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The Model of Cultural Identity Represented in Soviet Cinema from the 1930s to the Early 1950s (Stalin-era Cinema)

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Abstract

The article reflects the results of a comparative hermeneutic analysis of Soviet feature films from the 1930s to the early 1950s, including the study of cultural and historical contexts in order to consider their possible influence on the author's views, reflected in the specifics of the depiction of characters and reality, in the choice of plot motifs and other structural components of the film.

On the basis of the results of the hermeneutic analysis of Soviet feature films from the 1930s to the early 1950s, film images, types of film characters and plot motifs that reflect the prevailing "points of view" about cultural values and traditions and characterise stereotypical models of social interaction of characters in accordance with five types of cinematic discourse (interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural, mythological are described and systematized), the content of the structural-functional model of cultural identity that we have developed and that is represented in the national cinema.

In the interpersonal relations of characters in Soviet feature films of the 1930s and early 1950s, the following features peculiar to the Russian mentality are preserved: emotional openness, sincerity, trust and reciprocity. The characters possess signs of traditional Russian cultural identity: unselfishness, aspiration to collectivism and service to society. At the same time, the heroes of the films of this time lose their subjectivity. In the relations between society and nature represented by the cinema screen in the relations between society and nature depicted on the cinema screen of this period of a materialistic worldview.

Keywords: cinema, culture, identity, Soviet Union, 1930s – early 1950s, Stalin.

1. Introduction

In the 1930s, the foundations of socialist society were being laid. Questions of national self-consciousness became topical for the Soviet authorities. The development of international unity was presented to the party leadership as the most important condition for the formation of the Soviet people. Cinematography played a key role in shaping Soviet citizens' perceptions of fundamental Soviet values and their place in society.

The cinema of the Stalin era solved one of the most important socio-political tasks – the formation of the integrity of a multi-ethnic society living in the European, Eastern and Asian parts of the country, which occupied 1/6th of the Earth's landmass. Cinematographers reflected the only true and life-affirming view of the events of the revolution, civil war and modern times, showed and extolled the virtues of communism, created a sense of patriotism in the Soviet filmgoer and mobilised the country's population to build socialism. On the screen, the image of a production leader and labour hero was constructed, embodying for the audience a cherished dream and leading them into a new life.

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The interpersonal and social relationships depicted in the cinema of the 1930s and early 1950s orientated the audience within the space of the basic values of Stalinist culture and acted as a means of identification for them.

2. Materials and methods

The article reflects the results of a comparative hermeneutic analysis of Soviet feature films from the 1930s to the early 1950s, including the study of cultural and historical contexts in order to consider their possible influence on the author's views, reflected in the specifics of the depiction of characters and reality, in the choice of plot motifs and other structural components of the film.

The technique we used to hermeneutically analyse feature films in historical and cultural contexts is based on the developments of A. Fedorov ([Fedorov, 2015](#)), A. Silverblatt ([Silverblatt, 2001: 80-81](#)) and U. Eco ([Eco, 2005: 209](#)).

We interpret the structure of cultural identity as a multidimensional phenomenon that forms a set of discursive practices that reflect traditional and innovative forms and modes of relations between man and man, man and society, society and nature, constituting a system of functional blocks (which we formulate as interpersonal, social and being) that are ontologically linked to the processes of a person's search for his or her own place in society and the formation of his or her sense of cultural belonging.

On the basis of the results of the hermeneutic analysis of Soviet feature films of the 1930s – early 1950s, the film images, types of film characters and plot motifs that reflect the prevailing "points of view" about cultural values and traditions and characterise stereotypical models of social interaction between characters in accordance with the five types of cinematic discourse (interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural, mythological), which constitute the content of the different types of cinematic discourse (interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural, mythological), are identified. The five types of cinematic discourse (interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural, mythological) that constitute the content of the different types of cinematic discourse (interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural, mythological) were described and systematised.

3. Discussion

To date, the problem of cultural identity representation in the Soviet art cinema of the 1930s and early 1950s has not been considered in scientific research. At the same time, however, it has been indirectly touched upon by authors analysing issues related to the reflection and construction of socio-cultural reality by Soviet cinema of the Stalinist era. Within the framework of this direction, they have carried out research on the following topics:

- T. Dashkova, V. Solovieva and T. Khuzina examine the specific features of Stalinist cinema's depiction of the everyday life of Soviet citizens. The authors identify two characteristic features. In the 1930s, positive characters lived in the name of an idea, so they did not strive to arrange their ascetic life. Attention to household items and clothes was considered a sign of moral decay ([Dashkova, 2013; Khuzina, 2006; Solovieva, 2017](#)). However, this view was relevant until the mid-1940s, when cinema began to construct the image of a scientist living in luxurious flats with spacious rooms and expensive furniture. "Affluent" furnishings began to be presented as a sign of being economical rather than bourgeois as it was before ([Dashkova, 2013; Solovieva, 2017](#));

