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An Inexpiable Debt: Stalinist Cinema, Biopolitics and the Discourse of Happiness[1]

'Something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history'.

Jacques Lacan[2]

'But can [dreams] really have a limit? How can one stop? As soon as one dream is realised, a new one appears', reasoned a young working mother in 'A Conversation about Happiness' on the pages of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in 1949. Peppering her discussion with references to the stock paradigms of Soviet self-sacrifice, including Nikolai Ostrovskii and Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia, the author conceptualised *schast'e* as a process of continually striving and struggling to prove 'useful' to the motherland. Zoia's perpetually proud and serene appearance in photographs struck her as an immortal testament to the partisan's words, 'happiness is to die for one's people'. She proceeded to recollect a memorable encounter with another 'happy person' – a frontline nurse who risked her life transporting the wounded during the days of the Great Patriotic War. The image of her face, ravaged by war yet still bearing a bright smile, was vividly imprinted in the author's memory as 'the face of a person who has fulfilled her duty (*svoi dolg*)'.[3]

The symbiosis of 'happiness' and 'duty' in Stalinist discourse was well established by the time of this article's publication in 1949. The Stalinist rhetoric of life becoming 'better and happier', part of a mid-1930s cultural shift that witnessed the appearance of affordable luxuries in Soviet stores, the promotion of personal pleasure in Soviet advertising, and a new attention to festivity and celebration, did not simply spell an abandonment of an earlier, revolutionary, emphasis on self-abnegation.[4] The Stalin Constitution's proclamation that the

right to a cultured and prosperous life had been won not only aimed to stir feelings of joyful pride but to educate a sense of 'sacred duty'.[5] The canonical texts of socialist realism habitually rendered the 'happiness' of model Stalinist New Men such as Pavel Korchagin inextricable from dutiful self-sacrifice.[6] The new found prosperity declaimed by Stakhanovite labourers and collective farmers at congresses would typically be coupled with pledges to work even harder to overturn production targets in the name of Stalin and the Soviet motherland.[7] The diaries of Soviet citizens engaged in a process of 'working on themselves' also bore witness to this rhetorical paradigm.[8] The Sverdlovsk Mining Institute student Leonid Potyomkin, for example, expressed feelings of happiness in the same breath as vowing to 'achieve the unachievable even more forcefully'.[9]

The establishment of a popular conception of 'happiness' which merged self-realisation with restless obligation was in no small part facilitated by Stalinist cinema. The words 'it is happiness to die for one's country, for one's people!' resounded triumphantly on the Soviet screen as Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia confronted death with a smile at the finale of Lev Arnshtam's wartime biopic *Zoia* (1944). Paradoxically, the captured partisan's subjection to gruesome torture and execution is set forth in Arnshtam's film as the culmination of a life-long quest to find the meaning of happiness. First sparked by the heroic narratives of Russian fairy-tales, Zoia's childhood fascination with the human struggle for happiness intensifies as she learns of the construction projects transforming her country and marvels at May Day spectacles from the shoulders of her father. 'Human kind', affirms the teenage heroine to her fellow pioneers during a New Year's Eve fête, 'is made for happiness like a bird for flight'. The call to fulfil a national duty completes, rather than negates, this happy Stalinist childhood; having internalised the models of heroic self-sacrifice embodied by Ivan Susanin, Lenin and Ostrovskii, Zoia calmly perceives the outbreak of war as a means for true self-realisation. Before leaving to join the partisan movement, she writes in her diary:

'All our lives we have deliberated the meaning of happiness. Now I understand that happiness is to be a fearless fighter for our country, for our motherland.'

This article contends that Soviet cinema's representation of happiness as a repayment of a debt to the state exemplifies the discursive logic of a new modality of power, which whilst first emerging in 1917, came into full fruition in the Stalin era – the modern style of population governance theorists have termed 'biopolitics'.[10] Marking a new generative and regulatory exercise of power distinct from the sovereign 'power of death', biopolitical governmentality sets its sights on the transformation and management of the population with the view of maximising its happiness, 'happiness being understood as survival, life and improved living'.[11] The Stalinist state elevating its citizens' happiness to a matter of prime political consideration in at the same time as compelling bodily sacrifice in the name of industrialisation and national warfare bears out the paradox of an 'art of government' in which the protection of human rights and vitality coincides with the suppression of life and the generation of new states of indebtedness. Michel Foucault, as well as Roberto Esposito and Giorgio Agamben more recently, have explored the unprecedented subjugation and violence to which biopolitics has exposed human life, even whilst aiming to secure its proliferation, well-being and happiness.[12] Most notably, Agamben has tied the biopolitical incorporation of life into the domain of sovereign power to the creation of a new state of precariousness – *bare life*, or simple biological existence which is forced to subsist in zone of indistinction ('a state of exception') between nature and culture, life and death.[13]

My claim that Soviet cinema's representation of Stalinist happiness as both entitlement to state care and a *being-in-debt* before the law bears witness to the vicissitudes of biopolitical modernity will be elaborated through a close analysis of Mikhail Kalatozov's 1941 film *Valerii Chkalov*. Tracing the reforging of self and society spearheaded by a new ethos of 'care for the person', the film showcases the precarious mode of selfhood addressed

by Stalinist biopolitics. In the midst of intensified efforts to harness the population's capacities for wartime sacrifice, *Valerii Chkalov* exalts a New Soviet Man for whom enjoyment of the Soviet 'good life' and dutiful state service fully coincide. Before turning to Kalatozov's film, however, I will begin by tracing the origins of cinema's entanglement with the agendas of biopolitics to the years of the First Five Year Plan by analysing one of the earliest cinematic framings of the Stalinist project as a battle for human happiness, Dziga Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine*, 1934).

In exploring the call to duty underwriting Stalinist cinema's discourse of the happy life, my aim is to also shed light on what made such biopolitical pressures bear weight.[14] This line of enquiry pushes beyond the question of discourse.[15] The symbiosis of self-realisation and bloodshed on the Soviet screen points to the painful pleasure (or '*jouissance*', to use Jacques Lacan's famous formulation) with which happiness became entangled in the Stalin era. A psychoanalytic exploration of the networks of enjoyment and desire – the libidinal economy – tapped by Stalinist rhetoric can help to better apprehend what drove subjective investment in its discursive strategies, making them persistent or 'sticky'.[16] Although recent studies, particularly Lilya Kaganovsky's account of Stalinist cultural fantasy, have taken important steps in this direction, they have tended to explore Stalin-era encodings of desire in isolation from broader discursive shifts.[17] This article seeks to situate Stalinism's libidinal economy within the larger (bio)political turn of modernity. Following in the footsteps of scholars who have used the tools of psychoanalytic theory to further understandings of biopolitics, I will map this relation with recourse to Lacan's theories on the co-entanglement of discourse and *jouissance*.[18]

Expanding his earlier account of symbolic castration, Lacan's late seminars wager that the enjoyment forfeited by the subject upon entry into language is compensated by another form of satisfaction – surplus *jouissance* ('*plus-de-jouir*').[19] He maps the different

ways in which discursive systems work to reconstitute enjoyment, producing distinct subject positions, power relations and social ties, in a theory of the four discourses (the discourse of the master, the university, the hysteric and the analyst). Lacan describes the master's discourse – predicated on a master signifier that arrests the slippage of meaning in the signifying chain as well as a desiring subject that 'works' to recuperate the enjoyment lost upon his or her assumption of a place in the symbolic network – as the primary social bond. His attention fixes, however, on the waning of the master's discourse in modernity and its displacement by the discourse of the university. Lacan's account of modernity's discursive revolution offers particular promise for extending Foucault's exploration of the biopolitical horizon, providing a means of elucidating the new networks of enjoyment structured by biopolitical governmentality.

