself alone in the Alaskan wilds and survives while winning over the hunger and cold, as well as winning in his battle with a hungry wolf. The example, in the main

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[972] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* p. 121.
[973] Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, p. 135.
[974] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 100-101.
[975] On the Soviet conquest of space, see also Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, pp. 142-189.
[976] Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* p.101.
[977] See p. 157 above.
[978] Ibid., p. 102.

character of London's story, of human ingenuity and will winning over the limits set by nature is described by Clark as becoming a model of the exceptional man who is able to defy these limits, as described in Stalinist literature.[979]

As we have seen, in the 1920s some Soviet film critics saw Americanism as an essential part of the Soviet cinema of the future.[980] For Voznesenskii, for example, Americanism meant, among other things, brave, willful and dynamic heroes,[981] with human willpower being the essential quality to be represented on the screen. It is worth repeating here Voznesenskii's words, written in 1924:

> To want, to tense up one's willpower, to strive and to achieve, to act against obstacles and counteracting elements – this is what should comprise the main content of life of the future people, the builders of the new reality.[982]

In the cinema of the 1930s, this ideal of the 1920s found its expression in the Londonian characters in aviation and Arctic exploration features. While Clark has focused on the influence of Jack London on Soviet literature, this influence can also be perceived in Soviet cinema of the 1930s and especially in films about Arctic fliers and Arctic explorers. In Jack London's stories, portrayals of exceptional individuals winning over nature are combined with an element of thrilling adventure. This same combination can be perceived in *Valerii Chkalov*. In this film, the human struggle with the elements and the sense of dangerous adventure inherent in it are represented, for example, in the scene where Chkalov and his small team are flying over the North Pole towards America, and they suddenly have to avoid a dangerous thunderstorm. Chkalov makes a decision to fly the plane at a much higher altitude than planned, and

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[979] Ibid., pp. 102-103.
[980] Voznesensky, *Iskusstvo ekrana,* pp. 71-72.
[981] Ibid., p. 72.
[982] Ibid., p. 23.

preserves the supply of oxygen by only letting one of the three men use an oxygen mask, taking turns. When a crew member starts to faint, Chkalov gives him some oxygen, himself remaining the only one of the three men abstaining from using the mask and thus displaying a feat of individual will and what Clark has called 'stickability' (*vyderzhka*).[983] The scene is an example of dangerous adventure and human struggle with nature, and specifically the air element. Flying over the North Pole denotes the connection between the heroism of the fliers with that of the Arctic explorers pitted against nature, specifically the famous Cheliuskin team that survived being stranded in the North Pole in 1933.

There were a number of Soviet films that dealt with exploration of the Arctic. Let us now consider some of these films; we shall return to the discussion of *Valerii Chkalov* further on. Sergei Gerasimov's film *The Seven Brave Ones* [*Semero smelykh*] (1936)[984] is about seven young Komsomol members who spend the winter in the Polar region while looking for deposits of natural resources and helping local inhabitants. It combines representation of the Soviet frontier spirit and the 'stickability' of the New Soviet Men and Women who, in a manner strongly reminiscent of Jack London's characters, win in the struggle with nature and are tempered by it into stronger individuals. In the film, every one of the seven characters has to face the elements, some of them alone. Not all of them survive this struggle. In a manner reminiscent of London's Alaska gold mining stories, two young men, Il'ia Letnikov (Nikolai Bogoliubov) and Iosif Korfunkel' (Andrei Apsolon), set out to

[983] Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. 103.
[984] Some scholars translate this film's title as *Seven of the Brave*. See, for example, Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, p. 150. Peter Kenez refers to it as *The Courageous Seven*. See Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 148. Sergei Gerasimov studied with Kozintsev and Trauberg in their FEKS studio in the 1920s and acted in a number of their films.

look for tin deposits. They do find what they are looking for, but get stranded in the middle of a blizzard, and end up loosing their dog sleigh and skis. At one point, the two men nearly fall off a steep cliff, surviving by hanging on a safety rope in a scene reminiscent of early American adventure films. Pitted against the bitter cold, Iosif grows ill, and Il'ia heroically carries him home, surviving the cold and fatigue in a feat of superhuman tenacity. Elements of the adventure genre reflected the popular motto of the times, 'to fight and to search, to find and not to give up' (*'borot'sia i iskat', naiti i ne sdavat'sia'*).[985]

In the meantime, the two men's friends Zhenia Okhrimenko (Tamara Makarova), the female doctor, and Lenia Bogun (Ivan Novosel'tsev), the male pilot, find themselves in a dangerous situation when flying back to camp in a small aeroplane after Zhenia performs successful surgery on a local inhabitant. There is trouble with the plane engine, and Zhenia has to jump from the plane into the snowy terrain with a parachute, while Lenia attempts to land the plane. Zhenia the strong and fit New Soviet Woman survives the jump but finds herself utterly alone in a blizzard and an unfamiliar, uninhabited area. Lenia succeeds in landing the plane. After having faced the dangers of nature and malfunctioning technology on their own, the two are rescued by a search party. The search party fails to find Il'ia and Iosif, however, and it is only thanks to the tenacity, 'stickability' and will power of Il'ia that he manages to bring himself and Iosif back to camp (however, Iosif does not survive the journey). The film explores the themes of Arctic exploration, human tenacity in the context of individual struggle with nature, and mastery over

[985] Valeriia Gorelova, 'Semero smelykh', in *Rossiiskii illiuzion* (Moscow: Materik, 2003), p. 155.

technology and science (aviation, medicine, and radio all play an important role in the film), combining these with the themes of youth and friendship. The film's main exemplary man and Soviet frontiersman, Il'ia, possesses the character traits of a Londonian hero.

Another Soviet adventure film that explores the themes of aviation, exploration of the Arctic, and a Londonian individual pitted against the dangers of the natural world is *Air Mail* (1939). Palmer has described this film as combining 'the fetish for fliers and contemporary fascination with arctic exploration in a manner that endowed the pilot with folkloric, superhuman qualities.'[986] In a scene that is strongly influenced by London's story 'Love of Life', the main character, a young female pilot Nastia Koroliova (S. Al'tovskaia), finds herself stranded in the middle of the Arctic taiga after having to land due to lack of fuel. As she tries to leave the plane, she finds herself surrounded by hungry wolves. The New Soviet Woman Nastia is in a much better position than London's male Alaskan gold digger who has nothing but his will to live in his struggle with a wolf. Nastia, on the other hand, is a young Soviet female master of nature and technology who has the metal of the plane and the bullets in her gun protecting her from the pack of wolves. She survives while killing a number of wolves, and is further helped by a young local hunter boy.

Soviet Russia was neither the first nor the only country interested in Arctic flights and their representation in cinema. Features dealing with the theme of Arctic exploration were produced in America since as early as 1926. According to Paris, a series of three films about the Arctic flights of Commander Byrd were released

[986] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 507.

between 1926 and 1947.[987] In 1926, Commander Byrd and pilot Floyd Bennett became the first men to fly over the North Pole, Byrd filming most of the flight himself. Then, Byrd's flight over the South Pole was filmed by a professional crew. The film was released in 1930 and won an Academy Award for cinematography. The last film of the series, *The Secret Land* (USA, 1947), documenting Byrd's latest Arctic flight, won an Academy Award in the Best Documentary category in 1949. Furthermore, three American feature films about Arctic fliers were made in the early 1930s, *Conquest* (USA, 1929), *The Lost Zeppelin* (USA, 1930), and *Dirigible* (USA, 1933).[988] According to Paris, all three of these films showed glorious attempts ending in failure of the expedition, but the films nevertheless served to emphasize the determination of the airmen and made 'the final achievement, the conquering of new frontiers, even more glorious.'[989]

Whether or not Stalin, the Kremlin film buff, had seen any of the American Arctic aviation features[990] is not as important as the fact that, in the 1930s, Soviet cinema reflected the country's fascination with the tenacity and frontier spirit of Arctic fliers and explorers, which the Soviet people shared with the Americans.

