

I ★ INTRODUCTION “Bodies That Matter”

“Andrei! Don’t you recognize me?” whispered Meres’ev, feeling that he was beginning to tremble all over.

Andrei looked for another instant at the living skeleton covered with dark, seemingly charred skin, trying to discern the merry features of his friend, and only in his eyes, enormous and almost quite round, did he catch the frank and determined Meres’ev expression that was familiar to him . . .

—Boris Polevoi, *A Story About a Real Man*, 1947

What does the socialist realist hero look like? Is he strong and healthy, handsome and virile, broad shouldered and square chinned? Is he “stern,” “determined,” “shiny-eyed,” and “proud”?¹ Or does he resemble a “living skeleton covered with dark, seemingly charred skin”?² How do we begin to make sense of this double image that works like a double exposure, the one body overlaid on the other, the healthy and happy Soviet man obscuring the skeletal remains of this second fantasy, this “other scene” taking place in the unconscious?

Fedor Gladkov’s 1925 novel *Tsement* (Cement), opens with Gleb Chumalov’s return home from the front to find his house empty, his wife distant, and the factory that was the heart and soul of the town abandoned. Furious, Gleb speaks to the recalcitrant and backward Worker’s Club “Comintern,” and when words fail, he “tore off his tunic and his soiled shirt and flung them on the floor,” revealing his naked body, “knotted and scarred.” This wounded body appears precisely at the moment

when we expect it the least: ready for a display of virility, we, like Gleb’s comrades, are unprepared for the vision of the “pallid and purple scars that cover his chest, neck, and side.” What begins seemingly as a play of muscles, pointed to by Gleb’s invitation to “come and touch them,” turns instead into an exhibition of wounds and a brash invitation: “Shall I take down my trousers? Do I have to? Oh, I’m not ashamed; I am wearing the same sort of decorations lower down . . .” This conflict of tropes—the muscular body of the hero lacerated by scars; pride taken in the possibility of castration—in Gladkov’s novel appears as a unified signifier of Gleb’s heroism, of his *masculine* power and authority.³

Twenty-five years after the first publication of Gladkov’s novel, Boris Polevoi relies on a similar set of contradictions to describe Squadron Commander Andrei Degtiarenko, Aleksei Meres’ev’s friend and comrade-in-arms in *Povest’ o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (A Story About a Real Man, 1947). Roused by the sound of a “young, resonant, booming bass voice,” Meres’ev opens his eyes to see Degtiarenko appearing before him as in a dream:

Aleksei opened his eyes, but he thought he was still asleep and that it was in a dream that he saw the broad, high-cheeked, roughhewn, good-natured, angular face of his friend, with the livid scar on his forehead. . . . The vision did not melt away. It really was Degtiarenko . . . standing there, tall, broad-shouldered, with his tunic collar unbuttoned as usual. . . . The rushlight was burning behind him, and his golden, close-cropped, bristling hair shone like a halo.

With almost the entire history of Stalinism between them, these two novels participate in the creation of the New Soviet Man (*novyi sovetskii chelovek*)—that rhetorically constructed figure rising above the Soviet masses to lead them to victory and the bright future of communism.⁴ The square jaws, the broad shoulders, the “halo” that emanates in and around his presence—all these elements contribute to the grandeur of the new being, the hero of socialist labor. And yet, as both Gladkov’s and Polevoi’s texts suggest, these men are set apart by more than simply their monumental stature: they are also wounded and maimed, proudly offering to show off their “decorations lower down.” The “real man” referred to by the title of Polevoi’s novel is of course not Andrei Degtiarenko, but Aleksei Meres’ev, the “charred” and emaciated body that Degtiarenko, in the

same scene, fails to recognize as his former comrade and friend. Blind or paralyzed, limping, one-legged, or wearing prostheses—the world of the Stalinist novel and Stalinist film is filled with damaged male bodies. Their sacrifices to the Soviet cause make them worthy of elevation to the status of “hero”; yet their extreme forms of physical disability reveal what might be called an ideological and cultural fantasy of Stalinism: the radical dismemberment of its male subjects.