Identified with the rise of happiness as 'a political factor', the university discourse maps the mutation of the master's discourse as it renews its legitimacy under the guise of 'scientific' and 'objective' knowledge. In similarity to Foucault's thesis on the political break inaugurated with the entrance of human life into the purview of government, Lacan traces a discursive shift in which traditional forms of authoritarian power are replaced by bureaucratic expert rule targeted toward securing the welfare and well-being of its subjects.[20] In distinction from Foucault, however, Lacan insists on linking this new 'matrix of sociality' to a transformation in the discursive emplotment of enjoyment. If in the master's discourse, surplus enjoyment functions as an unaccounted for and illicit 'excess', in the university discourse it comes to be 'counted' and 'totalised'.[21] The privileged place allotted to enjoyment in this discursive structure radically alters its function. In the university discourse, *jouissance* overlaps with the superego command, the cruel agency which paradoxically fortifies the prohibitions of the law even as it articulates imperatives to transgress them.[22] For

Lacan, the 'modernised master's discourse' thereby functions to erase the very distinction between enjoyment and duty.[23]

Cultural theorists have recently deployed Lacan's reading of discourse to trace a historical transition from 'the society of prohibition' to 'the society of commanded enjoyment', a shift in which the superego's command to enjoy displaces the traditional, forbidding form of symbolic authority.[24] Whilst theorists have so far focused solely on the conflation of enjoyment and abstinence instated with the shift towards the politics of *jouissance* in late capitalist Western societies, Lacan himself conceived the capitalist turn as only one manifestation of this dynamic.[25] Soviet state socialism, he argued, also gave rise to the 'reign of the university'.[26] In light of Lacan's claims, the erasure of distinction between enjoyment and duty in Stalinism's libidinal economy can be seen as part of a broad modern discursive shift that set 'the demand for happiness onto the political stage'. [27]

The death of the master: *Three Songs of Lenin*

Dziga Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin* is well known to scholars of Soviet cinema. Commissioned to mark the tenth anniversary of Lenin's death, its three 'songs' blend archive fragments of the leader's life and funeral, footage of the 'modernised' Soviet Far East and the glories of the industrialisation drive to extol the materialisation of Lenin's behests in the socialist offensive (proclaimed victorious at the Seventeenth Party Congress in the year of the film's release). Various aspects of the film, from its place within Vertov's oeuvre and function in relation to the ideological imperatives of the 1930s, to its use of iconic imagery, sound, and representation of space, have been explored extensively.[28] My aim, by contrast, is to trace how *Three Songs* plays out the discursive logic of Stalinist biopolitics. The film's identification of the Great Break with a new type of social order – one which secures the rights, welfare and happiness of its citizens – represents the Stalinist body politic as a

perpetual state of exception, a 'production site' of bare life fixed on the threshold of protection and sacrifice.

A cinematic ode to Lenin's tireless 'struggle for a new happy life', *Three Songs* celebrates the dawn of a new type of power. Its opening 'song' lauds the new government's close attention to the needs and desires of its citizens in Soviet Central Asia, showing their health, education, work life and recreational activities being taken into the fold of state care. 'No father', assure the intertiles, 'ever did so much for his children'. Lenin's revolutionary project is explicitly identified with the advancement of individual rights through the film's depiction of the Muslim woman's emancipatory path from faceless prisoner of the *paranja* (in the words of the intertitles, a 'slave without chains') to self-assured student, worker and mother.[29] Bringing the aims of Soviet modernisation into equivalence with the agendas of individual rights and welfare, the film's montage of mechanised farming, homes illuminated by electric light, newly opened buildings of higher education, and unveiled women nursing their children is accompanied by titles extolling, 'My Collective Farm!', 'My University', 'My Family!'[30] The ways in which the life of Soviet citizens 'has become joyful and cheerful' continue to unfold in the second song's dazzling montage of water bringing agriculture and industry to life, synchronised gymnastics routines animating Leningrad's Uritsky Square and the flourishing of national cultures. The third song further identifies 'Lenin's path' with the conquest of happiness over sorrow, the triumph of light over darkness, and the transformation of death into life.

The image of a social body held together by ties of duty rather than the command of an external authority figure plays a pivotal role in the film's conception of the Soviet project as a new form of politics. Setting Soviet power apart from older techniques of government oriented around the prohibitive presence of a 'master', Vertov places his lament for Lenin's *absence* squarely between the first song's display of a new life built in Central Asia and the

third song's glorification of the Soviet Union's newly industrialised might. The central place that newsreel footage of Lenin's 'last forty kilometres', stark close-ups of the leader's motionless body and shots rendering the wintry emptiness of his residence in Gorki assume in a cinematic ode to the consolidation of the Soviet system attests to the film's representation of a new type of social matrix. It is the palpitation of an internalised obligation – in the words of the 1930s Soviet press, the 'beating of a Leninist heart' – that renders viable this new form of social order.[31]

Vertov enacts a biopolitical state of exception where the suspension of the symbolic law coincides with the stirrings of a new kind of imperative.[32] The paralysing grief expressed in the second song's concluding reconstruction of Lenin's funeral salute in a series of freeze frames featuring a peasant coming to a stand in the Kara-Kum desert, factories and construction sites turning idle and a train freezing motionless in its tracts, is triumphantly dispelled by the sense of forward-moving momentum crafted in the film's final song. Illustrating how Lenin's spirit lives on in the production drive waged by his sons and daughters, the awakening of movement called forth by its opening imagery of rushing clouds builds to a crescendo of exhilaration as a frenzied montage of construction projects unfolds before the viewer.[33] The symbolic conversion of Lenin's living energy into mass labour power frames the new political weight ('a drop of Lenin's blood') allotted to each citizen with the dispersal of the principle of sovereignty as a palpitating pressure to 'make good' the lack of the father.[34]

