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THE SOCIALIST REALIST HERO UNDER PARTY MENTORSHIP: THE BIOPOLITICS OF SOVIET STATE

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Summary

This article contributes to the existing field of analyses of the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic by further exploring the biopolitics in Soviet State and the place of family and sexual relations. It focuses in particular on the role of Party mentorship in the acquisition of consciousness, as well as on the shift in the mentoring process from inhibiting sexual relations to maintaining them, as Party policy changed drastically from a mechanistic approach in the 1920s to a more organicist worldview in the 1930s, with individual families understood as cells of the state's collective body. The discussion of these phenomena is based on literary texts—Nikolai Ostrovskii's How the Steel Was Tempered (1932), Maksim Gor'kii's Mother (1906), Leonid Potemkin's diary, Boris Pilniak's The Birth of a Man (1935), and films—Ivan Pyr'ev's Tractor Drivers (1939) and Party Card (1936), Sergei Gerasimov and Roman Tikhomirov's Teacher (1939), and Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits's Member of The Government (1939).

Key Words: The spontaneity and consciousness dialectic, Biopolitics, Organicist worldview, Master plot, Socialist realism, Ideology, New Soviet man, Mentorship.

Introduction

The dialectic of spontaneity and consciousness (*stikhiinost'* and *soznatel'nost'*) in the Soviet context goes back to Lenin's influential treatise *What Is To Be Done?*, in which he argues that socialist consciousness has a scientific nature and thus belongs only to a limited circle of

intellectuals. He further maintains that the proletariat is not capable of producing socialist thinking on its own, and hence, the working class needs external assistance in achieving consciousness—from the vanguard of the Party. As Leopold Haimson argues in his seminal study, "the party was to stand for the manifestation of socialist consciousness, it should include only 'conscious,' responsible members in its organizations."[1] These "conscious" members were intended to become mentors of society.

The controversies of Marxism and their specific articulation in Russia, as well as the formation of a new intelligentsia, have been discussed at length by a range of influential scholars: Igal Halfin,[2] Anna Krylova,[3] Katerina Clark, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Jochen Hellbeck, David Hoffman, and Peter Holquist, among others. In the broad understanding of the term, socialist consciousness emerged as an external phenomenon, which is why the primary task of revolutionary intellectuals was to infuse the working class with it. After mass inculcation of consciousness into a predominantly illiterate society was initiated, it eventually led to a bifurcated result: intimidation and terror, but also enthusiasm and devotion to the Party. The main expression of this devotion was militancy, which often precluded harmonious sexual relations between subjects of state power, given that the Party was prioritized over personal relations. This pattern became most evident in the literature and film of the period.

This article contributes to the existing field of analyses of the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic by further exploring the place of family and sexual relations. It focuses in particular on the role of Party mentorship in the acquisition of consciousness, as well as on the shift in the mentoring process from inhibiting sexual relations to maintaining them, as Party policy changed drastically from a mechanistic approach in the 1920s to a more organicist worldview in the 1930s, with individual families understood as cells of the state's collective body. The discussion of these phenomena is based on the following literary texts—Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalialas' stal'*, 1932), Maksim Gor'kii's *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1906), Leonid Potemkin's diary, Boris Pilniak's *The Birth of a Man* (*Rozhdenie cheloveka,* 1935), as well as films—Ivan Pyr'ev's *Tractor Drivers* (*Traktoristy,* 1939) and *Party Card* (*Partiinyi bilet,* 1936), Sergei Gerasimov and Roman Tikhomirov's *Teacher* (*Uchitel'*, 1939), as well as Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits's film, *Member of The Government* (*Chlen Pravitel'stva,* 1939).

Acquisition of Consciousness and the Role of the Mentor

Over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, striving for socialist consciousness became the major subtext not only for political organization and ideological doctrine, but also an underlying principle of art, literature, and film in the Soviet Union. In her discussion of the Soviet novel, Katerina Clark examines the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic in socialist realist literature. The scholar argues that socialist realist novels were written according to a "single master plot, which itself represents a synthesis of the plots of several of the official models."[4] The master plot, a set of patterns used and re-used by authors, featured a hero moving from spontaneity to consciousness with the help of a mentor (or mentors). Clark further underscores that "the master plot personalizes the general process outlined in Marxist-Leninist historiography […]: the positive hero passes in stages from a state of relative 'spontaneity' to a higher degree of 'consciousness."[5] In spite of the external origin of socialist consciousness, the doctrine soon took root and was deeply internalized by the masses. At the same time, consciousness was not a static phenomenon: with the evolution of historical events and circumstances, its meaning constantly developed and changed over time.

At the beginning of the 1920s, consciousness meant understanding and accepting political

doctrine; by the 1930s, individual consciousness had gradually evolved into absolute devotion to the Party and eagerness to sacrifice everything personal for its sake—family, privacy, body, and soul. In addition to its enlightening function in the revolutionary period, consciousness eventually becomes the lens through which the world is perceived, becoming more a kind of conscience residing deep in the mind of Soviet citizens. According to Clark, "*soznatel'nost'* has the coloration of something inspired by one's conscience and could hence be associated with the intelligentsia's tradition of assuming the role of Russian society's conscience."[6] Thus, whereas at first consciousness tended to appeal to the rationalization and understanding of ideology, later, in the 1930s, it began to work from within and turned into self-awareness (*samosoznanie*), shifting to the next level—the level of internalization.

