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# Scorched by the Fire of War: Masculinity, War Wounds and Disability in Soviet Visual Culture, 1941–65

CLAIRE E. McCALLUM

RETURNING home from fighting in the Civil War, Gleb Chumalov, the protagonist in Fedor Gladkov's seminal novel of the 1920s, *Cement*, finds the factory where he used to work a crumbling wreck. Determined to restore the cement works to its former productivity, Chumalov confronts his former co-workers, whom he accuses of being work-shy, revealing his war-damaged body as a visible indication of his commitment to the Soviet cause: 'with his fingers he tapped his chest, neck and side. And wherever he tapped scars showed purple and pallid [on] his naked body, all knotted and scarred.'<sup>1</sup> For Chumalov, his patriotism, heroism and strength were quite literally inscribed upon his body. Two decades later another quintessential fictional Soviet hero, Vasilii Terkin, would prove his wartime heroics through the exposure of his damaged body in the *bania*:

On the naked skin, a star  
Flaming bright and livid  
Like a medal that he's won.  
And he always wears it [...]  
Like a hieroglyph, each scar  
Tells a different story...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fedor Gladkov, *Cement*, trans. A. S. Arthur and C. Ashleigh, London, 1929, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Tvardovsky, *Vassili Tyorkin: A Book About a Soldier*, trans. Alex Miller, Moscow, 1975, p. 351. For more on authenticity, the exposure of scars and the *bania* see Ethan Pollock, 'Real Men Go to the Bania: Post-war Soviet Masculinities and the Bathhouse', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 11, 2010, 1, pp. 47–76.

In a society that was founded upon a cult of youth, in which physical beauty was equated with moral superiority, and in which the heroic ideal was embodied by those who had made the most significant contribution to the collective, the damaged body is seemingly incongruous with the Soviet paradigm of the New Soviet Man. Yet, as a number of scholars have shown in recent years, the disabled body has a complex and often contradictory place in Soviet discourse. This was particularly the case during the 1930s and 1940s, when the transgressive and liminal aspects of the violated male form were coupled with a rhetoric,<sup>3</sup> especially prominent in the literature and film of the period, in which the wounded soldier was actually the most perfect embodiment of idealized masculinity, representative of a uniquely Soviet form of heroism and strength of character.

However, as this article will demonstrate, despite the pedagogical merits and popularity of such literary and cinematic characters, this was not rhetoric found in visual culture either in the Stalin era or beyond. Instead, until the mid-1960s bodily damage inflicted by war was consistently presented as a temporary state of being, and as something confined to the combat zone that would have absolutely no impact on the life of the soldier or his loved ones once the fighting was over. While other cultural genres grappled with the complexities of the disabled experience after 1945, for the most part, visual culture continued to utilize frameworks that had been established during the War years, in which war wounds were symbolic of heroism rather than a graphic reminder of the cost of victory. Indeed, it was not until the years surrounding the reinstatement of Victory Day as a public holiday in 1965 that art began to approach the legacies of the War with a more brutal realism — culminating in the production of the *Scorched By the Fire of War* series by the Muscovite artist, Gelii Korzhev in 1967 — a development that can be seen as one strand in a far more extensive reassessment of the significance of the War experience for contemporary Soviet society.

The issue of disability, and particularly disability in relation to masculinity, is one that has only come to the fore in Slavic studies in the last decade, as the field of masculinity studies has continued to develop and as more scholars have turned to the analysis of the post-war era. While notions of heroic, and particularly martial, masculinity have underpinned much of the research into Soviet constructions of the male gender role<sup>4</sup> —

<sup>3</sup> For more on the transgressive body, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Cambridge, MA, 1968; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription*,

as it did much of the contemporary rhetoric and representation — in recent years there has been more attention paid to those who did not live up to the expectations of official ideology, such as the homosexual, the rebellious youth and the disabled.<sup>5</sup> Specifically in terms of the Great Patriotic War, scholars such as Mark Edele, Beate Fieseler and Ekaterina Tchueva have done much to develop our understanding of official attitudes towards and provisions for the disabled veteran of the Great Patriotic War, and crucially the extent to which these provisions fell short of what was promised and the consequences this had for the individuals who were left to find their own way in post-war society.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the reality of the disabled veteran, his purpose and portrayal in Soviet culture has been the focus of work by Anna Krylova and Lilya Kaganovsky in particular, both of whom have highlighted the significance of the damaged man in late Stalinist culture and the implications that this has for how we conceptualize the masculine ideal during this era.<sup>7</sup>

*Total War and Mass Politics 1905–1925*, DeKalb, IL, 2003; 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, pp. 172–93; Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Oxford, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, London, 2001; Juliane Fürst, 'The Importance of Being Stylish: Youth, Culture and Identity in Late Stalinism', in J. Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 209–30; Mark Edele, 'Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945–1953', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 50, 2002, pp. 37–61.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941–1991*, Oxford, 2008; Beate Fieseler, 'Stimmen aus dem gesellschaftlichen Abseits: Die sowjetrussischen Kriegsinvaliden im "Tauwetter" der fünfziger Jahre', *Osteuropa*, 52, 2002, 7, pp. 945–62; idem, '"Nishchie pobediteli": invalidy Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v Sovetskom Soiuze', *Neprikosnovenyi zapas*, 2–3, 2005, pp. 40–41 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2005/2/fi33.html>> [accessed 5 August 2013]; idem., 'The Bitter Legacy of the Great Patriotic War: Red Army Disabled Soldiers Under Late-Stalinism', in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp. 46–61; Ekaterina Tchueva, '"Mir posle voiny": Zhaloby kak instrument regulirovaniia otnoshenii mezhdyy gosudarstvom i invalidami Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny', in Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov (eds), *Sovetskaia Sotsial'naia Politika: Stseny i deistvuiushchie litsa, 1940–1985*, Moscow, 2005, pp. 96–120. See also, Robert Dale, 'The Varlaam Myth and the Fate of Leningrad's Disabled Veterans', *Russian Review*, 72, 2013, 2, pp. 260–84; Sarah D. Phillips, '"There Are No Invalids in the USSR!": A Missing Soviet Chapter in the New Disability History', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29, 2009, 3 <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/936/1111>> (unpaginated) [accessed 22 September 2014].

<sup>7</sup> Anna Krylova, '"Healers of Wounded Souls": The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944–1946', *Journal of Modern History*, 73, 2001, 2, pp. 307–31; Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin*, Pittsburgh, PA, 2008.

While Krylova's account of mid-1940s' literature illustrates how some cultural forms attempted to deal with the consequences of injury and disability, both for the men themselves and their families, in her analysis of the film and literature of late Stalinism, Kaganovsky convincingly argues that the disabled man in Stalinist culture was just as much an ideal as the Stakhanovite. Yet, as important as such work is for enhancing our understanding of the complexities of Soviet culture, gender ideals and the relationship between Socialist Realism and actual reality, at the same time it must be recognized that it is impossible to transpose these trends onto visual culture. In contrast to literature and film, in art after 1945 the damaged man was never presented as an ideal nor was he ever cast as a figure symbolic of the Soviet war experience. This disjunction can be seen as rooted in the genres themselves as, unlike the temporal forms of literature and film, visual culture could not easily present the complexity of the standard tale of injury and despair to ultimate triumph, and thus frame bodily damage or disability in a way that was ideologically appropriate. In order, therefore, to fully appreciate the nuances of both Soviet cultural production and the significance of the damaged man for the masculine ideal after the Great Patriotic War, it is crucial that we acknowledge the fact that visual culture followed a unique trajectory when it came to grappling with some of the more problematic aspects of the Soviet victory.

The discussion that follows is based on a detailed study of a range of printed media, spanning both professional art journals and popular magazines — to include *Iskusstvo*, *Ogonek* and *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* — and the images that they published. Such images included photographs, cartoons and illustrations as well as reproductions of posters and paintings, both the high-quality and the decidedly mediocre. As scholars such as Lynne Attwood have demonstrated, such popular magazines were vital tools in educating and shaping the ideal citizen,<sup>8</sup> but this process of socialization was not just contained to the textual elements of these publications — the images that we find in popular print culture also had an important role to play in creating the New Soviet Person. Additionally, by looking at the images that were found in the printed media, we can also 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. With annual circulation figures of around ninety million in 1960,<sup>9</sup> the readership of *Ogonek* alone undoubtedly dwarfed the number

<sup>8</sup> Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922–53*, Basingstoke, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> 'Weapons of Communism', *Agitator*, 8, 1960 (translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet*

of people attending exhibitions throughout the country in any given year, meaning that what was reproduced in such a forum had the potential to be highly influential in determining people's outlook towards, and knowledge of, the fine arts in particular. More than this though, by looking across the spectrum of Soviet print culture, we can gauge not only what works were being produced by Soviet artists during this period but what works were being *reproduced* and in what context; in turn this can tell us a great deal about issues of acceptability and the schisms that existed between what works were being created, what was being discussed in professional circles, and what found its way onto the pages of the nation's most popular publications.

Through such images, what will be demonstrated is that after 1941 the damaged Soviet man was a consistent presence in both the images that were being created and those that were being reproduced in the Soviet press. Yet the fact remains that for the majority of the period under review here, the mode of representation lacked the range and nuance found in other media, meaning that while it is valid to see the damaged man as a staple element in the artistic construction of Soviet military masculinity from the outbreak of War onwards, at the same time it must be remembered that what was presented in visual culture was often very different to what was to be found in fiction or on the silver screen.

### *Representing the Damaged Body before 1941*

In contrast to its almost total absence from Soviet visual culture prior to 1941, the wounded male body played a surprisingly prominent role in the propaganda generated by the tsarist regime during the early years of the First World War. Within months of the outbreak of hostilities, posters were being produced which explicitly articulated the toll of the War on the bodies of those fighting and mobilized the wounded soldier as a call for charity. The most iconic of these was the lithograph, *Help the War Victims* (1914) by Leonid Pasternak, which shows an exhausted and bleeding soldier wrestling with mental distress, reflecting with a remarkable honesty the consequences of industrial warfare on the body and psyche of the Russian soldier.<sup>10</sup> This image would be reproduced tens of thousands of times on postcards, labels, stickers and even on wrappers of confectionary, despite

*Press*, 12, 1960, 15, pp. 32–33).