Echoing Freud's myth of the primal father who continues to exert power over his sons after his demise in the form of the introjected commands of the superego, Lenin's filmic afterlife assumes the classic guises of this agency – the gaze and voice.[35] A false eye-line match which edits together footage of the living Lenin and the Dnieper hydroelectric complex brings the *vozhd'* back to life to approve this accomplishment. The superimposition

of the leader's forward-looking statue over the cascading waters of Dnieprostroi again attributes the motor of the industrialisation drive to Lenin's immortal gaze. Other miracles of the 'socialist offensive', including collectivised agriculture, the White Sea canal, the rising city of Magnitogorsk, and the Cheliuskin expedition, are also staged before Lenin's eyes; each achievement is intercut with time-lapse footage of his statue against a rapidly changing skyline and the inter-title: 'If only Lenin could see our country now'. Rendering a zone of indistinction where the commands of the law fall silent at the same time as life is encumbered by a new set of appeals, Vertov counterpoises footage of Lenin's dead body, which, as the intertitles impart, lies speechless, with the sound recording of his famous directives to the Red Army: 'Stand firm, stand together! Go forward bravely against the enemy!' The on-screen representation of Lenin thereby materialises the overlap of two symbolic agencies; the leader is rendered in the form of a lifeless symbol – a mummified body, an immobile monument, the dead letter of the law – *and* an immortal 'spirit' which continues to observe and articulate demands. The collapsed dichotomy between the symbolic law and its superegoic underside staged in *Three Song* registers the transformed nature and function of symbolic authority in the discursive shift that casts surplus enjoyment into 'the place of the command'.[36]

[Figure 1]

An injunction to 'Continue. March on. Keep on knowing more and more' is figured as the lifeblood of a new 'body politic' in which the *jouissance* of the death drive and the dutiful implementation of the superego command become indistinguishable.[37] The filmic showcase of Lenin leading the Red Army's unflinching advance through the horrors of the Civil War, a march which consumes the leader's own 'mind', 'blood' and 'heart', betrays the re-articulation of the symbolic mandate as a death drive – a bodily obligation to push the bounds of the pleasure principle.[38] Analogising 'Lenin's path' with the transgressive momentum of

the drive, the blistering elegy to the building of socialism in the final song unravels in a rhythmically edited sequence of landscapes crumbling under the thrusting force of water jets, sparks flying from blazing furnaces, trains steaming ahead, aeroplanes taking off and cascades of water gushing through the channels of a dam. Coded as a response to Ili'ch's call, this unstoppable offensive climaxes in footage of the Cheliuskin expedition surging through ice and a stream of military recruits powering forward with rifles at the ready.

The contingency of biopolitic's manufacture of a *being-in-debt* on a libidinal economy which turns jouissance into duty is further elaborated in the closing song's series of sound interviews with Stakhanovites. The interviews bring the viewer face to face with the new subject nurtured by the revolution, a selfhood realised in tireless self-sacrifice in the name of the Other. In the first of three individual portraits, a female Ukrainian concrete worker (identified in the screenplay as Maria Belik) describes a near-death accident at Dneprostroi.[39] A lethal fall into concrete only strengthens her commitment to fulfilling Lenin's behests; Belik relates with pride how she quickly managed to dry herself off, resume her duties and complete her full shift with tar-singed arms. A shy smile lights up her face as she remarks that her self-sacrificing feat was rewarded with the Order of Lenin. The deep lines on the face of a shock worker pushing to overfulfil production targets at 63 years of age, and the sparkling eyes of a kolkhoz chairwoman which swell with tears as she contemplates the extent of what she is still to achieve, captured in Vertov's next two interviews, similarly speak to a surrender to a call of duty beyond the law, to a life turned into an instrument of the will-to-*jouissance*.

The integration of surplus enjoyment: *Valerii Chkalov*

I have begun to explore how cinema's representation of the new happy life forged in the 1930s testifies to the blurred boundary between the Stalinist society of commanded enjoyment and the state of exception, a claim which I will develop further in my analysis of a

second Stalin-era film. Reflecting the changed agendas of the 'mature' Stalin era, Kalatozov's *Valerii Chkalov* materialises the dawn of Stalinist happiness in the creation of an individual New Soviet Person. Its narrative of an 'exceptional' man whose subsistence on a limit zone antagonises early Soviet society but gains legitimacy in the Stalin era, maps the biopolitical integration of bare life into the normal rule of law, a process which the film unfolds in its dependence on a new relationship between desire and state power.

Released in March of 1941, *Valerii Chkalov* immortalises the life of a record-breaking Soviet pilot, who prior to his death on a test flight in 1938, attained national adulation for accomplishing two pioneering long-distance routes set out by Stalin – the first across the Arctic Ocean to Udd Island, the second over the North Pole to the United States.[40] The screenplay by Georgii Baidukov (the co-pilot on Valerii Chkalov's Stalin routes), Dmitrii Tarasov and Boris Chirskov published in *Novyi mir* in 1940 intended to show how its hero, gifted with a 'mighty talent' but not yet having 'found himself', is set on the correct 'road to life' by Stalin and undergoes a process of 'internal growth in which his temperament and behaviour acquire Bolshevik lines'.[41] Scholars have tended to read the eventual harnessing of Chkalov's energies to the service of responsible, long-distance aviation as the curbing of 'excess'. Kaganovsky, for example, asserts that the cinematic myth of Chkalov presents 'an unruly and undisciplined subject brought to earth by the forces and constraints of Soviet power'.[42] I seek to read the process of 'transformation' staged in the film not as the suppression of desire by state coercion, however, but rather as its inscription in a new discursive logic which renders enjoyment and duty indistinguishable.

Set in Leningrad in the mid to late 1920s, the initial part of Kalatozov's film constructs a 'society of prohibition' which necessitates that Chkalov's strivings manifest as transgression. Multiple violations of the Red Air Force's code of practice embroil the pilot in a cycle of arrests and explanations before his commander. Based on a chapter in Baidukov's

1939 novel on the pilot entitled 'Games with Death', these early episodes cast Chkalov in the guise of a tragic hero consumed by a destructive desire and thereby condemned to traverse a limit zone between life and death, nature and culture.[43] His very first appearance on screen unravels a subordination to a drive 'which overrides the pleasure principle'; confined in a narrow cell, Chkalov spends his arrest for aerial hooliganism compulsively throwing match after match at a can without reaching his target whilst singing the cruel romance: 'To suffer or to enjoy is all the same to me' (*Mne vse ravno, stradat' il' naslazhdat'sia*).[44] He instantly springs back to life when summons on a new risky assignment permit him to continue his flirtation with death. Just when his fellow pilots conclude that he must have crashed and drowned on the 'impossible' reconnaissance expedition, the faint roar of Chkalov's engine attests to his triumphant return.