The Stakes

Traditional critical approaches have taken for granted Stalinist culture as productive of untroubled Soviet heroes, virile bodies, and heteronormative paradigms of masculinity. Yet against the background of Stalinist monumental art—such as Vera Mukhina’s colossal monument *Rabochii i kolkhoznitsa* (Industrial Worker and Collective Farmer, 1937), to name but one example—socialist realist novels and films of that period surprisingly often rely on the figure of the wounded or mutilated male body to represent the New Soviet Man. Early literary works such as Gladkov’s *Cement* and Nikolai Ostrovskii’s *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1932–1934) as well as later Stalinist creative productions such as Polevoi’s *A Story About a Real Man* and Mikhail Chiaureli’s classic propaganda film *The Fall of Berlin* (1949) help to frame the argument about an acceptance of an emasculated male subjectivity that may be understood as the condition of “living with lack.” Ivan Pyr’ev 1936 melodrama *The Party Card* and Eduard Pentslin’s 1939 film *The Fighter Pilots*, along with a series of other standard but less “canonical” examples of Stalinist socialist realism, demonstrate the ways in which marginal texts also disseminate this socialist realist convention. Finally, post-Soviet writers like Viktor Pelevin and filmmakers like Sergei Livnev rework socialist realist—and specifically Stalinist—tropes. Together these texts construct the Stalinist fantasy of masculinity, turning the New Soviet Man into a heroic invalid.

Psychoanalytic theory and the theories of sexuality (Freud, Foucault, Lacan), queer theory and gender studies (Butler, Halberstam, Sedgwick), and film theory (Doane, Mulvey, Silverman, Žižek), articulate Western philosophical and cultural discourses of masculinity. They therefore serve as the background against which the stakes of Stalinist masculinity may be elaborated. Limping, bandaged, bedridden, grounded, unwilling or unable to marry, the New Soviet Man, in socialist realist novels or films,

looks quite different not only from his Western counterpart, but also from the other model of exemplary masculinity—the iconic Bolshevik / blacksmith / Stakhanovite of early Soviet and high Stalinist art—from the “fantasy of extravagant virility,” as Toby Clark names it, that we associate with Stalinist masculinity.⁵

Several interlinked notions guide the readings that follow. First is the discursive construction of the figure of the New Soviet Man as it is found in early, seminal works of socialist realism. The loss of bodily mobility, coupled with an insatiable drive to keep moving forward toward the bright future, constitutes one of the main plot devices that underpin the socialist realist text, in particular in its larger, novel form. The second feature of Stalinist ideology, expressed in novels and film, is the prohibition against and simultaneous demand for love, romance, and heterosexual marriage, complicated by the maimed or invalid status of the hero. Here, the damaged body in part enables the hero to remove himself from the sphere of heterosexual and heteronormative desire, opening up a space for homoerotic bonds. The figure of the woman, left behind on the shore, in a ration line, or in the “rear,” suggests male flight from the norms and conventions of the patriarchal family back toward the promise of masculine utopia. Yet, because this flight is no longer encouraged and sustained by dominant ideology—because there is a shift from the utopianism of the Soviet twenties to middle-class values of High Stalinism—heterosexuality returns to haunt the Stalinist text.

Thus, the mutilated male body is only the starting point for a discussion of the production of Stalinist masculinity as a whole. Physical disablement is not taken here as a psychoanalytically driven textual response to early socialism’s hyperemphasis on the enhanced, virile, or ideal body—quite to the contrary, my argument returns again and again to the idea that the two forms of masculinity exist together, that together they create the ideal Stalinist man: hyperbolically strong, yet without arms or legs; committed to the cause, yet permanently chained to his bed; visionary, yet blind. At stake here is the notion of *limitation*, of certain disciplinary and structural parameters that the Stalinist subject (of either gender) is not allowed to cross. In other words, themes of mutilation, discipline, and heterosexual panic together articulate the paradox of Stalinist masculinity.

The Fantasy

Before turning to the narrative of "deviant" masculinity, let us consider the figure of virile, undamaged masculinity in Stalinist art. As many scholars have noted, both early Soviet and high Stalinist culture was greatly preoccupied with the body.⁶ The body as a physical site for spiritual transformation—the provenance of Fedorovian philosophy, the dreams of the futurists and the avant-garde, at stake in the physical culture movement as well as in the praise lauded on Stakhanovites, aviators, and engineers—plays a central role in Bolshevik and Stalinist discourse.