- A. Chernilovsky, analysing the content of Soviet films of the 1930s about the future war with fascism, shows how cinematographers created images of external and internal enemies (traitors – former kulaks, White Guards) and images of Soviet soldiers, courageous, self-sacrificing and humane towards the peaceful population of the enemy country ([Chernilovsky, 2017](#));

- A. Zyablikov conducts a historiographical analysis of the problem of the construction of social reality by means of cinema and the formation of socio-cultural stereotypes that determined the worldview of the "new man". In his opinion, the creative process of cinematographers took place under the sign of deconstruction of existing social practices and the search for images combining utopia and real life ([Zyablikov, 2022](#));

- E. Volkov analyses the role of religious images and archetypes (archetypes of the martyr) in the depiction of the Civil War on the Soviet cinema screen of the pre-war years. He notes the peculiar integration of traditional religious and new Soviet consciousness. In his opinion, the image of the enemy embodied the devilish forces opposed by the Bolsheviks, who represented the "saints"

of the new world of social justice (Volkov, 2009). G. Morozova investigates the problem of actualising the creation of the image of a new hero who embodies the "light" elemental forces or who acquires them in the process of undergoing a kind of "rite of passage" – the transition from the "old" world to the "new" one (Morozova, 2008);

- E. Aristova conducts a philosophical analysis of the construction of the image of collectivisation by Stalinist cinema as a process of creating a myth of a socialist state whose population lives in abundance and prosperity (Aristova, 2021);

- A. Neminushchy, S. Smagina and O. Khloponina consider the semantics of the visual category of femininity, which is characterised by wide variability (Neminushchy, 2016). Khloponina examine the semantics of the visual category of femininity, which is characterised by wide variability (Neminushchy, 2016), describe the ideal of a Soviet woman who challenges the old way of life and declares her equality with men (Smagina, 2017), identifies the main female types (heroic, maternal and femme fatale) that form the system of myths-ideologemes represented in the Soviet cinema of the 1930s (Khloponina, 2017).

- N. Khrenov provides a comprehensive characterisation of the ways in which collective identity is formed through cinema in the 1930s, describing the socio-cultural functions of Soviet cinema as the embodiment on screen of the power to shape social ideals and values (Khrenov, 2013).

- V. Kolotaev analyses the problem of the emergence of a model of personality with rejected subjectivity in the process of changing paradigms of Soviet culture (the revolutionary-historical paradigm was replaced by the party paradigm). The author describes how the characters of the Soviet cinema of the Stalinist era are forced to delegate the active beginning to the authoritative Other, the conductor of political power (Kolotaev, 2018).

4. Results

Peculiarities of the historical period of feature film creation

The need to develop industry, agriculture and other spheres of the economy, which emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, posed serious challenges to the country's leadership. For their efficient solution, the authorities established plans for a five-year period, the so-called "five-year plans". According to the officials' reports, they were fulfilled ahead of schedule and exceeded the production volume, but in reality many plans were not realised.

Collectivization and industrialization carried out from the late 1920s as part of the first "five-year plan" were accompanied by mass repression of peasants (arrests, deportations, exiles, and shootings), which caused anti-government uprisings of villagers. Already in the early 1930s, collectivization was completed, but its consequence was a mass famine that swept across vast rural areas of the Ukrainian SSR and RSFSR in 1932-1933. According to various estimates, from 5 to 7 million people became its victims.

In the second five-year period (1933-1937) the level of repression decreased significantly. A landmark phenomenon of this period was the emergence of the Stakhanov's movement. Originating in the mining industry, it spread rapidly in production and agricultural spheres and contributed to a significant acceleration of production rates by involving workers in socialist competitions. Peasants were allowed to run private subsidiary farms to meet their own food needs and to sell some of their produce on the market. Political and economic reforms were carried out to improve the living standards of the working class.

Significant achievements of the 1930s, symbolising the country's economic and political

Important achievements of the 1930s, symbolising the country's economic and political power, were the "great constructions of communism" (the Baikal-Amur main line, the Belomorkanal, the Dneproges, the Moscow Metro) and the "great Soviet flights" (the flight of V. Chkalov's crew over the North Pole to America). The achievement of shocking feats was the result of the authorities' desire to "catch up and overtake" the economically developed countries. However, they were achieved not so much by the efforts of enthusiasts as by the mass forced labour of countless prisoners.

In 1937-1938, mass repression and shootings ("The Great Terror") swept the country. The fight against "anti-Soviet elements" (former members of opposition parties (Mensheviks, SRs), "kulaks" and entrepreneurs) and "enemies of the people" was widespread. They were also to be found among filmmakers. In 1938, for example, the cameraman V. Nielsen and the head of the Main Directorate of the Film and Photographic Industry B. Shumyatsky were shot. More than a million ordinary citizens fell victim to the terror.