A persistent striving to transgress human constraints also suspends Chkalov on the frontier between the cultured and the primitive. 'I'm not a bird, but a human being', he insists after completing yet another flight pushing the limits of the human. Whether play-fighting roughly with his friends, silencing an audience with a piercing whistle or taking his date on a 'romantic' *progulka* in a torrential rainstorm, this raw elemental force pays little heed to the rules of civilised social conduct. In the words of his wife, Chkalov lacks understanding of how 'to get along with people'. Repeatedly describing its hero as a 'beast', a 'madman', and a 'monster', the screenplay likens his restless primal energy to the tempestuous flow of his native river Volga.[45] The hero's fateful tie to the border is articulated through a staging pattern that situates his figure within a series of 'limit zones': the walls of a military guardhouse, the Neva embankment, the Volga shore, Troitskii bridge, and most prominently, the gateway of Leningrad's Summer Garden. [Figure 2]

Unable to recognise the pilot's desire as legitimate, the 'society of prohibition' banishes Chkalov from 'the domain of the living'.[46] His reckless flight underneath Troitskii

Bridge is followed by orders from the Party calling for his resignation. Stripped of his documents and rejected from the party, he professes that 'there is no fighter pilot Chkalov any longer' and abandons Leningrad for his homeland on the river Volga. The pilot's condemnation to a state of liminality is traced by a tracking shot following his flight from the city through the railings of the Summer Garden. Encased in a monastic black tunic, his dejected figure is set against the wilderness of the Volga riverbank in the next sequence. The soft sound of choir song permeates Chkalov's melancholy reckoning with a fate of being trapped between two deaths.[47] A local fisherman who witnesses this scene of mourning summates Chkalov's tragedy: 'You couldn't endure in the air and now the earth won't accept you back'. In the prohibitive social order introduced by Kalatozov, the aviator's fate is to subsist in a no man's land of indistinction. [Figure 3]

Despite a series of efforts to give way on a masochistic mode of desiring, the hero remains hopelessly embroiled in a libidinal economy of prohibition and transgression. The new job of a passenger aeroplane pilot, which he assumes on his return from the Volga, quickly proves incapable of placating his temperament. 'I was flying my "sky bus" (*nebesnyi avtobus*), he explains to his wife Olga, 'and suddenly felt that I couldn't go on, that my hands were moving of their own accord, and that I would crash this machine and send all the passengers to hell.' The hero's fortunes seem to turn when his former army commander Aleshin offers him an assignment seemingly more suitable to his temperament: the role of test-pilot for an aviation factory. This new found freedom, however, only fuels a fixation on new constraints. Battling with the director to continue testing a machine deemed too dangerous, he again articulates the burdensome compulsion which forever impinges upon him; 'I have a wife and children and I am risking my head: it's because I *must* do so!' When his persistence results in a near-death crash, the blood-stained, yet defiant aviator emerges from the wreckage smiling and proclaims the faulty aeroplane 'a fine machine!' This

masochistic display leaves the exasperated authorities no option but to ask what they are supposed to do, 'with this monster?'

The pilot's tragic inability to cede on a desire which is inextricable from death fully unravels at an Aviation Day parade which grants Chkalov an opportunity to showcase the aircraft he has risked his life to develop. The pilot takes on his former pupil Baidukov in fierce head-to-head aerial combat, yet is struck by disaster when his second wheel fails to extend out for landing and leaves him unable to bring his flight to a conclusion. Under Stalin's command, Chkalov receives stern instructions to abandon the aircraft. Yet instead of jumping out with a parachute, he continues to perform a sequence of dangerous aerial manoeuvres in a last-ditch attempt to shake out the undercarriage. He prepares for death by writing a note proclaiming that his machine is not to blame. The visceral danger of his predicament – conveyed through head-spinning point-of-view shots accompanied by the roar of crashing airplane engines, sirens and a thundering orchestral score – is experienced as a deadly ecstasy; when finally able to extend the second wheel and land in safety, Chkalov emerges laughing in the face of death and begins to sing a defiant refrain.[48] The script goes further to detail blood spurting from Chkalov's facial orifices during his landing. [49]

If Chkalov's drive in excess of societal norms echoes the predicament of the *homo sacer* – the ancient figure who for Agamben epitomises the enigma of bare life caught between nature and culture – it also burdens a host of other 'unaccommodating' and 'inflexible' heroes in Stalinist cinema who equally take on the uncanny status of human life which borders on the non-human.[50] Kalatozov's film is unique, however, in staging the metamorphosis which Agamben identifies with the very essence of biopolitical modernity – 'the process by which [...] the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm'.[51] The vivid

manifestation of Chkalov's banishment from the social sphere precipitates a transition process whereby the hero's initial contraposition to the law is gradually effaced.

A new path in life

A change in the nature and function of Chkalov's masochistic drive vis-à-vis the state is impelled by a life-changing meeting with the *vozhd'* following the pilot's brush with death at the aviation parade. Stalinist authority in the scene of the 'great encounter' explicitly takes on the biopolitical rhetoric of the university discourse. Giving credence to the Stalin-era conception of the person as 'the most precious capital' amongst the Soviet Union's 'immense riches', the film shows the party leadership take a pronounced interest in Chkalov's safety and well-being.[52] The pilot is brought to task for failing to comprehend that 'life' is the country's 'greatest weapon'. Stalin initiates the paternal reprimand by probing why he did not use a parachute. Sergo Ordzhonikidze, the commissar of heavy industry, proceeds to chastise him for not understanding 'the meaning of the word life'. In his defence, Chkalov protests that it is his duty as a fighter-pilot to sacrifice himself without mercy in the face of certain death. Clearly displeased with such reasoning, Stalin interjects: 'Dying may be tough but not very difficult, comrade Chkalov. We represent people who want to live… to live as long as possible…to go into battle with the enemy and to conquer!' 'An eagle', Stalin instructs, 'continues to fly for over a hundred years'. Giving back Chkalov his death note, he makes him promise never to write such letters again. [Figure 4]

The encounter culminates in the pilot's promise to the *vozhd'* to accomplish many more years of safe flight. Racing home to Olga in a state of profound agitation, Chkalov anxiously relates Stalin's observation that he does not love his family enough. A symbolic use of framing manifests the dawn of a new understanding. 'How we used to live!', the hero exclaims in disbelief behind the darkness of a gauze curtain, 'Days and years passed by and I didn't see anything…I only ruined, tormented, lost'. After dramatically pulling aside the

draping separating their figures from the camera, he voices his resolve to live life anew. In a direct allusion to their first, unceremonious kiss mired in the rain and mud of the Summer Garden in Leningrad, the pilot whisks Olga away to re-enact their courtship amidst the festivities of Gorkii Park, where, in line with the magical transformations of the Stalin era, everything is rendered 'better and more meaningful'. In a whirlwind of exuberance, Chkalov buys a flower seller's entire stock for his wife and sweeps her away to a *Gastronom* food emporium. The screenplay's expanded version of this scene features the insatiable hero greedily perusing its 'colossal' display of food and 'mountains' of wine bottles.[53] After the couple return to their flat laden with flowers and boxes of finery, the aviator pronounces that he has been betrothed to life. Twirling his exhausted wife around the room, he dedicates a toast to their new way of being. The image of Chkalov joyfully mouthing 'hooray!' with a glass of champagne in hand and a vast table of culinary treats spread before him concludes this hectic display of 'Stalinist happiness'. [Figure 5]