The process of instilling an external theory into people's minds, however, was a complicated task to be undertaken by the Party, which was supposed to wither away after its mission was accomplished. As Clark highlights, "Lenin himself believed that, once the revolution had occurred and the masses had become even more 'conscious' in the postrevolutionary environment, the need for the vanguard as an agent of control, discipline, and enlightenment would end," and yet, she proceeds that "external threats to Bolshevik hegemony … made it necessary for them to build up the institutions of state control rather more than they had envisioned."[7] The numerous institutions of control (Komsomol, raikom, Communist Party committees, etc.) established by the state exercised supervision over each individual and society in general, since consciousness could be achieved only through discipline and guidance of the proletariat by the already conscious Party representatives. As Haimson points out, "the network of organizations that [Lenin] envisaged was to constitute a veritable spider web controlled from the center. […] These men would be entrusted with the task of guiding the movement on the narrow and precipitous path that alone would lead to the socialist era."[8] Therefore, the guidance embodied in Party mentorship became an inseparable element of life in Soviet society. In his discussion of diary writing under the Bolshevik regime, Hellbeck emphasizes that "the party, embodied above all by Josef Stalin, cast itself as a final judge, weighing each soul individually and carefully."[9]

Due to mass illiteracy and the literacy campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s, the master plot of a hero acquiring consciousness with the help of a mentor in many cases resonated with the experience of the audience. The acquisition of basic reading and writing skills was usually accompanied by ideological education. As people could feel the real achievements of the new political order, they were simultaneously enlightened in terms of "correct ideology." It was easy to make people believe in the "bright Communist future" given relative improvements from the poverty they had been immersed in previously and the overall backwardness of society. Hence, the didactic nature of film (or novels)—either explicit or implicit—was nothing extraordinary. Moreover, by the mid-1930s didacticism became a common practice that permeated a society striving for enlightenment, and the goal of political consciousness extended this process beyond formal education. Eventually, the most important mentor was to be found inside oneself.

The phenomenon of guidance found its remarkable representation in socialist realist literature and film, where the mentor was an indispensable figure of the master plot. When socialist realism was declared the main literary method in 1934, Gor'kii's *Mother*, written in 1906, was identified an exemplary novel. Pavel Vlasov, the main hero of the novel, is a prototype for the Soviet socialist realist hero on the long, thorny way from spontaneity to consciousness, and eventually becoming a mentor himself. He primarily mentors his mother, as well as the young people surrounding him—Andrei, Nikolai, Sashen'ka, and others. Pavel does not lose his spontaneity with the acquisition of consciousness, however, which is what makes him so attractive as a hero. His *stikhiinost'* is fully

revealed, for instance, in his audacious conversation with the director of the factory concerning the taxation of workers' wages, or when he proudly protects the banner during the workers' demonstration on May 1 by pushing away an officer until he is arrested. His almost religious devotion to his revolutionary goal has no limits, as he sacrifices everything personal for the social. His relations with Sashen'ka have to be suspended, even before they can develop into something serious. In his conversation with the Ukrainian Nakhodka, Pavel admits that he does not want any personal attachments—neither to his mother, nor to his beloved, since they will necessarily distract him from his revolutionary activity: "I do not want love or friendship that hangs on to your legs, holding you back…"[10] Hence, Pavel's acquisition of consciousness precludes him from developing strong personal relations, and yet, as Clark underscores, "although he is completely dedicated to the interests of the collective, he has not lost his capacity for human interaction."[11] Pavel manages to establish a certain harmony of spontaneity and consciousness in himself, yet his militancy does not allow him to consummate his desire, and thus his relationship with Sasha has no erotic development in the novel.

This quality is subsequently inherited by Pavka Korchagin in Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1936). As Pavka becomes ideologically conscious, he cannot stop sacrificing his personal relations, as well as his body to the state. Lilya Kaganovsky emphasizes that in the novel, "the male subject's coming into being as a Stalinist subject depended first on being able to recognize power located outside himself, and second on internalizing that knowledge in the form of the mechanisms of self-surveillance."[12] In combination with his personal experience of hardships and deprivation in his childhood, Korchagin has internalized the guidance of his numerous mentors in the novel and eventually developed infinite devotion to the Party. Thus, he has long talks with Zhukhrai, a sailor and Party member, who immediately sees the potential in Pavka and instills socialist values in him: "this staunch, stout-hearted Baltic sailor weathered by sea squalls, a confirmed Bolshevik, who had been a member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) since 1915, taught Pavel the harsh truths of life, and the young stoker listened spellbound."[13] Eventually, Pavka himself becomes a mentor for Tonia Tumanova, his beloved, in his futile attempts to bring her to consciousness by introducing her to the Komsomol. Meanwhile, Tonia, attracted to Pavka's spontaneity and raw energy, is also trying to mold him in her own way. However, Tonia is completely devoid of *stikhiinost'*, of which Pavka is an everlasting source. In her article, Krylova underscores that the "spontaneous and instinctual never disappeared completely," which is why "class instinct," which existed before class consciousness, is a central dimension in the revolutionary identity. Krylova argues that "unlike the Plekhanovite vision of the instinct as anarchic and aimless, the instinct that the Bolsheviks ascribed to the working class was purposeful and history-making."[14] Tonia cannot overcome her bourgeois self, which is why Pavka's previously sincere feelings for Tonia begin to fade as he sees her inappropriately dressed up at a meeting of the Komsomol youth. Tonia's detachment from the "conscious" collective, of which Pavka has become a part, precipitates the unbridgeable abyss that emerges between the two young people.

The consciousness that Korchagin has acquired now forces him to prioritize the "communal cause" over his personal happiness. Thus, his sexual desire cannot be consummated:

> "Tonya, we have gone over this before. You know, of course, that I loved you, and even now my love might return, but for that you must be with us. I am not the Pavlusha I was before. And I would be a poor husband to you if you expect me to put you before the Party. For I shall always put the Party first, and you and my other loved ones second."[15]

Since Tonia is incapable of change, their separation is inevitable. Furthermore, indulgence in sexual relations would necessarily take away energy necessary for the revolution—hence, Pavka

cannot allow himself simple human joys at the expense of the "great cause" and the mission he has to fulfill.