Leon Trotskii focused on the body's transformations at the end of his 1924 *Literature and Revolution*, Vsevolod Meyerhold made it the object of his biomechanical training for actors, Vera Mukhina monumentalized it in steel, while her husband, Aleksei Zamkov, an endocrinological therapist, injected it with *gravidan* in the hopes of promoting its health and longevity.⁷

A "parodic recipe" for the proletarian hero listed ingredients such as a spike for his "iron sinews, iron heart, and iron nerves," lightning for the "flashes of class enthusiasm" in his eyes, and "a thermometer to register the heat of his enthusiasm."⁸ Visual depictions of the worker needed to represent him with a "healthy, lively, intelligent, intellectual face," since he was the "the prototype of the new man, a combination of physical strength, energy, fortitude, and intelligence."⁹ "Clean-cut and square-jawed,"¹⁰ the New Soviet Man towered above the population, his gaze always directed out or beyond, into the bright future:

[The worker] is strikingly youthful and handsome, in the clean-cut masculine way that became standard for male workers in the Stalin era. Rather than a static pose of the conventional hammer striking the anvil, his left arm is thrust forward on the diagonal. He holds up a hammer (the woman raises a sickle) not in an act of labor but rather in a gesture of triumph. His intense expression and direct gaze, brows slightly furrowed, indicate strong emotion and determination. He is the prototype of the new Soviet man.¹¹

Capturing the "look" of the New Soviet Man, Stalinist monumental art fashioned the new Soviet body from iron and steel, and in gargantuan

proportions: Mikhail Blokh’s ten-meter statue of a metal worker was conceived entirely in the nude and intended to rival Michelangelo’s *David*; Mukhina’s *Industrial Worker and Collective Farmer* was over twenty meters in height and seventy-five tons in weight; the statue of Lenin intended for the top of the future Palace of the Soviets was to be over a hundred meters in height.¹²

Like monumental art, films (fictional and documentary) also went out of their way to represent model citizens as healthy, virile, and handsome. Documentary films of the physical culture parades on Red Square, with titles like *Stalinskoe plemia* (Stalin’s Tribe, 1937) and *Pesnia molodosti* (The Song of Youth, 1938), glorified the strong athletic body of the Soviet youth.¹³ Thousands of young, physically fit, and handsome students, representing republics from around the Soviet Union, marched together under banners declaring “A Fiery Hello to the Best Friend of Athletes, Comrade Stalin!” and “Thank You, Comrade Stalin, for Our Happy Childhood!” while members of the Politburo watched from the podium of Lenin’s mausoleum. The participants rode on floats constructed to replicate Mukhina’s *Industrial Worker and Collective Farmer* and on tanks made out of flowers; they performed feats of athleticism and agility. Like the giants of monumental art, the young men and women in the parades demonstrated not only the prototype of the new Soviet person, their health and vigor also spoke to the health and vigor of the collective, of a new nation marching together toward the bright future.

Familiar figures of Stalinist iconography—actors such as Boris Andreev, Sergei Batalov, Mark Bernes, and Boris Chirkov; images of the blacksmith, the Bolshevik, and Stakhanovite, “conceived of as a perpetual builder of socialism, and usually shown in motion”;¹⁴ and famous heroes of Stalinism (Chapaev, Chkalov, and Stalin himself)—together with monumental art and physical culture parades, represent the easily recognizable “fantasy of extravagant virility” of Stalinist culture. The protagonist of Lev Kassil’s novel and film, *Vratar’* (The Goalie, 1936), is not only blond, handsome, and physically robust, he is also obsessed with his health. Anton Kandidov (Grigorii Pluzhnik) is “naturally” athletic, an “impenetrable goalie.” He is first spotted unloading watermelons on the banks of the Volga by a team of Moscow engineer-sportsmen, surrounded by a crowd of women, and the film’s erotic attention returns again and again to the sight/site of Kandidov’s body, as he stands “half-undressed” (*polurazdetyi*) in front of

an open window, flexing his biceps. "I'm so healthy, Karasik!" he tells the short, pudgy engineer-inventor, "Oh, so healthy! Like a bull!"

This fantasy of virility embodied by the images of the "iconic" or "ideal" man comes in direct conflict with the damaged and mutilated male body that I have briefly sketched out above. While "cinema and soccer formed two poles of socialist popular culture," and in the summer happy citizens were said to "frolic" in the shadow of various life-size statues of Stakhanovite workers, Soviet aviators, and Soviet leaders,¹⁵ other symbols of the Stalinist body were being offered by literature and film. Bandaged, blinded, limping, paralyzed—these "disabled" heroes represented the inverse of the fantasy of extravagant virility, of the "flesh to metal" narrative that imagined the body tempered rather than undone by Bolshevik commitment.

And yet, the damage to the male body should not be read apart from the narrative of virility. The "fantasy of extravagant virility" is precisely a *phantasy* in the psychoanalytic sense: a mediator between reality and desire; the primary content of unconscious mental processes.¹⁶ It is an expression of a simultaneous desire for, and the impossibility of belief in the extreme models of masculinity promoted by Stalinist culture, its obsession with shock workers, border guards, pilots, Arctic explorers, and Bolshevik leaders. The radical dismemberment of the male body found on the pages of socialist realist novels and on Soviet screens is a response to the narrative of "extravagant virility" produced by Stalinist art, pointing to the mediation between reality and desire, of what it means to be so close and yet so removed from power.