The second half of *Valerii Chkalov* extols the establishment of a social order in which the drive beyond the pleasure principle no longer takes the form of an illicit transgression, but manifests as a state-sanctioned obligation to venture 'ever higher'. In parallel with *Pravda*'s claims that workers who risked their lives to catch enemies, scientists who tried out their discoveries on themselves and pilots who jeopardised their safety to establish new paths were driven not by 'senseless risk' but a clear sense of debt, Kalatozov's film reconfigures Chkalov's strivings as a legitimate repayment of an obligation to the state.[54] The Stalin era's re-evaluation of the meaning of 'life' is thereby rendered co-extensive with a re-evaluation of death. Set on the path of the Stalin routes, Chkalov promises to continue to fly 'for as long as he has strength to hold the controls and his eyes can still see the earth'. He embarks on his first treacherous flight to the North Pole – a voyage that has already cost the life of his former commander – with the conviction that it 'is possible to die in such a way that life does not

end'. The pilot's contempt for death is counterpoised to Aleshin, who, having advanced quickly in the ranks for flying carefully and obeying his superiors, loses his resolve and turns back when his aeroplane begins to freeze over on route to the North Pole. On his death bed after the crash, he bitterly chides himself for not having 'enough Chkalov' in his temperament to go straight to his target. Contrasting the value systems of the 1920s and the 1930s through the different fates of Chkalov and Commander Aleshin on the Stalin routes, Kalatozov's film displays a new estimation of 'life value' proportional to its readiness to encroach into death.

The deadly bodily obligation compelled by Stalin's 'concern for the person' is exemplified in the scene of Chkalov's treacherous flight to America.[55] The crew receive a telegram from Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Zhdanov enquiring after the crew's welfare and reminding them that the party, along with the whole country, is following the progress of their aeroplane. The leadership's paternal attentiveness to his well-being compels Chkalov to report the success of the mission despite his crew subsisting on the brink of death from oxygen deprivation.[56] The defiant report before the gaze of the state which resounds on screen – '*Vse v poriadke*' – was also championed in the contemporary press as the motto of the New Soviet Person who readily carried out any dangerous assignment in the name of the motherland.[57]

The weighty burden implicated in the 'new path' taken by Chkalov fully transpires during the homecoming celebrations marking the successful accomplishment of the first Stalin route. A tracking shot across Chkalov's lavish apartment reveals a long table tightly packed with jubilant guests singing in unison and raising glasses of champagne. In contrast to the discontent he expressed before the air show, Chkalov appears in celebratory high spirits.[58] A crane shot capturing a table stacked with champagne bottles and encircled by dancing couples swoops down to follow Chkalov's waltz with his wife. A carefree and vivacious

Olga, dressed an exquisite silk gown, whispers in Chkalov's ear that today truly is their 'wedding day'. In the next scene she interprets the expedition's flight over the 'Bay of Happiness' as a fateful sign that their long-held wish to 'start living like they were supposed to' (*kak sleduet*) has been realised. With a contented smile, Chkalov confirms that he has finally learnt how to do so.

As soon as Olga remarks that she wants 'everything to stand still', however, Chkalov cries out for 'movement!' before spinning her around the room in a dance. When glasses are raised to toast the 'glorious completion of the Stalin route', he instead drinks to its 'never-ending continuation'. Whilst the celebration is still underway, the pilot feverishly pushes through plans for a new, riskier expedition, quickly lapsing into despondency as soon as this new project is forestalled. The insistence of his mechanic Pal Palych that he has already attained every imaginable goal, including material well-being, fame and glory, offers no consolation. 'If I don't have this flight, how am I to live, what am I to do?', he implores desperately. Echoing Stalin's claim that the Stakhanovites' strivings towards ever higher goals were inspired by their existing plenitude and happiness, Chkalov insists that his accomplishments infer a still greater obligation upon him.[59] The screenplay's expanded version of this scene makes clear that Chkalov recoils from a long 'grounded' life of small domestic pleasures and a comfortable pension as a fate worse than death. Coming to comprehend that her husband 'cannot be happy any other way', even his long-suffering wife insists that Chkalov must remain 'true to himself' and bring this more dangerous flight to fruition.[60] In full subordination to a psychic agency that 'operates according to an economy such that the more one sacrifices to it, the more it demands', Chkalov quickly returns to the aerodrome after his successful trans-Polar flight to hatch new voyages, reproaching himself for how little he has achieved in his advanced years.[61]

If Chkalov's early protest against his demobilisation as a gross injustice and insistence on the legitimacy of his strivings to attain the impossible initially cast him as a hero tragically at odds with his surroundings, the dawn of the 'heroic' Stalin era ensures the integration of his mode of desiring with the goals of the state. A tragedy of character turns into a drama of circumstance. As one contemporary viewer noted: 'when at the beginning of the film we see how Chkalov is accused of aerial hooliganism and undisciplined behaviour, we feel at once that this is unfair'.[62] The resolution on the script also suggests that the film aimed to show the reforging of social reality sooner than its hero. The protocol cautioned that Chkalov's life story was not to be presented as 'the story of a "*likhach*" (hooligan) who is subsequently re-educated. The story of CHKALOV is the story of a person endowed with a powerful talent and extraordinary strengths and abilities, but who is not yet fully understood by those around him'.[63] Already possessing the distinguishing quality of the New Soviet Person – a restless compulsion to tackle new difficulties – in the very first frames of the film, Chkalov must await the social turn that will transform the marginalised state of the *homo sacer* into a way of life.

The shift in which transgression attains the character of a duty is epitomised in the figure of a leader who acts as both the force of symbolic prohibition ('the Name-of-the-Father') and superegoic instigator of the drive (the father *jouissance*). Imploring the pilot to renounce risky excess after the Aviation Day parade, as well as bringing his planned second long-distance flight to a halt because of concerns for his safety, Stalin is first presented as the custodian of the pleasure principle's regulatory economy. The pilot's second encounter with Stalin at the Kremlin, however, renders apparent the superego demand underpinning the leader's 'paternal care'. Backtracking from the sentiment of their first meeting, Stalin now insists that the essence of life cannot be 'measured in years'. With a new gravity in tone and facial expression, he contends that one great feat can be equivalent to '300 years of life' and

'live on through the centuries'. In contrast to the priority he placed on the pilot's safety in their first encounter, the *vozhd'* now sombrely stresses the importance of Chkalov's mission. The hero is cautioned that he has been entrusted with 'precious machines' and that his flight has been made possible by the blood, labour and suffering of the entire Soviet people. Exemplifying the logic of the superego, Stalin deems Chkalov ready only when the pilot expresses his inadequacy to carry out the state's demand. The composition of the frame, which replicates the 'father' and 'son' opposition established in the scene of their first meeting, underscores the twofold characterisation of the *vozhd'*. Previously basked in sunshine, his eyes and hand gestures directly fixed on the individual person of his 'model son', in the scene of their second encounter Stalin stands veiled in darkness as his gaze shifts outward onto the Moscow skyline. The backlight circumventing their figures draws the viewer's attention to the illuminated globe in the second plane – a reminder of the world historical significance of Chkalov's task. [Figure 6]