In 1936, Hitler concluded treaties with Italy (the "Berlin Agreement", which brought Germany closer to Italy in military and economic terms) and Japan (the "Anti-Comintern Pact", aimed against the spread of communist ideology), which led to the threat of a military invasion of the USSR. In August 1939, a non-aggression pact with Germany was signed, which was in force until 22 June 1941, the beginning of the Great Patriotic War (which ended on 9 May 1945). During the war, the Nazis occupied Soviet territories, carried out mass shootings of civilians, destroyed farms and industrial enterprises, millions of inhabitants were evacuated to the rear areas, and many large factories were reoriented to the production of military products.

A landmark event of the war years was Stalin's meeting with the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church (4th September 1943), where they discussed the opening of churches, theological educational institutions, and the publication of the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate. Already at the end of November 1943, the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On the order of opening churches" was issued. Many repressed priests were released from prisons. During the war years, the Church was involved in patriotic activities, providing material support for soldiers and their families, and caring for homeless children.

Germany capitulated on 7th May 1945. The war claimed tens of millions of lives, destroyed thousands of villages and towns, collective farms and factories. In the first post-war years, many collective farms and factories went bankrupt, livestock numbers and crop yields fell markedly. Millions of teenagers were forced to work in the fields and factories to earn a living for themselves and their younger brothers and sisters. The authorities faced the urgent task of bringing the country out of the crisis. In March 1946, a five-year plan (the fourth "Five-Year Plan") was adopted to restore, develop and modernise the national economy and industry. The most significant results were achieved in the construction and scientific and technical spheres. Using forced labour of prisoners, roads, bridges and industrial enterprises were built in the country. In 1949, the first Soviet atomic bomb was tested, and in 1954 the world's first nuclear power station was opened.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a policy of cultural isolation was adopted. Cultural and artistic workers were obliged to propagandise the superiority of the Soviet Union in the socio-cultural and scientific-technical spheres. Intellectuals who did not follow the "general line" of the Party were accused of "low worship of the West", deprived of their jobs and exiled to camps (Gulag). This was the country's "struggle against cosmopolitanism".

The Stalin era ended with the death of the leader on 5th March 1953.

The influence of historical events on the process of creating Soviet feature films of the 1930s – early 1950s

In the 1930s, censorship in cinema reached its peak. Every kind of critique of everyday life and the state of social and political affairs was excluded, and thematic planning was introduced. Cinematographers were losing their creative independence and the opportunity to experiment with form, as they had in the 1920s. The country fought against formalism (from April 1932, "literary and artistic organisations" began to be united in order to strengthen control). Now socialist realism, showing and extolling the virtues of communism, became the main direction and method of creative activity, reflecting the only true and life-affirming view of the events of the revolution, the civil war and the present.

In the history of the USSR, the early 1930s was the period of the end of collectivisation. Its results were a failure: the number of livestock was reduced, crop yields fell, and villagers starved en masse (1932–1932). Meanwhile, the cinema portrayed a very different reality. The screen showed a beautiful and fairy-tale village drowning in abundance. For example, in the film by A. Medvedkin *Miracle Woman* milkmaids manage to achieve incredibly high performance. The young heroes of the film are neat and clean (dressed in snow-white Ukrainian vyshyvanki), genuine and selfless, do not burn in the fire and easily subdue rampaging cattle.

The inconsistency of the screen image with the experience of rural audiences, who were experiencing hunger and poverty, gave rise to a belief in the existence of secret enemies preventing the achievement of national welfare and the victory of socialism (interestingly, the ideal image of social life depicted in Stalinist cinema was constructed in the present, not the future, as was the case in the 1920s), and had quite definite Moscow localisations: VDNKh (called VSKhV in Stalin's time), Red Square, the Moscow Metro, and Gorky Park). Filmmakers were forced to glorify the brutal suppression of dissenters from different strata of the population: peasants, workers, and employees. Bolshevik violence during the revolutions and civil war was presented on the cinema screen as a necessary measure. "F. Ermler's talented film drama *The Great Citizen* (1937) ...

M. Romm's film *Lenin in 1918* (1939) also played its sad role in justifying the Great Terror of 1937-1938" (Zyablikov, 2017: 45).

The Soviet cinema of the 1930s reflected the theme of industrialisation. Films about the Stakhanov's movement were released (*Wonder Woman* (1936), *Big Life* (1939), *Night in September* (1939), etc.). Enemies and saboteurs prevent the screen heroes from setting records, but the wise leaders of the local party organs come to their aid in time. The heroes do not show personal initiative. They only selflessly fulfil their duty, serving the motherland faithfully and faithfully. The authors deliberately portrayed feelings of collectivism and involvement in the common cause of the development of a large country.