<sup>10</sup> Russian/Soviet Poster Collection of the Hoover Institute, Stanford University (henceforth RU/SU), 1066. For more on the issue of masculinity and war trauma in the early twentieth century see Laura L. Phillips, 'Gendered Dis/ability: Perspectives from the Treatment of Psychiatric Casualties in Russia's Early Twentieth Century Wars', *Social History of Medicine*, 20, 2007, 2, pp. 333–50.

Nicholas II being less than satisfied with this portrayal of his soldiery who, according to Pasternak, commented that 'his soldiers behaved bravely and not in such a manner'.<sup>11</sup> Whatever Nicholas's objections may have been to this characterization of the injured Russian soldier, Pasternak's image provided the template for other representations of the wounded man between 1914 and 1918 as he appeared time and again across a whole range of posters. Whether being used as a vehicle for raising funds, for demonstrating the exceptional ministrations of Russian field nurses, or for highlighting the heroism of the Russian soldier who valued the life of his injured comrade more than his own, the wounded soldier of the First World War was consistently depicted as a rather pathetic creature in need of rescuing and charity.<sup>12</sup>

After 1917, following the Bolshevik seizure of power and the subsequent outbreak of civil war there was a sharp decline in the representation of injury and disability, as attention turned from the imperialist war to the task of creating and consolidating the new state. Even during the course of the bloody Civil War, by and large, the wounded soldier did not make a reappearance on the ubiquitous Soviet poster; Aleksandr Apsit's *Day of the Wounded Red Army Man* and another poster, also attributed to Apsit, *Forward to Victory* (both from 1919), are two rare exceptions.<sup>13</sup> In the mid 1920s though, a very limited number of representations of the wounded First World War veteran started being produced. By far the most harrowing of these works was Iurii Pimenov's *War Invalids* (1926), which was presented at the second Society of Easel Painters' exhibition later that year to a not entirely warm reception.<sup>14</sup> Depicted staggering through a

<sup>11</sup> Pasternak cited in Nina Baburina, *Russkii plakat Pervoi mirovoi voiny*, Moscow, 1992, pp. 7–8. Emphasis in original.

<sup>12</sup> Examples include, E. E. Sporiuss, *Na dom invalidov* (1914), Otdel izdaniia, Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka (hereafter, RGB), XIV, 7b, 10946; Unknown Artist, *Pochta, telegraf, telefon* 21, 22, 23, *aprelia organizuiut sbor na ustroistvo zdavnits i podarki voinam* (1916), RGB, XIV, 7b, 65646; S. A. Vinogradov, *Na pomoshch' zhertvam' voiny* (1914), RGB, XIV, 7b, 18420. For further discussion of the representation of the disabled in the posters of the First World War, see Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory*, Bloomington, IN, 2011, esp. pp. 89–93.

<sup>13</sup> 'Harold M. Fleming Papers, 1917–71', New York Public Library Digital Gallery, Image ID 416744 <[www.digitalgallery.nypl.org](http://www.digitalgallery.nypl.org)> [accessed 1 August 2013]. Apsit, *Den' ranenogo krasnoarmeitsa*, found at GARF Otdel izdaniia, uncatalogued. There are a couple of other examples of posters which depicted the wounded soldier which date from the Civil War but they were aimed at the recruitment of nurses rather than explicit concerns over the welfare of the invalided or injured soldier. For example, anon, *Raneniyi krasnoarmeets naidet sebe mat' i sestru v kazhdoi trudishchesia zhenshchine* (?1917–22) RU/SU 1243 and Anon, *Tovarishchi rabotnitsy idite v riady krasnykh sester miloserdiia* (?1917–22) RU/SU 1244.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, London, 1998, p. 95.



bleak, post-apocalyptic landscape, these two veterans are presented by Pimenov as fragments of their former selves. With fingers shot off, teeth missing and limbs encased in bandages, these men stare out of the canvas at the viewer with opalescent eyes blinded by gas. But these are not the pitiful men in need of charity that graced the pre-Revolutionary poster, as the upright pose and determined forward motion of the composition endows these men with a heroism that was often lacking from earlier representations of the war wounded.<sup>15</sup>

While more famous for paintings such as *You Give Heavy Industry* (1927) and later *New Moscow* (1937), Pimenov produced works with a more macabre and decidedly less optimistic outlook on several occasions in the decade between the end of the Civil War and the disbandment of the autonomous artistic groups in 1932, as seen, for example, in his *On the Northern Front: Seizure of an English Blockhouse* (1928), which depicted the storming of an English stronghold during the Civil War and the grim death of one of the Red Army soldiers involved. It is Pimenov's 1933 canvas, *Soldiers Come Over to the Side of Revolution*, however, that is the most astounding for our purposes, as it is the only work this research has uncovered which addresses the issue of war-inflicted injury and death produced after 1932 and the move towards Socialist Realism. In this extraordinary image, Pimenov depicts the celebration of Bolshevik triumph taking place amidst corpses of the victims of the Civil War, and with the victorious soldiers shown in various states of bodily distress. This painting encapsulates the beliefs of Pimenov's former master, Vladimir Favorskii, that art should be both multi-temporal and multi-spatial, a trait that allows Pimenov to present a more complex narrative in his work — one that moves from the carnage and horror of war to the victory of revolution.<sup>16</sup> The work of Pimenov however stands alone — with the exception of perhaps Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin who also broached the theme of death in his paintings — and these few pieces represent both the beginning and the end of the representation of the damaged man in early Stalinist art, even in a retrospective context, as the artistic output of the Soviet Union became even more relentlessly optimistic in tone.

<sup>15</sup> See <<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/courses/russianart/images/large/o495/15.jpg>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

<sup>16</sup> While it is quite remarkable that it was produced at this late stage of the Cultural Revolution, unfortunately, it has not been possible to assess how this work was received by critics or the public as this research has uncovered no contemporary reproduction of, or comment on, this image.



While the wounded male body disappeared from Soviet visual culture with the advent of Socialist Realism, the ideal of a physically mutilated hero emerged as a key trope in the literature of the period. This ideal was embodied most completely and popularly in the figure of Pavka Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovskii's classic novel, *How The Steel Was Tempered* (1932), which presented a disabled veteran of the Civil War overcoming his incapacities to serve the State and the Party until the end of his life. In her research, Beate Fieseler has linked the emergence of heroes such as Pavka Korchagin to a changing attitude towards social welfare that developed over the course of the 1930s. This placed an increasing emphasis on a return to work as the optimum way of supporting an individual, representing a shift 'from material support to mobilization', which in turn led to a recategorization of invalidity, with those who were now deemed capable of work being stripped of their benefit entitlement.<sup>17</sup>

This new discourse of overcoming, which was idealized during the struggles of collectivization and industrialization, has led some scholars to suggest that the disabled male body was in fact the *ultimate* incarnation of Stalinist masculinity. Lilya Kaganovsky's work on male subjectivity under Stalin asserts that 'blind or paralysed, limping, one-legged, or wearing prostheses — the world of the Stalinist novel and Stalinist film is filled with damaged male bodies [...]. Together these texts construct a Stalinist fantasy of masculinity, turning the New Soviet Man into a heroic invalid'.<sup>18</sup> For Kaganovsky, in the years of Stalinism there existed two paradoxical but equally idealized models of masculinity: that of the physically perfect man, the square-jawed and muscle-bound Stakhanovite, and the mutilated man whose physical imperfections were overcome in an effort to rejoin the revolutionary ranks.

However, for all they may have been cast as the ultimate Stalinist hero in the novels and films of the era, these damaged men were never presented as an ideal in art, a discrepancy that can be seen as grounded in the differing qualities of the media themselves. The impact of visual culture must be immediate and its narrative hermetically contained and understandable from what is in front of the viewer. It does not have the luxury of time, as film does, to construct a narrative arc and so only cinema and literature had the scope to develop the complexities of the standard heroic disabled narrative fully, which ran from injury and psychological

<sup>17</sup> Beate Fieseler, 'Work as the Overall Remedy to Reconstruct Disabled Soldiers' Bodies in the Post-War Soviet Union', unpublished conference paper, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Philadelphia, November 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 3.

struggle, to eventual triumph and reintegration into either the home or work environment. Thus while this narrative of progression could easily be expressed on the page, it was far harder to render such inspirational tales effectively onto canvas. During this period then, despite the plurality of models found in literature, Socialist Realist art continued to draw on the tenets of the Classical world in which the ideal inner and outer self were a harmonized whole. In visual culture prior to 1941, therefore, heroes continued to be physically — and by extension morally — perfect.

*The Wounded Man in the Great Patriotic War*

This would all change with the outbreak of war in 1941, when the previous disparity between literary/cinematic and artistic representations of the wounded male dissipated as the injured soldier was cast as the apotheosis of Soviet masculinity, patriotism and strength. During the War years, a small but noteworthy number of sketches, paintings and sculptures were produced that tacitly acknowledged the bodily toll that the War was taking, as seen, for example, in Vera Mukhina's bust of the one-eyed and scarred Colonel Iusupov (1942), or I. A. Lukomskii's portrait of a wounded defender of Stalingrad (1943).<sup>19</sup> Crucially though, it would seem that such works only found an outlet in print on the pages of the thick art journals *Iskusstvo*, *Tvorchestvo* (founded in 1947) and, much later, in *Khudozhnik* (founded in 1958). However, as *Iskusstvo* was suspended from July 1941 until the beginning of 1946 and the other two prominent art journals were founded in the post-war period, these were not images that were in circulation in print, even in the professional art world, at the time at which they were produced, although Mukhina's bust of the recently injured general would go on to become one of her most famous pieces, winning the sculptor a Stalin Prize Second Class in 1943. During the War itself then, it was in the wartime poster that the wounded soldier found his most frequent incarnation, in images that were obviously intended to both reach and inspire a mass audience.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 2 (1950), p. 79; *Tvorchestvo*, 1 (1947), p. 6; published under the title, *Starshii leitenant A. S. Buryi*, in *Khudozhnik*, 2 (1963), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> For a broader discussion of some of the issues raised by the Soviet war poster, see Mark Edele, 'Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero According to Soviet Wartime Posters', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 47, 1999, pp. 89–108; Helena Goscilo, 'History and Metahistory in Soviet World War II Posters', in W. Bonner and A. Rosenholm (eds), *Recalling the Past, (Re)Constructing the Past: Collective and Individual Memory of World War II in Russia and Germany*, Jyväskylä, 2008, pp. 221–29.