Pavka's revolutionary aspirations do not allow him to develop intimate relations even with a woman who shares his ideological views and is assigned to him as his mentor—Rita Ustinovich. The passion overflowing Pavka's mind and body in the presence of Rita inhibits his acquisition of consciousness and learning from her, which is why Pavka has to terminate his lessons with her, leaving Rita unaware of the true reasons for his decision. Only three years later, when they meet again, Korchagin admits his blunder and explains his behavior by the fact that he was influenced by a revolutionary-romantic novel, *The Gadfly* by Voinich. He wanted to be as courageous as the heroes of the novel, so he allowed *The Gadfly* to interfere with his feelings for Rita: "I still stand for what is most important in *The Gadfly*, for his courage, his supreme endurance, for the type of man who is capable of enduring suffering without exhibiting his pain to all and sundry. I stand for the type of revolutionary whose personal life is nothing as compared with the life of society as a whole."[16] The last sentence in this declaration discloses the ultimate truth about Korchagin's convictions and the force pushing him forward, even to the detriment of his personal life. Hence, the rise of his consciousness simultaneously parallels his sacrifice of sexual desire and ultimately leads him to an overzealous internalization and obsession with revolutionary romanticism.[17]

Constant striving for self-improvement combined with aspirations to be useful to society and absolute devotion to Party ideology provide Pavka with the willpower to struggle further. These qualities become the defining factors in the formation of the New Soviet Man of the 1930s. However, what makes Korchagin obsolete for the post-revolutionary generation is the unnecessary sacrifice of his body. As the 1930s progress, the hero's suffering becomes less and less essential, since it depletes energy that should be channeled into political struggle. Korchagin overlooks the fact that his mutilated body will eventually prevent him from fulfilling his main mission—building socialism. His devotion turns into an obsession, an unexpected result of overzealous internalization as his consciousness grows. This obsession, in addition, hinders his sexual relations with women and, naturally, procreation, which becomes central to the Party ideology of the 1930s.

Kaganovsky points out that "under Stalinism, exemplary masculinity, at least as it appears in the literature and films of the period, consists of two contradictory models: the virile and productive male body on the one hand and the wounded, long-suffering invalid, on the other."[18] In the mid-1930s, the athletic and virile type of hero, taking care of both his internal culturedness and bodily strength becomes dominant. Although the image of Korchagin was deeply revered as an inspirational model for self-perfection and devotion, healthy docile bodies begin to gain preference. As Hellbeck notes, "revolutionary parades no longer featured marching workers in faceless rows; instead they showcased athletic young people . . . whose function was to represent the new man as an artifact of the utmost beauty and harmonious completion."[19] The new man was now not only a conscious devotee of the Party, but also a disciplined body, ready to fulfill its mission within the collective in the most efficient way—"it is the body of exercise, rather than of speculative physics; a body manipulated by authority, rather than imbued with animal spirits."[20] The individual's aspiration for self-perfection, however, played a double role within the Soviet ideological system: it allowed an individual to see a personal benefit in the struggle, and at the same time, allowed Party goals to be effectively realized.

As consciousness was gradually acquired and internalized, the idea of fighting for the "great cause" became a decisive factor in the formation of the new man. The goal itself, however, could hardly motivate people to work hard for a long period of time without visible results. At the same time, due to overall poverty and lack of resources, material benefits were mainly unattainable for the

majority, so the people were encouraged to seek other sources of motivation—moral satisfaction. As Sheila Fitzpatrick points out, "under the old regime, work had been an exhausting, soul-destroying chore; under socialism, it was the thing that filled life with meaning."[21] The awareness of one's own importance and the opportunity to contribute to the history of the revolution, making the world better for future generations, became the primary driving force for mass participation in the struggle. Moreover, since the revolutionary impulse produced the Party as much as the Party imposed ideology on the people, the implementation of the consciousness program was not a one-way process—it secured mass feedback in the form of people's enthusiasm and support in spite of the shortages and poverty people had to endure in everyday life.

Self-induced development becomes a prevailing pattern in the mid-1930s. The general image of the new man in the socialist realist master plot of this period is a self-made individual who achieves success in spite of his miserable background. In his discussion of the new man in Soviet psychology, Raymond Bauer emphasizes that in Soviet society "self-training becomes an effective force as the individual develops ideals, a definite image of the course of life along which he will guide himself."[22] Hence, an individual obtains the power of shaping him- or herself and is proud of the changes in his or her personality, endowing the overall collective movement toward the socialist future with personal significance.

In his introspective diary, Leonid Potemkin narrates a story of molding his personality and his constant struggle for a better self.[23] As Bauer subtly points out, "positing self-training as a factor in personality development is the last step in a doctrine which sees the individual's personality as almost infinitely plastic."[24] This "plastic" personality is the underlying characteristic for the notion of the new Soviet man, since it is taken for granted that personality can be developed and shaped; moreover, that this development can be self-initiated, or "self-mentored." Potemkin is an example of the new Soviet man who has created his cultured self by employing every possible opportunity for self-development. Hellbeck emphasizes that "he enacted in his life what in the portrayal of party leaders or members of the literary and artistic professions was a visionary figure or an ideological artifact."[25] Apart from mental development, he is also actively engaged in the physical training of his body, and even organizes dance classes for other students. Potemkin perceives his uniqueness in this world and the significance of his mission in society, and he develops himself in order to embody the ideology and become a self-created socialist man.