The characters in the films of the Stalin era were imbued with the spirit of industrialization. The image of a production leader and labor hero became a cherished dream for them, leading them into a new life. For example, the picture by G. Alexandrov *Bright Path* (1940) tells the story of a girl who goes from an illiterate housekeeper to an engineer of textile production, awarded the Order of Lenin. Filmed in fairy-tale style, the film was intended to evoke feelings of patriotism in the audience and mobilise the country's population to build socialism.

Stalin's reconstruction of Moscow, which began in the 1930s, was reflected on the cinema screen. A. Medvedkin's film *New Moscow* (1938) shows scenes of the destruction of buildings and the movement of large apartment blocks in space, along with the residents enthusiastically looking out of the windows. The appearance of Moscow is changing so quickly that the local artist does not have time to capture it in his paintings. In the painting by T. Lukashevich *Podkidysh* (1939) Moscow already appears as a utopian peaceful city with majestically towering buildings in the style of Stalin's Empire, with wide avenues on which people are endlessly moving, driving and honking cars.

The threat of a German attack on the USSR in the second half of the 1930s necessitated the creation of patriotic films in order to form the Soviet people's image of the military enemy, the feeling of hatred towards it and the belief in a quick and easy victory. The heroes of these films were characters from Russian history of pre-Petrine times. According to the writer K. Simonov, Stalin "took a ready-made figure in history, which could be utilitarian useful from the point of view of the modern ideological struggle. This can be traced back to the figures he put forward for cinema: *Alexander Nevsky*, *Suvorov*, *Kutuzov*, *Ushakov*, *Nakhimov*" (Simonov, 1990: 165).

In 1937-1938, the Soviet box office released a film by V. Petrov's film *Peter the First*. The First Emperor of All Russia (actor N. Simonov) appeared on the screen as a reformer, leader and people's commander with a strong and indomitable character. Especially inspiring look his monologues addressed to his army: "... Warriors of Russia, this formidable hour must decide the fate of the Fatherland! Do not think that you are fighting for Peter, but for the state handed over to Peter, for your people, for the Fatherland – forward! "

In 1938, Soviet viewers saw the painting by S. Eisenstein *Alexander Nevsky*. The film clearly identifies an external enemy – Nazi Germany. Although the historical events and the time of the film's release were separated by almost seven centuries, the plot has clear parallels and many references to Hitler's troops: the shape of helmets, swastikas, emblems on flags, and so on. Addressing the German prisoners, Nevsky utters the famous phrase: "But if anyone comes to us with a sword, he will die by the sword! "

In the pre-war year the film by V. Pudovkin and M. Doller *Suvorov* was released. Pudovkin and M. Doller's film *Suvorov*. The film tells about the people's commander who sincerely believes in his army. The soldiers carry him in their arms. Addressing them, Suvorov pronounces such words: "My heroes, Glory to you, Glory!...", "I have no doubt in the greatest indestructible bravery of my wonder-great heroes!". The film emphasises his closeness to the people and his religiosity. He hugs and kisses the soldiers, is baptised, and says that he will answer for his mistakes "before God".

The films of the war period were designed to show the horrors of the fascist invaders' massacres of civilians and the heroism of the Soviet people. The image of a truly popular war was created on the screen. Everyone took part in it: children, women, old people. In the film by M. Donskoy *Rainbow* (1943), a mother sacrifices herself and her own newborn baby, keeping secret the location of partisans. A ten-year-old boy is killed by the Nazis for trying to take bread to a pregnant woman. Seeing Soviet warplanes flying through the sky, the locals baptise and bow down. In the episode with the interrogation of the traitor (a former "kulak") behind the backs of Soviet soldiers hang icons, a local resident, pointing to the icon of the Mother of God with the Child says to him: "You don't touch God. This is not your God! This is our God! Our God! He is not for sale to

the Germans...". Obviously, such an appeal to the religious memory of the people was the result of a change of political course in the attitude towards the Orthodox religion.

The post-war period (1943–1953) has been called the era of "little films" (the number of feature films made per year decreased to 9 (in 1951). Its distinctive features are: the struggle against cosmopolitanism, screen adaptations of biographies of composers, writers, and scientists embodying the great achievements of the Soviet people (*Academician Ivan Pavlov* (1949), *Alexander Popov* (1949), *Spring* (1947), *In the Name of Life* (1946), *Glinka* (1946), Michurin (1948), *Court of Honour* (1948), etc.), lacquering, and idealisation of the biographies of composers, writers, and scientists embodying the great achievements of the Soviet people), varnishing and idealisation of reality (*The Kuban Cossacks* (1949), *Tale of the Land of Siberia* (1947), etc.), the release of so-called "trophy" films taken from Germany into mass Soviet distribution, and the creation of an image of a war won thanks to the wise leadership of Stalin (*The Fall of Berlin* (1949), *The Battle of Stalingrad* (1949), etc.).