Collective Make-Believe

To demonstrate better the workings of masculinity in socialist realist texts, I want to articulate for Stalinist culture a notion of a "dominant fiction": that is, the ideological fantasy by which the subject of a historical discourse is both produced and "captated."¹⁷ As Kaja Silverman notes, in Western philosophical discourse, the dominant fiction may be said to solicit "our faith" in the unity of the family, and the adequacy of the male subject. Images of unimpaired masculinity, produced by ideological discourse and sustained by popular culture, create the normative identification of the male subject with integrity, action, ability, and strength, while placing the female subject in the position of alterity, specularity, and lack. The

dominant fiction represents a compromise that seeks to erase the discrepancy between the two laws that organize our symbolic order: the Law of Kinship Structure that organizes patriarchal systems in the Name-of-the-Father, thereby erecting a master signifier from which all meaning proceeds; and the Law of Language that "dictates universal castration," permanently disjoining signifier from signified and leaving meaning vulnerable to slippage, misunderstanding, and contradiction. By systematically denying the possibility of *male* lack and yoking the image of unimpaired masculinity to the discourses of power, "classic masculinity" sustains itself through images of virility, through metaphors of strength, and through symbols of patriarchal privilege.¹⁸

The notion of the dominant fiction takes as its starting point the normative discourse of sexual difference elaborated by Sigmund Freud in his 1925 essay, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" and the 1927 essay "Fetishism."¹⁹ Positing a reaction-formation on the part of the "little girl" that sees "the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions," and immediately understands herself as "lacking" ("She has seen it and she knows she is without it and wants to have it"), Freud notes that for the little boy, the reaction is quite different: he either does not see or disavows what he sees.²⁰ Moreover, the little boy does not yet universalize what he has seen (or failed to see) to a principle applicable to all women. Only when confronted by the absence of a "particular and quite special penis,"²¹ to which he has been used to assigning great meaning and importance, does the little boy come to simultaneously accept and reject what he has seen. The formation of a "fetish," produced by the sight of female difference and its implicit consequences of castration, projects onto the female body a substitute object as a surrogate "penis"—a plait of hair, an undergarment, a shoe. It is an attempt, as David Eng puts it, "to obviate the trauma of sexual difference by seeing at the site of the female body a penis that is not there to see."²² Octave Mannoni's famous formulation, "I know very well . . . but all the same . . ." ("*Je sais bien que . . . mais quand-même . . .*"),²³ captures the double consciousness and "splitting of the ego" of fetishistic belief, founded on the spectacle of sexual difference and female "lack."

Jacques Lacan reformulates the notions of castration and lack (*manque*, *manque-à-être*) not as the physical absence of a penis, but as a precondition of subject formation and the individual's entry into language

(the symbolic order). Freud's notion of castration is defined by Lacan as a symbolic lack of an imaginary object; castration does not bear on the penis as a real organ, but on the imaginary phallus.²⁴ More vitally, for Lacan, "a relation of the subject to the phallus . . . is established without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes," again, because the law of language dictates *universal* castration.²⁵ Entry into the symbolic order, marked for Lacan by the successful negotiation and resolution of the Oedipus complex, is signaled, as Freud suggests, by the acknowledgment of the prohibition/imperative: "'You *ought to be* like this (like your father).' 'You *may not be* like this (like your father)—that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.'" ²⁶ This prohibition/imperative marks the subject as "decentered," always attempting to accede to a fullness of being (being *like* the father) forever foreclosed to him or her. In a sense, Freud already formulates the notion of all subjectivity as lacking when he considers that the fetish is a reaction formation against the threat of castration. It is not the woman who is ultimately found lacking in Freud's text, but rather the man: he, the male subject, projects what he sees (or fails to see) back onto himself, threatening himself with the possibility of lack. To defend against the perceived threat of castration, the male subject re-projects plenitude back onto woman, "seeing at the site of the female body a penis that is not there to see," mistaking penis for phallus.