Although Potemkin represents a new type of Soviet man explicitly of the post-revolutionary generation, which implied that the peak of the struggle for the "great cause" remained in the previous decade, he continues to infuse his life with overzealous militancy. This zeal eventually hinders his relations with women, making him sublimate his desire into his love for socialism. In the meantime, he seeks a woman for an "ideal friendship," "a pleasant person to talk to, a friend to whom [he] would express [his] noble soul and ennoble with the seething feelings of a tender refined love."[26] His romanticized perception of a woman often blends with his perception of music, and "as he did with music, Potemkin seemed to use love to generate an emotionally heightened devotion to the socialist cause."[27] Furthermore, he associates women much more with friendship than desire. He pictures such friendship as "fraternal in the sense of an ideological unity whose goal is to aid in the development of an independent personality through the spiritual cooperation of both parties in their community work."[28]

When he meets Zina, a girl who attracts his attention at the library, he is excited by the idea of finally finding the friendship he has been longing for. However, when later he does not encounter her for quite a while, he is frustrated but tends to find a bright side in his bad luck. Already in his childhood, when he was attracted to a girl, he "learned to suppress [his] desire for immediate

reciprocity, and to strive and believe in [his] dream instead: to be worthy of universal respect and love."[29] This universal love in many respects replaces personal human love for Potemkin—as Hellbeck maintains, in Stalinist times, "personal love, directed at a particular person, was in no way to eclipse or diminish the primacy of the citizen's social commitment."[30] As such, when Potemkin initially aims to write a love letter to Zina, he ends up writing her a political treatise. Although Potemkin decides against sending this first letter, since it hardly resembles a love letter and focuses primarily on his personality and official rhetoric, the second letter turns out to be no better due to the exalted style of his writing, which eventually puts Zina off.

Potemkin's relations with other women are necessarily fused with revolutionary romanticism and "odes to the socialist future."[31] Yet, he eventually finds his coveted "friendship" in correspondence with Zhirkova, a young woman studying literature in Gorky. As Hellbeck highlights, "the central purpose of Potemkin's correspondence with Zhirkova was to forge a Communist type of friendship. The spiritual affinity between friends was to be used for mutual personality formation and the pursuit of a rationalist, ideologically committed life."[32] In a sense, taking into account the edifying mission of the correspondence, Potemkin and Zhirkova become mentors for each other.

The Shift to Organicism

In the 1930s, when society had attained a certain level of consciousness, the Party shifted to a policy of promoting life, as well as encouraging procreation. The need for revolutionary militancy waned under the new circumstances of relative stability, and with it faded the need to preserve energy for the collective struggle. Love for the revolution no longer had to compete with sexual love for another human being. The true Soviet man now was complete only if he/she comprised a "cell" in the society—a family, which to a certain extent relieved the overzealous militancy of figures like Korchagin. As a characteristic trait of socialist society, militancy survived, yet now the revolutionary battlefield had moved to schools, parks, exhibitions, cinemas and other social organizations. The state now perceived not the individual but the family as the subject of its power, and instead of destroying sexual desire, the Party moved to maintain it.

The role of mentorship fulfilled by the Party and its numerous subdivisions also transformed. Whereas previously an individual was guided towards consciousness by an external mentor with a certain degree of deliberateness in the process, by the mid-1930s, mentorship was disseminated everywhere and penetrated all spheres of human activity—education, work, leisure, as well as family life. Due to the vast outreach of propaganda, socialist consciousness was implicitly internalized by Soviet people without it being deliberately imposed on them. Internalized consciousness became the norm in society, whereas the slightest deviation from it was immediately revealed and excised. The re-education of deviant members of the collective in distant camps became widely practiced, to say nothing of purges directed at enemies of the people.

The position that the family occupied in the mid-1930s in Stalinist Russia was radically different from that of the immediate post-revolutionary period. As opposed to the constructivist and mechanistic approach of the previous decade, with its "development through rebuilding . . . founded on strictly scientific methods, whose results could be planned and predicted," the new trend in social life "could be called 'organic,' 'existential,' or 'neoromantic.'"[33] Marked by the contradictions of the transition, the 1920s were notable for their rejection of the family as a petty bourgeois "survival" that had to be eliminated. In this connection, Eric Naiman argues: "to understand the nature of the discourse on sex in the mid-1920s, we must first appreciate that for the Party and the Komsomol, sex was a means of control as much as it was a *goal* of control."[34] Since marriage and divorce were

quick and easy to obtain in the 1920s, relations between men and women tended to become mechanical, without serious attachments. Promiscuity and the negation of family values, however, led to an increased number of divorces, abortions, and high orphanage rates, which, taking into consideration the shortage of manpower in the interwar period, became an unfavorable condition for the newly built society.

Therefore, it was crucial to take control over marriage and birth rates before the political body of the state became dysfunctional. This is why, in the mid-1930s, a completely different approach to the family was adopted. The Constitution of 1936 made divorce a costly endeavor that was, moreover, hard to obtain; it banned abortions; reinforced the authority of parents over children; and rewarded mothers of many children. In Foucauldian terms, this transition could be defined as "the beginning of an era of 'biopower'" and "the emergence of demography," where life and its mechanisms were brought "into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life."[35] Hence, the biopolitics of population management became the primary goal of the state's regulatory activity.

Ruth Miller develops Foucault's concept of biopolitics, and also enters a debate with Giorgio Agamben, who defines biopolitical space as a concentration camp. Miller, by contrast, finds this space in the figure of the womb and develops the idea of biopolitics with regard to the politics of abortion. The criminalization of abortion in the Soviet Union in 1936 was a powerful signal of the impetus to control the womb as a biopolitical site. In the new paradigm of biopolitical power, abortion was a threat not only to a single life out of millions; it also exposed these millions of lives to the threat of population decline. The fetus in the womb now symbolized the new Soviet man and the future Socialist society. At the same time, the woman, as a "womb-owner," in Miller's terms, moved into the focus of attention.[36] The woman suddenly became a useful resource for the state.

