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The cinema has always been subject to keen scrutiny by Russia's rulers. As early as the beginning of this century Russia's last czar, Nikolai Romanov, attempted to nationalize this new and, in his view, threatening medium: "I have always insisted that these cinema-booths are dangerous institutions. Any number of bandits could commit God knows what crimes there, yet they say the people go in droves to watch all kinds of rubbish; I don't know what to do about these places." [1] The plan for a government monopoly over cinema, which would ensure control of production and consumption and thereby protect the Russian people from moral ruin, was passed along to the Duma not long before the February revolution of 1917. [2] However, it was ultimately carried out in 1919 by the same Bolsheviks who had executed Romanov, and Vladimir Lenin formulated one of the Communist Party's political postulates in regard to cinema by announcing it to be, in 1922, "the most important of all the arts." [3] Yet it was truly made the most important medium of the new society by Joseph Stalin, who expressed this almost metaphysical conviction in 1924: "Film is an illusion, but it dictates its laws to life." [4]

When cinema first came onto the scene at the turn of the century as a means to capture movement visually, and then rapidly grew into an industry producing story-telling pictures, it became one of the first global vehicles for expression, erasing national boundaries between cultures. The first musings about this new technological phenomenon captured the shift in cultural paradigms which defined the turn of the century: the eternal; the fleeting moment; originality, abundance, genius; anonymous collectivity and organic unity; chaos and composition; fragments and organisms; mechanism and morality; amorality and depth; the concentration of all feeling at the surface and the primary visual sense; body and soul, etc. For this reason cinema, with its dense clotting of new qualities (the visual, the immediate, the mechanical, etc.) was often viewed as the quintissential vehicle for modernity.

Russian film, however, reflected values which had been defined by a pre-industrial society; this was evident in the peculiarly archaic tendency of this medium. This duality, which bespoke an ambivalence toward the assimilation of modernity, shaped the specifics of Russian film for many years. Russia managed to create an ideological and artistic construct which was in direct and conscious opposition to the development of the

moving pictures industry throughout the rest of the world, particularly in Hollywood . The stylistic similarities between Russian films and those made in Europe or America -- be they the melodramas of the 'teens, with their moody interiors; the virtual cinematic reality constructed in the film-studios of the 1930s; or the "raw physical reality" so fashionable in the 1960s -- do not outweigh the profoundly different understanding and function of film in Russia, which was tied inextricably to cultural tradition, the promulgation of national stereotypes, and the means by which they were implemented. I can do no more than sketch a few points of demarcation within the development of this singular phenomenon which we loosely term "Russian cinema," moving chronologically from the turn of the century to our own time.

I will explore four cinematic crossroads in the evolution of Russian cinematic culture: the connotation of cinema as a place of the death and rebirth of the collective soul at the beginning of the century; the palimpsest of old forms and radicalized means of expression in Russian montage cinema, which was perceived abroad as a reflection of the ruptured Russian soul in the 1920s; the cultivation of non-commercial yet mass-scale cinema, oriented toward government-sanctioned collective reverie from the 1930s through the '50s; and finally, modern-day attempts to individualize cinematic expression.

The Turn of the Century: Celebration and Death

On May 9th, 1896, Nikolai Romanov arrived in Moscow , the ancient capital, for his coronation in the Kremlin's Uspenskii Sobor (Chapel of the Assumption). The ceremony was to have been followed by a mass celebration at Khodynskii Field on May 18 and the distribution of royal gifts. But the crowd of several thousand rushed to the site of the festivities so precipitously that almost two thousand people were trampled to death in the mad panic. Moscow 's governor-general had to put in his appearance at the Vagankovskoe cemetery, where the bodies had been carted, instead of the ball at the French embassy. Much of the Russian intelligentsia interpreted this event as a symbolic overture to the new era, as an omen of Russia 's fate. "Our people are not accustomed to festivities. They tried it at Khodynskoe, bit off their own tail, and once more the terrible mysterious monster crawled off into its gloomy den," remarked the writer Garin-Mikhailovsky, [5] using this new event to buttress an age-old trope: Russians are fit for nothing but tragedy. The first films shot in Russia , by Pathé Félix Mesguich, centered around these very events. [6]

This Western technological invention, cinema, played a specific national role in Russia , and one of its qualities became the lack of a "happy ending." Almost all Russian films, even the most trivial, end in tragedy. These inevitable unhappy endings are taken into account by audiences and producers, both in Russia and abroad. Foreign producers often shot two endings--a happy one for their own market, and an unhappy one for Russian viewers who, unlike others throughout the world, only flocked to tragic tales. Similarly, Russian producers would film a grim ending for the home audience and a cheerful alternative for the outside world. Even the parallel montage, with the inevitable last-minute salvation of its subject, was altered. Yuri Tsivian, a historian of early Russian cinema, notes that the Russian replica of D.W. Griffith's film "The Lonely Villa" (1909), called "A Drama by the Telephone" and directed by Iakov Protazanov in 1914, ends thus: The husband, after being warned over the telephone that robbers are about to break into his house, rushes home after a mad car chase only to come upon his wife's corpse. [7] These tragic endings -- in death, suicide, insanity--upheld the foreign conviction of "terrific Slavic emotions" and traced their roots to the Russian theatrical melodrama of the nineteenth century. [8] This practice of double endings continued through the beginning of the 1930s, when the Soviet directors Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg were asked to film a separate European ending to their heart-rending melodrama "S.V.D." In the Russian version the hero dies before the eyes of a beautiful woman. The studio heads suggested that the directors film the following alternative "bearing in mind the demands of the foreign market: 'The general's wife finds him unconscious (not dead) on the riverbank. Next scene: A park (with a villa nearby, a lake in the distance, or better yet the sea), where we find the hero sitting on a bench with a bandage around his head, indicating a wound. Nearby, also in the park, the wife bustles around a lavishly set table, caring for the convalescent. The words "The End" scroll down.'" [9]

The link between cinema and death became commonplace to Russian audiences. Unlike many of the first Western filmgoers, who noted the lifelike rustling of tree-leaves and recalled "the realistic effects" and "animated nature," [10] the Russian visitor to the first film screening at the Nizhnegorodskaia Trade Fair, watching that very same chronicle by Pathé, might have agreed more with Maksim Gorky, who described the spectacle as a necropolis, a kingdom of shadows, lifeless and frightening space: "There are no sounds, no colors. There, everything--the earth, the trees, the people, the water, the air--is tinted in a grey monotone.. This is not life but the shadow of life; this is not movement but the soundless shadow of movement. . . . Curses and ghosts, evil spirits that have cast

whole cities into eternal sleep come to mind. . . . " [11]

Even more so than portraiture or photography, film was perceived as life's dangerous phantom double, with various mystical powers. This link is a frequent theme in the plots of many early Russian films; it became central to many films by the most significant director of the period, Evgenii Bauer: "After Death" (1915), based on Ivan Turgenev's short story "Klara Milich; "Daydreams" (1915) based on Georges Rodenbach's "Bruges la Morte"; or "The Dying Swan" (1916), based on Stanislaw Prszybyszewsky's novel *Homo Sapiens*. "The Dying Swan" is especially noteworthy as a singular explanation of the nature of cinema.

The plot follows two storylines: The hero leaves a mute dancer for a singer. The mute dancer begins to model for a decadent artist, who seeks to capture absolute beauty in the seemingly impossible synthesis of dynamics and absolute tranquility -- that is, in stopped motion -- so he kills his model during their session. The themes linking these stories -- muteness, motion, beauty, and death -- become a symbolic interpretation of the nature of film itself. The heroine's muteness emphasizes her intense expressiveness, which definitively paraphrases cinema's unspoken goal, to take away speech and reveal the soul in gesture alone, without verbal mediation. Life's intrinsic banality is tied to voice and speech--hence the sordid little affair between the hero and the singer. The second cinematic paradigm lies in the juxtaposition of motion and stillness, beauty and time. In 1914 Bauer made a film based on the symbolist Valerii Briusov's poem "Life in Death," which touched upon a similar theme. The story revolves around a doctor who kills and embalms his wife in order to preserve her beauty forever. With this plot, Bauer seemed to anticipate André Bazen's essay on "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," which tied the birth of cinema and other plastic arts with the practice of embalming, finding therein the bases for a "mummy complex." Death, the ultimate victory over time, opposed the desire to fix artificially the visible, physical object, tearing it out of the flow of time and thus attaching it to life, which "flows" from subject to reproduction, finally liberated from convulsive stillness by *cinematic* imagery.[12] It is no accident that dance was such a beloved theme of early filmmakers.[13] Yet cinematic *motion* is an illusion; film consists of a series of *motionless* photographic stills, which freeze the minutiae of movement. This death of motion signifies that absolute calm which the decadent artist seeks in vain in the old expressive arts, identifying frozen motion with absolute beauty. Death and film share the ability to freeze motion and time. These parallels, so crucial to Russians' initial response to cinema, were also reflected in fashionable literary themes at the turn of the

century -- the novellas of Edgar Allan Poe or Villiers de l'Isle
Adam's *Contes Cruels*.