Ideology, worldview of feature film authors in the socio-cultural context

Stalin, the country's chief censor, set the worldview guidelines for filmmakers. He "not only gave advice to directors, but also provided the cinema with development programmes" (Khrenov, 2006: 391). Films whose content was found to deviate from ideological norms were banned at the stage of filming and their authors were punished.

On the Soviet screen of the 1930s, the struggle against internal enemies – mainly bourgeoisie and kulaks – continued. Many filmmakers used the story of the confrontation between honest, hard-working peasants and workers and self-serving and unscrupulous lower and middle management as a basis for the plot. For example, in the film by B. Barnett's film *Night in September* (1939), the mine manager makes various attempts to disrupt the birth of the Stakhanov's movement, but the mine's parttorg comes to the rescue and manages to expose him.

One of the characteristic features of Soviet cinema of the pre-war decade was the authors' appeal to cultural memory and the historical past. During this period, "directors so actively borrowed folklore motifs and used them in their films that a contradiction arose between historical truth and fairy-tale clichés" (Khrenov, 2006: 390). Folklore acted as a source for the creation of sublime heroic images, as if copied from the pages of folk bylinas and fairy tales. In the traditional for Russian folklore struggle between good and evil on the cinema screen, characters are reincarnated as warriors who do not know fear, fatigue and defeat. Such, for example, was the folk hero Chapayev, a character from the film of the same name, who dies in the 1934 film and is "resurrected" in the 1941 short film (*Chapayev is with us*).

The Soviet cinema of the Stalin era not only constructed an image of reality, but also reflected it. The genre conventionality of feature films concealed the features of a living national character. In the atmosphere of fairground noise and fun in the musical films of I. Pyryev (*Tractor drivers* (1939), *Pig farm woman and Shepherd* (1941), *Kuban Cossacks* (1949), etc.) demonstrates the abundance and achievements of labor collectives, and against the background of vast fields and clear skies – the work of shepherds, farmers, mowers, and tractor drivers. In them, the director expresses the properties of the Russian soul: collective labor, unity with nature, love for the vastness.

In the post-war period, the image of a scientist dedicated to the motherland and dreaming of the Soviet Union's victory in the struggle against the West appeared on screen. His distinct feature was a well-established life (expensive furnishings and exquisite furniture, spacious rooms, a company car, etc.), interpreted as a reward for the scientist's labour. For example, in the painting *Spring* (1947) by G. Alexandrov, the protagonist lives in a spacious flat, her wardrobe is filled with luxurious evening dresses and furs, and a housekeeper keeps order.

The worldview of the people of the world depicted in Soviet feature films of the 1930s and early 1950s

Soviet cinema, which became sound, continued the tradition of reflecting the class struggle that had been established in post-revolutionary films. However, at the new stage, the contrast between the world of the idle "bourgeois" and the ascetic world of the "new man" led to the emergence of other ways and forms of depiction. For example, in G. Alexandrov's film *The Merry Boys* (1934), the main characters belong to different cultures. "Aristocratic" culture embodies elegant and haughty Elena and her mother, folk - simple and sincere housekeeper Anyuta and cheerful shepherd Kostya Potekhin. Anyuta and Kostya, thanks to their talent, achieve incredible success – they perform in the Music Hall in Moscow. Such an ending could not have happened in

the Soviet cinema of the 1920s, which glorified the struggle for social justice and the labour exploits of workers and peasants.

The feature films of the 1930s and early 1950s depict a utopian reality that became the embodiment of the people's dream. In mass and triumphant songs, characters sing of a world of abundance and prosperity, which became an expression of the true ideal in the pursuit of which the Soviet audience was supposed to see the meaning of life.

The behaviour of characters in Stalin-era feature films is guided by a sense of duty to society and the state. They are characterised by progressive views and a desire to participate in socialist construction. From the capital and other major cities they go to the remote provinces to build new industrial plants, power plants and cities. The cinema screen portrays their trips as romantic adventures with many curious and comical situations.

Sincere faith in the bright future of their country and a sense of duty put the characters on the path of transformation. For example, the heroine of the film by G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg *Odna* (1931) from the capital goes to work in the Altai village, where she undergoes harsh trials, starves, is seriously ill. Faced with a frightening reality, she does not retreat, but begins to run the household and together with the locals organises the fight against the "kulak". As a result, Altai becomes her native land.