In accordance with the general paradigm of thought in this period, the family as a source of life and regeneration was, on the one hand, extensively promoted and, on the other, meticulously supervised and managed. Soviet pro-natalist policies represented a direct intrusion into the demographics of the population. As an organic body, in the 1930s, the Soviet state began to represent itself as a single living entity, a larger family comprised of numerous cells—nuclear families considered to be "primary cell of the society" and "a microcosmic auxiliary to the state."[37] However, much as a cell cannot live on its own without the body, the family in Stalinist times could not operate autonomously without the state. In this sense, Gasparov's interpretation of the essence of organicism can be fully applied to the family as a unit empowered to exist only as a part of a larger whole: "An organic phenomenon has no fixed components that can be described as such, apart from the whole in which they are immersed; neither can it be exempt, for the sake of scientific 'purity,' from the wholeness of its environment."[38] Due to the complete dependence of the socialist family on the environment it existed in, the state could extensively intervene in its integrity, regulate its existence or even lead it to non-existence, if the family proved to be a defective unit. If one of the family members was accused of being an enemy of the people, for example, the rest of the members would also be punished, in order to prevent the gangrenous spread of the "illness" that could undermine the "health" of the whole organism (society).[39] Hence, the state disposed of such families like the body disposes of a necrotized cell.

According to David L. Hoffman, "despite rhetoric about strong families, the Soviet state actually encroached upon family autonomy and used this traditional institution for modern mobilization purposes."[40] Every cell in the body is important for its on-going life; similarly, the family was accorded importance and was promoted by the state in order to guarantee the reproduction of its own power. With its increased emphasis on the family and the promotion of

motherhood, the Soviet state located these phenomena within the social realm and the domain of its power. Marriage and childbirth became a social obligation. The child no longer belonged solely to the parents—children were now considered the "property" of the state. According to Aaron Sol¢ts, as quoted by Hoffmann in the epigraph to his chapter "Stalinist Family Values," "the Soviet woman is not free from the great and honorable duty the nature has given her: she is a mother, she gives birth. This is undoubtedly not only her personal affair but one of enormous social importance."[41] Meanwhile, the process of instilling consciousness had not ended. The organizations of state control mentioned earlier continued to exist, but now they "mentored" not individuals as part of the collective, but families as whole entities. Although now the mentors could also be family members themselves who exchanged their ideological views and shared common socialist values, much like in Potemkin's relationship with Zhirkova.

The transition to family values in the mid-1930s became the underlying theme of literature and film of the period. Boris Pil¢niak's short story *The Birth of a Man* (1935), for instance, is a hymn to childbirth glorifying the woman's role as a mother. The main heroine of the story, Antonova, is a pregnant woman who takes a vacation to give birth to her child. She is fully conscious of her social duty and rejoices in the opportunity to give birth to a new Soviet man who will live in the new classless socialist society of the future. Yet, she rejects family in disgust of the possibility of having her "own corner," husband, or saucepans, when she can own the whole world: "I did not have a family which might in its roots give me means to live. And apparently my race is not continuing but beginning—be-gin-ning. It is enclosed by a very narrow and restricted circle, by my son, who does not even have a father; but this race has an advantage, it does not look back but forward! . . ."[42] This understanding of a family and reluctance to comprise a cell of the society, in spite of her rejoicing in childbirth, locate Antonova on the border between the old mechanistic approach to life and the organic paradigm of the second half of the 1930s.

The image of the heroine is, furthermore, indirectly contrasted to the two ex-wives of her friend, Surovtsev. According to his words, his first wife was a party member and they fought together in the Civil War. She was an overzealous, masculine woman, committed to the feminist ideas of the 1920s, and so she rejected the family and childbearing as the ultimate purpose of her life. His second wife belonged to the bourgeois past, she was a "a remnant of the past"—and often betrayed him with poets. His first wife's mechanical approach to life and his second wife's individualistic bourgeois behavior were not acceptable for the organicist movement of the 1930s, which is why they are both jettisoned from his present into the past.

Representation of family in Soviet film of the 1930s

In Soviet film of the 1930s, one can observe the shift from a militant individual and overzealous internalization, suppressing sexual desire, to a less intense militancy, in which consciousness has already been internalized, and the principle of organicity is becoming dominant. Kaganovsky asserts that the "building of socialism" still remained at the forefront of film narratives, leaving "little room for the personal question of love."[43] The latter is debatable, however, since as family is emphasized more and more in the life of Soviet society, weddings and love begin to appear more often on screen in Soviet cinema, so that by the end of the 1930s love occupies an equal place on screen with ideology.

The political discourse of the period, in the meantime, embraced the personal life of individuals by pre-establishing the model of their relationships and distinguishing the best marriage

partners for them, as well as promoting the priority of the social over the personal. Therefore, the Party inevitably interferes in the private matters of individuals. The role of the "mentor" in the master plot of the Soviet film, furthermore, acquires particular significance in this period, first as individual guidance of the protagonist in his or her acquisition of consciousness, and later as moral guidance in the protagonist's private life.

In Ivan Pyr¢ev's *Tractor Drivers* (1939), Kirill Petrovich, the head of a tractor station, represents the voice of the Party and, as a mentor figure, facilitates the relations between Nazar Duma and Mar'iana Bazhan, the main heroine. Mariana is bewildered by this intrusion into her private life—she loves another man, Klim, and wants to make her own choice in life. The climax comes in the scene when Klim, without saying a word about his feelings directly to Mar¢iana, first tells Kirill Petrovich about his love for her, positioning him as a matchmaker and mentor in their personal relations. The heroes' feelings, in the meantime, are given only a secondary importance and necessarily have to be approved by the Party as embodied by Kirill Petrovich. The state takes full control of its subjects' personal lives—beginning with their choice of the partner, marriage, and, consequently, family relations.