Yet in its *aesthetic* Russian cinema fiercely rejects modernism, relying
instead on a peculiar brand of creative anachronism: Russian artistic
achievements of the late nineteenth century (Turgenev's and Tolstoy's
novels, the Peredvizhniks' naturalist school of painting, the psychology of
daily life explored by the Malyi Theatre and refined in Konstantin
Stanislavsky's Theatre Academy) are co-opted by film and presented as
the pinnacles of *twentieth* century art. Specifically, this resulted in slow-
moving narrative; the conscious rejection of montage (Russian actors
perfected a singular method of explicitly showing the *passage* from one
state to another, while montage strives toward elliptical abbreviation);
and sets cluttered with various everyday objects and furniture, which
rendered the overall composition more theatrical than cinematographic.
These peculiarities contradicted the essential poetics of the new medium--
dynamism, simultaneous action, ruptured connections, random action, the
primacy of fragments over the whole. The Russian avant-garde managed
to derail the dominant tendencies of Russian filmmaking only for a short
period in the 1920s; they returned, in slightly altered form, to the cinema
of the '30s.

As a new sociological phenomenon, however, film attracted the attention
of a wide spectrum of intellectuals--everyone from social-democrats
to*Narodniks* to the symbolists. All of them were fascinated by the
audience, the public response to film, since this was, after all, the first
truly democratic form of enterntainment. Russian cities had no previous
entertainment industry which catered to the lower classes, unlike
European and American cities. There was no street theatre, no music
halls, and even the variety-theatres were more like artistic clubs, closed to
the masses. Yet in 1912, the writer Alexander Serafimovich remarks with
surprise: "Look out into the rows of a movie-house audience. You will be
amazed at the composition of the public:*everyone* is here -- students and
militia-guards, writers and prostitutes, officers and girl-students, all kinds
of intellectuals in glasses, with beards, and workers and clerks and society
ladies and hairdressers and bureaucrats--just about everybody!"[14] The
populist democrats viewed the movie-house as an ideal opportunity to
enlighten the masses. Russian symbolists hoped that by uniting all layers
of society under one roof and subjecting them to the same emotional
experience they might realize their dream of "collective action," in the
spirit of Viacheslav Ivanov's theories. Liberal utopianists saw the gathering
of different social strata as a guarantee of social harmony; shared
emotional experience makes class distinctions obsolete.[15] The cinema

was seen as a place of social consolidation. Similar utopias, as well as the romanticization of the movie-going public, are rare in the Western/European world. The cinema is a freakshow where the monster on display is the public itself, where the asthmatic children of syphilitics collapse in fits of coughing and drunken proletarians mutter to themselves -- or so a doctor from the Berlin University clinic, Alfred Doblin, describes this convergence of social strata.[16] The chief concerns of the Western intelligentsia--the collapse of a unified worldview, the scattering of perception which leads to the fragmentation of personality, aesthetics giving way to the immediate, the superficial, expression on a mass scale-- were only on the periphery of Russia's cultural perception with regard to the cinema. The movie-house was seen as a place of collective unity, the salvation of a society rattled to its foundations by the reforms of the beginning of the century.

The cinema connoted the death of life and the resurrection of the collective spirit.

The 1920s. Montage and the Split of the Soul

In 1917 the world of Russian cinema collapsed along with the rest of the Russian world. Three of the more successful pre-revolutionary filmmakers--Alexander Khanzhonkov, Iosef Ermoliev, and Dmitri Kharitonov-- managed to emigrate to Western Europe by way of the Crimea and Odessa, taking with them not only most of the available studio equipment, film reserves, archives of film negatives, etc., but also their creative and technical personnel: directors, cameramen, set artists, costume designers, administrators, and popular actors. In 1917, 337 films were made in Russia ; in 1918, there were only six. Most of the films made during the first seven years of Soviet rule have not survived due to the lack of film on which to make copies; a few were printed several years after they were first made, as was the case with "Polikushka," which was filmed in 1919 yet did not make it to the screen until 1922. Since the economic blockade limited opportunities to import film (which was not produced in Russia) from abroad, Soviet filmmakers developed a complicated method of "rinsing off" old films and treating the celluloid with new emulsion. There is no way to know how effective this particular method was, but Soviet cinema immediately established itself as a palimpsest of pre-revolutionary film on many other levels. The first Soviet films imitated the forms of older Russian cinema in almost every way, from plot devices (for example, the lovers' triangle ending in death) and set design to actors and montage. In 1922 Alexander Panteleev (who had made the first Soviet propaganda film, "The Miracle-Worker," in 1919 and been praised by

Lenin), shot a tried-and-true Russian melodrama entitled "There is No Happiness on Earth." The husband has no money, but does have tuberculosis, and his pretty young wife is easily seduced by his rich friend. After the radical reforms in family law passed in 1918 divorce no longer posed any legal problems, but still could not be the subject of a film. Thus, the husband commits suicide and the wife goes insane. The profound and deeply rooted pessimism of traditional Russian film was not shaken by the revolution. Panteleev even saved the interior design of the old sets (a yacht or a boudoir with bronzed mirrors and champagne for the traditional seduction scene, a bourgeois parlor for the family scenes). Only a few inconsequential details refer to the new reality: Instead of a bank, the husband works at the Smolnii (Bolshevik headquarters); the seducer is an emigré who returns to Petrograd with an American passport and dollars. Even more incredible is the retention of Russian film's traditional allegorical forms--a fatalistic historical philosophy far from Karl Marx's class doctrine. Gardin's historical allegory of the revolution, with its title--"A Ghost Wanders Through Europe" (1923) -- inspired by Marx's*Communist Manifesto*, is actually a retelling of Edgar Allan Poe's gothic horror story "The Masque of the Red Death." The turbulence of the revolution is ascribed to mystical forces, as the results of plague, as an outraged father's personal vengeance for his daughter's seduction and ruin, etc. Moreover, Gardin employs the same nature motifs, props, and costumes as Bauer had used in his 1916 film "The King of Paris"! Cheslav Sabinsky's 1924 agitational film "The Venerable Vasilii the Filthy" mocks the traditional saga of a saint's life with antireligious subtitles. But without these subtitles the film could easily be perceived as a morality tale about a repentant sinner, especially since it imitates the psychological naturalism of the film "Father Sergii" (directed by Iakov Protazanov in 1916).

Seven years after the revolution Soviet publicists began to catch on that there was no *new* Soviet cinema, and demanded that the Bolshevik party undertake decisive measures regarding the politics of financing filmmaking and taxation of movie theatres.[17] Various members of the avant-garde also demanded radical reforms. In August of 1922 the constructivist Aleksei Gan published the first issue of his magazine "Kino-Phot," which became a platform for Russia 's first "modernist" filmmakers Dziga Vertov and Lev Kuleshov.[18] Vertov developed his models of "dynamic geometry" and the "kino-eye," which were based on a total rejection of the mimetic, psychological, or eccentric "theatre-as-film," which emphasized the immanent freedom of the camera, which has the ability to see what the human eye cannot. The director is equally free from the constraints of logic, and creates his own particular connections between

the segments of this new vision (telescopic, microscopic, cinematographic...), liberally manipulating speed, time, space, and causality. The rules of montage, as well as the rules of film imagery, were based on a medial grammar, similar to the "unintelligible language" of futurist poetry (in which Vertov had dabbled before becoming a filmmaker). However, in seeking an absolute cinematic language, Vertov was placed by chance at the head of the political chronology of film,[19] which led to certain conflicts between "abstract filmmaking" and concrete social demands. Vertov was criticized on both the left and the right as a "false documentarian," and the interpretation of "cinematic truth" remained eternally ambiguous (frequently overlooked was the fact that *cinematic* truth was by its very nature a step removed from reality). "All of his (Vertov's) work was aimed at studying the rhythmic nature of montage... For his experiments with various rhythmic variations created from pieces of film, he needed the sort of material that he could cut up with scissors however he wanted. 'Life as it is' was the perfect material -- random bits in which nothing is 'constructed,' filmed by different people in different places. For the most part these were cuts of filmed, evenly paced, repetitive processes: people working, machines working, the movement of crowds, etc. ," remarked Vsevolod Pudovkin, one of Vertov's few colleagues who thought that it was "utterly ridiculous to consider (him) a 'documentarian.'"[20]

Lev Kuleshov's career was no less paradoxical. He started out as an artist working on films with Evgenii Bauer, to whom he dedicated his book about cinema entitled *The Banner of Cinematography*, which explored the medium's two main constructive elements: light and space.[21] Kuleshov almost parodies the expressive beauty of Bauer's films in his "bare" shots -- the objects and set decorations are all markedly geometric in shape, contours and textures are permeated with light, the background is neutral, the props are carefully chosen and their number deliberately limited. The natural environment in Russia, its "motley peacock slush," is not photogenic enough for film, according to the director.[22] According to Kuleshov, only specific architectural structures possess this photogenic quality (for example, railroad bridges and skyscrapers, due to their immediately perceivable geometric form). Dynamic--and hence cinematographic -- objects include cars, locomotives, airplanes, motorcycles, and specially synchronized actors, trained in a specific method which Kuleshov termed "naturism," who had complete control over their bodies and could create cinematic motion which had nothing to do with chaotic day-to-day movement.