Through the mediation of images of unimpaired masculinity (the Bolshevik/blacksmith/Stakhanovite of the Stalinist imagination) cultural texts urge both men and women to disavow knowledge of male castration (You *may not be* like this [like your father] . . .) by putting their faith in the commensurability of penis and phallus, of masculinity with symbolic structures of power. Thus, "classic" male subjectivity rests upon the denial of castration, while the "phallus/penis equation is promoted by the dominant fiction, sustained by collective belief." Because the male subject's identifications with power and privilege are constantly threatened (formed as they are through the maintenance of a fetish), there are numerous obstacles that threaten to expose masculinity as masquerade. History may "manifest itself in so traumatic and inassimilable a guise, that it temporarily dislocates penis from phallus, or renders null and void the other elements of the dominant fiction."²⁷

Certainly, in the case of Stalinist culture, history may be said to have manifested itself in just such a "traumatic and inassimilable guise." The

ideological fantasy of Stalinist culture that installed Stalin, rhetorically and psychically, as father of the people, leader, master ("otets naroda," "vozhd," "Khoziain"); the mass terror and mass destruction that accompanied the slogans of being "dizzy from success," and insisted that "life has become better, comrades, life has become more joyous!"—these structures make it possible to see that the mechanism by which masculinity organizes itself around the disavowal of castration was brought under immense pressure. In opposition to the monumental figures of Stalinist poster art described by Victoria Bonnell or the "flesh-to-metal" fantasies described by Rolf Hellebust, socialist realist novels and films of the Stalin period manifest what might be called a "wish fulfillment" of the *inadequacy* of the male subject. Films consistently rely on the image of a bandage wrapped tightly around the hero's head to signify his sacrifice, but also his status as "less than" and "not quite." This is particularly legible in the final sequence of Chiaureli's *The Fall of Berlin*, which brings together the bandaged Alesha Ivanov, his fiancée Natasha, who has eyes only for Stalin, and Stalin—a colossus, dressed all in white, towering over the hysterically joyous crowds that have rushed to greet him. Alesha's bandaged head emphasizes what the film has repeatedly shown: in the love triangle of Alesha, Natasha, and Stalin, Alesha occupies the place of the subject "almost like but never the same as" Stalin. As *The Fall of Berlin* and other texts demonstrate, the male hero's visibility before the gaze of the big Other (either Stalin or history),²⁸ his exposure, specularity, and alterity—categories traditionally assigned to woman—are mobilized as markers of a masculinity that no longer disavows castration and lack.

In its representations of the wounded body, Stalinist art charts a trajectory from the visual arts—posters and painting, in which damaged bodies do not appear—to cinema, where they are marked by covert signs, such as a bandage or a set of crutches—to literature, where the nature of the wounds is described vividly and at length. Stalinist films address the question of masculinity obliquely. The focus, as I will show, is on the production of a circumscribed masculinity, a masculinity that openly acknowledges and privileges its own undoing, that insists on weakness, on blindness, on distance from power. Stalinist novels, on the other hand, are free to dwell on the details of their heroes' dismemberment. Thus, Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* and Polevoi's *A Story About a Real Man* revel in the

pain and damage sustained by their heroic subjects, describing in excruciating detail the nature of their heroes' suffering and inviting not only the female characters but also the readers to acknowledge and fetishize the damaged male body as a model of exemplary masculinity.

From "Worker and Peasant" to *Hammer and Sickle*

To examine the conflicts of gender and power in Stalinist texts, I want to keep in mind the historical and political circumstances that made those conflicts visible, isolating not only textual moments in which the Soviet male subject is able to sustain certain idealized gendered identifications (with Stakhanovites, with blacksmiths, with Stalin) but also, more vitally, those instances when these identifications fail or threaten to break down. Socialist realist novels and films construct a model of masculinity that is not afraid to show off its "decorations lower down," that, like Gleb Chumalov, invites others to "come and touch" the scarred and lacerated body and to see lack as a precondition of Stalinist male subjectivity.

Chapter 2 analyzes what is perhaps *the* model socialist realist text, Nikolai Ostrovskii's novel *Kak zakalialas' stal'* (How the Steel Was Tempered), published serially in the journal *Molodaia gvardiia* from 1932 to 1934. The publication of Ostrovskii's novel coincides with the adoption of the doctrine of socialist realism as the official method of the Soviet arts and provides a model, along with the Georgii Vasil'ev and Sergei Vasil'ev's screen adaptation of *Chapaev* (1934), for what a socialist realist text ought to be. The novel's hero, Pavka Korchagin, charts the path of true Soviet heroism: in his class origin, in his choice of occupations, his immediate and unwavering commitment to the Soviet State—Pavka never once veers from the path of ideal Soviet subjectivity.

