

THE RETURN: POST-WAR MASCULINITY AND THE DOMESTIC SPACE IN STALINIST
VISUAL CULTURE, 1945-53

In the summer of 1947, John Steinbeck and Robert Capa travelled through the Soviet Union, sponsored by the *New York Herald Tribune*, with the aim of relating to the American public what life was really like behind the Iron Curtain. After being wined and dined at the American Embassy in Moscow, Steinbeck and Capa set out for Stalingrad. One afternoon the visitors were taken on a tour through the ruins of the city and came across a park near the town square:

There, under a large obelisk of stone, was a garden of red flowers, and under the flowers were buried a great number of the defenders of Stalingrad. Few people were in the park, but one woman sat on a bench and a little boy about five or six stood against the fence, looking at the flowers. He stood there so long that we asked Chmarsky [the guide] to speak to him.

Chmarsky asked him in Russian, "What are you doing here?"

And the little boy, without sentimentality, in a matter of fact voice said "I am visiting my father. I come to see him every night".¹

The human and material cost of the Great Patriotic War for the Soviet Union is by now familiar, if no less startling; according to official sources 1,710 towns, 70,000 villages and six million other buildings were destroyed, leaving an estimated twenty-five million people homeless. The task of calculating the human cost of the War has largely been left to the historian and while there is still no consensus on this figure, the most recent estimates put the death toll at around 26.6 million people, three quarters of whom were male and most of whom were from the 1901 to 1931 cohort.² The immediate consequences of this demographic crisis were realised in the workplace and on the collective farm, but were most keenly felt in the homes of families across the Soviet Union, who were left dealing with the realities of single-parenthood, fatherlessness and bereavement.

This article will chart the attempts to both articulate and obfuscate the impact of this loss on the family, focussing primarily on the representation of the father in post-war visual culture. It will argue that the War represented a fundamental shift in the imagining and portrayal of fatherhood, as the use of the family as a motivational tool in fighting the Fascists had intrinsically tied masculinity to paternity and patriotism, and this new focus on the Soviet man as a family man would be carried into the post-war period. Running

alongside this development though, it will be shown that in contrast to the images of returning soldiers and family reunions, the demographic reality of post-war society was also acknowledged in numerous works during the last years of Stalinism, through both the representation of the single mother with her children and the introduction into the home of the ultimate surrogate father, Stalin himself.

The examination of these issues is based on a detailed analysis of the range of images published in the print media across the two decades following the end of the War. This survey encompasses both the professional art journals *Iskusstvo*, *Tvorchestvo* and *Khudozhnik*, alongside more popular, but highly visual publications, most notably *Ogonek* but also the likes of *Krokodil* and the women's magazines *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* and *Rabotnitsa*, as well as the press. The images that were found on the pages of these publications included photographs, cartoons, and illustrations as well as reproductions of posters and paintings, and ranged from the high-quality to the decidedly mediocre. As Lynne Attwood highlighted in her analysis of women's magazines from the years of NEP to the end of the Stalin period, 'newspapers and magazines were credited by the leaders with enormous importance in socialising the population. They were seen as the main channel of communication between the Communist Party and the people, and a crucial means of disseminating propaganda'.³ However, the importance of such publications in socialising the population was not contained solely to the letters they published, the articles they ran, or the stories they told; the images that were found on the pages of these magazines also had a function to play in the creation of the ideal Soviet citizen and in articulating the preoccupations and values of contemporary society. By using images found in the printed media then, we can gain a valuable insight into the way in which the vast majority of the Soviet population encountered the visual output of their country, both past and present. More than this though, we can gauge not only what works were being produced by Soviet artists during this period but what works were being *reproduced*, what this can tell us about issues of acceptability and the potential schisms between popular reception and professional criticism, and how the ideals of the State were visually presented to the Soviet public on a day to day basis.

Benefitting from the cultural shift and plurality of postmodernist trends, the reality and representation of the male experience in the Soviet Union has been an intrinsic part of Slavic studies since the end of the 1990s, revealing the range of masculine behaviours – both hegemonic and subordinate – that existed even under the strictures of the Soviet state. What the work of Lilya Kaganovsky, John Haynes, Eliot Borenstein, Dan Healey and others has highlighted is the self-evident yet neglected fact that Soviet masculinity was not monolithic or consistent, either in its idealised State-sanctioned form or in the

range of masculine types and behaviours that populated literature, visual culture, and reality itself.⁴ Fuelled by the same theoretical shifts in historical scholarship, recent years have also witnessed a dramatic upturn in interest in Soviet cultural production, a trend that has moved us away from dismissing culture as simply another tool of a totalitarian state to revealing the complexities and contradictions inherent in the creative and institutional processes. Specifically in terms of visual culture, the dynamic between artist and institution, the thorny problem of individual agency, and attempts to access the popular reception of works have been recurring themes in work ranging from Susan Reid's ground-breaking analysis of art during Destalinisation to Christina Kiaer's ongoing research into Aleksandr Deineka, and both Oliver Johnson and Jan Plamper's recent valuable contributions to our understanding of how the world of art functioned in the Stalin era.⁵

This article sits at the intersection of these two trends, bringing together for the first time the themes of paternity and post-war Stalinist visual culture. The issue of paternity and paternalism, particularly in relation to the cult surrounding Stalin, has received significant attention in studies of Soviet film, most recently and substantially in Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova's *Cinepaternity*.⁶ However, away from the silver screen, the construction of masculinity in Stalinist visual culture generally has received very little detailed consideration, beyond matters such as those surrounding heroism and the sporting body.⁷ Similarly while scholars such as Amir Weiner and Anna Krylova have detailed the impact of the War on aspects such as the masculine myth of the Revolution and variants of masculinity in Soviet literature respectively,⁸ how the War experience influenced the visual representation of idealised manhood remains to be fully explored. The discussion which follows bridges these gaps by demonstrating that the War dramatically changed the depiction of the Soviet man within the domestic space and that this shift was predicated upon an increased significance for the paternal role in the aftermath of 1945. In addition, by examining works which omitted the father from the family scene, it will also be shown that the legacy of the War was portrayed in visual culture and, although it was limited both in terms of scope and emotionality, even such seemingly taboo issues as grief and loss found a visual outlet during the final years of Stalinism. What is more, these issues found expression on the pages of the nation's most popular publications.

Fatherhood Before the 1945: Reality and Representations

The impact of the October Revolution on the Soviet family, particularly with regards to the position women were seen to now occupy in the new society, has long been an area

of interest for Slavic scholars and has generated a vast and varied historiography.⁹ However, in both contemporary discourse and, until recently, the historiography on the family, the figure of the father was conspicuously absent; while women, right from the earliest days of the Revolution, were readily cast as political activists, workers and mothers, the male role in the creation of a Soviet society was largely limited to that of proletarian-hero, a person too consumed with the task at hand to be hindered by personal relationships or a private life of any sort. Indeed, in his analysis of Soviet patriarchy, Sergei Kukhтерin argues that the family policies of the 1920s were founded upon an alliance between the State and the mother and child, in which the father was actively excluded in an attempt to socialise the family unit, something that was only achievable with the destruction of traditional patriarchy.¹⁰

There was a perceivable shift in the rhetoric of the male social role around the years of industrialisation and collectivisation, however, which can be viewed within the complex framework of the rise of the paternalistic cult of Stalin, pronatalist policy,¹¹ the development of what Katerina Clark termed 'the Great Family Myth',¹² and the emphasis on *kul'turnost'*, in which the home was seen as the crucible wherein ideal Soviet citizens were forged.¹³ The emergence of the Great Family Myth – in which allegiance to the State overrode loyalty to biological kin – was, according to Clark, linked to the preoccupation of 1930s society with enemies, both internal and external.¹⁴ In this formulation, interpersonal relationships were restructured and the horizontal ties between actual family members were superseded by the vertical bond between individual and leader. Nevertheless, this new relationship between the Soviet citizen and their paternalistic *vozhd'* was not designed to completely replace the family unit, which was now cast as a microcosm of the State itself and viewed as a key element in maintaining the stability of the Soviet system. The confluence of these factors manifested itself culturally in a reappraisal of what constituted the ideal New Soviet Man, leading to – among other things – a move away from the revolutionary notion of the mass heroism of the proletariat to the singling out of exemplary heroes, such as Aleksei Stakhanov and Valerii Chkalov, whose names were known throughout the empire.