Kuleshov believed that cinema must be maximally dynamic, a concern for

American filmmakers as well. For this reason Kuleshov termed his method of cinematic expression "Americanism," which meant specifically the presentation of movement in an elliptical, abbreviated way. His films revolved around themes such as rapid motion and the protagonist's ability to control this speed, whether it be a machine, technology, or his own body as the ultimate machine. The average length of one shot in Bauer's film "Mute Witnesses" (1914) was, according to Yuri Tsivian's count, about one minute--six times slower than in American motion pictures. The average length of a shot in Kuleshov's first film, "Engineer Pright's Project" (1918) was six seconds, which was one and a half times faster.

The flat, rectangular screen put constructive restraints on Kuleshov, helping to reduce the amount of visual information (for instance, rotating the geometric shapes of the objects being filmed, motion which runs parallel or diagonally to the frame of the shot, and movement which avoids curved lines) and making it more comprehensible. The burden of semantics lies in the junction of the shots. Montage either shortens or draws out time, creating spaces which cannot exist in reality. In his experiments with montage, Kuleshov proved that the viewer automatically establishes space-time and cause-and-effect relationships between disparate fragments.

Russian art is radical in its emotion -- it takes everything right up to the end." This is how the most influential Berlin critic, Alfred Kerr, attempted to describe this new Russian cinematic phenomenon in the introduction to his book *The Russian Cinema*.[23] The book's opening photograph, however, depicts a Chechnyan soldier with a knife between his teeth. It is no accident that montage is acknowledged to be the fundamental distinguishing characteristic of Russian film. Russian directors avidly experimented with montage, as did the French and German avant-garde. Yet this technique, which frequently involves the contraposition and splicing of two completely unrelated images, bespeaks the specific mentality of Russian national cinema (perhaps as a manifestation of the violent internal split in the Slavic-Tatar soul). In "Potemkin" Kerr sees an "apocalyptic vision of the future," and credits the film's success to its vivid realism, the ethnographic models employed, and also to Stanislavsky ("He laid the foundation for Russian film") and Dostoyevsky ("the same abysmal passions").[24] The German critics juxtapose Eisenstein's naturalism, models, montage, and mass-scale scenes with the historical pictures made in Hollywood , which seem like idyllic pastorals in comparison. However, the critic Oscar A. H. Schmitz approaches "Potemkin" in terms of the nineteenth-century novel and thus finds none of the qualities of 'true art' in the film (which lacks a distinct protagonist

who thinks and suffers, an individual consciousness). Walter Beniamin challenges this view, declaring that "Potemkin" charts the coordinates of the new twentieth-century art: violence and the masses, collective destiny and technology.[25]

Western European critics tended to see Russian films as the expression of one author, one genius, though this contradicted the new artist's creed in Soviet Russia: He presents his professional skill to the working classes, articulating its interests and desires; he is their medium, answering society's demands. These passionate, violent, sentimental, eccentric, propagandistic, and experimental new Russian films found their admirers among millionaires and Dadaists, psychoanalysts and professional revolutionaries. They included Antonin Artaud, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Le Corbusier. At the same time, those very films which gained the greatest critical reputation abroad as models of the new Russian art flopped at home. Russian audiences preferred either Western or Soviet popular films, with American, German, or Russian stars such as Douglas Fairbanks, Harry Piel, Conrad Veidt, or Vera Malinovskaya. According to a *Kino-Gazette* survey, the most popular Soviet director of the 1920s was not Eisenstein, but Abram Roam, who had made a comedy about a three-way marriage called "The Third Bourgeois" (1927). "Our cinema here has a pre-war atmosphere. I'm talking about the big picture, so to speak. Right now the story of the prodigal son is a popular theme: a man strays away from the straight and narrow, but finally returns to his own. Along the way, he sees corruption and decay among the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie is already corrupting the film studios. . . . The Revolution comes, and is stretched to fit the frame of a romance without the slightest trace of irony! The plot collapses on itself, while on the screen we see the words 'And in the meantime, poor Paulina. . . .' We know that Eisenstein works differently, but he doesn't count. He is a national park, a state-protected area."[26] The leftist front, which published this article by one of the most cutting film-critics of the '20s, Viktor Shklovsky, fiercely denounced this "brainwashing" which went under the name of cinema, where the bourgeoisie flocked for their scrap of cheap daydream, given permission to "legally desert reality."[27] The leftist front declared film to be among the most menacing cultural threats, rivaling vodka and opium, and began an aggressive attack in 1927-28 upon "entertainment" cinema. Meanwhile, in 1928, the Party called together the first cinema-workers' conference on film issues, which became a turning point in the life of this new medium in Soviet Russia.

The 1930s-1950s: Collective Daydreaming

In 1927-28, foreign-currency funding for cinema was drastically curtailed, which brought about radical change. First, factories had to be built to produce film and other equipment, which had previously been entirely imported from abroad, mostly from Germany . Second, the importation of foreign movies (by the late 1920s, these were mostly American) came to an abrupt halt. The viewer was left with nothing but the cinema of his fatherland, now hemmed in on three sides -- economically, technically, and ideologically.

A new Party worker came to the head of the film industry; Boris Shumiatsky gained control of the restructuring process which initiated the incredible mass expansion of *Soviet* cinema. He faced several limitations: the number of viewers was growing while the number of movie theatres built and film-copies available for rent (this had become technically feasible with the native production of positive film) were shrinking. The number of pictures being produced fell rapidly. In 1928, 124 films were released in the Soviet Union; in 1930 there were eleven; in 1933--twenty-nine; in 1936--forty-three; in 1947 -- twenty-three; in 1950 -- thirteen, and in 1951 -- nine. [28] And yet, this gradual freeze in film production was not initially perceived as a significant element in the development of Soviet cinema. At first, Shumiatsky dreamt up grandiose plans to increase production to 800 films a year, and envisioned wild expenditures on the creation of a kino-city in the Crimea , styled after Hollywood. [29] But film studios rarely carry out their plans. Instead of the sixteen pictures slated for release in 1936, Mosfilm (the most powerful studio) produced only thirteen. The program for expanding production was rejected; Shumiatsky was exposed as a saboteur and enemy of the people, who had failed to understand the real nature of the problems facing cinema. In 1938 he was arrested and shot. In the press he was damned as "fascist swine" and a propagator of "conveyer-belt cinema," mass-produced, *anti-nationalist* forms of *"kino-americanism"* (italics mine).[30] His methods, including the kino-city project, were oriented toward the international cinematic standard, instead of seeking the authentic *Russian, Soviet* way. Although the number of films being made was falling drastically, the number of movie theatres grew; in 1928 there were 7331 movie theatres in operation (almost a third of these in the country), and in 1936 there were 28, 931 (more than half in rural areas).[31] If new films arrived on the screen about every two weeks in the 1920s, by the '30s it took a month for no more than four pictures to open.[32] The number of copies distributed of each film was predetermined by the Central Authority of Cinematography. Thus there were 955 copies of "Lenin in October" compared to 198 copies of the adventure film "Karo."[33] In this way the audience's tastes and consumption itself were regulated and controlled.

The people, on their part, were forced to sit through the same movie from a limited, rarely changing repertoire over and over, because cinema remained the only form of cheap entertainment. People learned movies by heart, and developed a specific sort of pleasure in repeated viewings, rather like a toddler enraptured by repeating words.

The cut-backs in film production resulted from significant technical difficulties (for instance, the transition from silent to talking movies—which was not complete in the Soviet Union until 1936, the building of factories to produce film equipment, the conversion of the old silent studios, and the construction of new studios in the republics of central Asia, which had no native film industry). Additional problems were caused by the unstable economy, controlled by the same Party/government apparatus which financed cinema.

In the 1920s, financial support from the government was insignificant; the organization Sovkino put in about four million rubles, which might pay for thirty pictures—about one fourth of the total output for the year. The national cinema survived thanks to revenue generated by imported pictures and native commercial production, which brought in over sixteen million rubles in that same year.[34] In the thirties this situation reversed itself; government funding increased significantly, reaching 465 million rubles by 1937 (of which only 225 million were used). However, customer revenue in that same year only came to 20, 395 rubles.[35] Admission prices rose along with the state's sweeping investment; the profit margin was too low to justify the immense expenditure, even after the range and variety of movies increased. However, in contrast to the 1920s, the government and the Party were prepared to free the film industry from the financial squeeze; that is, they took the entire financial burden of production and distribution upon themselves, in exchange for the right to participate actively in the collective creative process, on the same plane as the screenwriter and the director—at least, this is how Boris Shumiatsky defines their role in 1936.[36] This government takeover took place over the course of a decade, between 1928 and 1938, and at first the Party was not sure whether to view cinema as a commercial enterprise, generating income, or a state-supported means of propaganda. At the Fifteenth Party Congress, Stalin held on to the hope that "maybe we could gradually phase out vodka and bring in radio and cinema as significant sources of revenue,"[37] echoing Trotsky's old ideas.[38] But even when these hopes remained unrealized, the politics of government spending did not change. The noncommercial Soviet socialist cinema that emerged at this time was a deliberate counterweight to Hollywood 's materialism. Despite these attempts to avoid crass Western-style mercantilism, Soviet

cinema was rarely touted as an author's work; this enterprise, suddenly blessed by the government's attention, needed to establish common poetics of expression—which, paradoxically, led to a homogeneity typical of commercial film. Both aim to be captivating and comprehensible to the masses. The 1928 Party Conference identified this as one of the crucial dilemmas facing Soviet cinema. From the outset, its development rests on an inherent oxymoron—noncommercial, yet requiring mass consumption. "In Russia , the cinema is not a form of entertainment as it is in other countries," notes a British film critic. "It has a definite goal--to inculcate a sense of social unity,"[39] that is, to develop collective identity.