His commitment comes at a price: for every step he takes toward the ideal, Pavka pays with the disintegration of his body. Removed to sanatoriums, blind, paralyzed, and permanently confined to his bed, Pavka never gives up on his desire to "move forward," to (re)join the ranks of the party, to remain a soldier on the front lines of the battle for socialism, always ready to give a "little more of himself" to the party. This masochistic relationship underscores the psychic economy of debt that marks exemplary Stalinist masculinity. Payment for participation in the system is made explicit by Pavka's progressive disabilities: first one eye, then the other, then

the nervous system, then paralysis of one side of the body, and finally, permanent immobility turn Pavka into a "living mummy," a persistent reminder of Stalinist masculinity structured by/as lack.

Chapter 3 places the question of Stalinist masculinity within the broader paradigm of sexual difference, focusing on the production of female guilt in Ivan Pyr'ev's 1936 film *Partiinyi bilet* (The Party Card). The film is set in a context of show trials, party card exchanges, and rumors of war that underscore the sexual and political vulnerability of the Stalinist subject. Where Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* asked us to read metaphorical plenitude at the site of the emaciated, paralyzed male body, Pyr'ev's *The Party Card* asks us to see metonymical lack at the site of the perfectly healthy female body. Evoking nearly every Freudian definition of femininity as alterity, specularity, and difference, and fetishizing the party card as a symbol of plenitude, Pyr'ev's film displaces the threat of (political) castration onto the female subject, as if lack belonged only to woman. Though no one escapes the threat of universal castration that Pyr'ev's film stages and then disavows, *The Party Card* helps to turn this threat into visual pleasure. We enjoy watching Anna admit her guilt and condemn her for her reckless sexuality. But Anna is a "good party member," a "loyal" friend, and in prosecuting her, the film simultaneously acknowledges and disavows the terror and uncertainty of Stalinist subjectivity. This too is a kind of visual pleasure, in briefly identifying with one who has temporarily escaped the operations of power. This chapter reconceives Laura Mulvey's work on visual pleasure as determined by the historical and cultural contingencies of Stalinism. It shows how the traditional paradigm of sexual difference remains at work in Stalinist texts, even when compromised by competing fantasies of emasculation, heterosexual panic, and male hysteria.

Chapter 4 focuses on cinematic examples of male subjectivity as circumscribed, disciplined, and feminized. The heroes of these films from approximately 1935 to 1945 are models of "extravagant virility" (sailors, soldiers, and pilots), who refuse to occupy the position of virile, heterosexual masculinity. The patriarchal norms of relations between men—what Eve Sedgwick terms "homosexual panic"—alongside the implementation of Stalinist "family laws" limiting divorce and abortion and the criminalization of homosexuality show that the discourse of normative desire (heterosexual love, marriage, family) is consistently undermined by quite a

different form of "panic." None of the male protagonists can securely align his desire with the heteronormative structures seemingly demanded by the state. Rather, the protagonists of these films attempt to "remain men together," and to preserve, in the words of Major Tucha in *The Sky-Barge*, their "holy male union." This attempt is marked by hysterical symptoms—headaches, leg cramps, blindness, hospitalization²⁹—produced at the site of the male body, acknowledging a prohibition against a repressed wish that leaves male pilots "grounded."

Chapter 5 discusses Boris Polevoi's *A Story About a Real Man*, which tells the story of the fighter pilot Aleksei Meres'ev, who, after having his feet amputated at the shins, nonetheless returns to the front. It is a narrative about undaunted Soviet heroism, about a *real man* "minus two feet." The loss of mobility is seen here as a specifically "male" problem, and amputation becomes synonymous with castration: legless, Meres'ev cannot fly, cannot marry, cannot rejoin the fighting ranks, but must live out his days either in the hospital with other damaged men or with "the women in the rear," resigned to the position of the Stalinist "abject." Yet this "pinned" and "disabled" state may in itself be the "real" goal of Stalinist masculinity. The mechanism of the desire/compulsion to return "to ranks and to life" at work in *How the Steel Was Tempered* is repeated in Polevoi's novel. Asked to imagine a "real" man, Meres'ev recalls "the big, bloated body" and "the waxen face" of Commissar Vorob'ev, and the woman "standing like a statue over him in the eternal posture of feminine grief." Meres'ev's progress through the novel is marked by the loss and reacquisition of subjectivity—understood here in the sense that Louis Althusser provides, an answer to an ideological "hail." The reacquisition of subjectivity is marked not only by an acceptance of lack, but also by the display of this lack for all to see. Thus, we find Meres'ev's legs frequently lying "some distance from him," underscoring the distance between the "fantasy of extravagant virility" and its representation in socialist realist texts.