Produced by the prolific graphic artist Viktor Ivanov in 1942, the poster, *Every Border is Decisive*, was indicative of a shift towards using injury as a marker of heroism in visual culture,<sup>21</sup> mirroring what had been the case for several decades in Soviet literature. Against a backdrop of entrenched fighting and the falling bodies of the German infantry, Ivanov's warrior appeared helmet-less and carrying a head wound. While his steely blue eyes and furrowed brow were established modes of representing the steadfastness and determination of the Soviet soldier, the bloodstained bandage around this man's head, placed in almost the exact centre of the poster, added a new element to the depiction of the Soviet hero: the fact that this soldier has sustained such an injury does not in any way compromise his military prowess, but rather only serves to enhance his courage and resilience, as he carries on fighting without consideration for his own bodily welfare.

We see this ideal taken to the extreme in Aleksei Kokorekin's *For the Motherland!* (1942) which, like Aleksandr Deineka's famous painting, *The Defence of Sebastopol* from the same year, turned to the heroic exploits of the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet and depicted the already wounded central character carrying out an act of suicidal heroism.<sup>22</sup> Kokorekin drew his inspiration from the real life heroics of Commander Stepan Ermolenko, who in this poster is pictured on his knees, blood pouring over the hand he has clasped over a chest wound, about to lob a grenade towards an unseen enemy. Yet despite the mortal injury that he has sustained, Ermolenko is shown as physically undiminished — his bulging biceps, enormous thighs and resolute demeanour are presented as stoic markers of both his physical and moral superiority — and his heroism is only heightened by his wounds and the act of self-sacrifice he is willing to commit for the motherland. In such instances, the wounded male body superseded the physically intact body as the paradigm of Soviet heroic masculinity, as injuries were cast as indicators of valiant achievement, duty and a willingness to die for the cause, rather than being tainted by any association with inability, incompetence or the superior strength of the enemy. By representing the wounded soldier on posters rather than on canvas, the focus was on mass dissemination, while the acts of (real-life) heroism that such posters depicted were intended to inspire confidence in the civilian population and to reiterate the certainty of eventual victory but also to emphasize the

<sup>21</sup> Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, *Plakaty voiny i pobedy, 1941–1945*, Moscow, 2005, p. 98.

<sup>22</sup> See <<http://eng.plakaty.ru/en/catalog/15/1525/#MAIN>> and <<http://www.allworldwars.com/Soviet%20War%20Paintings.html>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

collective nature of the war effort and the sacrifices that victory would entail. In this context then, the injured male body was transformed from being transgressive and problematic to being the very epitome of Soviet subjectivity.

It was also in the years of the Great Patriotic War that the maimed body of the enemy emerged as a metaphor for military defeat. While posters of the First World War had shown the Kaiser in various states of undress, as mad, or even as having a body full of cockroaches (a play on words between *prusak* meaning cockroach and *prussak* meaning Prussian),<sup>23</sup> his physicality was never equated with Russian military success. During the Civil War, visual culture had frequently turned to the grotesque or emasculated body as a means of articulating the moral corruption of hated figures such as the tsar, the pope, or various White generals, but again had never correlated events on the battlefield with the body of the enemy. It would appear then that this use of disfiguration was a new iconographical trope, and was a device generally reserved for posters containing top-ranking Nazi officials, providing an amusing contrast to the countless, often horrific, images which cast these same men as barbarians, cannibals and the bestial murderers of women and children. This visual correlation between military defeat and physical disrepair was highly effective. For example, in the poster produced by *Okno Tass* in 1941 entitled 'Criss Cross', Hitler is shown in one panel proudly straightening his Iron Cross, while in the next panel he has been reduced to a limping wreck, forced to hobble around on crutches, as the result of Red Army victories.<sup>24</sup> In a 1943 poster by the renowned graphic artist Viktor Deni, each wound on Hitler's comically disfigured face is representative of a Red Army 'correction'.<sup>25</sup> Deni would return to this theme a year later in the poster, *The Hun on a 'Visit'! Will Soon be at the Graveyard!*, in which the injuries on Hitler's face are equated with the strength of the natural resources of the Soviet Union — Ukrainian bread, Caucasian oil and Donbass coal.<sup>26</sup> Nor was this a mode of representation that was just confined to posters, as the motif of the wounded Hitler would be repeated by the Kukryniksy in the cartoons they produced for *Pravda*, such as the one published in February 1944 which paralleled Hitler's injuries with successful Red Army campaigns.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, A. F. Postnov, *Shar zemnoi pokryl ty krov'iu, Ne morgnuv pri etom brov'iu* (1914), RU/SU 81; D. Moor, *Kak chort ogorod gorodil* (1914), RU/SU 371; E. F. Chelnakov, *Prussaki* (1914), RU/SU 377.

<sup>24</sup> *Plakaty voyny i pobedy*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> RU/SU 2094.

<sup>27</sup> Kukryniksy, 'Godovoi itog', *Pravda*, 24 February 1944.

Using the Foucauldian framework in which bodily punishment is representative of the inscription of power of the state,<sup>28</sup> we can more thoroughly appreciate the appeal of the wounded male body in the years of war. The two contrasting models presented in Soviet iconography of the injured Red Army soldier and the mutilated enemy are indeed part of the same process of the Soviet state's articulation of power and military prowess. Through the body of their own soldiery, Soviet artists articulated not only a rhetoric of the physical superiority, bravery and resilience of the collective force of the Soviet people, but the strength of the political superstructure of which these extraordinary beings were a part. In this context, the wounded body of the military man and his/the State's ability to withstand the blows inflicted by the enemy and remain fighting until victory had been assured was a symbol of greater potency than his physically unscathed counterparts. Meanwhile, the decrepit and decaying bodies of the Nazi leadership presented the ideal vehicle for emphasizing the comparative health of the Soviet body politic as well as Soviet military might.

#### *Overcoming the Damaged Body, 1945–53*

Any positive connotations that the wounded male body may have gained during the War years were largely lost after 1945 and were a completely alien notion by 1950. Now the wounded or disabled body was representative of the cost of victory and its terrible legacy. In his inventory of Soviet casualties during the Great Patriotic War, G. F. Krivosheev determined that, according to official reports, out of the 3.7 million servicemen who were sent home on sick leave during the War, 2.5 million were left permanently disabled by their injuries.<sup>29</sup> Due to the difficulties in defining categories of disability, and the State's reluctance to do so, in reality the number of those left permanently incapacitated by the War is likely to be far higher. As would be expected, it was the rank and file that made up the vast majority of military losses, accounting for somewhere in the region of 75 per cent of all casualties.<sup>30</sup> Catherine Merridale has proposed that the demography of those who had borne the brunt of the War accounts for the absence of injured/disabled men in post-war Soviet society; as many would be lacking in 'education, cash and influence', they were more likely to be seen as an

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, 1977.

<sup>29</sup> G. F. Krivosheev, *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century*, trans. John Erickson, London, 1997, pp. 89–91.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

embarrassment than as heroes.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, since the mid 1940s it has been believed by citizens and academics alike that, instead of receiving the adulation that they had rightfully earned with their bodily sacrifice, many disabled veterans were rounded up by the authorities and died in exile on the shores of Lake Lagoda, a post-war myth that has been challenged most recently by Robert Dale.<sup>32</sup> However, whatever the real story is behind places such as the 'invalid's home' at Varlaam, what is undisputable is that the inability to work, a shortage of wheelchairs and poor quality prosthetics often condemned the disabled veteran to a life of practical hardship and marginalization. The difficulties of the situation were exacerbated in 1947, when Stalin ordered that the streets of Moscow be cleared of beggars — the majority of whom were war-amputees — a move that was followed by a decree in July 1951 against 'anti-social parasitic elements' which, while not specifically aimed at beggar war veterans, undoubtedly contributed to their declining visual presence in the big cities.<sup>33</sup> The clearing of the streets of Moscow and other major cities,<sup>34</sup> the anti-parasite legislation and the privations of the immediate post-war period, as well as the more nebulous impact of the renarrativization of the War to recast Stalin as the prime hero of the entire venture, placed the disabled veteran in a particularly ambiguous position within Soviet society: just what role could such men have in a society that was built upon collective ideals and labour, when they themselves could no longer work and found that the rewards promised for their sacrifice never materialized?

Despite, or possibly because of, the liminal status of the disabled veteran, official rhetoric from this early post-war period repeatedly emphasized what measures the State was enacting to bring these men back into the fold of Soviet society, and again participation in the workforce was seen as the miracle cure for all physiological difficulties. A report by the Minister of Social Maintenance in May 1946 claimed that, among many other achievements, the government had given out over 30 million rubles in pensions to the war-disabled in the first year of peace, that there were over 50,000 men no longer capable of working in their old profession in training centres, and that over 90 million rubles had been spent on

<sup>31</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939–1945*, London, 2005, p. 314.

<sup>32</sup> Dale, 'The Varlaam Myth and the Fate of Leningrad's Disabled Veterans'.

<sup>33</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War*, p. 94. See also, Elena Zubkova, 'S protianutoi rukoi nishchie i nishchenstvo v poslevoennom SSSR', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 49, 2008, 2, pp. 441–74.

<sup>34</sup> For detailed figures on this urban clearing, see Dale, 'The Varlaam Myth and the Fate of Leningrad's Disabled Veterans', pp. 268–73.

artificial limbs to date.<sup>35</sup> The sacrifice of the disabled soldier also warranted special mention in the May Day and October Revolution Anniversary slogans, which in 1946 hoped for 'the employment and rehabilitation of the disabled of the Patriotic War'.<sup>36</sup> While the press hailed the Soviet treatment of disabled veterans as a hallmark of the progressive, inclusive and technologically advanced nature of Soviet society, as Beate Fieseler has demonstrated, the reality of the situation was far less positive: pensions and compensations were insignificant (and it would seem were deliberately so to force veterans back to work), the majority of disabled veterans did not receive any retraining and were left to find suitable employment on their own, and employers openly admitted to preferring to hire former prisoners than 'cripples'.<sup>37</sup> For many even having been fortunate enough to have received prosthetics from the State did not mean that they could then fully participate in the workforce, as this one letter to the editor of *Pravda* written by a couple of disabled veterans from the Kostroma Province highlights:

We lost our legs in battles for the fatherland. Despite our disabilities we are burning with desire to work for the good of the Soviet people. However we are prevented from carrying out our wishes by the lack of good artificial legs [...]. We received artificial legs [...] but they chafe and cause pain. They are useless.<sup>38</sup>

In the immediate post-war years, then, there emerged two parallel discourses concerning the disabled veteran and his place in Soviet society: one that stressed the benevolent nature of the Soviet state in helping care for these men, and concomitantly one that treated disability as something which could be surmounted by a return to labour and the unique physical and psychological strength of the Soviet man. In the space of just a few years, the damaged body had shifted from being the ultimate marker of heroism and patriotic duty to an impediment that needed to be overcome in order to reclaim one's masculine virility. To this effect, the post-war press was full of headlines proclaiming the remarkable achievements of the disabled veteran: men with no hands surpassing production quotas,

<sup>35</sup> A. Sukhov, 'What We Do For Disabled Ex-Servicemen', *Soviet News*, 4 May 1946, p. 1. Sukhov's figures are disputed by Fieseler ('The Bitter Legacy of the Great Patriotic War', pp. 53–54).

