INHERITED DISCOURSE: STALINIST TROPES IN THAW LITERATURE AND CINEMA

In his monograph, Alexander Prokhorov that while Thaw cultural producers believed that they had abandoned Stalinist cultural practices, their works continued to generate, in revised form, the major tropes of Stalinist culture: the positive hero, and family and war tropes. Although the cultural Thaw of the 1950s and 60s embraced new values, it merely reworked Stalinist artistic and ideological practices. On the basis of literary and cinematic texts, the author examines how these two media reinstantiated the fundamental tropes of Stalinist culture.

In the first two chapters, the author discusses approaches to Thaw literature and film in Western and Russo-Soviet scholarship, and his methodology, which is best defined as cultural semiotics. Chapter three discusses the instantiations of the positive hero in Thaw literature and film. As case studies the author adduces Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) and Grigorii Kozintsev's film adaptation of *Hamlet* (1964). Though both texts are considered "beyond" classical socialist realist aesthetics, the author contends that they feed on major Stalinist tropes and dialogize and elaborate the Stalinist canon. The positive hero remains the major trope for constructing individual, and, above all, masculine, identity. The narrative of maturation into true consciousness remains central for the Thaw novel and film. The fact that the protagonists are insistently non-Soviet does not significantly alter discursive practices of Soviet culture and sooner reflects the interests of the intelligentsia who negotiated intellectual capital with the party elite.

The fourth chapter examines how Thaw culture redefines the family and war tropes in trench prose and film melodrama. Whereas the family trope is central for constructing Soviet communal identity, the war trope represents the culture's mode of existence, casting Soviet values in confrontation with their ideological "opponents": Non-Soviet natural laws, the elemental forces of market economy, and the spontaneous and irrational forces of human nature. Trench prose emerged as an unheroic and antimonumental way of representing the Great Patriotic War in response to the bombast of its Stalin era representations. Viktor Nekrasov's novel In the *Trenches of Stalingrad* (1947)—a model of trench prose—was published before Stalin's death under the title Stalingrad and received the Stalin Prize. Thaw renditions of fundamental tropes were not completely alien to earlier Soviet culture: the new variants of the tropes stem from those established during the 1930s and 40s.

The central cinematic genre of the Thaw was family melodrama. My analysis of an exemplar of this genre focuses on Mikhail Kalatozov's *Cranes Are Flying* (1957) recycling the family and war tropes in a story of betrayal and redemption. National identity loses its monumental and patriarchal overtones and is transferred to the more tra-

ditional feminine figure, who functions as a symbol of Russia. The female protagonist, Veronika, incarnates in her life-narrative the sufferings and salvation of the nation.

The fifth chapter treats the ironic reworkings of the major tropes in Soviet culture of the 1960s. Prokhorov's case studies consist of Vasilii Aksenov's short novel *Ticket to the Stars* (1961) and El'dar Riazanov's film *Beware of a Car* (1966). Irony, as one of the major taboos of socialist realism, was absent during Stalinism and early Thaw culture but became an increasingly dominant mode of late Soviet "aesthetics." The author examines each text from the viewpoint of its inner system of values and in the context of the era's cultural politics.

Thus, the book traces the evolution of Stalinist cultural tropes in literature and film of the Thaw: from the project of redefining them to the project of distancing from them. While the majority of writers on the period argue the radical departure of Thaw producers from the Stalinist cultural practices, Prokhorov argues for the understanding of the Thaw as the period sharing basic cultural tropes with Stalinism while their specific instantiations in various modes of cultural production became different due to the changes in cultural capital, technologies, and values.