Although both characters—Mar'iana and Klim—maintain a vigorous militancy in their work activities, and are even getting ready to defend their Motherland by mastering tanks along with tractors, there is still place for desire and love between them. As Mar'iana changes from her masculine work jumpsuit and boyish cap into an embroidered blouse, her body attains a feminine flair and she turns into a woman capable of being sensuous and experiencing love. At the same time, Klim manages to see a woman in her during their first meeting when he helps her with her broken down motorcycle on the roadside. As he eventually brings her home and bandages her hurt leg, Mariana looks at him with curiosity and her inspired look reveals her incipient feeling. Still unaware of her love but already unconsciously guided by desire, Mariana immediately invites Klim to stay and work for their collective farm. Meanwhile, Klim's singing in the following scene becomes the final blow into the woman's heart.

Mar'iana is militant not only as a Stakhanovite, famous across the Soviet Union, but also as a woman ready for anything in her struggle for personal happiness. When, due to Nazar's jealousy, Klim resolves to move to another collective farm, Mar'iana does not surrender—she finds ways to make him return. When Klim re-educates Nazar and transforms him into a renowned tractor driver worthy of Mar'iana's hand, Mar'iana cannot keep her feelings for Klim secret anymore. She reveals her desire by sensuously looking at him, touching him and eventually embracing him with the words "What a fool you are, Klim." Interrupted by Kirill Petrovich, she is immediately ashamed of her behavior and runs away to sing about her love in sad solitude. When Klim and Mar'iana finally declare their love for each other, their kiss is again interrupted by Kirill Petrovich, who reminds the viewer that it is the Party who controls and manages the relations between its subjects, and that Mar'iana and Klim's marriage at the end of the film is blessed by the Party.

An earlier film by Pyr¢ev, *Party Card* (1936), is also devoted to courtship and family relations; however, it depicts the dangers of desire directed at an unworthy individual—an enemy of the Party. In the film, the main heroine, Anna, rejects her fiancé, Iasha, who is a loyal Party member, and falls in love with Pavel Kuganov, a newcomer with a shadowy past who manages to gain her trust through affected masculinity and fake heroism. While Pavel is concerned only with rising in the ranks with Anna's help, her unconscious desire, manifested in her intense looks at him, is emphasized from their first meeting. Trapped in the treacherous sincerity of Kuganov's singing, Anna cannot resist the nascent attraction she feels for him. The difficulties awaiting the couple are foreshadowed when a thunderstorm traps them in a room. In spite of warnings about Kuganov's

origins, she gives into her desire for him and abandons her ideologically correct partner. Anna's eventual downfall is preconditioned by the fact that her lover is from a *kulak*[44] family. However, the extent of Kuganov's treachery is immense, and even Fedor Ivanovich, the Party secretary who represents the "mentor" for the characters, overlooks the enemy in him.

It is notable that Anna and Pavel get married immediately after Pavel is accepted into the Party. His membership legitimizes their marriage, as Kuganov joins not only the Party but also the big Communist family. Anna's father's speech at their wedding also symbolizes Kuganov's initiation as a Party member. As Kaganovsky asserts, "this marriage, in other words, is more than a union with Anna, or even with the imposing Kulikov [Anna's] family—it is a union with the state itself."[45]

In this film, the clash of two opposing ideologies, embodied in the spouses, comes into primary focus. The contrast between the political views of the main characters is unequivocal and is depicted in the best traditions of the socialist realist method. The wife and the husband eventually become a necrotic cell of the society that has to be disposed of. As Anna loses her Party card—stolen by Kuganov—she is condemned by Party members, including her husband, and is eventually ostracized from the Party. Once she makes this mistake, despite all her previous achievements, she is excised from the healthy collective like a gangrenous cell. Having lost the Party card, Anna betrays her Communist family, and thus deserves the highest punishment. After Kuganov is unmasked, however, and the heartbroken Anna has no one else to support her, she suddenly remembers Iasha. According to the Communist canon, Iasha, as a lawful and reliable Party member, is an ideal partner for Anna, but she disregarded and offended him with her rejection. Eventually, Anna's punishment for her transgression is complete. The possibility of Anna's and Iasha's future together is only suggested in the film but is a probable solution within a socialist realist plot.

Hence, family relations are increasingly emphasized in film narratives of the 1930s, with the state deeply permeating these relations. The Party features as an invisible family member infusing sexual desire with ideological content—thus making personal relations deeply political and dependent on Party decisions. As Khlinovskaya Rockhill argues, "the positioning of the family in the hybrid sphere had far-reaching consequences for the inter-penetration between the state and the family, resulting in […] processes of familiarization of the state and estatization of the family."[46] In addition, it is notable that whereas *Tractor Drivers* (1939) promotes desire, *Party Card* (1936) warns against it. The reason for that most obviously lies in the times the films were created—in the mid-1930s, when *Party Card* was released, the new pro-natalist policy had only just been introduced. It reveals itself in full only by the end of the 1930s, which is why Pyr'ev's *Tractor Drivers* and Gerasimov and Tikhomirov's *Teacher*, both of which appeared in 1939, are rife with sexual desire.

In *Teacher* (1939), the main character, Stepan, achieves consciousness in Moscow and returns to his native village with the purpose of establishing a school there. Although Stepan's father perceives his return as his son's inability to make a career in Moscow, Stepan proceeds with his goal. In spite of a number of obstacles on his way and often even lack of knowledge, Stepan eventually becomes a teacher and mentor for the entire village. As he is reading Chekhov's *Van'ka* (1886) to his students, both children and adults are mesmerized by the story and deeply empathize with the main character. When students begin to cry because of the main hero's sad destiny, Stepan relieves them with his own end to the story. Although Van'ka's letter did not reach his grandfather, it reached a more powerful man—Lenin—who managed to oust Van'ka's oppressor and free the boy to study and become a Bolshevik. Stepan's communist interpretation of the classical Chekhov story, as well as his introduction of Marxist works to the villagers, eventually serve his purpose of enlightening the people and bringing them to consciousness. Grunia, who falls in love with Stepan, becomes one of

his ardent followers—she even gives up a chance to go to Moscow in order to keep taking his classes. During a question and answer session, Grunia is anxious because her real question to Stepan is whether he loves her or not. In place of this question, she asks him about life on the Moon. Stepan is frustrated because he cannot transmit his knowledge to people and does not know enough to explain everything. He nevertheless stays true to his goal and insists on the establishment of a school so the village residents can be educated without leaving their village. Stepan eventually also becomes a mentor for his father, as he teaches him that not everyone is supposed to fly in the sky: someone—like his son—has to walk on earth and do earthly work—teaching (mentoring) people.