<sup>36</sup> 'Prizyvy TsK VKP(b) k 1 maia 1946 goda', *Pravda*, 24 April 1946, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy of the Great Patriotic War', pp. 48–52.

<sup>38</sup> 'Letter to the Editor: On Poor Artificial Limbs', *Pravda*, 14 September 1949, trans. CDSP, 1, 1949, 38, p. 63.



amputees driving tractors and veterans using the convalescing period to learn new skills. These men were not to be pitied for the misfortune of their injuries but emulated in their exceptional achievement, courage and determination.<sup>39</sup>

However frequently these concurrent narratives were articulated in the press, neither the discursive trope of support nor superhuman overcoming impacted upon artistic representations of injury or disability. Whilst the damaged soldier did not vanish completely from the visual culture of the late Stalinist period, he was always cast in a retrospective context and confined to the Front rather than being shown as a figure in post-war society. In contrast to the heroic depictions of the wartime era, between 1945 and when these images disappeared around 1948,<sup>40</sup> instead of being the heroic figure himself, the wounded soldier became a vehicle for the presentation of the heroism of others. Such images found their way onto the pages of popular magazines and professional journals alike as we see, for example, with V. Khimachin's photographic commemoration of the selfless actions of nurse Motia Nechiporchkova in helping the wounded off the battlefield (1946), or Vera Orlovoi's painting, *Intelligence* (1947), which depicts a young partisan woman helping a wounded soldier through the forest, published in *Ogonek* and *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* respectively.<sup>41</sup> Nor was it the case that the wounded soldier was exclusively a tool for celebrating the actions of women during the War; N. Obryn'ba's *First Heroic Deed* (1947), shows a young boy leading two wounded soldiers

<sup>39</sup> The degree to which this idea of 'overcoming' disability through work was a distinctly Soviet attitude should not be overemphasized. As well as being a rhetoric that was found in other countries after 1945, in the Russian context it appears to have its roots at least in the First World War, as demonstrated by charity posters such as that by an unknown artist, *Labour Will Return Life and Happiness to You* (1916), which depicted a one-legged man, somewhat ironically, at a work-bench mending shoes [RGB XIV. 7b 10457]. For the idea of overcoming disability in other national contexts see, for example, David Gerber, 'Disabled Veterans, the State, and the Experience of Disability in Western Societies, 1914–1950', *Journal of Social History*, 36, 2003, 4, pp. 899–916; Carol Poore, 'Who Belongs: Disability and the German Nation in Postwar Literature and Film', *German Studies Review*, 26, 2003, 1, pp. 21–42.

<sup>40</sup> The notion that 1948 represented a watershed moment for other aspects of post-war society has been put forward by a number of historians. See, for example, Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments*, trans. H. Ragsdale, London, 1998, p. 102; Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*, Cambridge, 2002, p. 258. March 1948 also saw the last wave of demobilization (Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War*, p. 23).

<sup>41</sup> *Ogonek*, 7 (1946), between pp. 34–35; *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*, 6 (1947), p. 51. Orlovoi's image was actually reproduced as part of a rare feature on art and the female war experience: E. Braginskii, 'Ikh podvig: mastera izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva o zhenshchinakh-geroiniakh otchestvennoi voiny', pp. 48–51.

through the woods to safety,<sup>42</sup> while the 1948 work, *Stalin in the Dugout*, by K. Finogenov, completely circumvented the heroism of the injured soldier being greeted by the *vozhd'* by placing him in the shadows and presenting Stalin as sturdy and physically superior to those around him.<sup>43</sup>

In one of the most celebrated paintings of the era — and indeed of the entire war-themed *oeuvre* — Aleksandr Laktionov's *A Letter From the Front* (1947),<sup>44</sup> we find a slightly different use of the wounded soldier. In this case, rather than being a means of emphasizing the courageous actions of others around him, the injury portrayed in Laktionov's work served as a narrative device in which absence from the Front was legitimized. According to the artist's own, highly-stylized recollections on the origins of the painting, it was an encounter with a real-life disabled veteran that first gave him inspiration:

I saw a soldier coming along the dusty road, limping, with one hand in a bandage and a letter in the other [...]. I talked with him. He was just out of hospital, where he had been with a comrade who had not written home for many years and was considered missing without a trace. He had asked him to pass on a letter to his relatives. Meeting this soldier gave me a theme for my work...<sup>45</sup>

Later regarded as a Socialist Realist classic, *Letter* in its early years had a chequered history; it was criticized for its photorealism and the painting was initially hung in a dark and dingy corridor in the Tret'iakov Gallery upon its first showing at the 1947 All-Union Exhibition. Within days, however, following rhapsodic praise in the visitors' book and the small corridor being jammed with viewers, the painting was moved to a more suitable location.<sup>46</sup> The contrast between the work's popularity and the reaction of the professional art world to the young painter's war-themed canvas was reflected on the pages of the popular press as *Letter* was reproduced for the first time not in a professional journal but in the women's magazine, *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*, in April 1948. Later that same month Laktionov

<sup>42</sup> See <<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-qm15AjsKkNs/U4Od6V4iAwI/AAAAAAAAAs6w/bD38tK-aMhA/s1600/Н.И.+Обрыньба+Первый+подвиг.jpg>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

<sup>43</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 3 (1948), p. 13; *Iskusstvo*, 5 (1948), p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> See <<http://www.allworldwars.com/Soviet%20War%20Paintings.html>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

<sup>45</sup> Aleksandr Laktionov cited in Oliver Johnson, "A Premonition of Victory": *A Letter From the Front*, *Russian Review*, 68, 2009, pp. 408–28 (p. 410). This soldier would go on to provide the protagonist in Laktionov's painting of the following year, *Defender of the Motherland* (1948), whose injuries bore a close resemblance to that of the soldier in *Letter*.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, 'A Premonition of Victory', p. 418.

was awarded the Stalin Prize First Class.<sup>47</sup> Thus cemented as a favourite piece amongst the public and the authorities alike, *Letter* would become a staple image in Soviet print culture for many years to come, being reproduced for a mass market in the form of postcards, and even appearing as a stamp in 1973 as part of a series celebrating Soviet painting,<sup>48</sup> as well as frequently gracing the pages of popular publications, particularly around significant anniversaries. In this scene of the personal and domesticated impact of war on the Soviet family, the wounded soldier plays a crucial part in the story of the canvas, cast as the bringer of the joyful news that the father and husband who they thought was lost actually lives. In addition to his unique use of the injured soldier for narrative purposes, Laktionov is also distinct in placing him in a domestic setting, but when we look specifically at how the artist has rendered this man's injuries we see the same degree of understatement and obfuscation that characterized visual representations of the damaged male body in this period and beyond. By the very act of delivering the precious letter, Laktionov presents this man as one who is on the road to complete recovery — who is perhaps even on his way back to the Front — and the bandaged arm and the cane appear as transitory and to some extent inconsequential as the soldier notably stands, rather than sits, while the letter is read aloud.

As had been the case in the 1930s, the absence of men from visual culture who had been left forever scarred and changed by their injuries was in marked contrast to the characters that populated literature and film of the late Stalin era. Although there was a continued emphasis on the restorative power of labour in overcoming disability, the severity of the injuries that these men had suffered — and it was always men despite the participation of women in a wide variety of roles at the Front<sup>49</sup> — found no parallel in visual culture. As with the pre-war heroes of Chumalov and Korchagin, who had had to prevail over significant physical difficulties in order to reclaim their place in the Soviet collective, so in the post-war era we find characters such as Colonel Voropaev in Petr Pavlenko's Stalin Prize-winning novel, *Happiness* (1947), who, despite having being injured four times, suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and having a prosthetic leg, commits himself fully to his labour, creating a new heroic identity for himself which is then emulated by others.<sup>50</sup> Above and beyond such

<sup>47</sup> *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*, 4 (1948), p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Solov'ev, *Pochtovye marki Rossii i SSSR 1857–1991*, Moscow, 2003, p. 251.

<sup>49</sup> For more, see Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front*, Cambridge, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> For more, see Vera Dunham, 'Images of the Disabled, Especially the War Wounded

fictional characters however, the disabled hero soon came to be epitomized by the fighter pilot and amputee, Alexei Meres'ev, who lost both his feet after being shot down but eventually retook to the skies despite his disability. Through Boris Polevoi's 'biography', *A Story About a Real Man* (1946), and the subsequent 1948 film by Aleksandr Stolper, Meres'ev was elevated to the position of the ideal Soviet man, whose resilience and dedication to the cause surpassed any obstacle. And yet the treatment of Meres'ev and his story across the various genres provides a succinct distillation of the discrepancies we find in how problematic issues such as injury and trauma were dealt with in late Stalinist culture.

Although ultimately a tale of heroism and triumph, Polevoi's biography did not shy away from the psychological damage that physical injury could inflict: as the author recognizes, in the world of the 'severely wounded man, the thing on which all his thoughts are concentrated is his wound, which had torn him out of the ranks of the fighters, out of the strenuous life of war and flung him on to this soft and comfortable bed'.<sup>51</sup> This was not the idealized wounded body of the wartime poster, representative of either a dogged determination to continue fighting or of suicidal heroism, but was a stark reminder of the effort that was required for these men to quite literally get back on their feet, and leave the comfort of their emasculating hospital beds behind them. The wounded airman's liberation from his hospital bed and his doctor's amazement at his achievement were the themes of two watercolour illustrations based on Polevoi's biography produced by N. N. Zhukov, which were reproduced *Ogonek* in early 1951 as part of a retrospective of the 1950 All-Union Art Exhibition.<sup>52</sup> However, it is telling that both of these images, while including injured men, painted a far rosier picture of hospital life and overcoming injury than was found in the book. Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of these pictures though, especially when taken in conjunction with how Meres'ev is presented in

in Soviet Literature', in L. Siegelbaum and W. McCragg (eds), *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, Pittsburgh, PA, 1989, pp. 151–65. For a detailed discussion of the treatment of the damaged man in war-time Soviet literature, see Krylova, "Healers of Wounded Souls". Issues of subjectivity and disability are discussed in relation to blinded war veterans by Maria Cristina Galmarini in 'Turning Defects into Advantages: The Discourse of Labour in the Autobiographies of Soviet Blinded Second World War Veterans', *European History Quarterly*, 44, 2014, 4, pp. 651–77.