The 1930s were dedicated to seeking out some common model for Soviet cinema, one to which all directors could conform, even ones as different as Eisenstein and Abram Roam. The development of this collective model required the dissolution of boundaries among genres, between creative and documentary film. After the second World War, for example, Stalin ordered creative film directors to film reenactments of its most important battles, 'corrected' to show the required outcomes. Not surprisingly, such epics as Vladimir Petrov's "Stalin's Battle " (1946), Igor Savchenko's "The Third Strike" (1948), and Mikhail Chiaurely's "The Fall of Berlin" (1952) were presented as documentary dramas. Documentary film, on the other hand, was often acted out, with staged news footage such as the scenes showing the unification of the Don and Stalingrad fronts in Leonid Varlamov's " Stalingrad " (1942). The cameraman Roman Karmen recalls that he was late to arrive to shoot a news report in Stalingrad , so the arrest of the German general Paulius was repeated in front of the camera by the actual participants.

The structures of production facilitated the development of a common model for collective art. It was not even necessary to unionize the film industry, as the writers had been. The very mechanism of film production was easily controlled, most often by Stalin himself. His was the final word on everything from the film studios' thematic plans to set design and shooting arrangements to the confirmation of editors and major actors. Sometimes these editors, directors, and actors were invited to the discussions. But most often Ivan Bolshakov, who took over the post of director of the Central Authority of Cinematography in 1939, had to interpret Stalin's coughs and mutterings during a screening and decode them into directive instructions for the reworking of a film.[40]

One should be able to attribute the decline in film production during this period to technical and economic difficulties, but contemporaries most often saw it as the direct result of Stalin's censorship, which was

buttressed by his ideas on the "production of masterpieces." This lively economic theory (why devote so much energy to make many mediocre pictures when you can hire the best screenwriter, director, cameraman, composer, and actors, and make a few brilliant films?) was never really fixed in history, and is passed on orally as part of Soviet cinematic lore, an anecdote.[41] It is easily accepted as a reasonable explanation, one which denies any actual technical difficulties and presents Stalin's films as the products of careful planning, a triumph of spirit and will over the petty reality of figures. Yet the cinema's position in this highly hierarchical system of artistic creation in the 1930s remains ambiguous.

In the autumn of 1936, plans were revealed for the construction of the Great Academic Movie Theatre, which was to tower over two of Moscow 's central squares — the Red Square and the Sverdlov. This gigantic structure was to stand directly across from the Bolshoi Theatre and, while imitating its architectural style, dominate the older building visually with its immense height and mass. While the Bolshoi seated 2000, the movie theatre was to pack in twice that number.[42] A movie theatre was also planned for the Palace of the Soviets. This one was to seat 20,000, with films showing simultaneously on four separate screens. Neither project was carried out, but they point up the drastically increased value placed on cinema. If, in the 1920s, architects grouped movie theatres with other commercial buildings, by the 1930s they had become an independent architectural category.

The marked attention focused on cinema did not change the radical reorientation of its function and perception: this was not a separate form of *art*, but a translator, an audio-visual receiver, a *medium*. In this sense one might consider a suggestion made by Aleksei Stakhanov, a worker-hero who once mined fourteen times the normal amount of coal during a single shift. He formulated the new problem facing Soviet filmmakers.[43] The people want to live cultured lives, he writes in his article, but the scoundrels and saboteurs in charge of the film industry won't send talking pictures to the coal-mining villages. And in the meantime, workers on the *Kholkhoz* (collective farm—trans.) want to listen to Beethoven. So why not simply film performances given by the best singers and public speakers? This demand in the form of a question was only one indicator of the commonly sanctioned view of cinema as a medium, an art form with no language of its own. Practically, Stakhanov's suggestion unleashed a special genre of Soviet cinema—the film-concert, film-play, film-opera, and film-ballet. No one expected the translation of concerts or plays at the Khudozhestvennyi or Malyi theatres to the cinematic medium to alter them. No influence was ascribed to the fact of film itself. Soviet cinema

was not alone in bringing together theatrical performances and cinema after the introduction of sound. Radio programs were also translated to film in Europe and America (for instance, "Elstree Calling," Adrian Brunel, Alfred Hitchcock, 1929/30). In Hollywood popular plays and musicals are brought to the big screen. But in the context of the polemics among well-known filmmakers and theorists of silent cinema (such as Rudolf Arnheim, René Clair, or Charlie Chaplin) about the dubious aesthetics of "photographed theatre," the Soviet solution to this question seems especially archaic and radical. The transfer of theatrical text to the big screen takes place with no "cinematographization." Cinema becomes simply a means of preservation, a medium for translation, and a way to popularize high art. It deliberately returns to the role to which it was relegated in the first decade of its existence. In 1914 Vladimir Mayakovsky summarized a widespread opinion that "Art provides us with lofty and meaningful images, while cinema multiplies and scatters them to the most remote corners of the world, much as the printing press has done with books. It cannot be its own separate art form."[44]

In his memoirs Konstantin Simonov recounts a noteworthy scene: In 1940 Stalin banned the film "The Laws of Life," and its author, Alexander Avdeenko, was subjected to harsh criticism. After the Central Committee meeting, someone asked Stalin what was to be done with the film's directors, Alexander Stolper and Boris Ivanov, who had also been present. Stalin casually twirled his finger in the air, imitating the rotation of film in a projector, and replied, "Them? Who cares? They just spun out the stuff that was written for them."[45] Cinematographers, as well as cinema itself, were reduced to the medium of preservation, arrangement, and translation of images; theirs was not an independent art. Their product is secondary, based on a preexisting text. In this visual medium, words are valued far more than images; the screenplays which began to be published in the journal *The Art of Cinema (Iskusstvo Kino)* in 1936, and which were later published in special editions and even anthologies, were subjected to particular scrutiny. Most of the censorship cases in the 1930s involved the literary editing of the screenplay, the dialogue, and its relation to the written text (of the ballet, opera, novel, or play.)

Soviet cinema developed outgrowths such as the "revolutionary film," the "labor film," the "*Kholkhoz* film." These categories seem out of place in a system which has its own established *cinematic* genres: detective stories, melodramas, comedy, slapstick—all of which were acknowledged to be cinematic because of their well-developed and clearly defined patterns of motion (the chase scene in detective stories; the gags and motorcycle stunts in slapstick; the dramatic buildup resolved with a last-minute

rescue in melodrama). The nebulous definitions of "revolutionary," "labor," and "*Kholkhoz*"resulted in some peculiar hybrids of established genres. Revolutionary films borrowed from the old monumental pictures, with their mass scenes and apotheoses (for example, Carmine Gallone's "Quo Vadis" or Griffith's "Intolerance"), which also made effective use of teeming masses, battle scenes, and staged catastrophes (floods, fire, volcanic eruption). Only instead of the burning of Rome or the Babylonian siege, the Soviet version tackled a single, eternally unchanging, national mass action: the Revolution. A prototype for Soviet monumental films of the 1930s became "We, the People of Kronstadt" (1936) by Vsevolod Vishnevsky and Efim Dzigan: it got rid of the nominal romance of struggling lovers set against the background of grand historical spectacle, and retained only the kinetics of the mass scenes. In the other films—about labor and life on the *Kholkhoz*—the love story is but an insignificant detour from the main plot of socialist struggle or the emancipation of women. Comedies, which revolved entirely around romantic intrigue, were harshly criticized or even banned outright, as was the case with Konstantin Iudin's belatedly released "The Heart of Four" (1941).

Even the weakest romantic subplots, such as the love story between Anka and Petka in "Chapaev" by the Vasiliev brothers (1934) was viewed as a relic of "the faceless international stewpot of storylines, with its lazy dependence on genres and pseudo-reality," "a rote tribute to Americanism."[46] As opposed to the films of the '20s, which brought to the fore the chaotic movement of the collective body ("The Battleship Potemkin"), the monumental films of the '30s have the organized moving masses revolving around their director — Stalin. Soviet film could only achieve total expression when it ceased to be a medium for other art forms (the traditional, hence unworthy path), and became its own reality and most importantly, its own version of history. The Soviet monumental films were peculiar not only in their rejection of tried-and-true narrative structures. The cinema took on the role of a chronicler, which merely modified its existing intermediary status.