When Stepan encounters Grunia naked by the river, he stays and looks at her, while the woman feels uncomfortable and, naturally, hides in the bushes. After Grunia has put on her clothes, they sit next to each other and their desire begins to overflow. Grunia, not able to resist her feelings any more, leans on Stepan's shoulder and they finally succumb to the long-coveted kiss followed by off-screen sex. Later on Stepan comes to Grunia, urging her to go and register their marriage, but she is shocked by such a precipitous proposal—he has not declared his love for her and he still keeps the photograph of a woman on his desk that he brought from Moscow. So she rejects his proposal immediately, in spite of all the anxiety and suffering that follows this decision. "You seem to be a new man but you make decisions as if you still belong to the people of the old views"—she says to him and leaves. Being an ideologically conscious man, Stepan still does not fully understand the importance of organic, harmonious relations between men and women, which is why he perceives marriage as a mechanistic act.

While he mentors Grunia towards socialist consciousness, the woman mentors him in terms of the new organicist approach towards marriage and family. Eventually, Grunia becomes one of his most brilliant students in the class, and she even resolves to go to Moscow to continue her studies. Stepan, in the meantime, is chosen as a candidate for the Supreme Soviet, yet he does not intend to go because he does not want to leave Grunia. Stepan's indecisiveness as to love matters is finally broken when a friend of his, Kostia, tells him that he should fight for his happiness. He should be persistent in his personal relations with the same intensity with which he strove to build a new school in the village. Hence, according to the new Party policy, people are now supposed not only to achieve high results in their struggle for the "bright future" of the country, but also create ideologically correct families under the auspices of the Party. This is why Stepan decides to ask Grunia to marry him once more, and although again he does it all wrong, Grunia finally cedes to his persistence and kisses him. Since they are now on the same level of consciousness they are officially allowed to marry and build a new cell in the society. Before Stepan's proposal, however, Grunia was planning to leave for Moscow, and it is left unclear for the viewer if she has changed her mind. Menawhile, their productive relationship, even a long-distance one, becomes obvious. The possibility of such a long-distance relationship, however, is reminiscent of the militant sublimation of the previous period, so to a certain extent, traces of militancy are still present in the new organic period.

In Zarkhi and Kheifits's film, *Member of the Government* (*Chlen Pravitel'stva*, 1939), family relations are greatly influenced by the Party as it interferes with the relationship between Aleksandra Sokolova and her husband, Efim. The latter keeps tightly to the old patriarchal views concerning the role of the woman in the family, and he becomes the target of Party ideology. The Party takes away his power over his wife, leading to a clash between his old pre-revolutionary views and the new Party consciousness, which Aleksandra acquires with the help of a Party representative. In the film, a secretary of the Party district committee (*raikom*) notices leadership potential in Aleksandra and comes to her husband with a suggestion to propose her candidacy for head of the collective farm. Surprised by such an idea, Efim immediately speaks on behalf of his wife and declares that she will

not take the position. While Aleksandra is distressed after some brutal treatment by her husband in the previous scene, the two men make decisions for her—one represents the Party and the new ideology, while the other—the old patriarchy.

The secretary of the district Party committee eventually convinces Aleksandra that she should take this position. From that moment on he fulfills the role of Aleksandra's mentor in the film. It is not accidental that he does not even have a name; he is generalized as a Party representative and thus his behavior is presented as typical for people in this position. Having helped Aleksandra to become the head of the *kolkhoz,*[47] this mentor simultaneously intrudes into her personal life, since her husband does not approve of her new role and eventually abandons Aleksandra because her social responsibilities are taking up the time she is supposed to spend on him. When he sets an ultimatum for her—either him, or *kolkhoz* meetings—Aleksandra chooses the latter and consequently is left alone without her husband. Later on the secretary attempts to interfere in her personal life again and suggests: "We will find you a good husband!"— by "we" meaning "the Party," while "good" means "ideologically conscious." But Aleksandra rejects such assistance, arguing that this is her personal business and that he has no right to intrude.

Eventually, when Aleksandra establishes her position as the head of the *kolkhoz,* she becomes a representative of the Party herself, and mentors other village residents. At the wedding of a young couple in her village she even substitutes for a priest and marries them. Aleksandra continues to love her husband and suffers from their separation, but she manages to channel her energy into work for the benefit of society. The Party helps her go through her personal transformation, and social work replaces her personal life. However, while this development would seem more characteristic of the mechanistic 1920s, Aleksandra clearly belongs to the 1930s and feels unhappy without her family. This is why she breaks down at a certain point: "Ultimately, am I a human being or not?"—she exclaims, and she is happy again when her husband returns to her. Efim feels inferior to his wife and this inspires him to grow professionally and acquire a socialist consciousness of his own, with his wife now serving as his mentor. Hence, the family is reunited only after all its members become open to communist ideology. The Party, in the meantime, becomes a family member its own right, guarding relations between the man and the woman as well as their conscientious work towards the great cause.