<sup>51</sup> Boris Polevoi, *A Story About A Real Man*, Amsterdam, 2002 (reprint of 1949 edition), p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> N. N. Zhukov, *Iz illiustratsii k "Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke" B. Polovogo: Razreshite poproshchat'sia, tovarishch polkovoi komissar! and Poshel!* (1950) in *Ogonek*, 11 (1951), between pp. 8–9.

both the film and in Polevoi's book, is the fact that in his illustrations Zhukov conveniently bypasses the severity of Meres'ev's injury by only showing the airman from the knees up. Similarly in a photograph published in *Soviet Union: Illustrated Monthly* in July 1950, which was taken outside his home with his wife, Olga, and their son, Meres'ev is shown again with his feet missing (the photograph starts at the pilot's ankles), with no other outward indication of his disability such as a cane and, more importantly, as a participant in normal family life; both his body and his life are entirely unhindered by his disability, which has been completely surmounted.<sup>53</sup> This depiction of Meres'ev again stands in contrast to the treatment of his story in Polevoi's novel which, as Kaganovsky highlights, constantly reminds the reader of Meres'ev's lost feet by repeated references to his prostheses or his haunted thoughts of the 'strong, tanned legs' of Olga.<sup>54</sup> Even though it is a photograph then, by having his prosthetic feet compositionally amputated in this image, the real-life Meres'ev is brought into line with artistic modes of representation in which injury was never so severe.

During the Stalin era then — with the exception of the wartime work of Mukhina and the rather limited depictions of Meres'ev in the 1950s — it is practically impossible to talk of visual representations of the disabled man. While the wounded man appeared on the pages of the nation's popular and professional publications with some degree of frequency after 1945, and the damaged body of both the enemy and the hero had appeared on the wartime poster prior to this, such injuries were invariably presented as temporary, largely superficial and of a type that would have no impact on the individual once they returned to their normal lives after the War was over. It would appear that this was not simply a case of there being a reluctance to reproduce images of the permanently disabled in such a public forum or that somehow the strictures of Stalinism or the prevailing rhetoric of normalization prevented their broader circulation. Rather, it would appear that, in contrast to contemporary film and literature, visual portrayals of the disabled veteran were just not produced in the first place.<sup>55</sup> Why this was the case is difficult to ascertain and but it certainly cannot be wholly ascribed to the conservatism of the late 1940s and early 1950s, given that all cultural production was constrained by the same ideological

<sup>53</sup> A. Tarasenkov, 'Living Heroes of Literature', *Soviet Union: Illustrated Monthly*, 7 (1950), p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*, p. 122.

<sup>55</sup> This is a conclusion based on the fact that no Stalin-era representation has been found in any published form from any period up until the present.

shackles. Again we return to the question of genre, and more broadly the role that Soviet culture was seen to play. Culture in the late Stalin era was not designed to provoke discussion or to wrestle with the problems facing contemporary society but to educate, inspire and radiate optimism about the nation's future. When the issue of disability was broached it needed to be packaged in a way that fitted into these broad criteria — the trauma needed to be overcome, the family needed to be a balm for the 'wounded soul', and work needed to offer salvation — a complex task that even the most gifted artist would struggle to convey simply with oil and canvas. This research would suggest that none even attempted such a feat.

### *Depicting the Damaged Man after Stalin*

Khrushchev's denunciation of the cult of personality in his 'Secret Speech' to the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956 profoundly changed the collective and official memory of the War: credit for the triumph was wrested from the hands of the political elite and the Soviet people were reinstated as the true heroes and instruments of victory. However, this radical reconceptualization of the events of 1941–45 did not lead to a radical reconsideration of how the War was portrayed in art, with many of the pre-1953 tropes of representation persisting, including how issues relating to injury and disability were handled. This said, while scenes of heroic action and a generally romanticized vision of soldierly life continued to be produced, a new pathos did emerge in some Thaw-era representations of the War, which for the first time began to explore themes such as the emotional impact of separation, homecoming and the disruption to the normal life course that war had caused. This was just one part of a wider trend in Thaw-time art that rejected the Stalinist varnishing of reality (*lakirovka*) and instead attempted to inject psychological depth and emotional complexity into Socialist Realism, a trend that is commonly referred to as Severe Style (*surovyi stil'*). However, while this was a move that brought about significant changes in how the everyday life of the Soviet person was portrayed in general, it was one that had a very limited impact on the representation of the War and its legacy.

The handful of works that brought this new emotional honesty to the war genre include Boris Nemeskii's *Scorched Earth* (1957) and Edgar Iltner's *The Husbands Return* (1957) — both of which are set during the War — and Gelii Korzhev's *Lovers* from 1959, one of the earliest paintings to explore the lasting psychological impact of such trauma. A work which had been reproduced in both the popular and the professional press by the end of the



year,<sup>56</sup> Korzhev's painting depicts a middle-aged couple sitting on a pebble beach looking out to the horizon, and is founded upon the dichotomy between the physical closeness of these two people and their emotional distance, at the heart of which is the man's experience at the Front.<sup>57</sup> Although not entirely uncritical of the piece, in her lengthy review of Korzhev's work accompanying its reproduction in *Iskusstvo*, D. Bezrukova concluded by stating that 'the positive attitude of the majority of viewers towards *Lovers* shows how our people appreciate truthful art', suggesting that for many this more profound treatment of the War experience was a welcome development.<sup>58</sup> Yet, this new psychologism did not lead to a more honest portrayal of the bodily cost of victory.

Although the re-emergence of the wounded soldier in visual culture occurred around the same time as the rise of Severe Style, rather than being linked to these developments in the art world, this reappearance was actually a consequence of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. Between 1957 and 1960 in particular, the Soviet art world was consumed with celebrating the victories of the Revolution and Civil War, with the jewel in the crown being the All-Union Exhibition of 1957. This exhibition, which ran from 5 November until 16 March 1958, was dedicated to the Great October Socialist Revolution and brought together older works that had gained popularity over the preceding years and new pieces by both established and graduating artists. Understandably, given its theme, this was the largest exhibition of the 1950s, exhibiting the work of over 2,000 artists and warranting extensive comment and numerous reproductions across both the popular and professional press. The prominent artist Vladimir Serov was just one of the many artists whose work in the mid 1950s was predominantly concerned with the revolutionary era, and three of his best known works were displayed for the first time at the All-Union show of 1957 — *The Decree on Peace*, *The Decree on Land* and *Waiting for the Signal* (all from 1957).<sup>59</sup> While Serov

<sup>56</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 8 (1959), 30; *Ogonek*, 26 (1959), between pp. 16–17.

<sup>57</sup> For further discussion, see Susan Reid, 'Masters of the Earth: Gender and Destalinisation in the Soviet Reformist Painting of the Khrushchev Thaw', *Gender and History*, 11, 1999, 2, pp. 276–312 (pp. 290–92).

<sup>58</sup> D. Bezrukova, 'Uroki odnoi vystavki', *Iskusstvo*, 8 (1959), pp. 33. This appreciation of more emotional honesty in Soviet visual culture can be seen to have parallels to the responses of readers to the novels of Konstantin Simonov in the early 1960s. See Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1952–70*, New Haven, CT, 2013, pp. 183–93.

<sup>59</sup> B. V. Ioganson, *Vsesoiuznaia iubileinaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka 1957 goda*, Moscow, 1958, p. 7. Serov served as First Secretary of the Union of Artists of the RSFSR



was by no means alone in choosing to paint revolutionary themes, what makes these works particularly significant in this context is that in each of these paintings he included a wounded soldier.<sup>60</sup> Serov's series contained what could be classed as incidental portrayals of injury and were part of a wider trend that located the wounded soldier in a Revolutionary or Civil War setting. Rather than being confined to their hospital bed or being in need of rescuing by others, the wounded soldier in this revolutionary context was depicted as a man still carrying out his revolutionary tasks and as someone who was intimately involved in the creation of the new Soviet state.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, such injury never exceeded a bandaged arm or a slightly gammy leg. This relatively minor change in how the wounded man was represented was, however, confined to this distant and quasi-mythical setting of the revolutionary era. As with their Stalinist antecedents, the handful of contemporaneous works that presented the wounded soldier of the Great Patriotic War continued to depict injury as a marker of Soviet valour and place the damaged hero in a variety of extraordinary situations which demanded extraordinary acts of bravery.

The work of the artist Petr Krivonogov either side of the 1953 divide is demonstrative of just how resilient the visual lexicon surrounding injury was, despite the significant social and cultural shifts that had recently occurred. During the last years of Stalinism, Krivonogov was one of just a handful of artists who produced 'realistic' battle panoramas, as seen in his *On Kursk Arc* (1949), which depicted the greatest tank battle of the Second World War,<sup>62</sup> and his *Defenders of the Brest Fortress* (1951).<sup>63</sup> In keeping with the trend of equating physical injury with heroic deeds, Krivonogov's defenders are shown as battered and bloodied, several with wounded limbs and with three of the group sporting bandaged head wounds, as they fearlessly charge towards an advancing enemy across land which is strewn with the bodies of both their fallen comrades and German adversaries. A highly popular work, this huge battle scene would be published numerous times during the mid 1950s. Indeed a detail from the painting focusing on the group of injured but resolute defenders was singled out for pride of place in Boris Polevoi's piece in *Ogonek*, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Grekov Studio in November 1955, with this same section of the work

from its founding in 1960 before becoming President of the Academy of Arts in 1962.

<sup>60</sup> Both *Decree* paintings are reproduced in *Ogonek*, 50 (1957), between pp. 16–17.

<sup>61</sup> Other examples include Vilen Chekaniuk, *Pervaia komsomol'skaia iacheika na sele*, 1958, G. P. Sorogin, *Bylye pokhody*, 1956 and V. V. Sokolov, *Kostr'y pokhodnye*, 1957.

