Dressing the Part: Clothing Otherness in Soviet Cinema before 1950.

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Almost two decades after the revolution, in his classic film of 1935 *Schast'e* (*Happiness*), the idiosyncratic director Aleksandr Medvedkin pictured acceptance into the new Soviet world as the literal and metaphorical shedding of old clothes. His hero, Khmyr, has – after a long battle with himself and others – finally become a happy and productive member of his collective farm. In the final scenes of the film, he and his wife Anna take a trip to the city where he is re-clothed – transformed from peasant into Soviet man. **Clip.**

Here, then, Khmyr enters modernity; he graphically (and increasingly desperately) throws away his old attire, and implicitly his old self. Of course, in Medvedkin's typically playful style, Khmyr's entry into the Soviet world is by no means simple. We see him comically battling with the apparatus of the emerging Soviet consumerism, desperately trying (and for a while failing) to leave his old self behind. Ultimately, however, the message is clear. Khmyr purchases the signs of Sovietness. Clothes carry meaning; dress is a sign of belonging. And the distinctions are symbolically graphic. In the film's final scenes, when Khmyr's former enemies seize greedily on his discarded attire, those outside the collective remain semiotically bound by old symbolic order; Khmyr's escape into the new symbolic order signals his acceptance into the new world.

Medvedkin's use of the symbolic vocabulary of clothing and belonging was not accidental. It was part of an ongoing debate about the nature and form of Soviet clothing during the late 1920s and into the 1930s. In June 1928, a headline in the newspaper *Komsomolskaia pravda* posed a crucial question: 'How should we dress?'[1] What, it asked, was correct Soviet dress; what was the ideologically appropriate fashion for the new age? Such questions were increasingly widespread. In the same year, the periodical magazine *Krasnaia panorama* began to issue a supplementary magazine, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* (*The Art of Dressing*). Its first issue contained a forward by Anatolii Lunacharskii, in which he acknowledged that 'a certain amount of smartness and fashion

(*moda*) is by no means unsuited to the proletariat.'[2] Five years later, in 1933, *Komsomolskaia pravda* began to publish a regular column under the heading 'We want to dress well'.[3]

What did all this mean? Did it herald the beginning of a new attitude to Soviet fashion? How was Sovietness to be encoded in clothes? And what, if so, was un-Soviet dress? The evidence – even the very existence - of such debates leads us to question the so-called 'prohibition' of fashion in Soviet Russia.[4] The standard narrative of Soviet fashion, at least in the West, is one of its absence, of the grey sameness that is supposed to have distinguished the Soviet street: in the words of one historian of dress, 'It is drab, dull, old and simple.'[5] Communism, it is suggested, eliminated fashion.

One of the earliest attempts to theorise the role and significance of fashion in modern society was made by Georg Simmel in 1914. According to Simmel, fashion in Western societies provided a uniquely synthetic answer to two apparently contradictory ambitions: it allows for 'fusion with our social group and the accentuation of the individual.' 'Fashion,' Simmel suggested, 'is the imitation of a given pattern and thus satisfies the need for social adaptation. It leads the individual onto the path that everyone travels […]. At the same time, and to no less a degree, it satisfies the need for distinction, the tendency towards differentiation, change and individual contrast.'[6] For Simmel, writing in 1914, three years before the Bolshevik revolution claimed to usher in a new kind of social order, these two aims were essential to the very existence of fashion as concept and reality: 'If one of the two social tendencies essential to the establishment of fashion, namely, the need for integration on the one hand and the need for separation on the other, should be absent, then the formation of fashions will not occur and its realm will end.'[7]

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[1] *Komsomolskaia pravda* 30 June 1928
[2] Anatolii Lunacharskii, 'Svoevremenno li podimat' rabochemy ob iskusstve odevat'sia,' *Iskusstvo odevatsia*, 1928.
[3] N. B. Lebina, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' sovetskogo goroda 1920/1930 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 204-225 (220).
[4] Ingrid Brenninkmeyer, *The Sociology of Fashion* (Keller: Winterthur, 1962), p. 84.
[5] Brenninkmeyer, 156.
[6] Georg Simmel, 'The Philosophy of Fashion,' in *Simmel on Culture*, edited by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London, 1997), pp.187-206 (p. 189).
[7] Simmel, p. 191