In the 1930s a single subject became the theme for all manner of art forms -- from novels, plays, opera, ballet, and film to miniatures, sculptures, and monuments. Cinema managed to develop and elaborate this established trope with more refinement than any of the others. The same subject was thought out, planned out, peppered with new details in various films which, when taken together, formed a sort of fictional place and time which nonetheless came into sharper and sharper focus with each new production. Almost every leading Soviet film director shot the history of the October uprising. Beginning with Sergei Eisenstein's

"October" in 1927, this story came out onto the big screen every decade, for the anniversary of the Revolution, with a ready supply of component parts and often in several different films. In 1937-38 the first group of these pictures was produced: Mikhail Romm's "Lenin in October," Mikhail Chiuareli's "The Great Fiery Glow," Grigorii Koznitsev and Leonid Trauberg's "The Vyborg Side," and Sergei Iutkevich's "The Man with the Gun." Since these films presented the exact same historical events, an episode from one screenplay could easily be transferred to another, as it happened when Stalin ordered the scene of dispersing the administrative meeting to migrate from Iutkevich's screenplay to Koznitsev and Trauberg's film. In Romm's "Lenin in October," Lenin gives the worker Vasilii an article to pass along to Stalin in the *Pravda* offices; in Chiaureli's "The Great Fiery Glow" Stalin reads over Lenin's article in *Pravda*'s editorial offices; and in "The Man with the Gun" soldiers in the trenches read the article which Lenin published in *Pravda*. In Romm's film Lenin writes something undiscernable to the viewer in a notebook, while in Chiaureli's the camera zooms in on the notebook so that the words may be read. Stalin, who stands silently before a map in Romm's film, gives audible orders to seize the Central Post Office in Chiaureli's. Romm shows the actual storming of the post office. When the soldiers write a letter to Lenin in Iutkevich's film, it is read in Chiaureli's. The question of agrarian reform which is raised in Iutkevich's film is answered in Romm's. "The Vyborg Side" opens with the final shot and closing lines of "Lenin in October." They are overheard by the film's protagonist, who is returning to the Bolsheviks' military headquarters in Smolny after the arrest of the Provisional Government, which had been shown by Chiuareli and Romm. Several shots become canonical, to be reproduced again and again. For instance, Romm borrowed the composition and *mise-en-scene* of Eisenstein's storming of the Winter Palace through the front gates ("October," 1927), which was more visually effective, though unfaithful to the actual course of events. Iutkevich later uses this black-and-white scene as an example of an actual newscast in his color film "Tales of Lenin" (1957). There are disparities as well: Romm has Lenin protected by the worker Vasilii rather than Eino Rakhia, his actual bodyguard, who had already been "repressed" by the time of the film's making. Chiuareli has Stalin himself take on this role of guardian angel. This maniacal refinement of the fictional details of the October uprising affirms the historical myth. Stalin's opponents, who were condemned during the purges of 1936-38, were presented in these films as enemies of the people even back then, in 1917. Lenin's presence in these films serves as a backdrop for Stalin's actions. In Romm's "Lenin in October," Stalin helps Lenin to a hideaway on the Finnish Gulf to escape Kamenev and Zinoviev (the latter accompanied Lenin in reality). In "Lenin in 1918," also by

Romm, it is Stalin rather than Trotsky who wins the civil war and saves Russia from famine, sending grain from the Volga to the central regions, while Lenin recuperates from the assassination attempt organized by the Socialist Revolutionaries and masterminded by Nikolai Bukharin! These films were the first of many commemorative films, all of which reenacted the revolution decade after decade with endless historical corrections. History became cinema's independent creation — an eternally variable present, and cinema truly became a collective art, reaching much further than the frame of a single picture. All films became a collective undertaking. "Film is an illusion, but it dictates its laws to life," Stalin said in 1924.[47] This conviction greatly helped to affirm the illusion of "the most important of all the arts," of the people's collective daydream about their past and present. It is no accident that all individual artistic detail is banished from the collective dream.

Another type of drama, the *private* drama, along the lines of Alexander Rzhevsky's emotional screenplays, was proposed at the beginning of the 1930s. But if the monumental film minus the romantic subplot was approved, then a film based on an emotional screenplay, however weak the narrative, was rejected; most of the films based on Rzhevsky's screenplays were banned or never finished ("The Ocean," "The Storm," "The Enthusiast's Way," Eisenstein's "Bezhin Field" of 1935-37). The emotional screenplay interspersed the normal plot (generally a melodrama) with various seemingly meaningless associations, frequently nostalgic (as in Vsevolod Pudovkin's "A Simple Ooccurrence," 1932) or wistful (as in Boris Barent's "By the Bluest Sea," 1935, which was based on a screenplay written by a man who had been involved with the Oberiut group, Konstantin Mints). This type of interjection, permissible in a quasi-historical chronicle, was considered unacceptable in any other genre and characterized as "illiterate pulp ravings," "paeans to the elements of chaos and crude naturalism."[48] With a bit of stretch one could view the rejection of this model as the rejection of the audience's subjective identification with the story on the screen, and especially with the seemingly out-of-plot images (dreams, memories, moods); more generally, it could be seen as objectivity forcing out subjectivity, to the point of removing the subjective perspective and every means of directing the individual's view codified in the '20s: the handheld camera, smooth transitions, the emphasis on foreshortening. The camera must be firmly affixed to its stand, the height of which is determined by the height of the table. Horizon lines set too high or too low are avoided, and panned shots are almost entirely absent. Real space is replaced more and more frequently with the space of utopian reality; thus filmmakers abandon the streets and move into the studio, where a backdrop replaces the horizon,

canvas replaces stone, buildings become false fronts, where space is entirely subject to the whims of the screenwriter and the light man. For two decades, from the 1930s to the mid-1950s, every set is constructed in the studio—the Winter Palace and Paris during the Commune, waterfalls, Arctic icebergs, deserts, taiga, the Volga . Eisenstein's "Ivan the Terrible" (1946) might be interpreted in this context as a claustrophobic film about closed, constructed space, which swallows up its characters. The cameraman's skill is now judged not by his choice of foreshortening or his handling of texture, but by his ability to lend depth to a flat canvas, sharpness to a hand-painted backdrop, the combination of nature with last-minute paint jobs in the studio, his ability to work with artificial light, to splice together hand-drawn, constructed, and real objects, smoothing out their differences with cinematic technique. Cameramen must master all the techniques of illusion — working with dummies and mannequins, rear-projection and transparent shots, maneuvers which the cinema of the '20s had shunned as "magic tricks" and pointless mesmerizing distractions. Lev Kosmatov, the cameraman on all of Mikhail Chiuareli's films, became a master of this, as did Vladimir Nilsen, Grigorii Alexandrov's cameraman, who in 1927 translated a book by Guido Seber, a leading German cameraman-trickster, entitled *The Technique of Cinematic Tricks.*

Cameramen had to avoid protocol photography as well as all outside effects. Using light and watercolor to retouch a face was not considered formalism, yet the frequent use of soft optics was perceived as "unpleasant effete wateriness"; Iakov Protazanov was reprimanded for this weakness during the filming of "The Bride with No Dowry" (1936).[49] The choice of unjustified camera angles inspired even harsher criticism than the choice of optics. The camera's path is usually motivated by an individual's perspective, but since the subjective point of view was forbidden, the "randomly" moving camera disappeared with it. In Lev Kuleshov's "The Siberians" (1941), the camera shares the viewpoint of a boy lying in the back of a cart, who is gradually losing consciousness. The panorama of swirling treetops inspired reproachful comments about unnatural camera shots and formalism. Oleg Leonidov, a film reviewer, was of the opinion that presenting the world from the perspective of the protagonist, particularly a protagonist who is about to pass out, was unacceptable.[50]

The neutralization of cinematographic modes of expression was a pre-programmed phenomenon. Individual language is avoided, the artificial folklorization of art becomes a palliative escape route — analyzed in recent works by historians of Soviet film as the formalization of

mythological consciousness.[51 This is how the old quandary of Russian film is modified: the modern is made archaic and the individual is dissolved in the collective.

Modern Times. Siamese Twins

After the Party's first open reevaluation of its own history at the 50th Party Congress in 1956, after the revelation of the atrocities committed during the great terror and the debunking of Stalin, the history of Soviet cinema seemed to begin anew once more, which was again manifested in galloping numbers. During the course of five years the number of films produced grew tenfold, from nine pictures in 1951 to 104 in 1956 and 150 in 1969. New film studios were built, and new technologies were mastered: there were now more films made in color (in 1966 they made up one third of the yearly production; in 1969 more than half, 82 out of 150 [52] as well as wide screen films (two in 1956; 67 in 1966) and 70 mm wide-format films (one in 1960; 9 in 1969). The number of movie theatres tripled, and the politics of distribution changed radically once again. 1949 was the first year in which the Soviet viewer could see foreign movies, after a prolonged delay; at first they were trophy films brought back from Germany , and afterward foreign films distributed for profit and screened at the Moscow Film Festival (resumed after a twenty-four year hiatus) — also called Foreign Film Week. The liberation of film from the tight grip of the collective model, the open distribution, and the increase in theatre seating led to a doubling of the number of filmgoers within the space of ten years, with almost five million visiting the theatres in 1968.[53] The profit margin grew, and even at the beginning of the 1980s, when the number of filmgoers was reduced to the level of 1960,[54] and ticket prices never surpassed 70 kopecks, cinema still brought in 16.4 million rubles in revenue.