<sup>62</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 2 (1950), between pp. 80–81.

<sup>63</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 1 (1952), p. 21.

going on to become a stamp in 1961.<sup>64</sup> In his work after the death of Stalin, Krivonogov would return to the defence of the Brest Fortress several times but continued to equate the damaged male body with exceptional heroism. In a departure from his earlier paintings, his *Brest Fortress 1941* (1958),<sup>65</sup> along with N. P. Tolkunov's *Immortality* (1958),<sup>66</sup> reduced the collective struggle to defend the fortress to that of a heroic last stand of a lone, wounded warrior.<sup>67</sup> In both Krivonogov's and Tolkunov's canvases, the viewer is confronted by the physicality of the Soviet soldier who, like Stepan Ermolenko before him, aside from his injuries was presented as an archetypal male specimen — tall, athletic, imposing — and encapsulated the Soviet vision of the Classical ideal of 'masculine beauty caught in a hopeless struggle to the death'.<sup>68</sup> As it had been in the art of the War years, both the heroism and masculinity of these men were founded upon their utter devotion to the cause and the magnitude of their heroic actions was amplified through their already mutilated bodies.

However, for the first time, however, there appears to be a disconnection between work that was being produced and work that was being reproduced when it came to representations of the damaged body in print culture. In the late 1950s two significant pieces of sculpture that depicted the disabled Soviet man were created and exhibited — Ernst Neizvestnyi's *Invalid* (1957) and Dmitrii Shakhovskoi's *People Be Vigilant!* (1958) — and yet neither work graced the pages of either the professional or the popular press at the time, despite the fact that this research would suggest that these pieces represent the first depictions of Soviet Great Patriotic War amputees in any medium.<sup>69</sup> In the years after 1955, Neizvestnyi produced a series of works entitled *War Is...* that dealt explicitly with issues surrounding death and disablement and which drew on his own experience of being left for dead behind German lines. While his sculptures, *Soldier Being Bayoneted* (1955) and *Dead Soldier* (1957), were demonstrative of the abstract and avant-

<sup>64</sup> B. Polevoi, 'Groznoe oruzhie', *Ogonek*, 47 (1955), pp. 11–13; V. Iu. Solov'ev, *Pochtovye marki Rossii i SSSR 1857–1991*, Moscow, 1998, p. 190.

<sup>65</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 4 (1958), p. 22; *Ogonek*, 25 (1961), between pp. 24–25.

<sup>66</sup> *Ogonek*, 22 (1960), between pp. 24–25.

<sup>67</sup> See <<http://www.allworldwars.com/Soviet%20War%20Paintings.html>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

<sup>68</sup> Alex Potts, 'Beautiful Bodies and Dying Heroes: Images of Ideal Manhood in the French Revolution', *History Workshop Journal*, 30, 1990, 1, pp. 1–21 (p. 11).

<sup>69</sup> Images that contained the war-amputee from other countries had been featured in the Soviet press since the early 1950s. See, for example, I. Pinkisevich, *V zapadnoi germanii*, 1952 (*Ogonek*, 3 [1953], p. 12) and M. Abramov, *Pobeditel' i pobezhdennye*, 1961 (*Ogonek*, 37 [1963], between pp. 24–25), or the photographs featured in 'Mir, a ne mech!', *Ogonek*, 49 (1960), p. 7 and 'Iaponskie zarisovski', *Ogonek*, 23 (1961), p. 19.

garde style that would cause him so much trouble in the coming years, his *Invalid* (also known as *Man With Artificial Limb*, 1957) — which shows a double-amputee reaching out to touch the prosthetic leg that lays in front of him — was more realistic in execution. The body of the man in this bronze is reminiscent of the *Belvedere Torso* (1st century BC, Hellenistic), a sculpture amputated by the vicissitudes of time: in Neizvestnyi's work though, it is not time but war that has left the body broken.

The *Belvedere Torso* is believed to represent Hercules after death, 'his now beautiful body purged of the marks of the violent struggle in which he realized himself a hero',<sup>70</sup> and similarly Neizvestnyi transformed this man into a Herculean figure through his battle with his disability. In his 1969 essay on Neizvestnyi's work, John Berger dismissed *Invalid* as an unsuccessful piece, although tellingly acknowledged that Neizvestnyi intended to articulate the fact that 'this mutilated man is a Prometheus because he is alive; his mutilation adds to his Promethean character by allowing him to show the extent of human [Soviet?] adaptability, and the strength of will to survive'.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in his biography of the sculptor, Albert Leong concluded that 'his men are powerfully masculine [...]. As we see in *War Is...* even the amputees and bayoneted men he depicted were, and remain, strong men who exhibit strength of will and power of resistance in the face of death and mutilation'.<sup>72</sup> The *War Is...* collection was exhibited in late 1959 and was the subject of a discussion at the general meeting of the Moscow Section of the Union of Artists in December that year, the tone of which was remarkably encouraging despite the artist's subject matter and style. Although expressing concern regarding the 'very pessimistic' outlook of the works, critics such as the art historian S. Valerius were forced to concede that 'What Ernst gives in his series *War Is...* [...] is a talented depiction of the physiological side of human suffering in war'.<sup>73</sup> The fact that Neizvestnyi's work was not reproduced or even discussed in the professional art press, considering both its ground-breaking subject matter and its generally positive critical reception, is perhaps a little puzzling. It is not at all surprising, however, that Neizvestnyi did not find an outlet in more popular publications given both the tone and manner in which he broached the issue of the war damaged body, which stood in

<sup>70</sup> Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, New Haven, CT, 2000, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> John Berger, *Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny, Endurance and the Role of Art*, New York, 1969, p. 99.

<sup>72</sup> Albert Leong, *Centaur: The Life and Art of Ernst Neizvestny*, Oxford, 2002, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup> S. Valerius cited in *ibid.*, p. 91.

stark contrast to the images of the wounded man that did populate print culture.<sup>74</sup>

While Neizvestnyi's work was generally positively received, Dmitrii Shakhovskoi's brutally realist work presented in 1958 at the Fourth Moscow Youth Conference was roundly condemned by the critics. Depicting a legless man, sitting on a *teleshka* and clutching the blocks he uses to wheel himself through the city streets, Shakhovskoi's sculpture provoked strong criticism for its bleak narrative, which according to some had neither educational nor inspirational merit.<sup>75</sup> Such youth exhibitions were a new development of the Thaw and, as Susan Reid has demonstrated, represented the 'avant-garde of the official art system'. Although such events were eventually quashed by conservative forces in 1963 (albeit temporarily), amongst the reformists they were welcomed as an opportunity for innovation and reinvigoration.<sup>76</sup> It is perhaps even more significant that Shakhovskoi should come in for such sharp criticism in this context but, as Reid states, 'even committed reformers equated "authenticity" and "contemporaneity" with a fundamental optimism, however "severely" it was expressed',<sup>77</sup> and there was nothing optimistic about this young artist's depiction of disability.

The treatment of disability by both Neizvestnyi and Shakhovskoi in terms of its realism and its psychological edge is in many respects closer to how contemporary cinema dealt with these problematic issues. The complexities of Thaw-era cinema are not the focus here and have been well-addressed elsewhere,<sup>78</sup> but the overwhelming disjuncture between art

<sup>74</sup> Khrushchev is said to have referred to Neizvestnyi's work as 'dog shit' at the Thirty Years of Moscow Art exhibition in 1962. According to James von Geldern, Neizvestnyi was so enraged at Khrushchev's comments that he removed his shirt to show the scars of his body, mementos of injuries sustained during the Great Patriotic War. This action provoked an hour-long debate between the two men, which although did not end with agreement, did end with some kind of mutual respect. Of course, at the former leader's own request, it was Neizvestnyi who went on to design Khrushchev's tombstone upon his death in 1971: <<http://soviethistory.macalester.edu/index.php?page=subject&show=&SubjectID=1961khrushcharts&ArticleID=&Year=1961>> [accessed 20 September 2014].

<sup>75</sup> Susan Reid, *De-Stalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art: The Search for a Contemporary Realism, 1953–1963*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 361, fig. 7.7.

<sup>76</sup> Susan Reid, 'Modernizing Socialist Realism in the Khrushchev Thaw: The Struggle for a "Contemporary Style" in Soviet Art', in Polly Jones (ed.), *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, New York, 2006, pp. 209–30 (p. 218).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>78</sup> See, in particular, Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw*, London, 2000, pp. 74–79; Denise Youngblood, *On the Cinema Front: Russian War Films, 1914–2005*,

and cinema in how themes such as disability and psychological suffering were depicted — as had been the case between art and literature in the immediate post-war period — once again highlights the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of both Soviet cultural production itself and how the legacy of the War was broached in particular. In two of the most acclaimed films of the Thaw, Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) and Grigorii Chukhrai's *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), the wounded soldier is presented as a complex man, grappling with a variety of psychological issues, and coming to terms with an injury that went far beyond the bandaged limbs and bleeding heads of most Thaw-era art. In *Ballad of a Soldier*, the character of Vasia, an amputee encountered by Alesha, the film's protagonist, is shown as wracked with doubt at the chances of a happy reunion with his wife and filled with self-loathing, while Kalatozov throughout his film presented injury and its effect on the male body and psyche as multifaceted — emasculating and heroic, life-threatening and life-affirming, a marker of bravery and a source of self-doubt.

Of course, even though the modes of representation were very different, it is inaccurate to see art and film as being completely divorced from one another. In her thoughts on Korzhev's *Lovers* accompanying its first reproduction in *Iskusstvo*, Bezrukova highlighted the fact that some observers had drawn parallels between this work, trends in post-war Italian cinema and, closer to home, Sergei Bondarchuk's film adaptation of Mikhail Sholokhov's 1946 novella, *The Fate of Man* (first published in 1957). Later, Korzhev himself would acknowledge the cinematic influence on his painting style and his treatment of his subjects, seen in his tendency for what Aleksandr Sidorov described as 'expanded scale and dramatic cropping'.<sup>79</sup> Bezrukova was, however, rather dismissive of those who drew too close an equivalency between Korzhev's paintings and film:

it is possible that one form of art influences another. But this kind of art should never lose its specificity. Film can tell you a lot in two hours, a painting must provide everything all at once. The artist can also say [a lot], but only inasmuch as he can do without sacrificing artistry and poetic expression [*poetichnost'*].<sup>80</sup>

Lawrence, KS, 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Aleksandr Sidorov, 'The Thaw: Painting of the Khrushchev Era', in *The Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, Soviet Socialist Realist Painting 1930s–1960s*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 30–40 (pp. 39–40).