While Soviet viewers in the 1930s might not have been familiar with American aviation films, they were very well aware of the fact that American fliers were involved in the race for world flying records as much as, and earlier than, the

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[987] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to 'Top Gun,'* 110.
[988] Ibid.
[989] Ibid., p. 111.
[990] I do not have evidence of whether Stalin had seen any of the American aviation films mentioned in this chapter; however, according to Simon Sebag Montefiore, Stalin enjoyed watching American films, especially westerns and detective and gangster films, and particularly liked *In Old Chicago*, *It Happened One Night*, *Mission to Moscow*, or 'any Charlie Chaplin.' This suggests the possibility that he did see at least some of the American aviation films. See Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 528.

Soviet fliers were. For example, on September 22, 1933, *Pravda* published an article announcing the arrival in Leningrad of 'the famous American pilot Charles Lindbergh, who became renowned for his non-stop flight from New York to Paris over the Atlantic Ocean in May 1927.' The article proceeded to describe Lindbergh as the 'hero of Transatlantic flight' and explained that his arrival in Leningrad was caused by his 'wish to learn about the life of the largest centres of the Soviet Union.'[991] The *Rabochaia Moskva* newspaper proceeded to describe Lindbergh's arrival in Moscow four days later:

> Five o'clock. The banks of the Moskva river and the Krymskii bridge are filled with viewers, and the opposite bank is literally black from the amount of people on it. Lindbergh's arrival is being watched from house windows, from rooftops, from balconies and trees [...].'[992]

In 1938, the Soviet public witnessed the landing of another hero of American aviation on Russian soil, the inventor, pilot, and film director Howard Hughes, author of *Hell's Angels*. During Hughes' flight around the world, he landed in Moscow and was greeted amicably: according to Vissarion Sisnev, Stalin sent Hughes a large jar of caviar as a present.[993] The existence of American aviator heroes, while gradually made obscure in the following decades, was perceptible in the 1930s, the time when Soviet mythmaking was at its most active and the image of the exemplary New Soviet Man was being forged in the popular imagination, using examples from American culture, among other sources.

Let us now return to Chkalov in Kalatozov's film. As we have seen, the filmic representation of Chkalov, as well as representations of Arctic explorers such as Il'ia

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[991] 'Prilet Lindberga v Leningrad', *Pravda,* September 23, 1923.
[992] 'Lindberg priletel v Moskvu', *Rabochaia Moskva*, September 26, 1933.
[993] Vissarion Sisnev, 'Khronika pikiruiushchego oligarkha: samyi pervyi milliarder Govard Khiuz na ekrane i v zhisni', *Trud 7: Gazeta o semje i zhizni*, 147 (August 11, 2005).

Letnikov in *The Seven Brave Ones,* combines an element of adventure with individualism and mobility, the last two being elements described by Zelinsky as important aspects of American culture. Chkalov the frontiersman aviator is shown as an exceptional individual continually seeking out movement and conquering new frontiers. Movement is an essential quality of aviation, and is also connected with the Soviet obsession with dynamism, dating back to the 1920s. As we have seen, the Soviet love of dynamism as an expression of modernity was documented in many films made in the 1920s. Flying is the ultimate form of movement and is thus deeply connected to the spirit of modernity. Films about aviation made in the 1930s and early 1940s were thus finally quenching the Russian thirst for action and dynamism, expressed in the 1910s and 1920s in the Russian press and perceived in the popularity of dynamic American films, as well as in the Soviet montage cinema. In Kalatozov's film, Chkalov is almost obsessed with movement: while dancing with his wife Olga during the celebration of his Arctic flight, he compares himself to a plane which, if stopped in the air, will fall down. Thus, he tells Olga, he needs to 'move, move, move!' This obsession with movement finds a productive outcome in Chkalov's flights that reach ever further, first to the North Pole, and then to America.

In addition to mobility and individualism, another element described by Zelinsky as vital to American culture is love of technology.[994] This element, too, is present and plays an important role in the filmic portrayal of Chkalov and of other Soviet aviator heroes. The New Soviet Man not only loves technology, but also possesses mastery over it, modeling this mastery on the perceived technological

[994] Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, p. 40.

acumen of the Americans – at first openly (in the discourse of the 1920s), and then without acknowledging its original source.

Chkalov in Kalatozov's film is the ultimate master of modern technology. As we have seen, technology had been associated with America and 'Americanness' in Soviet Russia since the 1920s. The aeroplane was the ultimate technological achievement, 'a gift of technology to the nation, expanding the potential of the Soviet experience.'[995] According to Palmer, the acquisition of specifically American technology and production techniques was indispensable to the modernization and expansion of Soviet aviation.[996] In Kalatozov's film Stalin (played by Mikhail Gelovani) teaches Chkalov how best to surpass the achievements of the Americans: 'If you want to catch up with and surpass someone, it is necessary to take a good look at them.' In essence, Stalin suggests a method of surpassing American achievements by encouraging the New Soviet Man to be more 'American' than the Americans themselves in his technological and flying skills.

In another aviation feature, Dovzhenko's *Aerograd* (1935), the main pilot hero Vladimir (Sergei Stoliarov) embodies the 'catch up and surpass' rhetoric: he tells his wife and friends about an American pilot whose plane broke down and whom he, the Soviet pilot, had to fly back home to America. Vladimir thus presents himself as far superior than the American pilot, and in a sense, more 'American' (more technologically savvy, heroic and optimistic).

In the 1920s, imported American films presented to Soviet audiences heroes and heroines who could easily operate automobiles, trains, aeroplanes, and other

[995] Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, p. 128.
[996] Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 326-329.

machinery, well before that technology came into wide use in Russia. We have already seen the proliferation of engineer heroes as the new Soviet masters of technology in Stalinist Soviet cinema. Aviator heroes, too, signified the new Soviet mastery over technology and its roots in the Americanization discourse of the 1920s. In Kalatozov's film, Valerii Chkalov exhibits ultimate mastery over technology in the Moscow air show scene. In this scene, Chkalov is a test pilot, testing brand new military aeroplanes. During the show, his task is to prove how well the newly designed Soviet aeroplane can manoeuver in the air during a potential fight with an enemy plane. The discourse of the esteem of cinema stuntmen of the 1920s is displaced, in this 1941 film, literally and figuratively onto a higher level: a stuntman now performs his stunts by using a machine, an aeroplane, rather than his own body, while the fight scene takes place between two planes operated by two skillful aviators. Elements of risk and suspense evoked by these stunts and fight scenes in the cinematic air surpass the ones produced by the land-bound stunts.

Having achieved victory over his student, Egor Baidukov, in the spectacular and dangerous air fight, Chkalov finds out that the landing gear in his plane is malfunctioning. Everyone expects him to abandon the plane, and Stalin himself orders him to jump with a parachute. However, Chkalov disregards the order and proceeds to throw the plane into numerous unfathomable spins, trying to force the landing gear to open properly. Crowds of people watch intensely and Chkalov's mechanic leads Chkalov's wife away from the stadium, while Chkalov continues to battle with the aeroplane as if it were a mustang that has to be tamed by the modern Soviet cowboy of the skies. The sequence favours the shots of Chkalov's plane spinning in the air as the ground far underneath is blurred due to the speed of

Chkalov's flight. The relentless and daring airman is risking his life so as to preserve the aircraft, which it took two years to build. After a series of breathtakingly dynamic shots, Chkalov is shown winning over the machine: by throwing the plane into various positions in the air at great speed, the landing gear is finally forced to open correctly, and Chkalov lands the plane safely. The Soviet *bogatyr'*-like hero from the Volga river region is at the same time an 'American'-like master of technology, whose stunts surpass the best physical stunts of Douglas Fairbanks and other American cinematic 'sportsman' heroes of the 1920s.