This new heroic pantheon was a hierarchy of fathers, heroes of 'a truly extraordinary calibre', and the 'less-than-absolutely-extraordinary' sons.¹⁵ The position of father was generally reserved for the Party elite but with Stalin as its ultimate living incarnation, casting him as a leader who was dedicating his life to the protection and education of his people. In addition to the paternal rhetoric of heroism and emulation, after 1934 Stalin's role as father-in-chief took on a new dimension with the development of a strand of his personality cult that was specifically aimed at the Soviet child,¹⁶ explicitly expounding

the paternalism of the State while concurrently undermining the role of biological paternity. Posters proliferated emblazoned with *Thank You Dear Stalin for Our Happy Childhood!* – a maxim which adorned classrooms across the Soviet Union – and the press carried photographs and stories of the lucky child who had had the chance to meet with their munificent leader. The role of son was taken up by a plethora of archetypal male models, first Stakhanovites, and then ‘border guards, long-distance skiers, violinists, mountain climbers, parachutists and above all, aviation heroes’.¹⁷ And at the top of the pile of heroic aviators was Chkalov, whose 1937 flight across the North Pole was seen as a testament to both Soviet technology and the subjugation of nature to the might of the Soviet man. As Jay Bergman has demonstrated, the rhetoric which surrounded Chkalov, his feats, his reputation and his relationship with Stalin, was a complex interplay of heroic and masculine ideals, in which he was simultaneously a loving father, naïve son and Stalinist Prometheus.¹⁸

Whether as the supreme figure of authority in the Soviet collective or as a figure for emulation, the father was *symbolically* at the heart of Soviet manhood during the early 1930s. However, this was not a model of fatherhood that was rooted in the domestic space or the activity of everyday family life, but one that was based on the extraordinary. This ambivalence towards both the private sphere and the role of the real-life father was reflected in the extremely small number of artistic works depicted the father as part of the family unit. Because fatherhood was the subject of so few works during this period – this research has uncovered just four paintings – it is difficult to extrapolate any clear picture of the use of visual culture to present a model of idealised paternity. We can, however, take this paucity as indicative of the persistence of the idea that a present and proactive father was not a necessary component in the Soviet family, especially now that mothers and their children had Father Stalin to look after their every need. Even in the couple of paintings produced in these years that did include the father in a family scene, there was a tendency to place him on the periphery of the family unit and in every instance, it was the bond between the mother and child that was given priority, as seen in both Taras Gaponenko’s *To Their Mothers For Lunch* (1935) and Kuz’ma Petrov-Vodkin’s *The Year 1919: Anxiety* (1934-5). Therefore, while it is significant that the father began to appear, albeit with great infrequency, in the visual culture of the early 1930s, these works can hardly be seen to mark a watershed in the presentation of paternity.¹⁹

The mid-1930s witnessed a shift in official attitudes towards the family, leading to a well-documented sentimentalisation of motherhood;²⁰ but this period also saw a shift in attitude towards the role of the father in the family, with his function now increasingly

been seen as more than pragmatic. This more polyvalent view of fatherhood would develop during the years of Cultural Revolution, as the traditional economically-based model of fatherhood began to be combined with the emerging view that the father was a crucial element in child-raising, which itself became explicitly tied to both the strength of the Soviet state and the qualities of the individual themselves: good fatherhood became synonymous with good citizenship. This duality was demonstrated by the constitutional reform which was introduced in 1936-37; while the new constitution and the changing divorce laws brought about a clamp-down on fathers who were seen to be shirking their fiscal obligations to their family, the public discussion surrounding this legislation conveyed a far broader conceptualisation of fatherhood. For example, amidst the public debate concerning the amendment of the abortion laws, in June 1936 *Pravda* published an article discussing the role of the father in Soviet society. Couched in terms of both financial support and social obligation, the traditional paternal role of provider was now combined with a duty to inculcate a suitable socialist morality and to be a 'social educator'; conversely, any man failing to shoulder his paternal responsibilities 'shame[d] the name of a Soviet citizen'.²¹

This development of the paternal role also found an outlet in a couple of paintings produced just after the introduction of the new constitution: Samuil Adlivankin's *The Prize* (1937) and Vladimir Vasil'ev, *A Commanding Officer's Family* (1938). Both of these canvases are demonstrative of a change in the portrayal of the father; no longer a figure on the periphery of family life, in these works the Soviet man is shown to have an emotional bond with his children. What is telling though is the fact that both works show the family in exceptional circumstances: the prize won by the father in Adlivankin's painting took the family on a special trip, and the very presence of the father, on leave from the army, in Vasil'ev's image transforms what appears to be a simple family scene in to something extraordinary. Despite the rhetoric, then, the visual inclusion of the father in family scenes appears to have been reserved only for special occasions.

This would all change in 1941. With the outbreak of war, every aspect of Soviet society was mobilised to aid the War effort and the family was no exception. In the indistinct boundaries between the home and the Front, familial relations were cast as a motivation for fighting for those in the forces, and as part of a rhetoric of both support and of waiting for those who were left behind the lines. Given the immediacy of the situation, it was through the poster that this relationship between the family unit and the nation-state was most evocatively portrayed. The revival of the figure of the motherland, epitomised by Iraklii Toidze's *The Motherland Calls* (1941), became one of the most instantly recognisable icons of Soviet poster art and represented a shift in the

conceptualisation of patriotic duty from being based on an ideological affinity with the principles of Marxist-Leninism to being grounded in nationalistic sentiment. But while the figure of the mother/motherland has garnered much attention, what is often overlooked is the fact that the Soviet man in the world of the wartime poster was a family man in the fullest sense of the word. Posters such as Leonid Golovanov's *For the Sake of My Wife, For My Children's Lives* (1942) and Viktor Koretskii's *Red Army Warrior – Save!* (1942) – both of which presented the German threat to the lives of women and children – coupled individual performance at the Front with the integrity of the family which remained at home. In this way, soldiers were compelled to do their duty at the Front, not only out of filial devotion, but as part of their role as husbands and, more crucially, as fathers. Golovanov's later work, *My Daddy is a Hero! And You?* (1943), which depicted a small girl holding a picture of her father and pointing to the male viewer in a Kitcheneresque manner, went even further and explicitly linked paternal duty, the preservation of the family and masculine imperative.²² Thus, the extensive use of the mother and the wife and infant can be seen as part of the same framework, in which idealised masculinity, soldierly conduct and heroism were intrinsically tied to notions concerning the inherent defencelessness of women and children and the role of the male to provide protection. This potent mix of the most intimate personal relationships with national security and the blend between family and patriotic obligation was one of the defining characteristics of wartime visual culture.²³

Amidst the mobilisation of the family for the symbolic, in 1944 the State turned to the real concerns of family life after the end of the War. The new family code, introduced in July 1944 was, to this end, an interesting blend of pragmatism and idealism. Taking into account the expected rise in the number of unmarried mothers and the demographic crisis that was expected to follow the end of the War, a range of measures was introduced to boost the birth-rate. The status of Heroine Mother was created for women with more than seven children, taxes were levied for citizens with no children (and every unmarried man was now classed as legally childless), and married couples with less than three children. And yet amidst these new financial incentives for childbearing, Article Twenty of the new code removed a woman's right to sue for paternity and alimony from a man to whom she was not married.²⁴ By the end of the War then, paternity was not simply a case of biology but was defined by law, and as such a man was no longer legally obliged to provide for his illegitimate children financially; nor could he use his illegitimate offspring to avoid the new 'bachelor' tax. This provided a rather paradoxical view of fatherhood, as the new code seemingly reinforced the traditional family unit, encouraging fecund marriage while, at the same time, it financially rewarded unmarried mothers and removed some of the financial burdens for men that were associated with

having children outside of wedlock. Thus, specifically in terms of *unmarried* fathers, if paternity was reduced to its most basic social element – that of financial provision – the Family Code of 1944 shifted the responsibility for this from the biological father to the paternal State. With this, fatherhood was now limited by law to being exclusively something which occurred within the institution of marriage.

Thus we can see that for all its supposed one-dimensionality, the issue of fatherhood and paternity was an incredibly complex and often contradictory formulation throughout the 1930s and into the War years. The paternal personality cult of the leader ran alongside an increased focus on the importance of the father in childrearing, meaning that the authority of the biological father was simultaneously reinforced and undermined by official state rhetoric and, after 1936, the private enacting of fatherhood became enmeshed with civic responsibility and public persona. By the end of the 1930s, the father was seen to have a crucial role to play in shaping the next generation of Soviet citizens and for the first time men were, at least ideologically, in the position that women had been in since 1917 in having to be simultaneously an effective worker and parent, which by extension made them the model Soviet citizen. This intermingling of the private and the public was not something that was confined to the Soviet father, but it was the blurring of these boundaries and the creation of the symbiotic relationship between good citizenship and fatherhood that enabled the family to be used to such great effect during the War years, as the protection of loved ones became synonymous with the protection of the State. Both practically and symbolically the War was a watershed for the conceptualisation of paternity, and with it, Soviet masculinity as a whole.