<sup>80</sup> Bezrukova, 'Uroki odnoi vystavki', pp. 32–33.

Here Bezrukova pinpoints a potential reason why we see such a gulf between even the most psychologically complex and nuanced work — as Korzhev's was even at this stage — and cinema. Not only were there restrictions inherent in the nature of the media themselves, in terms of the distinction between temporality and spatiality, but painting was also meant to fulfil a purpose beyond simple narrative, it needed to do more than tell a story, it had to remain *art*. What is more, given that official cultural bodies still advocated that art should be optimistic in its outlook — despite the high-gloss coating of reality that had characterized Stalinist visual culture having been to some extent stripped away — the representation of the more profound aspects of the War experience in general remained highly problematic throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. It is this combination of the intrinsic characteristics of the respective medium and the prevailing atmosphere of the Thaw that arguably offers the best explanation as to why this disparity in dealing with what Krylova termed 'inappropriate themes' persisted well after the death of Stalin.<sup>81</sup> However, there is no escaping the fact that, even taking these constraints into account, artistic representations of the impact of the War — physically, psychologically and materially — continued to be very limited.

More than anything, the representation of the damaged military man during the Thaw demonstrates the remarkable resilience of the established Soviet tropes for dealing with such issues. While cinema forged ahead with increasingly coloured depictions of these men, with very few exceptions, on the pages of the nation's major publications the same old type of image continued to be churned out. Injury was still portrayed as something that marked men as real heroes rather than something that left individuals scarred and it was certainly not something that had to be dealt with by either the men or their families once the fighting was over. The work of artists such as Korzhev though are demonstrative of how the terrible legacies of the War were now beginning to be broached in the visual arts, with such images finding both a place in the press and — it would seem — a broadly supportive public. However, what the examples of Neizvestnyi and Shakovskoi demonstrate is that while some artists were now being inspired to produce works of this nature — and that they received a public platform to show such pieces — there was a limit to what was deemed acceptable when it came to depicting the physical cost of war, and this did not include such bleak depictions of shattered lives.

<sup>81</sup> Krylova, "Healers of the Wounded Souls", p. 315.

*Scorched by the Fire of War: The Damaged Man Twenty Years On*

Rather than during the Thaw, it is not until the mid 1960s and the twentieth anniversary of the War's end that we begin to see a noticeable shift in the artistic presentation of the wounded or disabled soldier. This was not a unique development but was one strand in a much broader visual reconceptualization of the War experience that at last began to incorporate consistent reference to issues such as bereavement, trauma and death. It cannot be coincidental that works of this nature should emerge in the years surrounding the reinstatement of Victory Day as a public holiday (1965), which marked the zenith of the War cult in the Soviet Union, and witnessed the first wave of concerted memorial building within the USSR, bringing the memory of the War experience legitimately into the public arena. In her work on the cult of the Great Patriotic War, Nina Tumarkin is quick to point out the political upside of its reinvigoration for Brezhnev and his administration:

the idealized war experience was a reservoir of national suffering to be tapped and tapped again to mobilize loyalty [and] maintain order [...]. From 1965 on, the Great Patriotic War continued its transformation from a national trauma of monumental proportions into a sacrosanct cluster of heroic exploits.<sup>82</sup>

Polly Jones, in her recent book on literature and the trauma of the Stalinist past, recounts in detail how authors who attempted to publish works that broached the harrowing experiences of terror or the catastrophic early days of the War repeatedly found their works banned by the authorities in an era that was characterized by a renewed commitment to a heroic narrative of the Soviet — and Stalinist — past.<sup>83</sup> However, it is undeniable that this same period also saw a profound change in the visual representation of the War, which seems to stand in contrast to the disingenuous motives of the regime described by Tumarkin and the marginalization of traumatic memories that Jones finds in literary circles. Rather than being the domain of a few pioneers, as had been the case in the late 1950s, the physical and emotional scars inflicted by the events of 1941–45 became a concern for most artists who turned their attention to a war-themed genre after 1964. Indeed, as Matthew Cullerne Bown summarized, ‘paintings of wartime subjects are perhaps the one area of socialist realism in which the demands

<sup>82</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*, New York, 1994, p. 133.

<sup>83</sup> Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, pp. 212–57.



of the severe style artists for a more honest scrutiny of life were realised during the sixties'.<sup>84</sup> Again then it would seem that visual culture was following its own trajectory when it came to dealing with the War and its terrible legacies, a trajectory that perhaps calls into question some of the assumptions we make about the nature of the early Brezhnev era as one that typically saw '[t]he edginess and contentiousness of Khrushchev-era war culture [fade] into stable bombast at the level of public ritual'.<sup>85</sup>

The watershed painting in this new, more realistic treatment of the damaged male body was Korzhev's *Wounded* (also known as *Traces of War*, 1964),<sup>86</sup> everything about this work distinguished it from what had gone before. No longer simply an incidental figure in a crowd, or a lone man in a heroic duel with an unseen enemy, Korzhev's use of portraiture to represent the disabled soldier was unique and unprecedented. Offering the viewer no place to escape the unvarnished reality of his injuries, Korzhev's soldier stares confrontationally out of the canvas, his bright blue eye providing the focal point of the composition, creating an uneasy intimacy between the man and his observer. Embodying the struggle of self-recognition that was so often found in literature, this man is presented as two halves of a former whole: his left side intact and handsome, his right side burnt, scarred and blinded. The injuries that this soldier has suffered are great — his hair is burnt away, his nose is almost collapsed, his ear is damaged, his cheeks scarred and his eye gone — and this lack of bodily integrity is enhanced by daubed background paint which encroaches onto the soldier's head and ear, creating an indistinct silhouette. Altogether, this is a clear departure from the Classical ideal of the concrete male body that had influenced Soviet representations to date.

*Wounded* was one of a series of works which formed Korzhev's *Scorched by the Fire of War* collection and several of the paintings that are part of this set can be seen as Socialist Realist masterpieces; certainly the series as a whole marked a defining moment in the visual representation of the impact of the Great Patriotic War on the Soviet population. Said to have invoked 'strong passions' at its first display in its original format at the Moscow Regional Exhibition in 1965, contemporary critics, while not universally praising Korzhev's artistic style, recognized the thematic importance of

<sup>84</sup> Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, p. 418

<sup>85</sup> Stephen Lovell, *The Shadow of the War: Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the Present*, Oxford 2010, p. 9. As Lovell points out, Denise Youngblood has shown that some of the profound themes found in Thaw-era cinema also perpetuated in a few cases into the late 1960s and '70s: Youngblood, *On the Cinema Front: Russian War Films*, chs 6 and 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 2 (1965), p. 9. See also <<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/courses/russianart/images/medium/o495/50.jpg>> [accessed 4 February 2015].

this young artist's work, calling it an 'aesthetic refraction of the conscience of the time',<sup>87</sup> 'strong and inflexible in its truth' and demonstrative of a 'severe simplicity, a bluntness which expresses the immensity of suffering during the war years', an experience which itself was called 'an oozing wound in the heart of literally every family'.<sup>88</sup> In his review of the final series in *Khudozhnik* in May 1968, V. Gavrilov concluded that 'an artist who has found in himself the courage [*muzhestvo*] and strength to perform such a great work, deserves great respect and gratitude'.<sup>89</sup>

As acknowledged by the critics, the defining feature of these paintings is the treatment of psychological suffering as a consequence of the War, most poignantly rendered in the piece, *Old Wounds* (1967).<sup>90</sup> Using the same protagonists as in his earlier piece, *Lovers*, Korzhev returns to the emotional distance that the War has created between a husband and wife; while he lays awake, she sleeps soundly, her back turned, unaware of — or simply accustomed to — her husband's psychological struggle. *Old Wounds*, along with the paintings *The Farewell* and *The Human Shield*, were added to the *Scorched* series in 1967, which had originally been presented as a triptych in 1965 comprised of the paintings *Mother*, *Wounded* and *Street Singer*. While the first two paintings would remain as part of the collection, the image of the street singer was eventually dropped when Korzhev decided to introduce his later, and much more powerful, works. In *Street Singer* (1962),<sup>91</sup> Korzhev again tackles the issue of disability and its impact upon the life of the individual concerned, depicting a former soldier who has been blinded in the War now being forced to play his accordion for money on the street. This is not a particularly successful work: it is melodramatic and lacks the emotional depth found in his other paintings from this period, and tellingly the soldier's disability is hidden from the viewer's gaze by his dark glasses, making it hard for the viewer to establish an emotional connection with this individual. Despite the failing of this painting, it is interesting to note though that in its original composition two out of the three pieces in the series took the disabled veteran as their central theme.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>87</sup> V. Zimenko, 'Iskusstvo, vedushchee v glubiny zhizni', *Iskusstvo*, 12 (1967), p. 45.

<sup>88</sup> V. Zimenko, 'Ozarennye ognem zhizni', *Iskusstvo*, 5 (1965), p. 14. The language of the war experience being an unhealed wound is also prominent in literary discussions of those years. See Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, esp. pp. 173–211.

<sup>89</sup> V. Gavrilov, 'Tselestremennost' tvorchestva', *Khudozhnik*, 5 (1968), pp. 8–9.

<sup>90</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 12 (1967), p. 47.

<sup>91</sup> *Iskusstvo*, 5 (1963), p. 27.

<sup>92</sup> See also Korzhev's later work, *Oblaka 1945 goda* (1980–85). The attitude towards *baian* players and beggar veterans in real life is discussed in Galmarini, 'Turning Defects into

As we might expect, the critical art press discussed Korzhev's series extensively over the coming years and the final collection of five works was published several times in its entirety and in colour in *Iskusstvo* between 1967 and 1970 and at least once in *Khudozhnik* over the same period, as well as single pieces being reproduced individually on other occasions. The paintings, in their varying configurations, also appear to have been publicly displayed at least twice at major exhibitions after the original showing in Moscow — at the Soviet Russia Exhibition of 1965 and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Great October All-Union Exhibition in 1967. The latter prompted the first (and this research would suggest only) reproduction in a popular magazine of pieces from the series when *Rabotnitsa* published *The Farewell* and *Old Wounds* and a brief but glowing feature on Korzhev to mark the exhibition.<sup>93</sup> The selection of these two works seems logical given the resonance that these images would have had with *Rabotnitsa*'s female readership, but it is telling that no reproduction of *Wounded* in a popular medium has been found, despite the professional art world acknowledging the importance of the work.