Directors of different generations worked side by side in the film studios — relics from the '20s and '30s, veterans of cold war cinema, alongside the new prodigies (Grigorii Chukharii, Sergei Bondaruchnik) and twenty- and thirty-year olds who had never experienced war, making their debut just barely after receiving their degrees, such as Andrei Tarkovsky and Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. In its entire rich history of extreme variability, Soviet cinema had never achieved such rapid changes in terms of economics, structure, technology, and creativity.

Russian cinema now followed the international model of presenting anonymous reality with no attempt at interpretation, not subject to the ideological machinations of language. This was the aesthetic of Italian

neorealism, British "free cinema," French *cinéma verité* and *nouvelle vague*, and the new wave of filmmaking in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Its features included long shots, natural sunlight instead of artificial studio lighting, streets and original interiors instead of constructed film sets, amateur rather than professional actors, black and white instead of Technicolor, de-dramatization instead of intrigue, and a "dilletante" aesthetic taking precedence over mastery and skill. Noise is valued above dialogue. Characters wander mutely and aimlessly through the city instead of engaging in scripted, dramatic conversation. The camera observes life's random flow, registers minute changes in the appearance of people and city streets, in human communication, in all matters of movement and nuance and speech; films such as Marlena Khutsieva's "I Am 20 Years Old" (1961-64) or "July Rain" (1967) become far more captivating than the traditional scripted storylines. The new style is also perceived as the unequivocal redemption of a "reality" freed from ideological constraints, as described in books by André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer (whose translation into Russian was long overdue).[55] In this context montage was viewed as a trick that undermined cinematic integrity by manipulating the viewer's attention and consequently his opinion. Andrei Tarkovsky defined his technique as the aesthetics of "capturing time" and accused Eisenstein of misunderstanding the laws of cinematography.[56]

While Soviet film directors consider themselves indebted to neorealism, the neorealists declared their model to be Mark Donskoi, famous for his screen adaptations of Maksim Gorky's autobiographical stories "Childhood," "In Public," and "My Universities" (1936-39). The French emulate the work of Dziga Vertov, and the very term *cinéma vérité* originated as a translation of Vertov's "kino-reality." However, these outward stylistic similarities with world cinema do not negate the deeply rooted foundation of Soviet cinema — socialist utopianism.

The October Revolution and the second World War remained the central historical events in collective memory, and the preservation of socialist society was still outside the grasp of an individual person. This hierarchy of values and unshakeable core of social organization severely limited opportunities for innovation in dramatic structures. The parables at the center of most contemporary films (exposing the enemy, reeducating the individualist, emancipating women) remained essentially unchanged, but with slightly different emphasis: the enemy was no longer a foreign spy, but a conservative, a bureaucrat, or simply a cynic; the reeducation story is somewhat ameliorated in the form of comedy; the emancipation story, in contrast, moves from the comedic genre into drama. The working

woman is vulgar and smokes; her working husband does not understand classical music and has only a tenuous grasp of grammar. These simple shifts in the proletarian myth which Soviet cinema had propagated for decades were now received as signs of renewal. "Truth" is declared to be the crucial criterion for art, leaving only "superficial" visual similarities with English or French film. Unshaven actors, worn and rumpled clothes, poverty in the home, filth and muck in the streets -- these come to be seen as evidence of "truth" and lend verisimilitude to stories of everyday life. Filmmakers applied this style equally to contemporary plots, historical pictures, and screen adaptations of literary classics. Grigorii Koznitsev does "neorealistic" Shakespeare ("Hamlet," 1964) and Mikhail Schweitzer adapts Tolstoy in the neorealist style ("Resurrection," 1960-61). Yet the fact that all of these changes were minimal was nowhere more evident than in that most traditional genre of Soviet cinema: the Revolutionary film.

Of all the Stalinist films, only Chiuareli's were banned outright. Stalin's image was deleted -- often by complicated technical maneuvers such as rear-projection and the retouching of each individual frame -- from all of the other '30s films. Mikhail Romm even re-shot several scenes for "Lenin in 1918" twenty years after the original movie. Yet the historical concept behind these films remained untouched, and after undergoing the process of technical "de-Stalinization" they were re-released to condition and train the collective memory. Sergei Iutkevich re-filmed old commemorative stories of Lenin in the '50s, '60s, and even into the '80s. The historical fiction of these films acquired a new documentary style. While Stalin's image disappears from the screen (much as his embalmed body disappears from the mausoleum), the figure of Lenin is bestowed with a variety of new, day-to-day details (we see him riding a bicycle, lost in thought and wandering aimlessly down forest trails, sometimes sitting in meaningful silence, indecisive at times, going to the movies -- just like a character in any of the contemporary 1960s films) and finds a new form of expression -- much like the protagonist of some modern French novel -- in silent inner monologues ("Lenin in Poland," 1965, "Lenin in Paris," 1981). The camera's objective distance and various small signs of individualization (the inner monologue, handheld camera, the expressive use of foreshortening) make up the stylistic frame of 1960s cinema, which sought -- for the first time in the history of Soviet film -- an individual hero.

In the ecstatic mass scenes which became the hallmark of 1920s cinema, the individual dissolved in a teeming sea of bodies; in the '30s, the cinematic hero symbolically represented the working class on the screen,

nobly subject to the common fate. Without questioning the essentiality of this subjugation, the films of the '60s frequently revealed its inherent *drama*, exploring the *destruction* of personality. In "Ivan's Childhood" (1961) Andrei Tarkovsky's protagonist is a child who has been driven mad by war and has become its machine. The blame is shifted to a blind and merciless historical cataclysm, which strips the individual of all freedom and will. Italian Communists accused Tarkovsky of historical fatalism and a lack of faith in progress after his film won the Golden Lion award at the Venice film festival, and, not surprisingly, Jean-Paul Sartre emerged as one of his staunchest supporters.[57]

The most significant change of the decade came with the gradual shift of public interest toward the fate of the individual, one excluded from the common biography. Even Ivan Pyriev, the director of countless *Kholkhoz* pastorals in the 1930s, now filmed three consecutive novels of Dostoyevsky's—all of which had been taboo for two decades: "The Idiot" (1958), "White Nights" (1960), and "The Brothers Karamazov" (1968). Young French film critics immediately took note of this shift. Regarding the screen adaptation of Chekhov's "Jumping Girl" (by Samson Samsonov, 1955), François Truffaut wrote: "An adulterer in a Soviet film! Now we can finally breathe a sigh of relief!" For the first time he could draw parallels between films from "over there" (from Russia), which had previously struck him as nothing more than archaic "fairy tales," and something more familiar, such as Max Ophuls's melodramas.[58] For the first and last time in its history, a Russian film about an unfaithful wife (Mikhail Kalatozov's "The Cranes Are Flying," 1957) won the Palme d'Or at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival.

Soviet film critics often did not know what to make of these new characters -- the unfaithful bride Veronica in "The Cranes Are Flying"; the Red guerrilla fighter who falls in love with a White officer ("'41" by Grigorii Chukhrai, 1956); or the hardened child for whom war is the only reality, while life is a dream ("Ivan's Childhood"). At long last, the soldier Andrei Sokolov (in Sergei Bondarchuk's "A Man's Fate," 1959) can be enshrouded in his own, *personal*tragedy, apart from the overall euphoria of victory, even despite triumph over the Reichstag!

A historical cataclysm, whether it be the War or the Revolution, was an indispensable backdrop to the individual's break with collective destiny and righteousness. An emotional, biological experience (such as fear, survival instinct, erotic passion) serves to justify and ensure the emancipation of an individual's personality, yet the cataclysm sets the *individual* experience as an exception to the *collective*, thereby

mitigating the radical nature of the change. Moreover, in any mass action (such as war) one will always find a collective chorus to stand apart and comment upon the individual's fate. In Grigorii Chukhrai's "The Ballad of a Soldier" (1959) this chorus serves to correct and guide the hero's actions; the lovers in "The Cranes are Flying" do not just wander along deserted beaches, but also before the primary symbol of Soviet collective identity — the mausoleum. As the Red guerrilla fighter falls into a forbidden love, her dead comrades come to her in dreams. The camera's liberation, its accentuated expressiveness, was inextricably linked to this new, subjective, "intimate" take on historical experience. Cameramen such as Sergei Urusevsky and Vadim Iusov now rivaled the top directors in fame.