Returning Fathers

In July 1945, *Pravda* commented on the ongoing process of demobilisation: 'Everywhere the frontline soldiers are welcomed with excitement and joy, with open arms [...] they are returning home to peaceful labour, to their own families, with their sense of patriotic duty fulfilled'.²⁵ In officially organised parades and welcoming committees, the demobilised soldier was greeted by his relatives and grateful compatriots and promised a wealth of benefits and a special standing within post-war society. This theme of homecoming would resonate throughout the years of demobilisation, the last wave of which ended in March 1948; it encapsulated the promise of post-war society, which in itself was firmly rooted in the notion of the Soviet soldier as a family man, and especially as a father. Needless to say, neither the horrific conditions that many had had to endure just to arrive back home nor the limitations of the state benefits to which they were now entitled were part of the official rhetoric of homecoming.²⁶ The reality of the many

soldiers who found they had no home or no family to return to, either due to death or evacuation, was likewise glossed over. Just as the ravages of war had had no impact on their bodies or minds, in official discourses the Soviet soldier always returned home to find his wife and children waiting for him. As popular magazines of the time were festooned with both photographs and tales of happy homecomings, so homecoming gained attention in other artistic media, attention that persisted beyond the suppression of the commemoration of the War instigated in 1947. Like both the rhetoric and the photographs of homecoming, these works were also devoid of any indication of trauma or tension, but crucially they demonstrate a vastly different familial hierarchy to those presented before 1941, as the focus was now placed on the bond between the returning father and his child. Thus, in the paintings and sculptures produced in the last decade of Stalinism that explored the theme of homecoming, it was the child that was presented as the lynchpin in the relationship between the Soviet man and the domestic space.

One of the most commonly reproduced representations of homecoming, both in the years immediately after the War and beyond, was Vladimir Kostetskii's *The Return* (1945-7) [Figure 1];²⁷ a painting inspired by a much earlier scene of homecoming, Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (c. 1669).²⁸ In the communal area outside their apartment, husband and wife are reunited, shown locked in a heartfelt embrace, while their young son clutches on to his father's overcoat and gazes up adoringly at his all-conquering hero. With the grandmother standing in the darkness of the doorway, the focus of the work is on the nuclear family unit in the centre of the canvas. Yet although it is the clinch between husband and wife that physically dominates the piece, Kostetskii presented them as completely consumed in their reunion and as such they in turn obscure each other's features; the bulk of the man, who has his back turned from the viewer, hides the woman's petite frame, whose face is buried into her husband's chest. The only figure not obscured by the shadows or the embrace, the happiness of the young boy – reinforced by his light clothing against the generally dark palette – provides the locus of the canvas and is the distillation of the homecoming narrative: now father was home, normal life could once again resume. However, although it appears as such a positive interpretation of the joy of victory and reunion, the more pessimistic aspects of Kostetskii's work did not pass unnoticed by contemporary commentators. After its first showing at the All-Union Art Exhibition in 1947, one critic wrote that Kostetskii had truthfully represented the hardships endured by the Soviet people, encapsulated in the thin arms and hands of the wife and the 'haggard face' of the young boy.²⁹ A later discussion of Kostetskii's work also questioned whether the 'thin pale boy in worn sandals' was a suitable embodiment of the optimism of the War's end.³⁰ Yet, in neither instance did the physical appearance of the wife and child lead to a condemnation of

Kostetskii's work, rather they were highlighted as contributing factors to the overall success of the composition.

Kostetskii was not alone in prioritising the father-child relationship above all others when dealing with subject of homecoming. Dementii Shmarinov, whose poster-work during the War years had drawn heavily on the vulnerability of the mother and child as a spur for heroic action, continued to focus upon the family in his painting *Reunion on Liberated Land* (1946).³¹ Like Kostetskii, Shmarinov showed the reunited nuclear family in his canvas, and again portrayed the emotion of reunion through the reconnection between father and son. This was also the case in Viktor Kiselev's *He's Back* (1947), which depicted a young peasant father being embraced by his daughter upon his return to the family home,³² and in both B. Karadzha's sculpture *Reunion* (?1945-50) and V. L. Kostetskii's bronze *The Return* (1946).³³ Nor was the prioritisation of the father-child relationship something which was unique to 'fine' art as the homecoming-themed posters of Maria Nesterova-Berzina and Nina Vatolina show: in Nesterova-Berzina's poster, *Waited* (1945), the bond between the returned father and his children was given primacy simultaneously through the image and the accompanying text, as the veteran was presented as a father, a son and, only then, a husband.³⁴

Given the mobilisation of the family in wartime visual culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that artists in the years after the War chose to present the Soviet soldier as a family man: after all what could better symbolise the value of victory and the hope for a better future than a child? However, the shift in dynamic between these depictions of family life and those that were produced in the years before 1941 is not explained satisfactorily by the simple desire to tug on the viewer's heartstrings. What is more, beyond any emotional motivation that may have existed in the creation of such images, it is both the fact that the demobilised Soviet soldier came to be represented first and foremost as a father, and the impact that this had on the portrayal of the Soviet family, that arguably had the greatest consequences for the conceptualisation of Soviet idealised masculinity. As was discussed above, the introduction of the father into the family unit was a development of the mid-1930s, a trend that was cemented by the extensive use of the familial motif during the War years. Yet, in every work that this research has uncovered from the pre-war period, the father's relationship with his child is mediated through the figure of the mother, whether as an explicit physical barrier between the father and child, or as an ever-watchful guardian. This would change after 1945 as the bond between a father and his child took on a more direct quality, seen in the first instance in representations of homecoming.

The visual representation of father-child interaction would diversify after the immediate post-war period, but what was consistent across this range of works was a continual reference to the father's military service. This was seen, for example in Arkadii Plastov's *Threshing on the Collective Farm* (1949) which juxtaposed the father's return to work with the presence of his young son, who is shown wearing his old army cap,³⁵ or A. A. Shirokov's *In the Family* (?1947-53), which depicted a chess game between a father and son, both of whom are in uniform.³⁶ This link between the military experience of the father and his relationship with his children was most explicitly articulated in another oft-published work of the era, Nikolai Ponomarev's *A New Uniform* (1952) [Figure 2].³⁷ Following its first display at the All Union Exhibition of 1952, Ponomarev's work was hailed by critics as the epitome of Soviet genre painting of the early 1950s, and while much praise was lavished on the artist's ability to capture the 'special power of the domestic genre', little attention was actually paid to the content of the painting,³⁸ which is in of itself noteworthy. The central interaction in Ponomarev's canvas at first appears to be that between the hero and his wife, shown dutifully pinning his hard-earned medals on to his new jacket. However, it is the link between the father and son – who is playfully trying on his father's new army cap, standing on a dining room chair so that he is able to see in the mirror – that forms the primary narrative strand of this work. We can see the connection between father and son here operating on two levels. There is what we might think of as the national-symbolic connection that is created by the representation of the small boy in his father's military garb; a not so subtle indicator of the perpetuity of the Red Army and the inherent heroism of the Soviet people. Secondly, there is a more personal and intimate connection between the father and his son which is constructed through the use of the mirror, a device which establishes a direct and unmediated connection between the males in the painting to the exclusion of the female family members. What is more, as if to underline the primacy of the bond between the father and his son, the placement of the boy on the chair both physically and symbolically put him above his older sister in the family hierarchy.

This new, more complex conceptualisation of both the place of the father within the domestic space and his relationship with his children found expression in media other than painting as, in the last years of Stalinism, popular magazines began to publish photographs of the Soviet father. Featuring both known and 'average' men, such publications showed fathers enjoying the company of their children, teaching them to play the piano, to ski, or doing the gardening together, offering a vision of fatherhood that was far more interactive than was ever presented on canvas.³⁹ However, the frequency with which such images were reproduced in the press should not be overstated, and had they not been a new development, they would have paled into

insignificance when compared with the equivalent representation of the mother-child bond. Although a consistent feature throughout the 1945 to 1953 period, it is worth noting that the focus upon the father-child relationship reached its peak in the months following the death of Stalin, indicative perhaps of the impact the paternal cult of the leader had on the representation of biological paternity. In *Ogonek* for example, between May 1945 and March 1953, twenty-five photographs were published that featured *direct* father-child interaction; in the following nine months alone, a further eighteen were printed, almost 42% of the total published across the eight years between the end of the War and Stalin's demise.⁴⁰

Thus in the years between 1945 and 1953, we can see two parallel developments with regard to representations of the Soviet family; first, the father became a palpable presence in the domestic space and second, his relationship with his children began to emerge from under the shadow of the omnipresent mother. The idea that the War brought about a renewed interest in the family relations is not confined to visual culture, as Vera Dunham demonstrated so influentially almost forty years ago in her work on literature from this period.⁴¹ But more than just being about interpersonal relationships, this new artistic focus on the father in the home can be seen as a barometer by which the restoration of pre-war norms were gauged, even if this form of representation had very few pre-war antecedents. As Victor Buchli has argued, 'the "hearth" was substantially more important than ever for the rebuilding of families and Soviet society in general, and its regenerative powers were keenly cultivated by the state'.⁴² Thus, home life became a crucial element in the reconstruction of Soviet society and as such nothing could symbolise the return to normality more succinctly than the presence of those who had left to secure the Soviet victory.