The implications of this statement for Soviet society – and for Soviet fashion – are manifold and contradictory. According to Simmel, the collectivist imperative of Soviet Russia should render fashion irrelevant and impossible. Theoretically, the drive for integration would supersede the need for individual differentiation, and the 'realm' of fashion come to an end. In practice, of course, as these debates on 'dressing well' suggest, the picture was far more ambiguous. Dress and fashion were in fact as complex and negotiated in Soviet Russia as elsewhere.

Why then did fashion and clothing retain such signficance in post-revolutionary Russia? Perhaps Simmel himself pinpointed the essential feature of dress and clothing in relation to the Soviet project when he suggested that, in the West, fashion performed 'the double function of holding a given social circle together and at the same time closing it off to others.'[8] In Soviet Russia, dress and clothing functioned as symbols of belonging, defining participation in the collective project, and exclusion from it. A specifically Soviet form of dress, therefore, was an ideological imperative, a means first of distinguishing the Soviet world from the West, and second, within that Soviet world, of distinguishing the good and the bad, the loyal citizen from the saboteur or class-enemy. My focus today is on this second category. I will not look at oppositions between Russia and elsewhere, nor even at graphic distinctions between insiders and outsiders, but on the subtle signs of belonging that linked or separated different categories of so-called insiders.

I will provide a brief survey of the emerging language and symbolism of clothing during the 1920s and 30s, before focusing on a few key films from the late 1930s and 1940s. Specifically, I will suggest that the binary distinctions of Soviet and un-Soviet dress blur considerably in films of the late 1930s and early 1940s. The clear-cut oppositions of belonging and non-belonging begin to break down; in their place, in a new language of dress, a comprehensive and inclusive vision of Sovietness begins to emerge. Cinema had a crucial role to play. First, it could shape tastes, offering models of style and beauty for audiences to emulate. In addition, in a more complex sense, I will suggest that film-makers used the symbolism of clothing as a prism through which to talk about the

[8] Simmel, p. 189

role of cinema itself, to articulate an ideologically-palatable ideal of glamour and 'entertainment' which was central to the survival of their own art.

In the immediately post-revolutionary years, pragmatic and ideological imperatives alike seemed to demand a rejection of the bourgeois preoccupations of fashion. According to the leading Soviet historian of costume, Tatiana Strizhenova, 'For almost a decade after the revolution, 'fashion' was synonymous with impermissable luxury, frivolity.'[9] Questions of dress were affected by a number of factors. First, there was the unavoidable reality of shortages. In simple terms, clothing was difficult to get hold of: according to Nadezhda Mandel'shtam – 'All of us, women, mothers, secretaries, we all looked liked scarecrows.'[10] Alongside this, and certainly related to it, an ideological aesthetic of functionality was propagated by avant-garde designers such as Nadezhda Lamanova, Varvara Stepanova and Liubov' Popova, who sought new modes of clothing appropriate to the revolutionary utopia. In the words of Lamanova, 'Artists must take the initiative, working to create from plain fabrics simple but beautiful garments befitting the new mode of working life.'[11] Although the visions of such designers had little real impact on the clothing of ordinary men and women in Soviet Russia of the 1920s, they created an idealised vision of a kind of fashion based on socialist principles, and propagated an ideal of physical freedom and simple forms as the basis for Soviet clothing.