It is uncanny how closely *Chkalov* follows Zelinsky's model of American culture. The last of the four elements described by Zelinsky is the idea of America as a country with a world mission.[997] This element, too is present in *Chkalov* and reflects the Soviet Union's similar messianic tendencies. Arriving in the United States, having flown over the North Pole, Chkalov and his crew are greeted by crowds of whistling American onlookers and journalists. Chkalov greets the American people as if for the last time before the Cold War divides the two nations for several decades to come: 'On the wings of this aeroplane, through the cold that divides us we have brought greetings from the many millions of our people to the great American people!' However, the messianic rhetoric soon outweighs the amiable greeting: a young American journalist (played by Arkadii Raikin) asks Chkalov whether he is a wealthy man, to which Chkalov replies, 'One hundred and seventy million!' The journalist misunderstands the figure to mean monetary wealth, but Chkalov explains that the figure signifies the multitudes of Soviet people who work for him while he, at the same time, works for them. The young journalist nods, visibly in awe of the far

[997] Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, p. 40.

superior state system in Soviet Russia. Thus, within the film's narrative, by reaching the farthest frontier, America itself, Chkalov acts as a missionary spreading the 'gospel' of the superiority of the Soviet system both through his words and his deeds, the heroic flight itself.

Kalatozov's film, made in 1941, bears an uncanny resemblance to Victor Fleming's *Test Pilot* (USA, 1938). Both films focus on a daredevil test pilot hero (in Fleming's film, the main protagonist, Jim Lane, is played by Clark Gable). In both films, the protagonist has a close male friend who loves him and tries to tame his recklessness in the name of safety: in Kalatozov's film, this friend is Chkalov's commander 'Batia' Alioshin, and in Fleming's film, it is Lane's mechanic Gunner (Spencer Tracy). In both films, these men die, while the main protagonist survives. In both films, the daredevil pilot marries a woman who is willing to let him take risks and not to tie him down: in the Soviet film, Olga (Kseniia Tarasova) promises to Chkalov not to ever get involved in his flying affairs, while in Fleming's film, Ann (Myrna Loy) promises to Lane to support him by applauding him from below while he is in the sky. Both women are content with a quick marriage and no wedding celebration, and both make an effort to live with the constant danger that their husbands are under. In both films, the main protagonist is at one point fired by his superior (Chkalov for his daredevil flight under the Troitskii bridge, and Lane for not breaking a speed record and instead taking a week off to go on a honeymoon with his new wife). Both films include aviation stunts and a spectacular air show scene: in Kalatozov's film, Chkalov wins the air fight with his student Baidukov during an air show in Moscow, while in Fleming's film, Lane wins in an air race, while competing with several other outstanding test pilots.

We do not have evidence that either Kalatozov or indeed Stalin had seen Fleming's *Test Pilot* prior to the making of *Valerii Chkalov*. The list of American films in official Soviet distribution does not include information on *Test Pilot*.[998] However, Stalin was fond of watching films in private screenings at the Kremlin, which included various American films that were sometimes subtitled for him.[999] Prior to 1937, Shumiatskii showed many films, including foreign films, to Stalin in these private screenings,[1000] and after 1937, the new head of the Soviet film industry Ivan Bol'shakov replaced Shumiatskii in this role. According to Montefiore, Bol'shakov had hundreds of films to show Stalin at any time.[1001] Stalin was particularly fond of Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy,[1002] both of whom are the principal cast members of *Test Pilot*, which allows us to speculate on the potential for that film to have been shown to Stalin. Montefiore quotes Khrushchev as saying that Stalin cursed films with these actors on ideological grounds but proceeded to order more.[1003]

Even if Stalin had not seen *Test Pilot*, the similarities between that film and *Valerii Chkalov* attest to similar tendencies in representing the heroics of fliers in American and Soviet culture. Knowing that Soviet cinema borrowed from American cinema some of its devices and hero traits in the 1920s and 1930s, and that Soviet aviation borrowed from American aviation technology, it is plausible to conclude that

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[998] See 'Amerikanskie fil'my v sovetskom i rossiiskom prokate, 1929-1998: Spisok fil'mov, sostavlennyi po "razreshitel'nym" dokumentam', *Kinograf*, 16 (2005).
[999] I am grateful to Yuri Tsivian for the information about certain American films having been subtitled for Stalin's private screenings. For more on these screenings, see '"A driani podobno *Garmon'* bolshe ne stavite?"', pp. 281-346; '"Kartina sil'naia, khoroshaia, no ne *Chapaev*..."', pp. 115-188.
[1000] Ibid.
[1001] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, p. 528.
[1002] Ibid., 529.
[1003] Ibid.

the Soviet cult of the aviator, reflected in *Valerii Chkalov,* incorporated certain aspects of American culture, and that the film image of the greatest Soviet aviator Chkalov, while somewhat different from reality,[1004] was constructed using, at least in part, American traits of an aviator hero, as well as the heroic features of a Londonian frontiersman hero. Kalatozov's film presents Chkalov as a mythic figure, an example of a New Soviet Man and a role model for all Soviet men; it is important to acknowledge the presence, in this mythic cinematic Soviet hero, of a number of 'American' traits that emphasize the deep connection between the newly constructed Soviet culture and American culture.

[1004] For more on this, see, for example, Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air*, para. 379-381.

## CONCLUSION

Written a year after Fairbanks and Pickford's celebrated visit to Moscow and a year before most foreign films were withdrawn from Soviet distribution in 1928, Il'ia Trauberg's book *The Actor of American Cinema* was perhaps the ultimate expression of Soviet filmmakers' and critics' admiration for American film stars, and is evidence of the degree to which American actors, in addition to directors and methods of production and montage, affected the formation of Soviet cinema in the 1920s. Trauberg emphasizes the individuality that American stars brought to their portrayals of heroes and heroines, and their connection with literary portrayals, in the works of James Fennimore Cooper and Jack London, of courageous and strong individual heroes of the Wild West and the 'romantic pioneers' of Alaska. These heroes, as well as the more modern 'heroes of the dollar' and the film stars themselves, represented what Trauberg called America's 'cult of the personality' or individuality. The romanticism of the American admiration for individuality was, according to Trauberg, reflected in American films.[1005]

If Trauberg's book conveyed a certain degree of required, ideologically correct criticism of the individualism of American film stars from the point of view of collectivist Bolshevik ideology, then its conclusion dispelled all such criticism:

> We assess the art of American actors from the point of view of utilizing it in Soviet cinema, and cannot but admire the colossal treasury that has been acquired over many years. We are in the process of realizing the power of talent, which over time has been transformed into a culture of extraordinary breadth. [...] We doubt that due praise could be perceived as idolization. We take from bourgeois art all that is best and most dear to us. And *is there a*

[1005] Il'ia Trauberg, *Akter amerikanskogo kino* (Leningrad: Academia, 1927), pp. 50-51.

> *better brick and cement for constructing Soviet cinema, than the art of the American film actor?*[1006]

Analysis of Soviet films made in the 1920s and 1930s undertaken in my study makes it clear that this sentiment was shared by many Soviet filmmakers, even if no longer openly voiced in the decade that was lived under the slogan of 'catching up with and surpassing America'.