What has been found, though, are numerous articles that mention the work of this young artist, and even a few features that discuss his work exclusively. It was the triptych, *Communists* (1960), that secured Korzhev's place as one of the most popular artists of the period,<sup>94</sup> and the column inches dedicated to him, particularly in *Ogonek*, also made him one of the most written about Soviet artists of the era, despite the controversial nature of some of his work.<sup>95</sup> Yet while extensive articles on a particular artist — particularly those associated with the late-nineteenth-century *Peredvizhniki* movement — were a common feature of *Ogonek* by the 1960s, it was not commonplace to have lengthy discussions of a specific exhibition beyond the annual All Union show; images from a particularly significant event may be reproduced over several issues but the commentary that was provided to accompany these images was limited, if it was provided at all.<sup>96</sup> The Soviet Russia Exhibition of 1965 was an exception to this

Advantages', pp. 667–69.

<sup>93</sup> Anon., 'Za kazhdoi kartinoi – zhizn'', *Rabotnitsa*, 2 (1968), p. 16.

<sup>94</sup> The first reproduction of this triptych can be found in *Ogonek*, 23 (1960), where it was reproduced in colour and each painting was reproduced as a full page image. The painting *Gomer* from this series was also used on a stamp in 1968: Solov'ev, *Pochtovye marki Rossii i SSSR*, p. 229.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Iu. Bychkov and V. Voronov, 'Mera khudozhnika', *Ogonek*, 11 (1963), pp. 8–9; N. Tomskii, 'Liubite prekrasnoe', *Ogonek*, 10 (1966), p. 8; E. Belashova, 'Khudozhnik, vremia, zhizn'', *Ogonek*, 10 (1967), p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> The exhibition that got the most coverage in *Ogonek* during the 1960s was the 1962

rule, as it was the subject of a long article that featured in a March issue of *Ogonek*, in which Korzhev's original trio of paintings were examined in turn. While the commentator, Vladimir Voronov, did not offer the most incisive or detailed analysis of these works — just two or three lines on each — it is significant that, although no copy of *Wounded* has been found in the popular press, it was a painting that was at least discussed in a public forum.<sup>97</sup> Still, while it is correct to see this painting as a landmark in Socialist Realist treatment of the damaged Soviet body, how many ordinary citizens would have been aware of its existence given its limited circulation is impossible to judge.

While the work of Korzhev may stand alone in many respects, other artists across a variety of war-themed genres also offered a closer examination of the damaged male body at this time. Works such as Orlovskii's *For the Land, For Freedom*, Samsonov's *For Every Inch*, Khmel'nitskii's *In The Name of Life* and Khaertdinov's *After the War* (all from 1967) are indicative of an increased willingness to explore death, bereavement, and even psychological trauma, through art by the late 1960s. Though some artists, such as Petr Krivonogov and Nikolai But, continued to emphasize the extraordinary heroism of the Soviet military man, it was generally now a far grittier vision of heroism that was being portrayed and notions of bodily sacrifice were still key even in works of this nature.<sup>98</sup> Yet despite this new more brutal representation of the bodily cost of conflict, artists continued to confine their exploration of such themes to the theatre of war; there was no artistic equivalent of Chukhrai's *Vasia*, as the reality of the man who returned home from the War physically altered continued to be almost entirely absent from visual culture. The first and only representation of the physically damaged man in the domestic space that this research has uncovered is Nikolai Solomin's *He Came From the War* from 1967, which was published as a double-page colour reproduction in *Ogonek* in December that year,<sup>99</sup> and which depicts a soldier still in uniform, with his crutches hung on the back of his chair, seated at the kitchen table surrounded by his extended family. However, while it is noteworthy that Solomin's painting appeared in *Ogonek*, and was reproduced so prominently and so quickly following its completion

*Thirty Years of Moscow* show at the Manezh; material from this exhibition and comment upon it can be found in the first dozen issues of the magazine from 1963.

<sup>97</sup> V. Voronov, 'Za krasotu v otvete', *Ogonek*, 12 (1965), pp. 15–18 with colour supplement.

<sup>98</sup> See for example P. Krivonogov, *Komissar kretsosti* (1966) and N. But, *Vo imia zhizn'* (1965), both of which can be found in Oleg Sopotsinskii, *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina v proizvedeniiakh sovetskikh khudozhnikov: zhivopis', skul'ptura, grafika*, Moscow, 1979.

<sup>99</sup> *Ogonek*, 50 (1967), between pp. 16–17.

(suggesting that it had been a part of an exhibition at some point that year), the fact that we have no commentary on the image either in this context or — as far as can be ascertained — in a professional one, means that we have no way of gauging the response to the work and its content. This should not necessarily be taken as automatically indicating an unease with the subject matter though, as Solomin's work was by no means alone in being reproduced without comment. Generally, by the late 1960s, commentaries on individual images, which had always been brief and rather intermittent, were becoming even more of a rarity. However, the fact that this is the only reproduction of this work that has been found, and that it stands alone in its placement of the damaged man in the domestic sphere does serve to underline just how artistically marginal this subject continued to be, something that stands in stark contrast to how crucial the home and family had been for the wounded veteran in literature and film for the previous two decades.

The disparity between the conspicuous inclusion of Solomin's work and the absence of Korzhev's astonishing painting is particularly intriguing and at the very least underlines the fact that what was included in the printed media was not based on artistic merit alone. Again, we come back to this issue of disability having to be correctly packaged to make it fit for public consumption. Like Meres'ev before him, surrounded by family, Solomin's protagonist is shown as a participant in normal society, there is no indication of any psychological trauma, and his physical disability is untroubling and hidden from view; Korzhev's soldier, on the other hand, is both explicitly wounded and alone, suffering an anguish that is almost palpable. Thus however lauded this young man's work was, however popular his earlier vision of revolutionary triumph may have been and however willing publications such as *Ogonek* now were to publish scenes of bodily sacrifice that resulted in a heroic death, it would seem that, even two decades on, the unvarnished truth of the disabled body still had no place in popular print culture.<sup>100</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Despite the seismic changes that the Soviet Union had endured in the years since 1941, what we see when we look at the visual representation of the damaged male body is remarkable consistency. Although the processes associated with de-Stalinization had changed the memory of the War

<sup>100</sup> This is not a trend that is exclusive to fine art; no photographic representations of disabled veterans appear to have been published in these magazines during this period either.

and had had a significant impact on cultural production, for the most part neither the changing social context nor the liberalization of the art world influenced how the wounded male body was depicted. With very few exceptions, up until the mid 1960s the wounded man continued to be presented in the manner established by the wartime poster, as injury remained a marker of real conviction and patriotism. This is not to say that the equating of injury and heroism was a creation of the Soviet state — it is an ideal we find in Homer and in Shakespeare among many other places — but the connection between the body and unshakeable conviction was one that was recalibrated to become symbolic of a uniquely Soviet form of heroism and superiority. For all that the wounded body was a consistent aspect in the visual representation of the Soviet man at war then, such representation remained very limited: injury was either relatively superficial or demonstrative of a willingness to die for the cause, and it was predominantly confined to an explicitly militarized context. Thus prior to 1964, it is almost impossible to talk of visual depictions of disability.

Both the lack of the disabled veteran and the persistent placement of the injured man in the theatre of war stands in contrast to what was taking place in other cultural forms where the disfiguration caused by injury and the impact that this disablement had on both the psychological state of the individual and on his home-life were often fundamental to the narrative being told. The unwillingness to visually place the damaged man in a domestic setting is not unique and is symptomatic of a far broader trend found in visual culture after 1945 in which the home was presented as untouched by the ravages of war; indeed, works which linked death, bereavement or material loss to the home were also entirely absent until the mid 1960s.<sup>101</sup> This disjuncture between the presentation of the home in literature and film and the preservation of the home in visual culture is yet another example of how not only modes of representation differed across the genres but also the contrasting ways in how the legacy of the War was treated in culture more generally.

The shift in the visual presentation of the damaged male body came not during the Thaw, as we might expect, but in the mid 1960s at the height of the War cult. For all we may see the revivification of the War as being a politically calculated move for the Brezhnev administration, the fact is that from 1964 onwards visual culture at last began to turn its attention

<sup>101</sup> For further discussion of these themes, see Claire E. McCallum, 'The Return: Postwar Masculinity and the Domestic Space in Stalinist Visual Culture, 1945–53', *Russian Review*, 74, 2015, 1, pp. 117–43.

to the wounds that the War had inflicted on the Soviet people — both physically and psychologically — with a consistency and nuance that had to date been lacking. Works such as Viktor Popkov's 1966 series of paintings on the widows of Mezen, and Dmitrii Oboznenko's *Compatriots* (1969), along with other works examined here, are evidence of a greater degree of emotional realism being injected into works which dealt with the War experience and by a far greater number of artists. As issues of commemoration and recognition were legitimately brought into the public sphere on a large scale for the first time since 1945, finally the plurality of discourses surrounding the War experience found an outlet. Thus, while artistic portrayals of the effects of 1941–45 on the Soviet populace may have lagged behind other cultural media in many ways, the changes that we see in the visual construction of the War and its impact around 1965 was one part of the more extensive reappraisal of the Great Patriotic War taking place in contemporary Soviet society. Yet, it is crucial to remember that in the vast majority of cases this shift towards the profound did not include a reconceptualization of how injury and disability was presented visually: in this respect, the work of Korzhev is peerless.

Ultimately then what the material discussed here demonstrates is that the Great Patriotic War brought with it a new component in the visual construction of Soviet masculinity, as the wounded man was regularly featured in war-themed art from 1941 onwards. At the same time, we also need to recognize both the limitations of the visual representation of the damaged man, and how this differs from the trends that Krylova and Kaganovsky have identified in other cultural forms, particularly in relation to post-war Stalinism. Even in this era alone, the treatment of the damaged man in visual culture differed significantly from what was presented in literature and film, as he was neither an exemplar of Soviet manhood nor a conduit for dealing with the horrific legacy of the War, and this disparity would only become more marked during the years of de-Stalinization. That Korzhev's vision of the damaged man stands alone, despite the art world's increasing willingness to deal with the issues of grief and death after 1964, only serves to highlight the fact that even twenty years after the end of the War the visual narratives surrounding injury were still largely confined to the heroic and did not include the representation of the mutilated bodies, shattered psyches and destroyed lives that was the painful reality for so many Soviet men.