Chapter 6 takes a broader view of Stalinist culture by examining its post-Soviet "return" in films from the late eighties and early nineties, set during the Stalin era, specifically in Sergei Livnev's 1994 film *Serp i molot* (Hammer and Sickel). Like the novels of Viktor Pelevin, Livnev's film is a post-Soviet take on the myths and fantasies of Stalinism that asks what it might have meant to be a "man" in a world where the relationship between maleness and power was denaturalized and unhinged. Livnev's

parody relies on taking many of the tropes of Stalinist culture—the desire to produce the New Soviet Man; subjects without will that exist at the behest of the state; Stalin as the “big Other”—to their literal and absurd extremes.³⁰ And yet, despite its emphasis on the production and construction of (male) subjectivity, the ending of *Hammer and Sickle* nevertheless proposes a naturalized relation between maleness and power, between masculinity and action. In other words, Livnev’s film tries to undo the structures it sets out to parody by disavowing the possibility of masculinity as lack, and returning the New Soviet Man squarely back into the fold of heteronormative desire and phallic identification. *Hammer and Sickle* concludes with the image of the paralyzed “hero,” yet one more mummy lying in state in a “m(a)us(ol)eum”³¹ named after himself. Thus, chapter 6 underscores the pervasiveness of the trope of damaged masculinity for Stalinist culture, showing that we cannot understand socialist realism or the culture of Stalinism without addressing the construction and performance of gender; regimes of discipline/power/pleasure; bodily mutilation and exemplary masculinity; sexual difference and visibility before the big Other.

Questions of Method

How the Soviet Man Was Unmade brings together two fields of study—Soviet and post-Soviet studies and psychoanalytic theory—that are typically seen as disparate. As one of the dominant critical tools for theorizing the relationship between gender and sexuality, between identification and desire, between subjectivity and collective belief, psychoanalysis helps to reveal the multiple ways in which subjects are constructed and deployed, but also how cultural products reflect and translate a given society’s structuring illusions and fantasies. Moreover, psychoanalysis (in particular in its later, Lacanian turn) has had a profound effect on the field of film studies, which considers questions of spectatorship and identification, the roles of fantasy and ideology, and the effects of projection and mechanical reproduction.

Nevertheless, this book’s theoretical approach might give pause to some scholars of Slavic studies. In its relationship to a century of predominantly French and German literary theory, the field has come to embrace some of these with ease (formalism, structuralism), some with a certain degree of reluctance (deconstruction, postmodernism, postcolonialism,

queer studies), and some with mistrust (Marxism, feminism). Yet psychoanalysis, from its inception as a field of scientific study to its literary and cultural theoretical applications has had a long and difficult path through Soviet history and Slavic scholarship, even though the influence of Freud in Russia can be traced to the earliest developments of psychoanalysis in Europe. As Martin Miller points out, "Freud's works, beginning with his *Interpretation of Dreams* (published in 1899), were translated from German into Russian before they appeared in any other foreign language. Psychiatrists who had traveled to study with Freud, Carl Jung, and Karl Abraham in western Europe organized a training institute in Moscow years before any existed in London, Paris, New York, or Buenos Aires."³² This influence did not end with the public denunciation of Freudianism at the Congress on Human Behavior in Moscow in 1930, when all matters relating to Freud and psychoanalysis were declared retrograde, bourgeois, and counterrevolutionary. Instead of disappearing, psychoanalysis became the favorite target of critique, continuing to generate articles and books that attacked Freud's methods and conclusions, keeping them in intellectual circulation: "Throughout the Stalin era, and well into the postwar period, this critical discourse was sustained by people who were in fact genuinely interested in Freud in spite of the fact that they could neither practice as clinicians nor publish as academics with a psychoanalytic identification."³³

Psychoanalytic approaches to Slavic studies, however, continue to be debated.³⁴ And though most would agree that we are, all of us, "Freudians" (culturally and historically, if not by choice), scholars of Soviet studies still cite the Bolshevik hatred of psychoanalysis, or V. N. Voloshinov's critical study, *Freudianism* (1927), as a good enough reason to reject the methodology *tout court*. And yet, when Isaac Babel writes about masculinity in "Moi pervyi gus'" (My First Goose, 1926), or Andrei Platonov about the death drive in "Ivan Zhokh" (1927), or Iurii Olesha about the father-son relationships in *Zavist'* (Envy, 1927), or Mikhail Zoshchenko about the traumas of childhood in his autobiographical *Pered voskhodom solntsa* (Before the Sunrise, 1943), they are relying on Vasilii Rozanov and Nikolai Fedorov; Otto Weininger and Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing—but more vitally, on Freud and his theories, which, however discredited at the time or after, helped to shape a century of modern thought, even in Soviet Russia.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, critics of the Soviet regime