As we have seen throughout this study, the Americanization discourse of the 1920s was an important source of inspiration for the New Soviet Man and Woman project, along with Nietzscheanism, Freudianism, the alchemical 'flesh-to-metal' transformation discourse, and other sources. Part of the Americanization discourse was the call for the 'Americanization of personality'.[1007] Exemplary workers who possessed positive traits that were perceived as innately American were called 'Russian Americans' in the Soviet press of the 1920s. Russian people's knowledge of the praised American qualities – such as efficiency, technological skills, resourcefulness, physical fitness, dynamism, energy, optimism, and the frontiersman's self-reliance, – was based in part on portrayals of positive heroes and heroines by American actors in imported American films, as well as on the translated American frontier and adventure fiction. Popular American film stars of the 1910s and 1920s, and in particular Douglas Fairbanks, Pearl White and Mary Pickford, among a number of others, created modern screen heroes and heroines whose positive traits were perceived in the Russian cultural imagination as innately American. Positive attitudes towards these praised 'American' traits thrived among the Soviet public and were cultivated by the Bolshevik officials, whose criticism of America in

[1006] Ibid., pp. 132-133. My italics.
[1007] Tretiakov, 'Otkuda i kuda? (Perspektivy futurizma)', p. 201.

the press was half-hearted in that decade and who openly used the 'American' trope as a model in constructing the image of the ideal Soviet citizen.[1008]

The metaphorical use of 'Americanness' as a measure of excellence was present in the official Soviet discourse throughout the NEP period of the 1920s and was reflected in cinema. Americanism in Soviet cinema in that decade was present on several levels. I have argued in my study that, in addition to stylistic borrowings in the field of editing and camerawork, and fascination with the 'lower genres',[1009] there existed yet another kind of Americanism in Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, namely the attribution of the praised 'American' character traits to positive hero(in)es. Soviet film critics throughout the 1920s called for the new Soviet cinematic hero to draw on the models presented by American actors in imported American films. In the early and mid-1920s, this call of the critics gradually began to make a difference: early examples of 'Americanized' heroes and heroines in Soviet films include Mishka and Duniasha in Perestiani's adventure film *Little Red Devils* (1923) and its sequels, as well as some portrayals of the modern female heroine, such as Mariia Ivanova in *The Doll with the Millions* (1926) and Natasha in *Four and Five* (1924).[1010] At the same time, an open interest in America was also reflected in some filmmakers' choice of American themes and characters, and film adaptations of American literature,[1011] as well as, on the stylistic level, in editing and filming techniques and the adventure and comedy genres.

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[1008] See Introduction above, pp. 7-8.
[1009] Tsivian, 'Between the Old and the New', pp. 39-45.
[1010] As discussed in Chapter 1 above, p. 201.
[1011] As discussed in Chapter 2 above, pp. 145-174.

After 1928, at the time when most American and other foreign films were purged from the screens, further importation was curtailed, and open admiration of American film stars, as well as the use of the 'Russian American' trope in the press was discouraged, an important phenomenon took place: new positive characters began to appear in Soviet films in larger numbers than before, that resembled the descriptions of 'Russian Americans' in the Soviet press and/or were inspired, in their new, non-traditional traits, by representations of positive heroes and heroines in previously widely available imported American films, or by the frontiersman heroes of American fiction. The very same traits that, throughout the 1920s, Soviet film critics praised in American actors and their hero representations[1012] were among the traits of the new Soviet cinematic hero(ine), although the 'Americanness' of these traits was no longer acknowledged either by the critics or within the diegesis of the new films.

On the level of character development, Soviet cinema of the 1930s inherited the admiration for 'American' qualities, characteristic of Soviet culture in the 1920s. However, Soviet cinematic characters of the late 1920s and 1930s could not be openly compared with Americans, as the official discourse no longer favored the 'American' metaphor. Instead, it was now the Soviet Union, rather than America, that was to be seen as the exemplary and praise-worthy state. Part of the goal of the Stalinist project of creating New Soviet Men and Women was to legitimize the new regime and to present the Soviet state – both to its own citizens and to the world – as having succeeded in transforming its population into human beings of a superior kind.

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[1012] See pp. 52, 93.

As we have seen in Chapter 1 of this study, Russian fascination with American adventure film serials and 'serial queens' including Pearl White predated the Revolution and was a reflection of the Russian attraction to the dynamism of modernity. In the eyes of pre-revolutionary intellectuals, this attraction was partially the result of the general public's tiredness, on the eve of the Revolution, of 'fish-like'[1013] existence, and the widespread desire for action.

Among the admirers of American adventure serials in the late 1910s and early 1920s were the future Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg, and Sergei Iutkevich. Several aspects of American adventure serials, including the character traits of their active protagonists, who were mostly female, played an important role in these filmmakers' formation as film artists. The incorporation of dynamism, American editing devices, and positive American human traits into the films created by Soviet filmmakers in the 1920s and 1930s was in part a reflection of their early personal admiration for the dynamism of American cinema, as well as American frontier fiction and 'Americanized' Russian serialized detective-adventure stories.

From the early 1920s and throughout the entire decade, Soviet film critics called for the new Soviet cinematic hero to be modelled on the energetic, dexterous, and resourceful 'human sportsman'[1014] heroes of American films. The quality of daring that these heroes possessed provided the link between the Americanization discourse and the Nietzscheanism of the time, as this quality was considered highly

[1013] *Russkie vedomosti,* 210 (1915).
[1014] Veronin, 'Kriticheskie zametki. Po povodu tekushchego repertuara', p. 11.

valuable from either perspective, the 'daring man' or 'superman' being the central concept of Nietzscheanism.

Popular and professional cinema periodicals in the 1920s abounded in articles about and references to American cinema, reflecting the Soviet readers' interest in, and furthering their knowledge of works of American cinema. At the same time, Soviet avant-garde filmmakers learned various devices of American cinema, including parallel editing, the use of close-ups, and rapid plot construction, from American adventure serials, the films of D.W. Griffith and other directors, and slapstick comedies of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd, among others. When Soviet filmmakers referred to American directors and actors as the 'great teachers',[1015] the relationship between the two sides was not simply one of influence or imitation; rather, Soviet filmmakers engaged in an active dialogue with the American filmmakers and used American cinematic devices to achieve completely new, unique and unprecedented discoveries in the field of montage, as well as in the rationalized approach to working with actors. Additionally, the broader Americanization discourse of the 1920s, with its admiration of modern technology and rationalized production mehods, exerted an important influence on Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg.

It would be wrong to assume that Soviet filmmakers, critics, and viewers had a 'cultural inferiority complex' in relation to America, as some scholars have suggested.[1016] Rather, American cinematic devices used by Soviet directors should be

[1015] Kuleshov, 'Konrad Veidt', in *Sobraniie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol.1, p. 93.
[1016] Youngblood, 'Americanitis', p. 151.

understood as part of the overall early Soviet propensity for cultural 'self-improvement' and as a source of inspiration, in the spirit of learning and cultural dialogue, upon which the new Soviet cinema, as well as Soviet society and the new identity of its citizens were to be built. The process was not one-sided: as David Bordwell has indicated, Hollywood cinema soon assimilated certain discoveries of Soviet montage cinema for decades of use, thus closing the 'feedback loop'.[1017]

Douglas Fairbanks was the most popular male American film star in Soviet Russia in the 1920s and was called by Soviet critics the 'ideal of the positive screen hero'.[1018] In providing an inspiring cinematic role model for Soviet viewers and filmmakers, Fairbanks played an important role, previously overlooked by scholars, in the creation of the new Soviet cinematic hero. Additionally, Fairbanks' star image offered an immediate model of exemplary masculinity for Soviet men and boys in the 1920s, who went on to become (or so the authorities hoped) the New Soviet Men of the following decades.