Yet the strong independent personality in film was presented mostly as an exception—one which carried subtle and inherent risks. Thus the protagonist is frequently a criminal (as in Vasilii Shukshin's 1974 film "The Red Rose," in which the eccentric personality belongs to a professional thief), or else slightly psychotic (the same Shukshin's unconventional cranks in his films "There Was Once a Fellow…" [1964] and "Just One Word, Please" [1975]), or he is condemned to loneliness and solitude as one of the "chosen" -- the great historical figure, the artist. Perhaps only two directors—Andrei Tarkovsky and Sergei Paradzhanov -- rejected these palliative options in favor of asserting individuality on the Russian screen, and vehemently defended the author's autonomy in the artistic realm; this was so untraditional within that singular construct called "Russian Cinema" that it actually leaned more toward the Western European tradition, where these two became better known than any of their Russian colleagues.

Paradzhanov creates a new image of the autonomous eccentric -- now he is a homosexual, a blasphemer, an aesthete, a camp prisoner. Beginning with "The Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (Ukranian, 1964) he established himself as a director with a particular archaic style, which was further developed as *his own*, Paradzhanov's, personal vision in "The Color of Granite" (Armenian, 1969) and "The Legend of the Suramsky Fortress" (Georgian, 1984). His camera remains markedly still; spatially, each frame is flat, with frontal composition and no sense of linear perspective; the actors' gestures are ritualized; the deliberately chosen color scheme is restricted to red, blue, yellow, and black, all in stark definition. Paradzhanov makes do without the use of montage; each shot, each frame is constructed and presented as a painting, and demands careful perusal, as if the viewer, contrary to all laws of cinematography, is not to associate one frame with the next but must rather immerse himself in the depths of a flat space, much as he would regard a painted canvas. Each shot is overladen with meaningful details -- the symbolism of color,

costumes, the poetic text, which underlies all of his films; the enigmatic, ritualized movement of the actors. Each of these seemingly symbolic details cannot and in fact *should not* be deciphered, because their meaning is freely invented by the director himself, and changes just as freely from film to film. The aesthetic beauty of Paradzhanov's compositions seems to dominate all other meaning, yet in his non-narrative, stylistically naïve movies he manages to convey tragic and philosophical ideas about death and sacrifice, exile and the loss of faith, the loss of love, the loss of memory. Every one of Paradzhanov's films ends on death's doorstep and is laced through with a tragic worldview, in sharp contrast to the decorative, sensual, and highly unstable beauty of his "textual" cinematic world.

Paradzhanov's unyielding conception of cinema as form and even as fable in his 1964 directorial debut ("The Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors") first makes evident his deliberate break with Soviet tradition. The Hutzul (a Ukranian inhabitant of the Carpathian region-trans.) loses his beloved and hence every remaining tie to life. Paradzhanov also approaches the relation between the individual and the collective (a crucial theme in 1960s cinema) on a different level: as his individual characters break from their family and heritage, the artist Paradzhanov perfects his distinctive individual language. Students of Russian film generally interpret this transition from an alien ritual and canon to a more personal form of expression as the transition from mythical to Christian (hence individual) thought patterns.[59] But it can also be understood as the development of a personal artistic language, marked in Pradzhanov's work by his use of color and the overall sense of space.

Andrei Tarkovsky's conception of an "author-created" film revolved around the traditional narrative of individual choice, which torments the characters of all of his pictures—from "Andrei Rublev" (1966-71) to "Nostalgia" (1983) and "Oferet" (1985), which Tarkovsky made after his emigration. Tarkovsky's assertion of his right to an individual viewpoint, unhampered by any authority but his own, and to autonomy in his artistic creation, generated his fundamental conflict not only with the authorities governing "State-Cinema" but also with the entire Soviet cinematic tradition, which left no room for aesthetic or ideological differences. (It is telling that one of the leading directors of the 1930s, Sergei Gerasimov, identified this as an *ethical* conflict: "This is an overestimation of one's own persona, which is exclusionary: 'I am an individual phenomenon and therefore I can make judgments unchecked even by the conscience and reason of the people . . . . ' Such a position has nothing whatsoever to do

with our Communist morale."[60]

In his later book, *Sculpturing in Time*, Tarkovsky muses not so much about cinema, art, and aesthetics as about the relations between the individual and society, freedom and conscience, the physical and the eternal. He sees the twentieth century as the end of the Great Inquisition and the persecution of ideas; he believes that society can gradually become more and more just, and offer new and more enlightened means for the world's salvation. This idea of world salvation must include the thoughts and actions of the loner, who has over time lost his ability to think and feel. "World evolution is a collective effort" -- in each of his films, Tarkovsky countered this maxim with the concept of individual effort, which can affect history, civilization's progress or regression, and even, in some mystical sense, the very fate of the world (as in "The Sacrifice"). Though in that particular film the hero must sacrifice two of his individual hypostases -- his home and his voice -- in order to save the world from global catastrophe.

In Tarkovsky's view, art exists to give form to the fragile, easily lost individual experience, memory, feeling, dreams. Thus his best-known, most characteristic movie is probably "The Mirror" (1974) -- the *first* film-autobiography in the history of Soviet cinema, which even Tarkovsky's faithful cameraman, Vadim Iusov, considered to be beneath the common conception of art and fit only for amateur 8mm family film.

Although his subjectivity links him with author-driven Western filmmaking, Tarkovsky also fits the stereotype of the enigmatic, metaphysical, impenetrable Russian soul -- only this stereotype was no longer couched in Eisenstein's exemplary montage sequences, which had fixed the idea of the "divided Slavic soul" in Western imagination, but in the agonizingly drawn-out *plan-séquences*, in which the viewer loses all sense of direction, where actors whirl around the camera and the camera circles among the actors, and contrasts are built not around the junctions between shots but upon depth and proximity, different signposts, contrasts between shadow and light, warm and cold light, a shot's slowed tempo -- supported by a magnification of time and elliptical leaps among various historical and cultural strata.

This same aggressive defense of subjective experience can be found in the films of Kira Muratova, who provocatively aestheticized the "banal" as the antithesis of the now meaningless "provincial melodrama" genre ("Long Wires," 1972; "Discovering the White Light," 1984), or in the films of Aleksei German, who found a "cinematographically individual" form of

expression in reconstructing "the greater meaning" of history, which had been erased from intimate memory, forgotten "in general," and restored only in loose, scattered details in the mind. All of the characters in his landmark film "My Friend Ivan Lapshyn" (1984) recall the past "incorrectly" in this sense because they generally lack the ability to perceive reality and themselves within that reality. These characters completely subjugate their individual differences to the commonly accepted norm: the journalist trying to shoot himself cannot fathom that Mayakkovsky had committed suicide; the actress, who is miserably in love with the journalist and in turn scorns the unrequited love of the military officer, is amused by the clumsy love affairs between Chekhov's characters. The epileptic military officer, who is also a militia detective, expounds on the health of society and future plans for building public parks, all against the backdrop of a vacant lot and a ditch, from which mutilated corpses are being unearthed behind him. To German this represents the tragicomic inability to *see* the actual results of the medial experiment -- Soviet cinema, which, more so than any other art in Soviet history, had impressed a particular worldview upon every member of society. For this reason he bases the aesthetics of his work on a rejection of the "Soviet film" aesthetic created by the collective efforts of filmmakers in the 1930s-50s: the clear shots, stationary camera, clear sound quality to convey the crucial symbolic weight of the dialogue, were all replaced with shaky camera-work and skewed asymmetrical composition, in which random "unimportant" details are constantly obscuring the protagonist, or simply the speaker, from view. The complicated soundtrack, with its multiple overlays of noise, makes it almost impossible to discern words through the din, bits of garbled dialogue, and scraps of melody.

Yet these examples -- German, Muratova, Tarkovsky -- make plain that the construct of Soviet cinema as such was a necessary element in their 'emancipation'; they are like Siamese twins and, once separated from one another, once viewed outside their context, they lose their subversive premise and their audience—that is, the viewer familiar with Soviet cinema. In the 1970s, during the so-called "period of stagnation," the social split between conformists and dissidents, the division of art into official and outlawed categories, and the "Siamese twin" relationship between Soviet and individual film became too obvious. Soviet cinema had to make one final heroic effort to restore the disappearing reverence for the collective. Thus films by Tarkovsky ("Andrei Rublev," screen adaptations of "The Idiot" or screenplays written along the lines of Hoffman), Muratova, and German were banned. The old familiar mass-action films were resurrected on 70 mm film, in glorious full color and

stereophonic sound. Yuri Ozerov begins a military epic which spans twenty years and eleven films, from "The Liberation" (1970-72) to "Stalingrad" (1989), in which he once again offers up the battles of the second World War as part of the collective biography, with Stalin and his field marshal (either Zhukov or Rokossovsky) as the protagonists and thousands of anonymous soldiers. These films might be viewed as a remake of Stalin's "Ten Strikes" project, which had included films such as "The Battle of Stalingrad," "The Third Strike," and "The Fall of Berlin." Sergei Bondarchuk undertakes a similar remake, recreating the October Revolution once again ("Red Bells," 1982), though this time with a nominal attempt at historical accuracy. He introduces the quasi-realistic character of the foreign correspondent and eyewitness John Reed into the traditional, fictional cinematic space, but ultimately Reed is mute, an extra instead of a chronicler of events. The "anonymous" film retained its role as historical medium, and in these Bondarchuk repeats scenes from all of the familiar old Soviet films—though on a new technical level, with better film, optics, and recording equipment.