have used the tools of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis to think through the problems of Soviet history. The rejection of psychoanalysis itself (from its total dismissal in 1930 to its slow reemergence in the 1970s) has become emblematic of Soviet Communism as a system that, as Aron Belkin argues, "obliterated the nation's collective past."³⁵ One of the first films to deal explicitly with psychoanalytic themes, Andrei Zagdanski's *Tolkovanie snovidanii* (Interpretation of Dreams, 1989), showed extensive documentary footage of Freud and other historical figures, with Nicholas II inspecting the troops, Stalin in 1920, Hitler and staff at Nuremberg in 1927, and Nikita Khrushchev and Kliment Voroshilov applauding Viacheslav Molotov in 1930. As Miller notes,

The filmmaker's attitudes toward psychoanalysis were hardly subtle: he juxtaposed graphic footage from the savage history of imperialism, warfare, and revolution during the first half of the twentieth century against quotations read from Freud's works which, uncannily, seemed to interpret the events. . . . To underscore the connection between repression, whether individual or societal, and the long-standing intolerance of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union, the film closed with these words alone on the screen: "From 1929 to 1989, Freud was not published in the USSR."³⁶

Not only Freud, but also post- or neo-Freudian psychoanalysis became a possible topic of discussion in the Soviet Union in the early seventies. V. M. Leibin published on the works of Erich Fromm, and in 1973 N. S. Avtonomova published an article on the "Psychoanalytic Conceptions of Jacques Lacan."³⁷ In particular, Leibin's book, *Psychoanalysis and the Philosophy of Neo-Freudianism*, discussed the vast influence of psychoanalysis in Europe and America in the fields of psychiatry, philosophy, sociology, history, anthropology, and art—in other words, precisely the kind of influence that initially opened up psychoanalysis to vast criticism and ultimate rejection by the Soviets. As Miller puts it, quoting from the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia* (1978), the Soviets made a distinction between psychoanalysis as a study of unconscious phenomena and Freudianism as a theory that elevated "the tenets of psychoanalysis to philosophical and anthropological principles." There was concern "that Freud's dangerous influence could be found in other fields, extending from psychology and psychiatry to philosophy, aesthetics, art, sociology, literature, and his-

tory."³⁸ And indeed, since the republication of Freud's works began in the late eighties, a new field of study—psychohistory—spearheaded by Belkin, was founded in Russia.

In Western academic discourse, Freud's influence on feminist theory, queer theory, and film theory was shaped in large part by the work of Lacan, who began his "return to Freud" by bringing together knowledge from such diverse fields as structural linguistics and cultural anthropology, and from thinkers such as Hegel and Kojève. Film studies, gender studies, Marxist studies were influenced directly by the psychoanalytic work of Lacan, by his formulations on the subject of language, on femininity, on the "look and the gaze." The application of these concepts to the study of Stalinism should be no more radical than their application to the study of Italian or German fascism, Chinese Communism, or American capitalism—indeed to any political system in which ideology acts as a force that shapes the subject without his or her knowledge, but which can nevertheless be read through cultural texts: through novels and films, through advertisements and laws.

This is not to say that in each case the answers will be the same—Jacques Derrida's famous formulation that psychoanalysis looks at texts but finds only itself; or Freud's own suggestion that each case opens easily to his "collection of pick-locks."³⁹ Rather, as Michel Foucault suggests in "Questions of Method": "What I say ought to be taken as 'propositions,' 'game openings,' where those who are interested are invited to join in; they are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left *en bloc*."⁴⁰ Here I provide a kind of "game opening," a different way of looking at and thinking about the culture of Stalinism. Indeed, many scholars have already successfully proven the usefulness of psychoanalysis for thinking together mass culture and ideology: Louis Althusser, Judith Butler, Kaja Silverman, and Slavoj Žižek, to name just a few. Moreover, the work of the Ljubljana School of Theoretical Psychoanalysis—whose participants include Mladen Dollar, Renata Salecl, and Žižek—has demonstrated the ways in which theoretical psychoanalysis maps onto the study of socialist and postsocialist culture. The work of these critics has been the next step in the intellectual project began by Freud and continued by Lacan, and it has been historically conditioned by "living socialism," by an understanding *from within* of the workings of Soviet power. Here I seek to provide a new insight into Stalinist culture, exploring the concepts of psychoanaly-

sis—bodily imago, mirror stage, the phallus, lack, and the big Other—to understand some of the means by which Stalinist ideology operated on its subjects, using theoretical psychoanalysis (and related theories of gender and sexuality) to read Stalinism and Stalinist socialist realism through an alternate lens.