Depicting the world of feature films

Socialist Realism turned ideology into culture. Ideology was not only embodied in signs and symbols, but also shaped the image of the world. The cinema screen of the 1930s - early 1950s depicted the reality of the desired present, as if in an instant it appeared after the slogan uttered by Stalin: "Life became better, life became merrier" (the slogan was voiced in Stalin's speech in November 1935 at the First All-Union Meeting of Stakhanovites). The unbridled gaiety in G. Alexandrov's films, the rural abundance in I. Pyryev's films, the new Moscow in A. Medvedkin's films – all this was a figment of the author's imagination and had almost nothing to do with the reality of reality.

Moscow in the 1930s was really transforming. High-rise buildings with columns, granite ground floors, marble and bronze sculptures in the so-called Stalinist style ("Stalin Empire") appeared on its streets. The furnishings in the offices of local leaders also changed. It was characterised by lacquered parquet floors, massive doors with copper handles, high ceilings with stucco, "tables with paperweights, ashtrays, inkwells, metal pencil holders, bronze and plaster statuettes, busts of leaders... – all this was emphasised monumental and static" (Khuzina, 2006: 324).

Collectivity became a symbol of the new socialist life, in which universal physical labour served as the main measure of human happiness. In the shots, filmed from an overhead perspective, against a background of wide expanses flooded with sunlight, the masses of workers and peasants labour with great enthusiasm: sowing bread, harvesting crops, building new cities. They "create sacred space or a new cosmos" (Khrenov, 2006: 339).

Everything changes with the outbreak of war. The films of 1941–1945 create an image of fascism, which embodies a system that completely subjugates man, depriving him of his soul. In the confrontation with it, the true human essence is revealed – the personal, free and indomitable beginning in man. For example, in M. Donskoy's film *Rainbow* (1943), there are evangelical allusions as evidence of the ever-living true humanity of the characters who endure incredible agony and sacrifice themselves. In the war films of the Stalin era, a turn to the Orthodox faith is noticeable. In the film by F. Ermler *She Defends the Motherland* (1943) peasant women evacuate from their native village, carrying icons of the Virgin Mary in their hands. In the film by V. Pudovkin and D. Vasilyev *In the Name of the Motherland* (1943) in the frame of the search behind the back of a German soldier on the wall hangs an icon of the Virgin Mary. In *the Big Land* (1944) by S. Gerasimov elderly woman baptised when the reproducer reported on the defeat of the Nazis near Moscow.

Films of the second half of the 1940s (*The Scout's Feat* (1947), *Private Alexander Matrosov* (1947), *The Fall of Berlin* (1949), *The Battle of Stalingrad* (1949), etc.) created images of an insidious and cruel enemy ruled by caricatured and humorless German leaders, and of the heroic Soviet people inseparably linked to the main creator of victory – Stalin. Alongside authentic films about the war, there were films about peaceful working life, full of optimism (*Spring* (1947), *Tale of the Land of Siberia* (1947), *The Kuban Cossacks* (1949), etc.), but excessively embellishing and glossing over reality.

Narrative structure and techniques in Soviet feature films of the 1930s – 1950s

Place and time of action. Most films of the Stalinist era tell about contemporary events and construct an image of the present day. Historical and biographical films create an image of past epochs: Alexander Nevsky, Peter the Great, Paul I.

Characteristic furnishings and everyday objects. Household furnishings of peasants and workers are simple and ascetic. In their homes are light and clean rooms, on the tables are glass decanters or glasses of water - signs of moral purity. There are books on the shelves – a sign of "the most reading country". In films about composers and scientists of the second half of the 1940s, luxurious furnishings, expensive furniture and furnishings.

Genre modifications: musical comedy, musical (films by G. Aleksandrov, I. Pyryev create an illusory image of the composers and scientists of the second half of the 1940s). Piryev's films create an illusory image of a utopian world), comedy (films of the comedy genre mock the bourgeoisie, lazy people, white Guards), war film (war films depict the cruelty of the Nazis and the heroism of Soviet soldiers), historical and biographical film (construct the myth of the creation of the Soviet state, based on the images of martyrs who gained immortality), drama (dramatic films tell the story of the confrontation between the Red Army and the White Guards, which takes on a religious character, or of the transformation of a simple peasant and worker who seeks justice and deserved reward), melodrama (melodramatic films reveal the idea that toilers who have travelled the path of moral perfection become worthy of love).

Stereotypical techniques of depicting reality:

Character typology:

– *The social status and profession* of the majority of positive characters in films belong to the working class, peasants, soldiers, and scientists. The negative characters are frequently portrayed as former members of the bourgeoisie and "kulaks".

– *Marital status of the character:* more often the marital status is not defined but many films depict single men and women who discover their "other half" in the finale.

– *appearance, clothing, physique of the characters, their character traits.* Positive characters are modestly dressed, strong, striving to achieve communist ideas. Their main character traits include: energy, initiative, determination, perseverance, courage, fighting spirit, self-confidence, optimism, bravery, selflessness, diligence. Women's screen images combine masculinity, diligence, heroism and beauty of a "simple girl" (appealing to traditional common people's ideas of beauty) elegance, attractiveness.