Lost Fathers

Of course not every father returned from the War and issues surrounding homecoming and reintegration were incongruent with the experience of many Soviet families. As one would expect, with the prevailing mood of the *Zhdanovshchina* – an era of cultural production based on the philosophy of 'conflictlessness' – and the emphasis on normalisation, the representation of the long-term impact of the War, in either emotional or material terms, had no place in post-war visual culture. And yet, there were a number of works produced in the late 1940s and early 1950s that omitted the father from domestic scenes and which seemed to hint at a restructuring of the family hierarchy in line with this absence. In addition to these works, this period saw a significant number of

images – paintings and photographs alike – which not only lacked the presence of the biological father but included the presence of the national father in the guise of Stalin or, less frequently, Lenin. Both of these developments would seem to suggest that, at the very least, the demographic impact of the War, was an inherent part of visual culture during the final years of Stalinism.

Aside from political and aesthetic constraints, one of the most problematic factors in deciphering whether we are in fact dealing with a permanent paternal absence in these images lies in the nature of fatherhood itself; after all, the ideal father who provides for his family must be by extension often away from the home. However, there is no such problem of interpretation in Tikhon Semenov's 1948 painting *Sad News (A Letter from the Front)*,⁴³ which was deemed 'particularly noteworthy' by the authors of a brief survey of recent art from the RSFSR published in *Ogonek* in April 1949 [Figure 3].⁴⁴ In retrospect, Semenov's painting was much more than noteworthy, it was entirely unique: it was one of only a handful of works that dealt openly with the issue of loss in the years before 1953 and was the only one from this period that placed the bereaved within the domestic space. Highlighting the indiscriminate nature of death, the family is depicted receiving the news of their loss at the breakfast table; amongst the trappings of a normal morning, the letter from the front in the young woman's hand is transformed into an alien object, out of kilter with the domesticity of the scene. Reminiscent of the device used by Kostetskii to highlight the father-child bond in his work, the wife of the fallen soldier in Semenov's canvas is shown with her face covered by a handkerchief. Through this, it is the man's children who provide the focus of the piece, in particular the young woman, letter in hand, whose body fills the foreground and whose black dress contrasts greatly with the lightness of the domestic interior. The son, who is himself in uniform, is presented as in a state of reserved shock but is compositionally overshadowed by his mother and sister, thus reinforcing the premise that grieving was predominantly a female occupation; an association that was not a Soviet invention but one which gained particular significance after 1941 as the bereaved mother became a central trope in both wartime and post-war visual culture.⁴⁵ The explicit emotion and clear narrative of Semenov's painting were exceptional for this period and it is telling that other works which are examined here contain such ambiguity that it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty whether we are indeed dealing with a permanent paternal absence.

In the years after the War renowned artist Fedor Reshetnikov produced a number of well-received works that focussed on the everyday lives of children. The Stalin Prize winning *Home for the Holidays* (1948) explored adult-child interaction, inspired by what one contemporary commentator called the 'new, friendly relationship between the

different generations',⁴⁶ from which the father was significantly omitted [Figure 4]. An immensely popular painting at the time, *Home* was reproduced on numerous occasions in the Soviet press over the next few years, even gracing the front cover of the *Ogonek* in January 1949⁴⁷ – the only painting in this era to do so – as well as appearing on postcards, being referenced in other images,⁴⁸ and even being reproduced as a sewing pattern.⁴⁹ Bedecked in his cadet uniform, saluting his grandfather, the young boy in *Home* was the embodiment of the patriotism, heroism and self-renewing nature of the Red Army. Yet despite the sense of optimism and festive cheer that the painting exudes, the boy's father is a notable absence. There are several indications that this absence was a permanent one, rather than this simply being a straightforward scene concerning the relationship between grandfather and grandchild, not least of all being the fact that it was the grandfather who was privy to this welcome. While the chair at the head of the dining table being occupied by the family cat may be a rather tenuous allusion to a paternal absence, it is the portrait which hangs above the young boy's head that provides the viewer with the most substantial clue that this family had suffered a loss during the War. This photograph is of a man in uniform, presumably the boy's father, and it hangs on the wall alongside a copy of Vasnetsov's 1898 much-loved painting *Bogatyri*. Compositionally this is very significant, as these two images and the boy form a pyramid, creating an unbroken genealogy of tradition and heroism, which leads from the knights of the mythical Russian past, to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War to the potential heroism of the young cadet. It is also telling that of the three generations of heroes, it is the (fallen) hero of the recent war who sits at the apex.

In *Low Marks Again!* (1952), Reshetnikov seemed to continue to explore this sense of inconspicuous loss,⁵⁰ although in this work there is no clear indication that the absence of the father from this scene was a permanent one. Arriving home from school with a battered briefcase, with a tell-tale edge of a skate poking through the top, and in an overcoat that swamps his small frame, this young boy stands dejected in the presence of his disappointed mother. While his brother plays and his sister studies, the boy appears as the world-weary master of the household, and is greeted in such a manner by his faithful dog. *Low Marks* was exemplary of the indolent schoolboy whose 'extra-curricular' activities had compromised his academic attainment. This painting, and a slightly earlier work by Adolf Gugel' and Raisa Kudrevich *A Big Surprise* (1951), which depicts a young boy caught smoking by his mother, are for Catriona Kelly symptomatic of the traditional structure of Soviet family life in which the father was the disciplinarian.⁵¹ In these works, the mothers are portrayed as somewhat ineffectual figures, capable of little more than a censorious look when it comes to disciplining her son.

While the absence of a male disciplinarian was at the heart of both of these paintings, and may even have been understood by the contemporary viewer as the reason behind these boys' wayward behaviour, there is nothing definitive in either image to prove that the father was permanently absent. Likewise, contemporary criticism was striking in its avoidance of the issue of the father. Writing for *Iskusstvo* in February 1953 about its display and reception at the latest All-Union Art Exhibition, Nina Dmitrieva called *Low Marks* 'undoubtedly one of the best works at the exhibition' as visitors could not help but 'genuinely love this sweet, simple family'. In two separate instances in this article, Dmitrieva discussed Reshetnikov's representation of the mother of the family, writing that the viewer could 'clearly see that the mother puts her whole soul into ensuring her children learn and grow into decent, educated people'.⁵² At no point in her analysis of this 'charming' family scene was the father so much as hinted at, let alone his absence, or even potential return, discussed. We see a similar obfuscation in an earlier critical analysis of *Home*, dating from February 1949, in which the author places Reshetnikov's work, not in the context of the War, but in that of the latest Five Year Plan.⁵³ Beyond *Iskusstvo*, on the pages of the popular press, Reshetnikov's works, while reproduced with relative frequency, garnered little written attention. However it is impossible to tell whether this is significant or indicative of an unease with their narratives as, for all they were lavishly illustrated, magazines such as *Ogonek* rarely included any detailed analysis of artworks and the majority of paintings in this period were presented as a series of colour reproductions separated from the main body of the magazine in an almost supplemental fashion. The exception to this would be the annual survey of works displayed at the All-Union Exhibition which generally ran over several pages and would include upwards of a dozen images. In January 1953, *Ogonek* published their overview of the offering from 1952, stating simply that *Low Marks* was a 'touching' piece characteristic of the genre works that typified Socialist Realism without providing any comment on the content, context or subtext of the painting.⁵⁴

The seeming ambiguity surrounding the absence of the father in Reshetnikov's work in particular is even more striking when we consider the lengths that the State went to to establish 'one-meaningness' [*odnoznachnost'*]. As Jan Plamper highlighted in his work on censorship in Karelia during the 1930s, there was an obsessive effort to eliminate ambiguity and polysemy from Soviet culture during this time which led to images being withdrawn from newspapers and magazines for a wide variety of reasons that ranged from looking too much like Trotsky to inadvertently containing swastikas.⁵⁵ Thus, Reshetnikov's work presents us with a rather a curious problem in terms of ambiguity and interpretation. It could be the case that the family dynamics presented in these works were so commonplace in the late 1940s and early 1950s that the father being

missing from the domestic scene was not even worthy of comment, but it is rather hard to believe that contemporary audiences viewed these paintings completely in line with the interpretation espoused in the critical press - that these were scenes of happy domesticity in which the absence of the father was either unnoted or entirely insignificant. Did the Soviet populace really not see the shadow of the War in the tone, composition or subject matter of these works? Or, was it the very subtext of the War and the pertinence of absent fathers and a longing for a happy childhood that made these pieces so appealing to the Soviet public?