Bringing to life Valerii Chkalov's widely quoted words – 'Yes, comrades, I am a happy man; happy because, just like you, I live in the Stalin epoch and carry out Stalinist assignments, this is my happiness', Kalatozov renders the 'new life' of the Stalin era as a perpetual *being-in-debt*.[64] The concluding scene of the film shows Chkalov holding firm to his plan to fly around the world in the face of his mechanic's remonstration: 'He's flown over Asia and it's not enough; flown over the whole of Europe and again that's not enough. He's even got to America, and still that's not enough for him!' In response to Palych's warning that there will be nowhere left to go after they encircle the globe, Chkalov calmly declares that they will keep going 'wherever human thought ventures!' Three years after *Valerii Chkalov* met his tragic end on a test flight, the closing shot of Kalatozov's film showed the aviator taking flight as a new day dawned and disappearing on the horizon in the pursuit of still greater triumphs.[65] In Kalatozov's portrayal of the birth of a 'Stalinist falcon' persisting

on an endless course of flight in rebellion against the grounding forces of death and decay, the subjection to a drive beyond the law is no longer the tragic burden of a subject condemned to a 'being for death', but the happiness 'enjoyed' by every Stalinist citizen.[66]

Conclusion

This article has sought to show how the discourse of happiness in Stalinist cinema points to the emergence of a biopolitical modality of power, and to explore this transition's contingency on the discursive constitution of a new libidinal economy. The short-circuit between self-realisation and self-sacrifice at the heart of the Stalinist discourse of happiness, I have argued, reveals the logic of the university discourse operating in an 'alternative modernity'.[67] *Three Songs of Lenin* and *Valerii Chkalov* bear witness to symbolic authority shedding its traditional, prohibitive rhetoric (encapsulated by Lacan in the slogan, "'Let's keep on working, and as far as desire is concerned, come back later"') for a discursive guise that compels enjoyment of (bare) life.[68] Their mapping of the birth of a Stalinist society of commanded enjoyment as a process in which the state of exception becomes the rule brings to light the new discursive codification of *jouissance* investing the Stalin era's production of a new mode of selfhood. Navigating a zone where immortality rides on life's encroachment onto death and state protection coincides with exposure 'to a violence without precedent', Stalinist cinema's New Soviet Person manifests as a naked drive to serve the Other's *jouissance*.[69]

Endnotes

[1] I wish to thank Susan K. Morrissey above all for her patience and encouragement in reading numerous earlier drafts of this article. I am also indebted to Julian Graffy, Seth Graham, Emma Widdis, Simon Huxtable, Simon Pawley, Alex Boican, Ian Klinke, and the anonymous reviewers at *Russian Review* for their comments and suggestions. An earlier

version of this paper was presented at the *The Russian Cinema Research Group Seminar Series* at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (UCL) in 2012.

[2] Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar, Book VXII*, trans. by Russell Grigg (New York, 2007), p. 177.

[3] K. Leonchenko, 'Razgovor o schast'e', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 5 March 1949.

[4] Discussions of this shift include: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 90-95; Kelly and Volkov, 'Directed Desires'; Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (Oxford, 2003); David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca, N. Y., 2003), pp. 118-145; Karen Petrone, *Life has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington, Ind., 2000); Rosalinda Sartorti, 'Stalinism and Carnival: Organisation and Aesthetics of Political Holidays', in Hans Günther, ed., *The Culture of the Stalin Period* (London, 1990); Randi Cox, '"NEP without Nepmen!": Soviet Advertising and the Transition to Socialism', in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, eds., *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington, Ind., 2006); Julie Hessler, 'Cultured Trade: The Stalinist Turn Towards Consumerism', in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000); Helena Goscilo, 'Luxuriating in Lack: Plenitude and Consuming Happiness in Soviet Paintings and Posters, 1920s-1953', in Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., *Petrified Utopia: Happiness Soviet Style* (London, 2009). On the discourse of happiness in Stalinist culture, see also: Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 2000); Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 50.3 (2004): 357-71; Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging', *Kritika*, 7.3 (2006): 487-528.

[5] 'Stalinskaia konstitutsiia i kommunisticheskoe vospitanie podrastaiushchego pokoleniia', *Sovetskaia pedagogika*, no. 4 (1937), 1-6. Such a pressing sense of debt was said to be the source of Stalinist heroes' endless drive 'ever higher'. See Boris Galin's article 'Valerii Chkalov', and Georgii Baidukov's article 'Stalinskii marshrut prodolzhen', in *Pravda*, 21 June 1937.

[6] See, for example, I. Bachelis and S. Stregub, *Schast'e Korchagina* (Moscow, 1944). The Stalinist New Person's personification of both the enjoyment of a 'new, happy life' and the drive for self-abnegation is laid bare in Andrei Platonov's unfinished novel *Happy Moscow* (*Schastlivaia Moskva*, 1932-1936). For a detailed analysis situating Platonov's novel in the context of the new rhetoric of pleasure and merriment in Stalinist culture, see Eric Naiman's excellent introduction to *Happy Moscow*, trans. by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler et al. (London, 2001).

[7] See speeches by Stakhanovites published in *Pravda*, 15 November 1935. See also, N. I. Slavniko et al., 'Speeches by Stakhanovites', in Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In The Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*, trans. by Yuri Slezkine (Princeton, N. J., 2000).

[8] On the diary as an instrument of 'self-fashioning', see Jochen Hellbeck, 'Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts', *Russian Review*, 60.3 (2001): 340-359.

[9] 'Diary of Leonid Alekseyevich Potyomkin', in Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s* (New York, 1995). Albert Baiburin and Alexandra Pirr have discussed the rhetoric of happiness in Stalin-era diaries. See their 'When We were Happy: Remembering Soviet Holidays', in *Petrified Utopia*, p. 168.

[10] Although he does not use the word biopolitics to describe this shift, Peter Holquist has explored how 1917 marked the rise of a new mode of power oriented around the government and management of populations. See his 'What's so Revolutionary about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and the New-Style Politics, 1914-21', in David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices, 1800-1950* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 87-111. David L. Hoffmann's and Stephen Kotkin's explorations of population policies in the Stalin period, including efforts to manage the rate of births and mortality, expansion of social welfare measures and interventions into the sphere of health and hygiene, make clear the biopolitical underpinnings of the project of 'remaking man'. See David L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, N. Y., 2011); Stephen Kotkin, 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture', *Kritika*, 2.1 (2001): 111-64; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995).

[11] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London, 1979), p. 140; Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. by Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis, 2008), p. 54.

[12] On the ways in which the state dominion over the management, strengthening and protection of human life has been haunted by a potential to reverse into 'the mass production of death', see: Michel Foucault, *'Society Must be Defended': Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. by Mauro Berlani and Alessandro Fontana (London, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif., 1998); Esposito, *Bios*. Extending enquiry into the 'enigma' of biopolitics through an examination of the Stalinist case, Sergei Prozorov has recently noted how the Stalinist drive to re-forge the social body based on rational principles exemplifies both biopolitics's 'positive' and 'constructive' character as well as its propensity to turn into

thanatopolitics. See his 'Living Ideas and Dead Bodies: The Biopolitics of Stalinism', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38.3 (2013): 208-227.