Of particular importance is Fairbanks' portrayal of Ahmed the Thief in one of the largest box office successes of the decade, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), where the main protagonist shares certain qualities with characters of traditional Russian folk tales and exhibits democratic accessibility, while at the same time possessing such praised modern American qualities as athleticism, optimism, resourcefulness, individual motivation and drive for success. Due to his possessing these qualities, as well as having to undergo a major transformation within the film narrative,

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[1017] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 74.
[1018] Ter-Oganesov, 'Duglas Ferbenks', p. 33.

Fairbanks' Ahmed the Thief (as well as, on a broader scale, Fairbanks' overall star image) needs to be viewed as an important prototype of the future Socialist Realist cinematic heroes.

Transformation of identity as a result of the encounter with American cinema is openly referred to in some Soviet films of the 1920s. A film that reflects, in a satirizing way, an attempt at a transformation of identity, as well as audience-star identificatory practices, is Komarov's *The Kiss of Mary Pickford* (1926) (discussed in Chapter 1), where the main male protagonist undergoes a number of identity changes so as to resemble Douglas Fairbanks and thus win the love of his sweetheart who is infatuated by the American film star. Another example is Perestiani's *Savur-mogila* (1926) (discussed in Chapter 3), where prior to engaging in their struggle for the Bolshevik cause, the two young protagonists watch a Pearl White serial, this scene being followed by an intertitle suggesting their acquisition of the qualities of the American actress and her acting partner.

In Chapter 2, I have examined representations of American and 'Russian American' heroes in Soviet films of the 1920s, including the new Soviet heroes with 'American' qualities in the 'Red Pinkerton' adventure films; portrayals of American characters in contemporary Soviet films and Soviet film adaptations of American literature; and representations of 'Russian Americans' in Soviet *novyi byt* films. I have argued that in addition to American cinema, translated American frontier and adventure fiction presented examples of ingenious, energetic and self-reliant heroes and played an important part in constructing the new Soviet identity.

The 'Red Pinkerton' adventure film *Little Red Devils* (1923) is a unique dialogic example of interplay between literary and filmic hero images, and between

American and Russian cinema and literature, on the eve of the creation of the new Soviet society. In this film, the qualities of a literary American frontiersman hero are used in representing the new Soviet cinematic hero. The film narrative presents two models of the new Soviet hero: the Americanized 'glorified' future citizen of the Soviet Utopia, modeled on James Fennimore Cooper's frontiersman the Pathfinder, and the 'crucified' martyr, modeled on Ethel Voynich's self-sacrificial revolutionary, the Gadfly. The male protagonist, Mishka, identifies with the Pathfinder, and his sister, Duniasha, identifies with the Gadfly. However, Duniasha, too shares some 'American' qualities with Mishka. The 'American' traits of the main protagonists are emphasized on a number of levels within the film narrative, more so than in the film's literary source. The two young heroes become Soviet by becoming 'American' first, through their acquisition of 'American' traits of optimism, energy, dynamism, athleticism, and daring, via the process of Mishka's identification with the frontiersman hero of Cooper's prose; through their association with an American character, Tom Jackson, with whom they share similar traits; through the devices and dynamism of the adventure genre itself; and through their likeness to heroes of American adventure films.

Portrayals of contemporary American citizens in early Soviet films differed from portrayals of the exemplary Russians with 'American' traits. In fact, American characters such as Mr. John West in *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) and Oliver McBride in *The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* (1924) were almost 'un-American' in their excessive possessions or excessive weight, as well as gullibility and lack of true resourcefulness. However, their representations were never entirely negative, as compared to portrayals of other

foreigners, especially Germans or Italians. In the case of the film serial *Miss Mend* (1926), the main American female protagonist, Miss Vivian Mend, is an active member of the American proletariat and is thus portrayed positively from the start. Her dynamism and physical agility are qualities similar to those of the early modern heroines played by Pearl White, as well as the active urban heroines of Priscilla Dean.

The role of American adventure literature, including the prose of Jack London, O. Henry, and Mark Twain, in the formation of the new Soviet cinematic hero has been demonstrated in this study. The Londonian willful and adventurous hero, in particular, was an important model for the construction of the new Soviet cinematic hero, who in turn was to inspire the formation of the New Soviet Man. The duality of official attitudes towards individualism within the context of early Soviet culture helps explain the fact that strong American individualist heroes of the type represented by Jack London could be at the centre of official admiration, at the same time as the official Soviet press attacked the negative aspects of individualism in American capitalist society.

The protagonists of a number of Soviet films that appeared soon after the turning point of 1928, such as Vasil' in Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) and Marfa Lapkina in Eisenstein's *Old and New* (1929) (discussed in Chapter 3), were highly motivated, efficient, and energetic men and women, trailblazers who brought modern technology to the world of the village and were the agents of change for those around them. While these characters were not openly referred to as 'Russian Americans', Soviet viewers would have easily perceived the connection between the exemplary qualities of this new type of Soviet hero(ine) and the 'Russian Americans' described in the Soviet press. Vasil' in *Earth* represents a combination of the two New Soviet

Man models: the 'glorified' citizen of the future Utopia with 'American' traits, and the 'crucified' martyr for the Bolshevik cause.

As I have argued in Chapter 3, most of the praised 'American' traits were not gendered and could be applied to either women or men. However, a number of traits of the New Soviet Person, such as athletic fitness and mastery over technology, were traditionally viewed as predominantly masculine, and were now to be cultivated in the female citizens of the new Soviet society, as much as in men.

The majority of Soviet films in the 1920s tended to represent the reality of Soviet women's existence, rather than define the image of the ideal New Soviet Woman. At the same time, alternative models of modern femininity were available to Soviet female viewers in the imported American films, which differed drastically from the old, pre-revolutionary cinematic portrayals of women. Soviet critics of the 1920s applied the term *travesti* to modern female heroines of American films who possessed what were seen as masculine qualities of physical fitness and mastery over technology. This type of 'masculine' femininity was highly praised in the Soviet press and was suggested as a model for the creation of the cinematic New Soviet Woman.

Another approach to constructing the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman reflected the use of the 'Russian American' trope, applied in the press in the 1920s to exemplary workers. Female 'Russian Americans' on the screen started appearing in Soviet films made after 1928, beginning with Marfa Lapkina in *Old and New* (1929).

One more American cinematic model of femininity in the 1920s, which proved to be the most popular with Soviet female viewers, was presented by the star

image of Mary Pickford. The optimism, sweet simplicity, and non-sexual nature of Pickford's characters were among the qualities actively promoted by critics in the 1920s in the new heroines of Soviet cinema, even if the critics' attitudes towards Pickford herself were ambiguous.

In the 1920s, Soviet cinema experimented with representing various models of femininity, several of them being inspired by American cinematic models, as well as by the broader Americanization discourse and the 'Russian American' trope. In the 1930s, the cinematic image of the New Soviet Woman became much more defined and unified. The Cultural Revolution put an end to the exposure of the Soviet audiences to the multiplicity of artistic and literary movements, as well as foreign films. But admiration for American film stars, including Mary Pickford, could not and did not disappear overnight from the memory of millions of Soviet film viewers, as well as film directors and critics.

The cinematic New Soviet Woman in films of the 1930s was constructed using, among other elements, the three main American-inspired models of femininity from the 1920s: the Pickfordian femininity, the 'masculine' femininity of a Pearl White-like 'girl-sportsman', and a 'Russian American' efficient master of technology. These models from the previous decade played an important role in the process of creating the image of the New Soviet Woman in cinema of the Stalinist thirties, a role that has been largely overlooked by scholars. Soviet female stars such as Liubov' Orlova and Marina Ladynina, and other popular film actresses of the decade such as Ianina Zheimo and Tamara Makarova, often portayed female characters that were constructed using exemplary 'American' qualities, such as the

ones embodied by Mary Pickford, Pearl White and other female American film stars in the 1910s and 1920s.