Conclusions

The master plot in socialist realist literature and film, which was closely connected to Party policy, reflects the transformations it underwent. Whereas in the revolutionary times family ties seem superfluous or even deleterious to the acquisition of consciousness, later on, in the 1930s, this overzealous attitude becomes unnecessary and the family comes into focus in the master plot. By comparison to the 1920s and the early 1930s, in the mid-1930s relations between men and women move to the forefront of both Party policy and cinematic production. Whereas in Pil'niak's short story there is no physical attraction between the wife and the husband, *Tractor Drivers* and *Teacher* explode with sexuality. These changes, however, did not happen overnight—it was a long process, in which one phenomenon paralleled the other, until a certain single tendency emerged by the end of the 1930s.

The Party tended to control and mentor people, whether as individuals or as members of a family. As consciousness reached widespread dissemination among Soviet citizens, it began to work from within the society through internalization. However, Potemkin's internalization, as discussed above, differs from the familial internalization of the later period. His internalization is self-induced,

since he has an internal urge for it, and he eventually achieves it not through external mediation but on his own. Even Korchagin's internalization, although acquired with the help of a number of mentors, is still much influenced by his own will to keep fighting. The familial internalization of the 1930s, however, is all about mediation—both between family members, and on the part of ideological institutions of control, as well as art, literature, and film. The Party's influence expands to such an extent that at times it seems to transform into an additional family member who has the full right to intrude into people's personal lives, manage their destinies and, ultimately, decide whether they can have happy sexual relations or not.

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[1]Haimson, Leopold H. *The Russian Marxists and The Origins of Bolshevism.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967. p. 215.

[2]In his study, Halfin provides a nuanced account of the role of the Party intelligentsia in the process of infusing consciousness into the working class. He writes: "Lenin contended that the Party intelligentsia had to articulate the universalist message, which would be embraced by the workers once the objective revolutionary situation had expanded their horizons" (185). Halfin asserts that "the Party had to forge a program that the proletariat, in its ideal form, would have recognized as its own" (156).

[3]Krylova discusses the emergence of workers' revolutionary identity by reinterpreting Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*. Her article also offers a helpful, more recent interpretative model based on the history of the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic.

[4]Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000. p. 5.

[5]Ibid., p. 16.

[6]Ibid., p. 21.

[7]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[8] Ibid., p. 137.

[9]Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006. p. 35.

[10]Gorky, Maxim. *Collected Works in Ten Volumes: Vol. III Mother*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978. p. 130.

[11]Ibid., p. 62.

[12]Kaganovsky, Lilya. *How the Soviet man was UnMade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2008. p. 22.

[13]Ostrovsky, Nikolai. *How the Steel Was Tempered*. Part I. Trans. R. Prokofieva. Sidney: Communist Party of Australia, 2002. p. 107.

[14]Krylova, Anna. "Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm: 'Class Instinct' as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis." *Slavic Review* Vol 62 No 1 (Spring 2003), p. 21.

[15]Ibid., p. 217.

[16]Ibid., p. 178.

[17]It should be noted that, completely absorbed by his goal, Korchagin is not fully aware of his sacrifice. According to Kaganovsky, "Korchagin is an example of a socialist realist hero whose radical bodily dismemberment parallels his rise through the bureaucracy of Soviet ranks" (22). At the end of the novel, paralyzed and blind, he still finds a way to be useful and return to the ranks. The destiny of the book he had written while blind and paralyzed was crucial for his further fate, since it was the only way for him to regain self-actualization: "If the manuscript was rejected that would be the end for him" (Ostrovsky 241).

[18]Ibid., p. 22.

[19]Ibid., p. 243.

[20]Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan NY: Vintage Books, 1979. p 155.

[21]Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s.* NY: Oxford UP, 1999. p. 75

[22]Bauer, Raymond A. *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1952.

p. 149.

[23]The source of the study is an English translation of excerpts from the diary published in an edition by Garros, V., N. Korenevskaya and T. Lahusen. Hellbeck's study provides a further insight into the diary, as well as its detailed interpretation based on his personal interview with Potemkin in 2002.

[24]Ibid., p. 150.

[25]Ibid., p. 244.

[26]Garros, Veronique, Natalia Korenevskaya and Thomas Lahusen eds. *Intimacy and Terror*. Trans. Carol. A. Flath. NY: New Press, 1995. p. 261.

[27]Hellbeck, p. 252.

[28]Garros, p. 271.

[29]Ibid., p. 277.

[30]Ibid., p. 252.

[31]Ibid., p. 253.

[32]Ibid., p. 273.

[33]Gasparov, Boris. "Development or rebuilding: Views of academician T.D. Lysenko in the Context of the Late Avant-Garde." *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde*. Eds. John E. Bowlt and Olga Match. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. pp.147-48.

[34]Naiman, Eric. *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. p. 97.

[35]Ibid., pp. 140-3.

[36]It is notable that in contrast to the first five-year-plan when females were presented as "stern, broad-shouldered, plainly dressed women workers" in the mid-1930s, their depiction shifts towards more "flirtatious, sensual, and dressed to accentuate their femininity" images (Hoffman 112). The shift is explained by the biopolitical emphasis placed on the course of the state politics with the adoption of the Constitution. See Miller, Ruth A. *Limits of Bodily Integrity: Abortion, Adultery, and Rape Legislation in Comparative Perspective*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2007.

[37]See Clark, p. 115.

[38]Ibid., p. 148.

[39] For more examples see Fitzpatrick p. 139-63.

[40]Hoffman, David L. and Peter Holquist. *Cultivating the Masses: The Modern Social State in Russia, 1914-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002. p. 89.

[41]Ibid., p. 88.

[42]Pilnyak, Boris. *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon and Other Stories*. NY: Washington Square Press, 1967. p. 266.

[43]Ibid., p. 69.

[44]Term used to denote well-to-do peasants who resisted collectivization in the 1920-30s and became enemies of the people.

[45]Ibid., p. 56.

[46]Khlinovskaya Rockhill, Elena. *Lost to the State: Family discontinuity, social orphanhood and residential care in the Russian Far East*. NY: Berghahn, 2010. p. 15.

[47]Collective farm.

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