Negative characters are rude, deceitful, self-serving, with a repulsive appearance. They are characterised by laziness, greed, avarice, and a desire for sabotage against the workers' collectives. Characters with an intellectual and arrogant appearance (emphasising their non-proletarian origin) play the roles of bourgeois, spies, traitors - "enemies of the people".

The model of cultural identity represented in the Soviet cinema of the 1930s – early 1950s.

The model of cultural identity represented by Soviet cinema of the 1930s and early 1950s presented below includes five types of cinematic discourse: interpersonal, artistic-aesthetic, religious-ideological, historical-cultural and mythological.

Interpersonal type of cinematographic discourse

The characters' communication displays the features peculiar to the Russian mentality: emotional openness, sincerity, attitude to trust and reciprocity. In communication with close people, they actively gesture, pat another character on the shoulder, address him using diminutive and affectionate forms: "mate", "lad", Anyuta, Dunya, etc. When communicating with an unfamiliar person, they use the address "comrade", which became a key address in the speech of Soviet people.

In wartime films, soldiers in the dugout in a warm and friendly atmosphere share intimate memories and dreams of everyday family life (there was no trench truth in the films of this period).

In many films, intimate-personal relationships are deprived of any privacy. Heroes confess their love in an official setting, surrounded by a large number of little or no strangers.

Artistic and aesthetic type of cinematic discourse

The genre of musical comedy, in which the films of G. Alexandrov and I. Pyryev were shot, reveals the properties of Russian cultural identity: nationality, love of space, and freedom-loving nature. The choral, lyrical, and extended folk songs (*My Native Land is Wide, Siberia is a Land of Sprawling Spaces, Song about the Volga*, etc.) performed in their films (*Circus* (1936), *Volga-Volga* (1938), *Tale of the Siberian Land* (1947), *Kuban Cossacks* (1949), etc.) are motivated by the unity and direct connection between man and nature. Singing characters are portrayed against the background of Russian expanses, shot in panoramic close-ups.

Soviet cinema of the Stalinist era idealises the everyday life of the Soviet people. The houses and flats of the characters show clean, bright windows and furniture, flowers on the table and windowsill, white tablecloths. All of this was a sign of an elevated, morally pure inner world.

In the 1930s, monumental images of Soviet culture ("Stalinist style") emerge: tall buildings with columns and granite plinths, in offices and flats, massive wooden furniture, and high ceilings. On the one hand, this symbolises stability, approaching the ideal of socialist construction, and on the other, the sacralization of power.

Religious-ideological type of film discourse

The Bolsheviks who came to power sought to replace religion with ideology. The struggle against the past ("the old"), which they led, had a pronounced anti-religious character. Meanwhile, in the Soviet cinema of the 1930s and early 1950s, the relation between ideology and religion was contradictory.

In the 1930s, Stalinist cinema skillfully cultivated the image of the fulfilled popular dream of justice and truth, encouraged blind faith in the tenets of the "red religion", in its preachers and primary teachers (Zyablikov, 2017: 47). The neighbourhood of Lenin's portrait with an icon in G. Aleksandrov's film *Svetly Put* (1940) did not embarrass anyone. The function of heavenly forces was assumed by the leader of the revolution, "sublimating the people's ideas about holy fathers and the supreme Providence" (Zyablikov, 2017: 43). In the film *Aerograd* (1935), the way of life of the Old Believers is contrasted with life in a new city of the future – Aerograd, built on the border of water and earth elements, symbolising "the utopian world of fairy-tale equality, fraternity, abundance and immortality recreated by the cinema of the 1930s" (Khrenov, 2006: 326-327).

By the early 1940s, the relationship between ideology and religion began to change. On the cinema screen, images of believers appear, blessing themselves and others with the sign of the cross. In the homes of Soviet residents, "red corners" with icons of saints are shown. And in the film by M. Donskoy *Rainbow* (1943), the Orthodox faith is openly defended. In one episode, the old man Ohabko shouts at the traitor, "You don't touch God. This isn't your God! This is our God...."

Historical and cultural type of cinematic discourse

In the early 1930s, socialist realism was asserted as the only "correct" method to be used by all artists. Glorification of the Soviet Union's achievements, exaltation of its leadership, and idealisation of reality became necessary genre conventions, without which no work of art could have the right to life. Soviet cinema in those years began to actively construct an image of a world in which social justice and class equality had been achieved, and workers and peasants worked selflessly in the fields, factories and plants. Moscow on the cinema screen becomes the embodiment of the ideal of a socialist bright future and a sacred symbol of the unshakeable and all-encompassing power of the "father of nations".