Liubov' Orlova was the leading female 'red star' of the 1930s. Her joyful, energetic and unerotic but charming heroines in Grigorii Alexandrov's musical comedies bear a visual and psychological resemblance to Pickford's heroines, especially to Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* (USA, 1919) which was one of the most highly acclaimed of Pickford's films in Soviet Russia. Like a number of Pickford's characters, Orlova's Soviet 'Cinderellas' (including Aniuta in *Happy Guys* (1934), Strelka in *Volga-Volga* (1938), and Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path* (1940)) undergo a process of transformation, in most cases a self-initiated one, that brings them from poverty to fame, individual success and personal happiness (the latter is also the result of Marion Dixon's transformation in *Circus* (1936)). Additionally, in the case of *The Shining Path*, the character of Tania Morozova is represented as the efficient 'Russian American'. These narratives of transformation into a New Soviet Woman represent a self-reliant female heroine equal to and better than men in her efficiency, mastery over modern technology, and American-inspired work ethic.

While in the 1930s, Stalin's competitive formula 'to catch up with and surpass America' replaced the earlier open admiration for American efficiency and technology, new Soviet cinematic heroes confirmed the continued presence of the American inspiration and its role within the construction of Soviet culture, as I have argued in Chapter 4.

Soviet films of the 1930s reflected the presence of two New Soviet Man ideals in Stalinist culture: the self-sacrificial martyr (Hellebust's 'crucified' hero,[1019] and Kaganovsky's 'disabled' hero)[1020] and the new energetic and technologically skilled hero (the 'glorified' inhabitant of the Socialist Utopia).[1021] This second hero type was encountered more often in Socialist Realist films than literature of the decade and was inspired, at least in part, by American stars in imported American films of the previous decade and the heroes of American frontier and adventure literature, as well as the image of the 'Russian American' used in the press in the previous decade, and the broader Americanization discourse of the 1920s, with its admiration of American technology.

Boris Shumiatskii's project of the Americanization of Soviet cinema, including the creation of a 'Soviet Hollywood', did not openly acknowledge the legacy of the Americanization discourse of the 1920s; however, this legacy was still important. While Shumiatskii called for the creation of 'living' heroes, as well as for joie-de-vivre and laughter in the new Soviet films, his project did not openly refer to the long-existing preferences of Soviet critics who, from the mid-1920s, voiced the need for the new Soviet cinematic heroes to be more like the heroes of American films in their joyfulness, athleticism, and lively, individualized characterizations. A number of Soviet films of the 1930s focus on the new kind of optimistic hero: such are, for example, Nikolai Sergeev in *The Path to Life* (1931), Kostia Potekhin in *Happy Guys* (1934), Ivan Martynov in *Circus* (1936), Klim Iarko in *The Tractor Drivers* (1939), and Aliosha Konopliannikov in *New Moscow* (1938).

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[1019] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal*, p. 58.
[1020] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 7.
[1021] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal,* p. 59.

In addition to focusing on the optimism of the New Soviet Man, many films of the 1930s emphasized his strong physique and exemplary fitness level. The Soviet critics' praise, in the previous decade, for the dexterous American 'human sportsman', exemplified by Douglas Fairbanks, as opposed to the 'usual European actor-intellectual with weak muscles',[1022] was finally realized in Socialist Realist films of the 1930s. One of the most highly acclaimed Soviet cinematic sportsman heroes of the 1930s is the character of Anton Kandidov in *Goalie* (1936). A naturally talented sportsman, Anton is also someone who is able to realize his aspirations for individual success and fame. This cinematic character, who went on to become a role model for many young Soviet viewers of the decade, contains a strong, but concealed and unacknowledged link with American culture and American cinema of the previous decade.

In the 1930s, there existed in the Soviet Union a cult of the engineer-inventor, something previously unacknowledged by scholars of early Soviet culture. The widespread admiration for these Soviet masters of technology had its roots in the admiration for American technology and those who created and mastered that technology in the United States. A significant number of Soviet films of the 1930s include characters who are engineers by profession and have highly regarded technological skills. Some of these characters, such as Petr Vinogradov in *The Private Life of Petr Vinogradov* (1934), Klim Iarko in *The Tractor Drivers* (1939), Aliosha Konopliannikov in *New Moscow* (1938), engineer Karasik in *Goalie* (1936), and Irinka in *A Chance Acquaintance* (1936), possess innate technological talent. Others, like the worker Zakharov in *Deeds and People* (1932), undergo a process of

[1022] Veronin,'Kriticheskie zametki. Po povodu tekushchego repertuara', p. 11.

transformation into a 'Russian American' master of technology as a result of a direct challenge from and guidance by an American specialist.

Other films of the 1930s and early 1940s that represent the New Soviet Man as the master of technology, as well as someone who possesses a frontiersman's self-reliance and individualism (even if combined with elements of collectivist ethics) are the films about Soviet aviator heroes. The main protagonist of *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), for example, exhibits traits such as self-reliance and ability to perform complex stunts while operating the latest technology – traits that contain an important connection with American culture. In the film, Chkalov is represented as a Londonian-Emersonian self-reliant and resourceful hero, while embodying the spirit of Arctic exploration and the drive to 'conquer' nature. The representation of the aviator hero Chkalov, the exemplary New Soviet Man, in the film is inherently connected with individualism, mobility, love of technology, and a missionary zeal – four categories that have been described by Wilbur Zelinsky as the four central themes of American culture. It is significant that the same themes are addressed (some more prominently than others) in a Soviet film about an exemplary new Soviet hero, pointing to a deep link between American and the newly constructed Soviet culture.

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While film critics, journalists, and Bolshevik officials in the 1920s were fully aware of their use of the 'American' trope as a positive example, the filmmakers of the 1930s were not always necessarily aware of the fact that they were, indeed, 'recycling' the 'American' trope of the previous decade, as well as following the suggestion of the film critics, a decade earlier, to learn from American actors and

their representations of positive hero(in)es. When in the course of the Cultural Revolution the emphasis shifted from Americanization through learning from America to 'surpassing America', openly comparing exemplary Russian workers to Americans and modeling the traits of an ideal Soviet citizen on the praised traits of heroes of American popular culture was no longer possible. However, the tendency to do so outlived the change in Party rhetoric.

In many films of the late 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s, the new Soviet positive hero or heroine possesses traits that would have been perceived as 'American', and would have been directly described as such in the 1920s. In some cases, such as Vasil' in *Earth* (1930), Marfa Lapkina in *Old and New* (1929), Klim Iarko in *The Tractor Drivers* (1939), and Tania Morozova in *The Shining Path* (1940), the main protagonist is not referred to as a 'Russian American' within the diegesis, but nevertheless possesses traits that clearly resemble descriptions of a 'Russian American' of the 1920s,[1023] and echo the early Stalinist formula of a Leninist worker who combines 'American efficiency and Russian revolutionary sweep'.[1024] In these cases, I suggest that the filmmakers were aware of the 'Americanness' of the new heroes and heroines they created, but avoided direct references to this 'Americanness', keeping it on the subtextual level of the film.