When thinking about such issues, it is important to note that for all the attempts to control the interpretation of images through the 1930s, Reshetnikov was not alone in presenting the Soviet viewer with a portrait of life that could be read in multiple ways during the early post-war era. As Matthew Cullerne Bown points out in his survey of Socialist Realist paintings, works such as Aleksandr Laktionov's *A Letter from the Front* and Arkadii Plastov's *They Are Going to the Elections*, both from 1947, are open to interpretations that are independent of the Communist ethos that on first appearances they seem to espouse. Employing the framework of dual belief [*dvoreverie*], Bown sees these images as being indicative of the persistence of traditional Russian values lurking under the facade of Soviet iconography. For example, the markers of Sovietness in Laktionov's canvas - the uniform and medals of the soldier, the young woman's red fire warden's armband, the Pioneer neckerchief of the small boy - are arguably secondary to the more traditionally Russian features of Laktionov's seminal work: the sleepy provincial setting, the onion-domed cupola of the church in the background, the rickety floorboards and peeling plaster of the family home all point at a way of life that has been unchanged by Soviet project.⁵⁶ Similarly in his comments on Plastov's work, Bown contrasts the 'official' reading of the painting that these citizens are exuberant at the prospect of participating in the nation's political future and the 'unofficial' reading that, title aside, this could simply be a scene of a group of friends enjoying a traditional Russian pastime of taking a troika ride through the snow.⁵⁷ Bown thus draws the conclusion that 'such ambivalent narratives are a widespread feature of socialist realist painting from the 1940s onwards'.⁵⁸ It is debatable how 'widespread' this phenomenon really was, certainly during the Stalin years, but such duality does open the door to legitimate multifarious readings of images such as those by Reshetnikov, despite the prevailing conservatism of the art institutions at this time and the fact that this was not a part of the critical reception of such works. Thus beneath the veneer of school days and holiday celebrations, we can see Reshetnikov's works as acknowledging the losses inflicted by the War - a factor which arguably played no small role in the popularity of these paintings.

Ultimately though, whatever pathos may be stirred by paintings like Reshetnikov's, and others such as Laktionov's *Into the New Apartment* (1952) - which is examined in more detail below - the emotional impact of these works is severely restrained by the rendering of the comfortable domestic setting [Figure 5]. These are not images of destroyed lives, of fragmenting families, or of individuals struggling to come to terms with the horrors that the War years have inflicted upon them; rather these are optimistic future-orientated scenes of a happy everyday life, taking place in a space of both material and emotional security. Indeed, the cosy domestic interior can be seen as compensating for the absence of the biological father by underlining the paternalism of the state as the provider of new apartments, free education and employment; despite their (potential) loss, these families are, after all, still able to enjoy the material benefits of life in the Soviet Union. If we accept the premise, first espoused by Vera Dunham, that the reconceptualisation of the domestic space from the asceticism of the 1920s and 1930s to the doilies, floral throws and lace tablecloths of the post-war years was part of a concerted effort to minimise the legacy of the War - both in terms of the disaffection of the population and in terms of its physical impact⁵⁹ - we should also see the combination of material well-being with the absent father as particularly significant. Yet, however emotionally limited these works may be, the crucial point should not be overlooked that, despite the lack of acknowledgement in the professional art world, the loss suffered during the War appears to be an intrinsic part of the narratives of these canvases.

Beyond this ideal of a comfortable family home, paintings such as those by Reshetnikov and Laktionov are symptomatic of a much broader reluctance to visually link loss and the domestic space; something that holds true even in works where loss is the central narrative and the ambiguity we encounter in paintings such as *Home* is not an issue. During the War years, a small space was carved out for the visual representation of bereavement, which was most commonly associated with the mother. From Fedor Bogorodskii's *Glory to the Fallen Heroes* (1945) to sculptor V.V. Lishev's *Mother* (1946), the image of the bereaved mother became an instant icon in Soviet visual culture.⁶⁰ Nor were these minor or marginal works. Bogorodskii's painting, for example, enjoyed enormous success throughout the two decades after the War: as well as being awarded the Stalin Prize, it was also reproduced many times in the popular press, even appearing as a colour pull-out poster-sized supplement in the January 1947 issue of *Tvorchestvo*,⁶¹ before being turned into a stamp to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of victory in 1965. What Bogorodskii's painting and other such works from this period - with the exception of Semenov's unique 1948 painting - have in common is a striking reticence to

associate this loss with the domestic space. The transference of grieving to a setting removed from reality (Bogorodskii) or the trope of the discovery of the son's body still on the battlefield (Lishev), preserved the domestic space, allowing it to be cast as a place of healing and a sanctuary away from both war and its aftermath.

As was frequently the case, the picture offered by post-war visual culture with regards to issues surrounding trauma and bereavement differed significantly to other art forms. While a full exploration of the diversity across the genres in terms of the presentation and remembrance of the War experience is beyond the scope of this article, even a cursory glance at other contemporaneous cultural products reveals considerable divergence in the treatment of these troubling issues to those found in visual culture. As Anna Krylova has highlighted, the discussion about the representation of the 'wounded soul' and the role of literature in providing a balm for the troubled Soviet psyche, predates 1945, as the War 'necessitated the treatment of such allegedly inappropriate themes in Soviet literature as mourning and grief'.⁶² We find the exploration of these 'inappropriate themes' with relative frequency both during and immediately following the War seen in pieces such as Pavel Antokolskii's poem *Son* (1943) and Mikhail Sholokhov's novella, *The Fate of Man* (written in 1946, censored until 1957), both of which describe the grief of a father at the loss of his son. The inverse scenario of the soldier who came home to discover that his family had been killed likewise found expression in contemporary literature. Mikhail Isakovskii's poem *The Enemies Burnt His Family Home* (1945) tells the story of a soldier returning home from liberating Budapest to discover his house in ashes and his family murdered and even the relentlessly jolly *Vasilii Terkin* contained a chapter entitled 'The Bereaved Soldier', which recounted the tale of one of Terkin's comrades who, passing through his hometown, found that he 'Has no window, has no cottage / Has no housewife, though he's married / Has no son, although there was one'.⁶³ In contrast, the reality of the soldier who came home to ruins or the destruction of his family was completely unrepresented visually until the mid-1960s, with the earliest work found being Aleksandr Romanychev's *The Paternal Home* (?1963).⁶⁴

Although it must be remembered that these poems and stories were produced in the immediate aftermath of the War, when control over cultural output was far laxer than it had been in the preceding years, the work of Antokolskii and others shows both that the expression of grief found an outlet in culture and, more significantly in this context, that this grief was at times explicitly linked to the home in a manner that was never a part of the visual discourse on the War's emotional impact. What is also interesting to note is that while the mother became the central figure through which bereavement was articulated visually, these examples from literature are coded through male experience –

fathers losing sons, husbands losing wives – which was not a part of Soviet visual culture until B. Shvelidze's *In Memory of Lost Sons* (1964), followed by Aleksei Eremin's *Fathers and Sons* a decade later.⁶⁵ Still, even in these works so many years after 1945, we see the continuation of the trend that maintained an artificial distinction between the domestic space and the events of war, as both artists placed their grieving fathers on the grassed-over battlefield, contrasting the scarred psyche of these men with the restored landscape. For our purposes then, what it is important to note is that what Krylova terms 'inappropriate themes' were not explored visually with anything like the same frequency, range, depth or subtlety as we see in other cultural media, either in the Stalinist era or beyond. Furthermore, while literary, and later cinematic, treatment of issues such as bereavement were often framed in relation to the domestic space, in art an explicit connection between the War and the home was studiously avoided until the mid-1960s.⁶⁶ Thus the two decades between the end of the War and the emergence of artistic representations which linked loss with the domicile suggests that we should look beyond the political constraints of Stalinism for the dearth of images which explored the War/home nexus. Instead we could view the lack of such works as a statement about the restorative power and sacrality of the domestic space; a view that was by no means uniquely Soviet and one that would resonate across Europe in the aftermath of 1945.⁶⁷

Why this reluctance to associate the home with the legacy of the War was so pronounced in visual culture is highly debatable: certainly both the prevailing atmosphere of the *Zhdanovshchina* and the conservative nature of fine art production in the immediate post-war period – as typified by the creation of the All-Union Academy of Arts in 1947 – could go some way to explaining why such potentially problematic or divisive themes found no outlet in the last years of Stalinism, but this fails to explain why we see such a divergence across cultural production, when all media were subject to the same ideological constraints and why, for the most part, this reluctance persisted throughout the Thaw.⁶⁸ Rather than look at the machinations of the various institutions governing cultural production, it is perhaps more fruitful to think about these differences as related to the inherent qualities of the media themselves. What we see time and again in literary and cinematic handling of subject matter such as bereavement or trauma is the centrality of overcoming: the way that Sholokov's hero in *The Fate of Man* channels his grief at the loss of his entire family to become a father to little orphaned Vania, or how the fighter pilot Aleksei Meres'ev overcomes having his feet amputated to once again take to the skies. The complexity of these tales of service, through despair, to ultimate triumph or recovery is simply better suited to the temporal rather than spatial arts, as this narrative of progression is almost impossible to represent on canvas.