[13] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

[14] Here I follow in the footsteps of Eric L. Santner's masterly exploration of the libidinal economy underlying subjective investment in the new biopolitical technologies of power produced in modernity. See his *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago, 2011).

[15] Existing studies have tended to explore Stalinist happiness on the level of language, rhetorical strategy and performance. Jeffrey Brooks and Sheila Fitzpatrick note the expressions of gratitude to the state necessitated by public declarations of happiness during the Stalin era, see Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 2000); and Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 50.3 (2004): 357-71. Golfo Alexopoulos explores happiness as a civic obligation in the Stalin era. See her 'Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging', *Kritika*, 7.3 (2006): 487-528. Glennys Young excavates the 'hermeneutics of emotion' at stake in the performance of apology rituals in the 1930s. See 'Bolsheviks and Emotional Hermeneutics; The Great Purges, Bukharin, and the February-March Plenum of 1937', in Mark. D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol, eds., *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (DeKalb, Ill., 2011). See also Alexey Tikhomirov, 'The Regime of Forced Trust: Making and Breaking Emotional Bonds between People and State in Soviet Russia, 1917-1941', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 91.1 (2013): 78-118.

[16] As Derek Hook notes, 'Apprehending the libidinal economy of given discourses might enable us to answer questions along the lines of why certain signifiers come to be locked into patterns of repetition; why some are particularly historically-persistent, 'sticky', difficult to

shake'. See his 'Articulating Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies: Limitations and Possibilities', *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, 13.4 (2008): 397-405.

[17] Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh, 2008).

[18] Existing attempts to read biopolitics through the lens of psychoanalytic theory include: Jodi Dean, 'Drive as the Structure of Biopolitics: Economy, Sovereignty and Capture', *Krisis: A Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 2 (2010): 2-15; Santner, *The Royal Remains.*

[19] Lacan insists that psychoanalysis's capacity to theorise the co-entanglement of *jouissance* and the signifier forms the basis of its 'intrusion into the political'. See his *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 78.

[20] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 73, 104. Slavoj Žižek has analysed the discourse of the university as a discourse of expert knowledge. See his *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), p. 297; and 'Four Discourses, Four Subjects', in Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Cogito and the Unconscious* (Durham, N.C., 1998).

[21] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 175, 177.

[22] Lacan famously contends that 'Nothing forces anyone to enjoy except the superego'. See his *Encore, The Seminar: Book XX*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York, 1998), p. 3. Yet he also notes that this agency functions as both 'the law and its destruction'. See his *Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954, The Seminar, Book I*, trans. by John Forrester (Cambridge, 1988), p. 102.

[23] Alenka Zupančič, 'When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value', in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 172.

[24] Todd McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction? Jacques Lacan and the Society of Enjoyment* (Albany, N.Y., 2004), pp. 1-40; Žižek, *The Parallax View*, pp. 308-317; Zupančič, 'When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value'; Joan Copjec, 'May '68, The Emotional Month', in

Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London, 2006); Juliet Flower MacCannell, 'More Thoughts for the Times on War and Death: The Discourse of Capitalism in Seminar XVII', in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, see also her *The Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (London, 1991).

[25] Zupančič, 'When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value', p. 172.

[26] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 206.

[27] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, The Seminar: Book VII*, trans. by Dennis Porter (London, 2008), p. 373

[28] Recent critical approaches to Vertov's film include: John MacKay, 'Allegory and Accommodation: Vertov's "Three Songs of Lenin" (1934) as a Stalinist Film', *Film History*, 18.4 (2006): 376-391; Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London, 2007), ch. 6; Annette Michelson, 'The Kinetic Work of Mourning: Prolegomena to the Analysis of a Textual System', *October*, 52 (1990): 16-39; Lilya Kaganovsky, 'Electric Speech: Dziga Vertov, Esfir' Shub and the Technologies of Sound', *The Russian Cinema Research Group Seminar Series,* SSEES, University College London, 12 December 2011; Andrey Shcherbenok, '"Vzgliadi na Lenina, i pechal' tvoia razoidetsia, kak voda": estetika travmy u Dzigi Vertova', in Serguei Oushakine and Elena Trubina, eds., *Travma: Punkty* (Moscow: 2009); Oksana Bulgakowa, 'Spatial Figures in Soviet Cinema of the 1930s', in Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman, eds., *The Landscape of Stalinism* (Seattle, 2003).

[29] As Shcherbenok notes, the viewer is encouraged to identify with the emancipated Muslim women shown on screen. See his '"Vzgliadi na Lenina"', p. 720.

[30] The film's culminating celebration of Soviet construction once more puts the provision of collective wealth at the heart of the revolutionary struggle, extolling 'Our Steel', 'Our Oil' and 'Our Coal'.

[31] A revealing review of Mikhail Romm's *Lenin in 1918* (*Lenin v 1918 godu*, 1939) outlines the process of 'internalisation' that Lenin cult films sought to bring into effect: '[t]he viewer will not only listen and understand, he will experience and feel the words about the happiness of the people. He will pronounce them as his own commandment. He will experience them with all the force of his emotions, upon seeing a film in which art forces to feel within oneself the beating of a Leninist heart', I. Bachelis, 'Obraz vozhdia', *Izvestiia*, 3 March 1939.

[32] Noting that the 'law affirms itself with the greatest force precisely at the point in which it no longer prescribes anything', Agamben argues that the *bare life* abandoned in the state of exception is simultaneously exposed to the law in its 'pure form'. See his *Homo Sacer*, p. 49.

[33] The 'collapsed dichotomy' between 'presence-absence, life-death' staged in Vertov's film is explored in detail by Bulgakowa. See her 'Spatial Figures in Soviet Cinema', p. 60.

[34] On the new biopolitical pressures instated with the transfer of the king's sublime body to the body of the people – 'the new bearers of the principle of sovereignty', see Santner, p. xxi.

[35] Freud's myth reads the institution of the symbolic law as a passage from a primal horde ruled by an oppressive father who keeps all enjoyment to himself, to the development of a sense of guilt and the self-imposition of the prohibition against incest. See his *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Volume XIII* (London, 1913), p. 142. Deploying Freud's myth, Eric Santner theorises the biopolitical state of exception as a space where the primal father 'refuses to be refused and returns in all his fleshy excess and overproximity'. See his *The Royal Remains*, p. 26. For a reading of the voice and gaze as incarnations of the superego command, see Alenka Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan* (London, 2000), p. 147.

[36] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, p. 106.

[37] Ibid., pp. 32, 105.

[38] Freud conceptualises the pleasure principle as a law of psychic functioning – the 'watchman over our mental life' – which ensures psychic equilibrium and constancy through directing the mental processes towards the maximisation of pleasure and avoidance of unpleasure. See his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *The Standard Edition*, *Volume XXI* (London, 1930), p. 83; *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, *The Standard Edition, Volume XIX* (London, 1924), p. 158.