In other cases, however, filmmakers in the 1930s and early 1940s were not always aware of the fact that they were applying 'American' traits to representations

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[1023] It is worth repeating one such description, in a 1924 *Pravda* article: 'What are the "Americans"? They are people who know how to work at such a speed and with such vigor and pressure as was unknown in "Old Rus'"[...]The "Americans" are those who most of all know how to take things in hand.' Quoted in Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message', p. 242.
[1024] I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoj literatury, 1952), pp. 186-88.

of the new Soviet hero(ine), such as in portrayals of Soviet sportsmen, engineers, and aviators in the films discussed in Chapter 4 above. Rather, the process was largely unconscious in these cases. The Party gave the filmmakers the 'social command' to create the new cinematic hero, a model of the New Soviet Man and Woman on the screen. There was no 'order' from above to endow the new Soviet hero(ine) with 'American' traits. In order to create the new cinematic hero(ine), Soviet filmmakers were often drawing on their personal perception of what constituted the traits of a modern, exemplary Soviet individual, an ideal inhabitant of the future utopian state. Their perception was affected by a decade-long open admiration and praise of positive 'American' traits of American film stars and their positive hero(ine) representations, and of adventurous heroes of American frontier and adventure fiction. In addition, the latest developments in American technology, including engineering and aviation, had an effect on the process of constructing filmic images of the new Soviet masters of technology, including engineers and aviator heroes. By the 1930s, the admiration for positive 'American' traits became a deeply engrained and partially unconscious part of Soviet culture. In Lotman's terms, the newly constructed Soviet culture was a dynamic system, one built upon dialogue with various other cultures,[1025] and in particular, I would argue, upon a dialogue with American culture, which largely took place in the medium of cinema.

The purge of American films from Soviet screens that began in 1928 could not affect the personal memory of Soviet viewers and filmmakers. Exemplifying the most admired 'American' traits and having become role models for individual viewers, American stars, including most notably Fairbanks and Pickford, and the

[1025] Lotman, *Kul'tura i vzryv*, pp. 9-10; Zylko, 'Culture and Semiotics', p. 403.

cinematic hero(in)es they created, became prototypes of the new positive heroes and heroines in a number of Socialist Realist films of the 1930s. Americanization as a discursive practice of the 1920s has had a much greater effect on the construction of the new Soviet cinematic hero in the Stalinist thirties than previously recognized.

The 'American' trope moved onto a subtextual (and sometimes unconscious) level, and was no longer called by its true name, but nevertheless inspired the creation of a new kind of cinematic character from the late 1920s until the early 1940s, exemplified by Marfa Lapkina, Vasil', Petr Vinogradov, Anton Kandidov, Kostia Potekhin, Ivan Martynov, Strelka, Klim Iarko, Tania Morozova, Valerii Chkalov, and a number of others. These Soviet cinematic characters were a product of the Americanization discourse of the previous decade: some possessed traits similar to those of the previously popular American film stars, while others were a cinematic representation of efficient 'Russian Americans', or reflected Soviet admiration for modern technology. All of them represented aspects of the ideal New Soviet Man and Woman, setting an example for ordinary Soviet citizens.

Cinematic representations of the 'glorified'[1026] New Soviet Man and Woman in the 1930s and early 1940s were at least in part the product of the dialogic nature of culture, as well as of cultural memory of Soviet filmmakers and audiences. Through endowing the new Soviet cinematic hero(ine) with 'American' traits, whether consciously or unconsciously, Soviet filmmakers participated in constructing the new Soviet identity and the new Soviet culture, which was to be drastically different from the old, traditional Russian culture. The interest of early Soviet filmmakers in American culture (including cinema and adventure literature) led to the fact that

[1026] Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal,* p. 59.

'Americanness' became an important inspiration behind, and element of, the newly constructed Soviet culture. Both American and 'Americanized' Soviet cinema, as well as the broader Americanization discourse with its emphasis on dynamism, efficiency, and mastery over technology, contributed to this process of Russian culture's transformation. Thus, 'Americanness', among other sources, was at the root of 'Sovietness', which the Bolshevik regime attempted to create in the first two decades of its existence.

# APPENDIX

## List 1. Douglas Fairbanks Films in Soviet Distribution[1027]

*American Aristocracy* (Triangle, 1916), in Russia as *Kariera Kassiusa Li* from 1924

*Don Q Son of Zorro* (Elton Corporation, 1925), in Russia as *Chelovek s knutom / Syn Zorro*

*He Comes Up Smiling* (Artcraft, 1918), in Russia as *Duglas ulybaetsia / Uroki smekha / Ulybajtes', kak Duglas Ferbenks*

*His Majesty the American* (United Artists, 1919), in Russia as *Ego velichestvo Duglas / Son Allana Fergiussona* from 1925

*Robin Hood* (United Artists, 1922), in Russia as *Robin Gud* from 1925 until 1930

*Say! Young Fellow* (Famous Players-Lasky, 1918), in Russia as *Duglas-reporter*

*The Americano* (Triangle, 1916), in Russia as *Avantiura Salso Espado* from 1923

*The Half-Breed* (Triangle, 1916), in Russia as *Metis, syn chernogo volka / Chelovek s chernoi reki* from 1926 until 1928

*The Mark of Zorro* (United Artists, 1920), in Russia as *Znak Zorro* from 1925 until 1930

*The Mollycoddle* (United Artists, 1920), in Russia as *Mokraia kuritsa* from 1931

*The Nut* (United Artists, 1921), in Russia as *Chudak* from 1928

*The Thief of Bagdad* (United Artists, 1924), in Russia as *Bagdadskii vor* from 1925

*The Three Musketeers* (United Artists, 1921), in Russia as *Tri mushketera* from 1925 until 1932

*When the Clouds Roll by* (United Artists, 1919), in Russia as *Koshmary i sueveriia / Rokovye primety* from 1926

[1027] Based on Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate," pp. 212-325.

**List 2. Mary Pickford Films in Soviet Distribution**[1028]

*Daddy-Long-Legs* (1919), in Russia as *Dlinnonogii diadiushka/ Naidenysh Dzhudi* from 1923

*Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall* (1924), in Russia as *Rify zhizni / Doroti Vernon* from 1925 until 1929

*Heart o' the Hills* (1919), in Russia as *Serdtse gor / Devushka iz Kentukki* from 1924

*Hoodlum* (1919), in Russia as *Kaprizy Miss Mei / Devushka s Kreigen Strit* from 1923 until 1931

*Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921), in Russia as *Dva pretendenta* from 1925 until 1928

*Love Light* (1921), in Russia as *Svet vo t'me / Kogda potukh maiak* from 1926

*Polyanna* (1920), in Russia as *Poli-anna* from 1925

*Rosita* (1923), in Russia as *Rozita* from 1926 until 1932

*Such a Little Queen* (1914), in Russia as *Meri Pikford* from 1923

*Suds* (1920), in Russia as *Myl'naia pena* from 1929 until 1930

*Tess of the Storm Country* (1914), in Russia as *Kogda rastaet sneg / Kliatva malen'koi Tess* from 1926 until 1930

*Through the Back Door* (1921), in Russia as *S chernogo khoda* from 1925

[1028] Ibid.

**List 3. Priscilla Dean Films in Soviet Distribution**[1029]

*Conflict* (1921), in Russia as *Vzryv / V lesakh Kanady* from 1925 until 1930

*Drifting* (1923), in Russia as *Radi opiuma* from 1925

*Flame of Life* (1923), in Russia as *Podzemnyi gul*

*Grey Ghost* (1917), in Russia as *Seraia ten'* from 1922

*Outside the Law* (1921), in Russia as *Chernyi Bill'*

*Storm Daughter* (1924), in Russia as *Doch' buri*

*Under Two Flags* (1922), in Russia as *Markitantka sigaret* from 1924

*Virgin of Stamboul* (1920), in Russia as *Nishchaia iz Stambula* from 1922 until 1928

*Wicked Darling* (1919), in Russia as *Vospitannitsa ulitsy*

*Wild Honey* (1922), in Russia as *Dikii med*

*White Tiger* (1923), in Russia as *Shakh i mat* from 1925 until 1933

[1029] Ibid.