However we may conceptualise the different handling of similar themes across the genres though, what is clear is that it is impossible to speak of one homogeneous way in which the War and its legacy was dealt with in Soviet culture even during the Stalinist years let alone in the plurality that was increasingly possible during Destalinisation. It is vital that we acknowledge that the bereavement caused by the War was a part of Soviet culture across a multitude of genres, but of equal import is that we recognise the vast differences that existed in the way in which its legacy was dealt with. In the case of visual culture, although we see explicit grief being expressed through the figure of the mother, what we do not see in this period is any acknowledgement the impact of the War on either children or the domestic space more generally – something that sets it apart from other contemporaneous media. Specifically in terms of the lost father, we are left with a very ambiguous picture and an apparent disjunction between the narrative of the paintings themselves and the critical reception of them on the pages of both the popular and professional press; a disjunction that aptly demonstrates the limits of official discourse on issues of post-war social reality.

Paternity By Proxy: National Leaders as Surrogate Fathers

At the All-Union Exhibition in 1952, Aleksandr Laktionov's *Into the New Apartment* was displayed for the first time and garnered a mixed reception. Criticised for its varnishing of reality, for showing the wrong kind of paper on the walls and for having the audacity to place artificial flowers in a modern apartment,⁶⁹ Laktionov's canvas nonetheless emerged as a staple image in the Soviet popular press.⁷⁰ Standing on the parquet floor of her newly-built, spacious apartment, Laktionov's heroine, hands on hips, proudly surveys her domain, surrounded by the accoutrements of life. Behind her, her eldest son stashes his bike in another room, and her daughter holds the family cat, also taking in the wonder before them; stood next to this woman is her younger son, who looks questioningly at her as if to ask 'Where are we going to put Stalin's picture, Mother?'. Thus the dynamic of this family was established, with the woman placed in the middle of the canvas, her feet firmly planted, forming the solid, central vertical axis of the painting,⁷¹ a literal presentation of her role as the support which held the family together, and at her side not a husband but a portrait of the *vozhd'*. While this woman was in many ways the centre of the narrative in Laktionov's work, the portrait of Stalin was not just there as a replacement spouse but, through its close proximity to the young boy, it also functioned as a surrogate father, as the natural male authority figure, the elder son, is relegated to a position of insignificance. Hence, Laktionov presented Stalin as far more than the figurative paternal leader of the nation, or the bestower of the gift of a new apartment on this family: as Jørn Guldberg states, 'via his picture, Stalin [...]

completes the family and by replacing the absent "real" father, he re-establishes the family's harmony and order'.⁷²

The idea of Stalin as the father of the nation was clearly not a product of the post-war period, and had been a significant trope in literature, film and the visual arts throughout the 1930s, as detailed by scholars such as Katerina Clark, Hans Günther, Catriona Kelly, and Jan Plamper.⁷³ Nor was the idea of Stalin making up for a lack – particularly a parental one – a new conceptualisation. The figure of the orphan had played a prominent role in early Socialist Realist cinema, particularly in the rags-to-riches plots of musical comedies and the frequency of the motif prompted Maria Enzensberger to proclaim as early as 1993 that 'the absent family of the Soviet cinema of the 1930s and 1940s is a subject worthy of separate investigation'.⁷⁴ But what was new – certainly as far as non-cinematic visual culture was concerned – was the transference of this surrogate paternalism into the domestic space in the years after 1945. After being largely dormant for the first years of the War, the paternal cult of Stalin was revived with a vengeance after 1943. As part of this post-war resurgence, genre paintings of this era consistently included Stalin in the home, leading to a domestication of the personality cult that set it apart from its pre-war counterpart. What is more, building upon the established link between Stalin and the Soviet child, his inclusion in the domestic space was almost exclusively confined to works that had children as their primary focus. In his painting, *The First of September* from 1950, Andrei Volkov showed a young girl preparing to return to school, adjusting her pioneer neckerchief in her light and spacious bedroom, all under the loving gaze of Stalin, whose portrait hangs over her bookcase.⁷⁵ Likewise, Elena Kostenko in *Future Builders* (1952) depicted a group of small children at play, again in a well-appointed apartment and with an abundance of toys, while being watched over by Stalin, with Gelya sat on his knee, from a photograph hanging conspicuously on the wall.⁷⁶ However, the introduction of Stalin into these domestic settings was positively deft when compared to that presented by Grigorii Pavlyuk in his painting, also from 1950, *To Dear Stalin*, which combined the domestic scene of a group of children writing a letter to their leader with an improbably large bust of Stalin himself overlooking proceedings from the corner of the room.⁷⁷ Due to the absence of a flesh-and-blood father in these works, Stalin is transformed into the alpha male of this family, fulfilling a range of traditional paternal functions as he is portrayed as their source of inspiration, their advisor, the focus of their love and devotion and the generous provider of their spacious private home.

In addition to being used in scenarios which included no parental presence, Soviet leaders were also used in scenes in which it was the father who was markedly absent,

thus strengthening the premise that this domestication of the paternal personality cult was the result of the demographic impact of the War. This was seen, for example, on a number of front covers of *Ogonek*, which appear to have been doctored to introduce Lenin and Stalin into the domestic space, as in the case of the magically-floating portrait of Lenin as a child that hangs above the heads of several women of one family and a young boy attempting to do his studies on the front cover of *Ogonek* in January 1952 or the New Year's edition of *Ogonek* in 1951, which showed a mother gazing adoringly down at her baby in its crib with a curiously clear photograph of Stalin on top of the piano behind her.⁷⁸ It was also seen in an interesting poster created by N. N. Zhukov, *We Will Surround Orphans With Maternal Kindness and Love* (1947), in which the impact of the War loomed even larger as the maternal care for orphaned children is juxtaposed with a portrait of Stalin with Gelya, which hangs on the wall behind the child's bed.

From oil paintings to low quality illustrations, from posters to the front covers of *Ogonek*, the presence of Stalin in the domestic space is one of the defining features of early post-war works which depicted family life. With the exception of Pavliuk and Kostenko, whose works have only been found in modern collections of Socialist Realism painting, all of these images were reproduced on the pages of the popular press, some very prominently, as with the New Year's front cover of *Ogonek* in 1951. As Plamper has demonstrated in incredible depth in his recent survey of the Stalin cult in visual culture, any manifestation of the cult could not happen without sanction from above;⁷⁹ therefore the domestication of the cult in the manner we see after 1945 could not be accidental given the control that Stalin or those in his inner circle had on what images of all genres were deemed suitable for publication. In the climate of the early Cold War period and the potential for disillusionment that existed at home, this shift could be representative of a need for the Soviet political elite to associate itself with the current young generation. However, it is surely not coincidental that both Stalin and, to a lesser extent, Lenin were introduced into the domicile in the aftermath of such much male loss, at a time when millions of children were left fatherless and a further 8.7 million were born to unmarried mothers in the decade after the end of the War.⁸⁰

Accompanying the domestication of the leader cult through the use of busts, photographs or portraiture in the home, there continued to be many works across a range of media which presented the close connection that both the 'real' Lenin and Stalin enjoyed with the Soviet child.⁸¹ But in 1947 we see a new, and seemingly unique, aspect of this ubiquitous association – Stalin as a biological father. In his survey of *Pravda*, Plamper selects 1947 for detailed consideration, labelling it 'a typical, most ordinary postwar year of the cult',⁸² and yet it is during this most run-of-the-mill year that Vasili

Efanov completed his painting *I. V. Stalin and V. M. Molotov With Children*, an image that was reproduced in *Iskusstvo* in a full colour plate early the following year and that in 1952 would grace the cover of the women's magazine *Rabotnitsa*.⁸³ Stalin was very rarely shown with his biological children in photographic form – just once in *Pravda* between 1929 and 1953⁸⁴ – and never in any other medium prior to 1947 but in Efanov's strangely unsettling pastoral scene, Stalin and Molotov are shown walking through a field accompanied by their small children. Although all of Stalin and Molotov's children would have been at least in their mid-twenties when the artist produced this painting, the unadorned military uniform and jackboots that Stalin wears suggest that this was in fact a retrospective work, set some time in the early 1930s. This makes the image even more jarring in its conceptualisation, as the setting for the painting would appear to be around the time that Stalin's second wife, Nadia, committed suicide and by the time that it was reproduced in *Rabotnitsa*, Molotov's wife would be in exile facing criminal charges – hardly the traditional underpinnings of a happy family scene! Despite the rather strange contexts in which the painting was both set and reproduced, it is telling that Efanov, who was himself no stranger to the portrayal of Stalin in all his pomp and glory, chose this mode of representation for the two statesmen and it is indicative of the new post-war status of fatherhood. No longer just the father of the nation, or the surrogate father of the fatherless, by 1947 the paternal role of Stalin was also grounded in biology.