In this same decade of the '70s, when journalism, literature, theatre, and film first became actively involved in discussing economic reform, civil rights, education, and ecology, the model of '30s cinema emerged not as a directive from above, but out of a specific and inherent artistic need. These filmmakers did not see themselves as slaves to ideology, but rather as the tutors of a nation, as messiahs, which lent their work an entirely different weight and value. For such a mission, constructs such as autonomous art, which Paradzhanov embraced so heartily, were entirely too narrow.

The concept of Soviet film became fragmented and scattered enough to include very disparate phenomena: state-ordered epics in the vein of Ozerov's tank-operas; Bondarchuk's colossal endeavors; the subversive, socially thought-provoking films of Gleb Panfilov; Tarkovsky's stubborn individual authorship; and also a vast number of unremarkable, mediocre Soviet melodramas which, however (unlike Tarkovsky, Bondarchuk, or Panfilov), enjoyed enormous popularity—for example, Victor Rogovoy's 1971 film "The Officers" attracted 70 million viewers in the first year after its release![61] But when even Russian viewers stopped attending the cinema it became necessary to gamble on the native film-entertainment industry and the "Hollywood-ization" of Soviet film, to the degree to which ideological doctrine would permit, or course. Suddenly, the State-Cinema itself was demanding staged historical films, imitations of Western models, comedies, melodramas, socialist films about natural catastrophes -- flouting all previously established guidelines. But Russia lost the arms race

on the cinematic-empire front, and Soviet cinema's time ran out almost simultaneously with the fall of the Soviet Union.

During the short period of *glasnost*, between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the '90s, Russian cinema saw a boom in production once again; it is impossible to recount exactly the number of films made per year (whether it was 400, 500, or 600), but there was talk of the new Hong Kong or the new Bombay, which would replace the socialist system of film production. However, the boom ultimately proved not to be the beginning of a new epoch, but a death-rattle. The entire hierarchy of values was changing. Banned films were suddenly acknowledged as masterpieces of the "period of stagnation"; marginalized directors took the places of government laureates, previously occupied by the likes of Bondarchuk. Once more history is rewritten in film, as part of the eternal quest for the contemporary moment which Soviet cinema eternally adjusted and revised. Instead of analytically debunking the old cinematic myths, filmmakers of the *perestroika* era industriously went to work imposing new ones, switching around the symbols of value. Stalin becomes firmly entrenched on the Russian screen, though not as a god but as a demon of history; crosses and ruined churches replace the red stars and banners; instead of the commissars, the royal family is romanticized and sanctified as victims of the Revolution. Anti-Stalin films rapidly replaced the cultish paeans, but did not change the hierarchy of genres in the old model of Soviet cinema. Although the authoritarian structures suppressing individualism had supposedly been removed and societal mainstays destroyed, the formerly Soviet cinema could not seem to find its own autonomous identity. However, during the course of the *perestroika* years it achieved a quality of aggressive realism unprecedented in Russian film. "Little Vera" (1988), a slight and mediocre film by the young director Vasilii Pichul, deliberately shocked Russian audiences. Pichul discovered in Soviet society a mass person without individual consciousness, and the critics were horrified that a Russian should fall into the stream of Western twentieth century progression, losing all touch with the cherished national tradition of spiritual superiority. Besides this, the film presented naked reality with no apologies or appeals to the ideological, metaphorical, pantheistic, or metaphysical sensibilities. For this reason this mediocre film appeared so novel and produced such a sensation. Yet the novelty was essentially *stylistic*, and soon filth, ruined buildings, gutted factories, industrial wastelands, and communal apartments were taken up by the new wave of filmmakers as a photogenic natural environment. These ugly yet aestheticized backdrops set the scene for a variety of narratives about the decay of Soviet structures, especially its long-standing artistic taboos

against sex and violence. At the same time popular culture, which had previously been suppressed much like the elite or the subversives, began to assimilate sex, violence, and destruction into its own stories, without the aestheticization.

Meanwhile viewers were no longer seeing Soviet films in the theatres; the movie-theatres were glutted with the products of the American and Western European entertainment industries, which led to an odd reorientation. Directors made movies—pretty much as they had before—with an imaginary viewer in mind, but the viewer's desires began to be calculated by Western measures, and the new Russian cinema began to adapt a foreign culture to post-Soviet film: the strong individual hero, supremely sure of himself and confident in his own perceptions, has to destroy the ideology of collective obedience totally and single-handedly modernize Russian-Soviet society. Criminals, prostitutes, Hell's Angels on motorcycles (usually portrayed as killers-for-hire in these plots) moved into Russia's cinematic world. Russian filmmakers began to populate post-Soviet reality with the aimless figures of Western cinema, lagging perhaps by a decade or two: thus Moscow in the 1990s came to know American hippies and Hell's Angels, mafiosi from the gangster thrillers of the early '70s, or the Russian Rambo, relocated to spread mayhem and fight for justice in the bloody Chechnyan conflict.

Yet it was not this amalgamation that truly washed away the traces of Soviet cinema. It seems more likely that the final blow was dealt by filmmakers such as Elem Klimov and Andrei Smirnov, who had enjoyed a brief period of authority during *perestroika*. They managed to dismantle the structures of state financing for films and the entrenched distribution methods, and initiated the struggle against the "average, grey, mediocre movie," which in turn resulted in the destruction of Soviet cinema. The glut of "grey movies," "state-sponsored movies," and vulgar entertainment had to be replaced with socially engaging or artistic pictures. The program put forth by these filmmakers recalled Stalin's "masterpiece" theory: why make so many middle-of-the-road movies, when one could make a few works of genius? In this way the *idea* of commercially based national film production was annulled -- and without it, large-scale films were impossible to make.

Eventually the system of film financing collapsed completely in the confusion of chaotic capitalism. The only survivors were rather marginal affairs — alternative cinema (called "parallel" in Russia), or experimental films which did not rely on mass distribution and were aimed solely at specific audiences and the film festivals, such as Alexander Sokurov's

"Mother and Son" (1997). The marked attention that Russian cinema had received on the international film scene during *glasnost* evaporated. Distributors, Soviet audiences, and international film festivals were no longer interested in Stalin, *perestroika,* or the absurdities of post-Soviet life. (The film festivals had turned the spotlight on films coming out of China, Africa, Iran, or Taiwan.) Now nostalgia set in. Post-Soviet viewers began to enjoy the old Soviet films just as they had been viewed in the '30s-'70s, with a childlike glee in repeated viewings—only now, of course, on television. Out of the 6,500 speaking films made in the USSR during its entire existence, exactly 115 were shown over ten times on television during the past three years. Most of these were made during the 1930s; perhaps the collective daydreams of social integration, staged in the "grand style," continue to define the world of the Soviet and post-Soviet man to this day.

The movie theatre, now transplanted to individual living rooms, remains a place of collective gathering and unification, a safe retreat for a society rocked to its core by the wave of reforms. Thus the peculiarities of Russian cinema, which was created largely by Russia's unique assimilation of modernity, have survived to this day, and the old "collective daydreams" remained as surrogates for a nonexistent national creative identity. The only difference is that the old mass-scale, solemn, non-commercial cinema is now consumed not as ideology, but as entertainment; it has outlived the obsolete function to which Soviet cinema had clung for so many years.

Perhaps it is this change in function that separates Russian cinema most distinctly from that of the rest of the world. The turn-of-the-century utopian imaginings, which presented the movie theatre as a place of social unification and the dissolution of class differences, was replaced in the '20s by a yet more radical vision; cinema became a laboratory for new modes of thought, perception, and movement, with the capacity to reach and transform millions. During Stalin's reign cinema was deliberately made into a means of conserving and translating the loftier, more traditional art forms, and a medium for the rewriting of history and historical memory. The national infatuation with post-individual values, established in the nineteenth century, remained crucial. This orientation was reflected in the various stylistic peculiarities of the period—the archaic treatment of poetics and the neutralization of expressive possibilities, both hallmarks of the 1930s. Even the Russian cinematic avant-garde, who created individually-authored film with its own singular poetics (and far surpassing the experiments of the Futurists and Surrealists), aimed not so much to express the individual "I" as to convey a total worldview,

revealing the motives behind historical processes and mass-scale events which consumed the individual, with all of his personal thoughts and experiences, and enslaved him to a causality beyond his control. Only after the 20th Party Congress did Russian cinema attempt to delineate the individual's drama within the collective destiny, which immediately became evident in the new, subjective means of expression. Yet even this process of liberation was firmly tied to Russian tradition. To this day, not a single Russian film has successfully disentangled itself from the mesmerizing paradigm of the "unhappy ending," which has been disregarded only in the amalgamated cinema of pop culture.

Russian cinema, which, like any other cinematic school, had to define itself within both the global and the local contexts, caught between making its language universal and remaining trapped inside the strongbox of national tradition or an author's individualism, offered up various combinations during the course of this century. This text has pointed out but a few of these.

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