**List 4. Charlie Chaplin Films (Silent) in Soviet Distribution**[1030]

*A Day's Pleasure* (1919), in Russia as *Den' razvlechenii* from 1929 and from 1958

*A Dog's Life* (1918) in Russia as *Sobachia zhizn'* from 1929 until 1932

*A Night in the Show* (1915), in Russia as *V teatre / Charli v teatre* from 1930

*A Night Out* (1915), in Russia as *Vecher oshibok* from 1930

*A Woman of Paris* (1923) in Russia as *Parizhanka* from 1925

*Between Showers* (1914), in Russia as *Bor'ba za zontik / Pod dozhdem / Charli i zontik* in 1918 and 1924

*Carmen* (1915), in Russia as *Karmen* from 1924

*Caught in the Rain* (1914) in Russia as *Nu i noch'* from 1924

*Dough and Dynamite* (1914) in Russia as *Testo i dinamit* from 1924

*Getting Acquainted* (1914) in Russia as *Chaplin v sadu* from 1930 until 1933

*His Favourite Pastime* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli schastliv / Charli poznakomilsia* from 1924

*Her Friend the Bandit* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli v obshchestve* from 1924

*His Musical Career* (1914) in Russia as *Perevozchik roialei*

*His New Job* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli- akter* from 1930

*His New Profession* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli vezet / Charli-sanitar* from 1924

*His Prehistoric Past* (1914) in Russia as *Son Charli / Charli-Tarzan* from 1924

*His Trysting Place* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Chaplin – semianin* from 1924

*Idle Class* (First National, 1921) in Russia as *Charli – zheleznaia maska* from 1929 until 1931

*Jitney Elopement* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli zhenitsia*

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[1030] Based on Kartseva, 'Amerikanskie nemye fil'my v sovetskom prokate," pp. 212-325, Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, p. 145, and Aksenov, '1917 god: sotsial'nye realii i kinosiuzhety', p. 58.

*Laughing Gas* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Chaplin – zubnoi vrach* from 1925

*Mabel at the Wheel* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli i Meibl u kolesa* from 1923

*Mabel's Busy Day* (1914), in Russia as *Zabiyaka* from 1924

*Making a Living* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli-schastlivets* from 1924

*Pay Day* (1922), in Russia as *Den' platezha* from 1929 to 1931 and from 1958

*Property Man* (1914) in Russia as *Teatral'nye zvezdy / Zadira / Charli v teatre* from 1924

*Shanghaied* (1915), in Russia as *Zaverbovannyi matros* from 1930

*Star Boarder* (1914), in Russia as *Liubimets khoziaiki* from 1925

*Sunnyside* (1919) in Russia as *Solnechnaia storona* from 1929

*Tango Tangles* (1914) in Russia as *Chaplin na maskarade* from 1924

*The Adventurer* (1917), in Russia as *Avantiurist* from 1958

*The Bank* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli v banke* from 1930

*The Champ* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli-bokser / Chempion / Charli – chempion boksa* in 1917 and from 1930

*The Face on the Bar Room Floor* (1914), in Russia as *Moia tragediia* from 1924

*The Fatal Mallet* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli otbivaet nevestu* from 1924

*The Kid* (First National, 1921), in Russia as *Malysh* in 1929 to 1932 and from 1958

*The Masquerader* (1914) in Russia as *Olitsetvoreniie zhenshchiny* from 1924

*The New Janitor* (Keystone, 1914) in Russia as *Charli-sluga / Novyi shveitsar* from 1924

*The Pilgrim* (1923) in Russia as *Piligrim* in 1929 to 1932 and from 1958

*The Rounders* (1914) in Russia as *Povesy* from 1925

*The Tramp* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli-brodiaga / Brodiaga* from 1923 and from 1930

*Those Love Pangs* (1914) in Russia as *Soperniki / Soperniki Charli Chaplina* from 1924

*Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914), in Russia as *Molodaia devushka / Tilli zavodit roman* from 1925

*Triple Trouble* (1918) in Russia from 1924

*Twenty Minutes of Love* (1914), in Russia as *Vesenniaia likhoradka / Charlie – vrag liubvi / Charli ublevaetsia* from 1924

*Woman* (Esseney, 1915) in Russia as *Charli Chaplin – zhenshchina* from 1923

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*A Forest Tale (Lesnaia byl')*, dir. by Iurii Tarich (Belgoskino, 1927)

*A Girl with a Hatbox (Devushka s korobkoi)*, dir. by Boris Barnet (Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1927)

*A Soldier Returned from the Front (Shel soldat s fronta)*, dir. by V. Legoshin (Soiuzdetfilm, 1939)

*A Spectre is Haunting Europe (Prizrak brodit po Evrope)*, dir. by Vladimir Gardin (VUFKU, 1922)

*Abrek Zaur*, dir. by Boris Mikhen (Goskino, 1926)

*Adventures of Oktiabrina, The (Pokhozhdeniia Oktiabriny)*, dir. by Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg (Sevzapkino, 1924)

*Aelita*, dir. by Iakov Protazanov (Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1924)

*Aerograd*, dir. by Aleksandr Dovzhenko (Mosfilm and Ukrainfilm, 1935)

*Air Mail* (*Vozdushnaia pochta*), dir. by D. Poznanskii (Soiuzdetfilm, 1939)

*Aliona's Love* (*Liubov' Aliony*), dir. by B. Iurtsev (Moskinokombinat, 1934)

*An American Story (Amerikanskaia istoriia)*, dir. by B. Nikiforov (Sovkino, 1931)

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*Bag of a Diplomatic Courier, The (Sumka dipkuriera)*, dir. by Aleksandr Dovzhenko (VUFKU, 1927)

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*Battleship Potemkin (Bronenosets Potemkin)*, dir. by Sergei Eisenstein (Goskino, 1925)

*Bay of Death, The (Bukhta smerti),* dir. by Abram Room (Goskino, 1926)

*Bed and Sofa (Tretia Meshchanskaia)*, dir. by Abram Room (Sovkino, 1927)

*Black Man from Sheridan, The (Negr iz Sheridana)*, dir. by P. Kolomoitsev (Ukrainfilm, 1932)

*Black Skin (Chernaia kozha)*, dir. by P. Kolomoitsev (Ukrainfilm, 1931)

*Born Not For Money* (*Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia*), dir. by Nikandr Turkin (Neptune, 1918)

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*Chess Fever (Shakhmatnaia goriachka)*, dir. by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Nikolai Shpikovskii (Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1925)

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*Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom, The (Papirosnitsa ot Mossel'proma)*, dir. by Iurii Zheliabuzhskii (Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1924)

*Cinderella (Zolushka)*, dir. by N. Kosheverova (Lenfilm, 1947)

*Circus* (*Tsirk*), dir. by Grigorii Alexandrov (Mosfilm, 1936)

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*Cossacks of the Kuban', The* (*Kubanskie Kazaki*), dir. by Ivan Pyriev (Mosfilm, 1949)

*Counterplan* (*Vstrechnyi*), dir. by Fridrikh Ermler and Sergei Iutkevich (Rosfilm Leningrad, 1932)

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*Deeds and People (Dela i liudi)*, dir. by Aleksandr Macheret (Soiuzkino, 1932)

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*Fight for the Utimatum, The (Bor'ba za ultimatum)*, dir. by Dmitrii Bassalygo (Proletkino, 1924)

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*Jimmy Higgins (Dzhimmi Khiggins)*, dir. by G. Tasin (VUFKU Odessa, 1928)

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