Conclusion: The Home Front: Fatherhood and Family After the War

The Great Patriotic War marked a watershed moment in the representation of the Soviet man: though tentatively and incredibly infrequently a presence in the domestic space during the 1930s, the blending of the personal with the public in wartime visual culture signified a shift that would perpetuate for the rest of the Soviet period as, for the first time with any regularity, the Soviet man was visually associated with the private sphere. Although the full fruition of this development would not occur until the late 1950s, what we see in the aftermath of the War is the emergence of the Soviet father as a figure in his own right, first in the guise of the returning veteran and then by the end of the 1940s, in a more diverse range of scenarios, although predominantly still with a military subtext. Though the significance of this development should not be underestimated, what must be noted is that despite the War looming large in the majority of such images, there was at no point any indication of strained relationships, material hardship, or physical or emotional trauma. Visually, homecoming was nothing less than happily-ever-after, as there was always a home and a family for the soldier to return to; an aphorism that would remain true until the mid-1960s.

While the years after 1945 brought about a positive visual reconceptualisation of the place of the man in the home, in contrast the representation of the lost father is indicative of a very different shift in visual culture as a consequence of the War. In Stalinist portrayals of the absent father we find some small space that allowed for the expression of sentiments which did not usually sit comfortably within the Socialist Realist ethos and, along with other earlier works that centred on the bereaved mother, allowed for a very limited acknowledgement of the bodily and emotional cost of victory as for the first time we see the treatment of death, bereavement and loss in Soviet art. Such representations of the consequences of war not only further complicate our perception of Soviet visual culture during this period, but also underline the complexities of Soviet culture more generally when it came to dealing with what Krylova termed 'inappropriate themes'.⁸⁵ Though trauma and grief found an explicit outlet in the literature of the period, with the exception of Semenov's extraordinary work, the same simply cannot be said for visual culture after the end of the War. This divergence was one that persisted long after 1953, and one that would become even more marked given how well Thaw-era cinema dealt with some of these sensitive and problematic issues.

Unlike the emotional rawness we find in literature and later in film, in visual culture we have intimation. While the father may be absent from post-war scenes of family life, the reason behind this absence, or the psychological or material consequences of this absence, were never articulated, either in the paintings themselves or in the official comment made about them. As such, we are left to read between the lines and to interpret oblique references made in the canvases of artists like Reshetnikov and Laktionov in a manner that was never part of the contemporary discussion of these works but was surely a way in which they were intended to be – and were – viewed. Still despite their constraints, the fact remains that even under Stalin works that dealt with both the implicit and explicit legacy of the War were not only produced but were also reproduced on the pages of the popular press. Beyond this, that so many of these tropes – such as the reluctance to associate death or the physical ravages of war with the domestic space – remained the norm in War-themed art into the mid-1960s should cause us to question both how far the narratives of these earlier works were shaped primarily by the strictures of Stalinism, and ultimately the extent to which the Thaw brought about an artistic reconceptualisation of the War experience.

¹ John Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal* (Harmondsworth, 2000), 119-120.

² Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments* trans. Hugh Ragsdale (London, 1998), 20.

³ Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-53* (Basingstoke, 1999), 2.

⁴ Lilya Kaganovsky, *How The Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: PA, 2008); John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema*

(Manchester, 2003); Eliot Borenstein, *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929* (London, 2000); Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (London, 2001); Mark Edele, 'Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945-1953', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50 (2002), 37-61; Ethan Pollock, 'Real Men Go to the Bania: Post-war Soviet Masculinities and the Bathhouse', *Kritika* 11:1 (2010), 47-76.

⁵ Susan Reid, 'All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s', *Slavic Review* 57:1 (1998), 133-173; Christina Kiaer, 'Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s', *Oxford Art Journal* 28:3 (2005), 321-345; Oliver Johnson, 'The Stalin Prize and the Soviet Artist: Status Symbol or Stigma?' *Slavic Review* 70:4 (2011), 819-843; Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (London, 2012).

⁶ Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova (eds.), *Cinepaternity: Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post-Soviet Film* (Bloomington: IN, 2010). See also Hans Günther, 'Wise Father Stalin and his Family in Soviet Cinema' in T. Lahusen and E. Dobrenko (eds.), *Socialist Realism Without Shores* (London, 1997), 178-90.

⁷ See for example Karen Petrone, 'Masculinity and Heroism in Imperial and Soviet Military-Patriotic Cultures' in B. Clements, R. Friedman and D. Healey (eds.), *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* (Basingstoke, 2001), 172-93; Mark Edele, 'Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero According to Soviet Wartime Posters', *Jahrbücher für Osteuropas* 47 (1999), 89-108; Toby Clark, 'The 'New Man's' Body: A Motif in Early Soviet Culture' in Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (eds.), *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992* (Manchester, 1993), 33-50

⁸ Amir Weiner, 'Saving Private Ivan: From What, Why, and How?', *Kritika* 1 (2000), 303-336; Anna Krylova, '"Healers of the Wounded Souls": The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-1946', *The Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001), 307-331

⁹ See for example, Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, The State and Revolution; Soviet Family Policy and Social Life 1917-1936* (Cambridge, 1993); Melanie Ilić (ed.), *Women in the Stalin Era* (Basingstoke, 2001); Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism 1860-1930* (Princeton: NJ, 1990); Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Indianapolis: IN, 1997).

¹⁰ Sergei Kukhterina 'Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-Communist Russia' in Sarah Ashwin (ed.), *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London, 2000), 74.

¹¹ See David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norm of Soviet Modernity 1917-1941* (Ithaca: NY, 2003), 88-117

¹² Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History As Ritual, 3rd Edition* (Bloomington: IN, 2000), 114-135.

¹³ See Vladim Volkov, 'The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*; Notes on the Stalinist Civilising Process' in Shelia Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000), 210-30; Catriona Kelly, '*Kul'turnost'* in the Soviet Union: Ideal and Reality' in G. Hosking and R. Service (eds.), *Reinterpreting Russia* (London, 1999), 198-213.

¹⁴ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 114-15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁶ See Catriona Kelly, 'Riding the Magic Carpet: Children and Leader Cult in the Stalin era', *The Slavic and East European Journal* 49:2 (2005), 199-224; *Idem*, 'Grandpa Lenin and Uncle Stalin: Soviet Leader Cult for Little Children' in Balazs Apor, Jan C. Behrends, Polly Jones and E. A. Rees (eds.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc* (Basingstoke, 2004), 102-22.

¹⁷ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 120.

¹⁸ Jay Bergman, 'Valerii Chkalov: Soviet Pilot as New Soviet Man', *Journal of Contemporary History* 33:1 (1998), 132-154

¹⁹ See also the poster by Konstantin Zotov, *Liuboi krest'ianin, kolkhoznik ili edinolichnik imeet teper' vozmozhnost' zhit' po-chelovecheski* (1934). The loving father can also be seen in V. Govorkov, *Za radostnoe tsvetushchee detstvo* (1936), although this poster does not have a domestic setting.

²⁰ D. Hoffmann, 'Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context', *Journal of Social History* 34 (2000), 35-53; Elizabeth Waters, 'The Modernisation of Russian Motherhood, 1917-1937', *Soviet Studies* 44 (1992), 123-135.

²¹ *Pravda*, 9 June 1936 published in Rudolf Schlesinger (ed.), *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the USSR, Documents and Readings* (London, 1949), 266-269.

²² The poster also has visual parallels with Dmitrii Moor's iconic Civil War poster *Ty zapisalsia dobrovol'tsem?* (1920). Other examples of the use of the spousal or parental role include Aleksei Kokorekin, *Ubei ego!* (1945); Dementii Shmarinov, *Otomsti!* (1942); Leonid Golovanov, *Spasem sovetskikh rebiat nemtsev!* (1943); Vladimir Ladiagin, *Ia zhdal tebia, voin-osvoboditel'* (1945).

²³ See Lisa Kirschenbaum, '"Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families": Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda', *Slavic Review* 59:4 (2000), 825-847 for discussion of family motifs in non-visual material.

²⁴ The Family Law of July 8 1944 published in Schlesinger (ed.), *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia*, 367-77.

²⁵ 'Vstrecha moskvichei pobeditelei', *Pravda* 16 July 1945, 3.