[39] Dziga Vertov, 'Tri pesni o Lenine: literaturnyi stsenarii', *Iz naslediia: dramaturgicheskie opyty*, tom 1 (Moscow 2004), p. 175.

[40] 'Pamiati narodnogo geroia', *Gor'kovskaia kommuna*, 16 December 1938, reprinted in *Velikii letchik nashego vremeni* (Gorkii, 1939), pp. 11-13; A. Serov, 'Luchshii letchik strany', *Izvestiia*, 17 December 1938, reprinted in the same volume, p. 27.

[41] 'Zakliuchenie po pervomu variantu literaturnogo stsenariia – "Valerii Chkalov"', 4 February 1940, l. 1; 'Zakliuchenie po stsenariiu 'Chkalov'", l. 1, archival file on *Valerii Chkalov*, *Gosfil'mofond.*

[42] Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 94. For a discussion of the aviation hero in relation to the spontaneity-consciousness dialectic, see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 124-29.

[43] G. Baidukov, *O Chkalove* (Moscow, 1939). I rely here on the psychoanalytic reading of the tragic hero presented by Lacan in his analysis of Sophocles's *Antigone*. See his *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* p. 335.

[44] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Standard Edition, Volume XVIII* (London, 1955), p. 22.

[45] G. Baidukov, D. Tarasov and B. Chirskov, 'Valerii Chkalov', in *Izbrannye stsenarii sovetskogo kino*, tom 3 (Moscow, 1951), pp. 205, 222, 254.

[46] As Lacan highlights, the state punishes Antigone's inflexible desire by banishing her 'from the world of the living'. See his *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 345

[47] For an analysis of religious imagery in the film, see John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 54-5.

[48] German Dmitrievich Kremlev identifies this as the Cossack song 'Raspriagaite, khloptsy, konei'. See his *Mikhail Kalatozov* (Moscow, 1964), p. 75.

[49] Baidukov, Tarasov and Chirskov, 'Valerii Chkalov', p. 217.

[50] Equating happiness with unceasing struggle, Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia and the engineer-hero of Aleksandr Faintsimmer's 1940 screen adaptation of the popular socialist realist novel *Tanker "Derbent"* (Krymov, 1938) also forgo a 'quiet and easy' life within the social fold. Earning the label of a '*neudachnik*' for his temperament, engineer Basov is stationed as a chief mechanic on an underperforming oil tanker in the Caspian Sea. The hero's restless push for improved performance estranges his captain, co-workers and even his wife. Basov's form of satisfaction, attained through persistently challenging the limits of the possible, is favourably contrasted with the conception of happiness embodied by the quiet domestic cosiness of his marital home, which his wife has filled with all the staples of Stalinist middle-class consciousness derided during Khrushchev's Thaw – lace decorations, silk lampshades and rubber plants. The inflexibility of Zoia's sense of debt before her motherland, a character trait that the film roots firmly in the 'relentless feats and daring' of the Stalin era, is similarly corrosive of friendship and family ties, ultimately compelling her to abandon her home in Moscow for the indeterminate existence of a partisan. See O. Leonidov, '"Zoia"', *Moskovskii bol'shevik*, 24 September 1944, reprinted in *Istoriia sovetskogo kinoiskusstva zvukovogo perioda, Chast' II (1934-1944)*, ed. by I. V. Sokolov (Moscow, 1946), pp. 275-76.

[51] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 9.

[52] 'Geroism i iskusstvo', *Izvestiia*, 15 July 1937.

[53] Baidukov, Tarasov and Chirskov, 'Valerii Chkalov', pp. 222-23.

[54] 'Sila i geroism', *Izvestiia*, 14 July, 1937.

[55] Stalin's attention to individual human welfare was repeatedly emphasised in the popular discourse on aviation. See for example, G. Baidukov, *Zapiski pilota* (Moscow, 1938), pp. 144, 175, 206.

[56] The film replicated the sense of duty impelled by the gaze of 'father Stalin' that Valerii Chkalov alluded to in a famous article published in 1937. Here Chkalov professed that his crew carried out their last Stalin route with the conviction that 'they did not have the right to turn back or change direction; on Stalin's path one only goes forward!' See Valerii Chkalov, 'O schast'e', *Gor'kovskaia kommuna*, 3 September 1937, reprinted in *Velikii letchik nashego vremeni*, 89-91.The film's connection of Chkalov's determination to succeed to his awareness of being observed was noted by one contemporary viewer, Komsomol member Nikolai Boldyrev: 'The way in which Chkalov overcame any difficulty made the greatest impression on me. When he found himself in difficult circumstances, he thought about how the whole motherland was observing him, and he triumphed', 'Velikii Patriot', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 21 March 1941. The dependence of Chkalov's drive on his sense of the Other's demand is also illustrated in Boris Galin's 1937 *Pravda* article about Chkalov. Galin writes that Chaklov's desire to fly across the North Pole to America was driven by his awareness 'that he still had not done enough for the country, for the Party, and for Stalin'. See *Pravda*, 21 June 1937.

[57] 'Geroism i iskusstvo'.

[58] The script describes Chkalov in this scene as walking 'before us with an implacable and mature joyfulness'. See Baidukov, Tarasov and Chirskov, 'Valerii Chkalov', p. 231.

[59] Stalin claimed that 'if people in our country lived badly, drably, joylessly, we should have had nothing like the Stakhanov movement'. See his 'Speech at the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites', in *Selected Writings* (Westport, Conn., 1970), p. 371.

[60] Baidukov, Tarasov and Chirskov, 'Valerii Chkalov', pp. 235-37.

[61] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 372.

[62] Evgenii Kolosov, 'Chuvstvo novogo', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 21 March 1941.

[63] 'Zakliuchenie po stsenariiu "Chkalov"', l. 1.

[64] V. Chkalov, 'O schast'e'. Nikolai Ostrovskii came to be remembered for similar pronouncements: 'I am deeply happy. My personal tragedy is set aside by the amazing, unrepeatable joy of creation: the awareness that even my hands are laying the bricks for the foundation of our wonderful building, the name of which is Communism'. Quoted in Bachelis and Tregub, *Schast'e Korchagina*, p. 139.

[65] The film's finale has clear parallels to the ending of Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalialas' stal'*, 1932-1934). See Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 36.

[66] Lorenzo Chiesa has shown how the death drive is 'a conservative drive precisely in that it is antisynthetic'. See his *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), p. 144.

[67] On Stalinism as an alternative route to modernity, see David L. Hoffmann, 'European Modernity and Soviet Socialism', in *Russian Modernity*.

[68] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 373.

[69] Agamben, *Homo Sacer,* p. 114. Zupančič highlights that the university discourse produces 'pure negativity: the death drive as incarnated in the subject who is in no way the master of knowledge and value accumulated in this discourse, and even less the master of enjoyment,

but who is their fall-off, excrement, the refuse'. See her 'When Surplus Enjoyment Meets Surplus Value', p. 173.