In the 1940s, with the outbreak of war, screen images of everyday life became more lifelike. The suffering and pain of the Soviet people was portrayed with real authenticity. Cinematographers endeavored to convey truly human feelings, increasingly acquiring a religious tinge.

In the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s, the film screen created the cult of the scientist who faithfully served his homeland and made scientific discoveries faster than his foreign competitors. Meanwhile, the cinematographers were constructing the image of an intellectual traitor, going over to the side of external enemies. This corresponded to the political situation: from 1948 to 1953, the Soviet Union conducted an ideological campaign to fight cosmopolitans – intellectuals oriented towards Western values. A good illustration of these events is the painting by A. Rohm's *The Court of Honour* (1948).

A mythological type of cinematic discourse

Stalinist cinema constructed four mythologems: abundance of food and goods, love as a reward for the worthy, sacred power, and nationality.

The mythologem "abundance of products and goods" In I. Pyryev's musical melodramas like *The Pig farm woman and the Shepherd* (1941) and *The Kuban Cossacks* (1949) where the characters in choral songs laud the Soviet way of life against the backdrop of sprawling wheat fields and fairs with full stalls. In the comedy G. Alexandrov *Spring* (1947), the heroine – a distinguished scientist, Nikitina (L. Orlova) – lives in a luxurious flat, wears expensive evening dresses and fur coats, and drives a private car.

The mythologem "love is a reward for the worthy" is present. In Soviet films of the Stalin era, the union of the romantic heroes, a man and a woman, only becomes achievable in the final act, when they have traveled a challenging labour path, transformed into the embodiment of moral purity and strength of the human spirit.

The mythologeme of "sacral power". In the 1930s, cinema demythologised the figure of Lenin, whilst in the 1940s it sacralised the figure of Stalin. For example, in M. Romm's famous duology *Lenin in October* (1937) and *Lenin in 1918* (1939) and S. Yutkevich's film *Man with a Gun* (1938), the "genius of the proletarian revolution" takes him out of the hermetic space of the party into the "light of God" of the masses, the crowd. There is an almost folkloric canvassing of Vladimir Ilyich's image" (Zyablikov, 2017: 42). In M. Chiaurelli's film epic *The Fall of Berlin* (1949), the idea of the perfection of Stalin's political management of the troops is broadcast, and in the final scene he descends by aeroplane from the sky to the countless crowd, his monumental figure in a white tunic is surrounded by the victorious people, on whose behalf a woman confesses her love to him.

The mythologeme of "peoplehood". In I. Pyryev's film *Tale of the Siberian Land* (1947), the protagonist, pianist Andrei Balashov, having lost faith in his talent, leaves for the Arctic Circle, where folk wisdom, song and warm communication with ordinary workers reveal to him the source of his creative powers. Inspired by the strength and heroism of the Siberians, he writes a symphony that is universally acclaimed.

5. Conclusion

In the 1930s-1950s in the Soviet Union, Communist ideology was not only embodied in signs and symbols, but also shaped the image of the world. The forms of relations between person to person (the interpersonal functional block), person to society (the social functional block), and society to nature (the existential functional block), as portrayed by the cinema of this time, became a reflection of a cultural identity that combined traditional and new Soviet forms of worldview and attitudes.

The interpersonal relations of characters in Soviet feature films of the 1930s and early 1950s retain the features peculiar to the Russian mentality: emotional openness, sincerity, trust and reciprocity. When communicating with close people, they share intimate memories and dreams of everyday family life, actively gesticulate, pat the other character on the shoulder, and address him using diminutive and affectionate forms: "friend", "lad", Anyuta, Dunya, etc. When communicating with an unfamiliar person, they use the address "comrade", which became a key address in the speech of Soviet people.

In many films, intimate personal relationships are deprived of any privacy. Heroes confess their love in an official setting, surrounded by a large number of strangers or few at most.

Stalinist cinema both reflected and constructed new forms of relations between man and society. Characters have signs of traditional Russian cultural identity, such as selflessness, aspiration for collectivism, and service to society. At the same time, the heroes of films from this era lose their subjectivity. Now the role of the subject is played by the state, represented by its representatives – officials of various levels. They are the ones to make decisions, not the workers, whose duty becomes selfless service to the Party and the country.

The relationship between society and nature depicted on the cinema screen in this period manifests the attitudes of a materialist worldview. Since the 1930s, the Soviet cinema screen has been portraying the image of the Man-actor. The winged phrase of the famous Russian biologist I. Michurin became the guide to his action: "We cannot wait for favours from nature; it is our task to take them from it". This was reflected in screen forms. There appeared superb general plans of Russian expanses, shot from the upper angle, reflecting the exalted worldview of the conqueror of nature. At the same time, realistic landscapes close to the Russian soul appeared on the screen, reminding of the canvases of V. Polenov and I. Shishkin.

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