- ²⁶ Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford, 2008), 21-34.
- ²⁷ In its first year alone it was published in *Iskusstvo 1* (1948), 13, *Sovetskaia zhenshchina 1* (1948), 23, and *Ogonek 8* (1948), 24-5.
- ²⁸ G. Portnov, 'Shtrikhi portreta: khudozhnik V. Kostetskii', *Iskusstvo 2* (1968), 27.
- ²⁹ Anon, 'Vozvrashchenie. Khudozhnik V. Kostetskii', *Sovetskaia zhenshchina 1* (1948), 23.
- ³⁰ Portnov, 'Shtrikhi portreta: khudozhnik V. Kostetskii', 27.
- ³¹ Reproduced in P. K. Suzdalev, *9.V.45 – 9.V.75: Podvigu 30 let* (Moskva, 1975), pl. 19
- ³² *Ogonek 19* (1955), between 16-7.
- ³³ *Iskusstvo 2* (1950), 65; *Ogonek 28* (1947), between 8-9.
- ³⁴ Nina Vatolina, *Ty khrabro voeval s vragom – voidi, khozyain, v novyi dom!* (1945), Maria Nesterova-Berzina, *Dozhdalis'*, both reproduced in Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaya Biblioteka,, *Plakaty voiny i pobedy*, pls. 201, 203.
- ³⁵ *Iskusstvo 3* (1950), 12.
- ³⁶ *Ogonek 1* (1955), between 16-7.
- ³⁷ *Iskusstvo 2* (1953), 18.
- ³⁸ N. Dmitrieva, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1952 goda', *Iskusstvo 2* (1953), 18
- ³⁹ See for example the photograph published in *Ogonek 48* (1948), 9, which depicts a father bathing his child and those in *Ogonek 21* (1953), 3 and *Ogonek 27* (1953), 3, which show a father gardening with his daughter and a father reading to his two children respectively.
- ⁴⁰ These figures are based on a survey of *Ogonek* between 1945 and 1953 and on photographs which depicted direct father-child contact and do not include other, far more numerous, images that presented the father as being present in a general family scene, or representations of grandfathers and grandchildren. A detailed survey of publications aimed at a female audience would possibly yield different results, for example the first post-war photograph of a father and his child did not appear in *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* until the final issue of 1951.
- ⁴¹ Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge, 1976).
- ⁴² Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford, 1999), 97. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society: The "Return to Normalcy", 1945-1953' in Susan Linz (ed.), *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa: NJ, 1985), 129-55.
- ⁴³ *Iskusstvo 3* (1949), 18; *Ogonek 16* (1949), between 16-7.
- ⁴⁴ 'Khudozhniki Rossiiskoi Federatskii', *Ogonek 16* (1949), 17
- ⁴⁵ For discussion grieving as female see Daniel J. Sherman, 'Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity in France After World War I', *Gender and History 8:1* (1996), 82-107 and Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, 1989).
- ⁴⁶ Anon., 'Torzhestvo sotsialisticheskogo realizma', *Iskusstvo 2* (1949), 6.
- ⁴⁷ *Iskusstvo 2* (1949), 5; *Ogonek 1* (1949)
- ⁴⁸ See for example Yu. Pimenov, *S novym godom* (1957). Reshetnikov even referenced himself in *Opyat' dvoika!* in which the painting was transformed into a calendar.
- ⁴⁹ Susan Reid, *De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art: The Search for a Contemporary Realism, 1953-1963* (Unpublished PhD, University of Pennsylvania, 1996), 146.
- ⁵⁰ *Iskusstvo 1* (1953), 9; *Ogonek 17* (1953), between 24-5.
- ⁵¹ Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (London, 2007), 127. As Reshetnikov would make clear in a later work, *Pereekzamenovka*, 1954 (*Ogonek 2*, 1955, between 8-9) discipline was enforced on this errant young lad, as he was forced to work whilst his friends, gathered outside his bedroom window, try to tempt him out to play.
- ⁵² Dmitrieva, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1952 goda', 18, 21.
- ⁵³ Anon., 'Torzhestvo sotsialisticheskogo realizma', *Iskusstvo 2* (1949), 6.
- ⁵⁴ A. Kamenskii, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1952 goda' *Ogonek 3* (1953), 10.
- ⁵⁵ Jan Plamper, 'Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s' *Russian Review 60:4* (2001), 526-44.
- ⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion of Laktionov's work and its reception see in Oliver Johnson, 'A Premonition of Victory': A Letter From the Front', *Russian Review 68* (2009), 408-428; Susan Reid, 'In the Name of the People: The Manège Affair Revisited', *Kritika 6:4* (2005), 697-706.
- ⁵⁷ M. C. Bown *Socialist Realist Painting* (London, 1998), 259-61.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 261

- ⁵⁹ Dunham, *In Stalin's Time*, esp. 91-6; Susan Reid, 'Women in the Home' in M. Ilić, S. Reid, and L. Attwood (eds.), *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (Basingstoke, 2004), 151.
- ⁶⁰ See also S. M. Orlov, *Mat'* (1941-43); D. Shmarinov, *Mat'* (1942); E. A. Zaitsev, *Pokhorony geroia* (1945).
- ⁶¹ A copy of the painting can be found at: <http://01varvara.wordpress.com/2008/05/18/p-bogorodsky-glory-to-a-fallen-hero-1945/p-bogorodsky-glory-to-a-fallen-hero-19451/> [last accessed 26.01.2014]
- ⁶² Krylova, "Healers of the Wounded Souls", 315.
- ⁶³ Alexander Tvardovsky, *Vassili Tyorkin: A Book About A Soldier* (Moscow, 1975), 329.
- ⁶⁴ *Khudozhnik* 12 (1963), 7.
- ⁶⁵ *Iskusstvo* 3 (1967), 8; reproduced in S. N. Levandovskii, *Mir otstoiali, mir sokhranim* (Leningrad, 1985), pl. 87.
- ⁶⁶ For more detailed discussion of these issues see Claire E. McCallum, *The Fate of the New Man: Reconstructing and Representing Masculinity in Soviet Visual Culture, 1945-65* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2011).
- ⁶⁷ See the special issue *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:2 *Domestic Dreamworlds: Notions of Home in Post-1945 Europe* (2005).
- ⁶⁸ Some notable exceptions include Edgar Iltner, *Muzh'ia vozvrashchaiutsia* (1957) and Gelii Korzhev, *Vliublennye* (1959).
- ⁶⁹ Dmitrieva, 'Vsesoiuznaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1952 goda', 22.
- ⁷⁰ *Iskusstvo* (1 and 2, 1953, 8, 19). Other early reproductions include *Ogonek* 24 (1953), between 24-5.
- ⁷¹ Reid, 'Women in the Home', 149.
- ⁷² Jørn Guldberg, 'Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice: Observations on the Interpretation of the Works of Art of the Stalin Period' in Hans Günther (ed.), *The Culture of the Stalin Period* (London, 1990), 169.
- ⁷³ Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 114-135; Günther, 'Wise Father Stalin and his Family in Soviet Cinema', 178-90 Kelly, 'Riding the Magic Carpet', 199-224; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*
- ⁷⁴ Maria Enzenberger, "We Were Born to Turn a Fairy Tale into Reality": Grigori Alexandrov's *The Radiant Path* in Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (eds.), *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema* (London, 1993), 99; Haynes, *New Soviet Man*, 61
- ⁷⁵ *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* 5 (1951), 21.
- ⁷⁶ E. Kostenko, *Future Builders* (1952), reproduced in Vern Grosvenor Swanson, *Soviet Impressionism* (Woodbridge, 2001), 321.
- ⁷⁷ Reproduced in Gleb Prokhorov, *Art Under Socialist Realism: Soviet Painting, 1930-1950* (Roseville East, 1995), pl. 45.
- ⁷⁸ *Ogonek* 5 (1952); *Ogonek* 1 (1951).
- ⁷⁹ Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 33-35; 127-35
- ⁸⁰ Mie Nakachi, 'Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and Its Legacy' in Juliane Fürst, *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (Oxford, 2006), 37.
- ⁸¹ Such works are numerous; see for example the sculpture by G. Stolbova and V. Bogatyrev, *Spasibo Tovarishchu Stalinu za schastlivoe detstvo* (*Ogonek* 6, 1952, 6); N. N Zhukov, *Pervoe slovo* (*Ogonek* 22, 1950, frontispiece); F. Antonov, *Schast'e iunosti* (*Sovetskaia zhenshchina* 3, 1951, frontispiece); the series of sketches by N. N. Zhukov which showed Lenin with children around Christmas (*Ogonek* 3, 1953, between 16-7, and *Rabotnitsa* 1, 1953, between 8-9); A. Varlanov, *V. I. Lenin s detvoroi*, 1950 (*Iskusstvo* 1, 1951, 20) and the photograph of a young girl kissing Stalin on the cheek (*Rabotnitsa* 6, 1952, frontispiece, and *Ogonek* 18, 1952, frontispiece) to name but a few of the works reproduced in the popular press at this time.
- ⁸² Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 86.
- ⁸³ *Iskusstvo* 2 (1948), 2-3; *Rabotnitsa* 5 (1952). A copy of the painting (although incorrectly dated to 1939) can be found on the Stalinka database: <http://images.library.pitt.edu/s/stalinka/> [last accessed 26.01.2014]
- ⁸⁴ This was on 3 August 1935; Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 44.
- ⁸⁵ Krylova, "Healers of the Wounded Souls", 315