In real terms, meanwhile, men and women, of whatever class or political persuasion, were faced with a real fashion dilemma: how to configure their appearance to match the demands of the day? How to appear to belong? At a conference of the Communist Youth League during the 1920s, such urgent questions were the subject of heated debate: 'What should a Komsomol member wear, and can you tell a class enemy by his clothes?' one agenda asked.[12] For a while, a uniform (known as the Iungshturm), was adopted as a symbol of membership of the Komsomol. More broadly, 'fitting in' became a kind of fashion statement. In the new game of belonging (where the stakes were increasingly high), appearing Proletarian was, in fashion-speak, the "New Black'.

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[9] T. Strizhenova, *Iz istorii sovetskogo kostiuma* (Moscow, 1972), p. 49.
[10] N. Mandel'shtam, *Vtoraia kniga*, cited in Lebina, p. 210.
[11] From *Protokoly I Vserossiiskoi konferentsii po khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti*. (Moscow, 1920), p. 37-8. Cited in Strizhenova, p. 17.

Writing to his wife Stepanova during a trip to Paris, for example, Aleksandr Rodchenko showed acute awareness of the new demands: 'I'm proletarizing my dress in the Western style,' he wrote, 'I even want to buy a blue blouse (a reference to the revolutionary travelling theatre, the Blue Blouse) and corduroy trousers.' [13] During the 1920s, in times of shortages, the most easily available ideologically-appropriate clothing for women consisted of a black skirt and white blouse, often with a red scarf, echoing the aesthetics (and political credentials) of the French revolution.[14] For men, the leather jacket (immortalised by Pil'niak in his images of leather-clad revolutionaries in the novel of 1919, *Golyi god* (*The Naked Year*)), was a symbol of the military-revolutionary aesthetic. In practise, however, alongside these drives to standardise the Soviet aesthetic, pre-revolutionary fashion remained the sought-after mode for the wealthy. French magazines were available in Soviet Russia throughout the NEP years, and a number of new fashion magazines appeared during the 1920s. A number of films from this period, including Protazanov's *Aelita* and Barnet's *Devushka s korobkoi* (and even Kuleshov's *Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*), picture an admiration of bourgeois fashion as a signal of ideological regression. **Clip.** In cinema, costume exhibited the hybrid nature of Soviet dress: from avant-garde costumes designed by Alexandra Ekster and Liubov' Popova, to the designs of Lamanova modelled by Aleksandra Khokhlova (wife of Kuleshov and star), the studied neutrality of Eisenstein's *typage*, and the ordinary clothes of Barnet's heroes and heroines.

Fashion, then, did not disappear. And in the early 1930s, it began to appear more consistently as part of the discourse of Soviet everyday life. The reality of a short supply of consumer goods in this period was counterbalanced by public emphasis on growth of consumer choice. 'Moscow is dressing well', one newspaper announced. In 1934, a central fashion store, the 'Tsentralnyi dom modelei' opened in Moscow, and, in the same year, an elite clothes shop opened in Dom 12, Nevskii Prospekt, Leningrad. Quality clothing was often a reward for the overfulfilment of production targets: the Stakhanovite man and woman emerged as the supermodels of the era; awards ceremonies were the

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[12] TsGA IPD f. 40000, op 6, d. 252/141.
[13] Rodchenko, Letter to Stepanova from Paris. In A. M. Rodchenko, *Stat'I I vospominaniiia. Avtobiograficheskie zapiski, pis'ma*. Ed. V. A. Rodchenko (Moscow, 1982), p. 93.
[14] Lebina, 217.

Soviet equivalent of the Oscars, with these 'ordinary' men and women often clothed in the latest styles.[15] Of course, such style, and such quality clothing, were supposed to filter down to other social levels: also in 1934, a specific clothes 'atelier' opened at Elektrozavod, to 'serve the workers of the factory.'[16] In the same year, an article in Pravda emphasised the demanding consumer that the factory worker had become.

From about 1933 on, then, a new rhetoric of 'beauty', and even of luxury, attached itself to the discourse on clothing. It was carefully negotiated, for the stakes were high and the issues sensitive. In 1934, for example, the journal *Nashi dostizheniia* (started by Maksim Gorkii in the early 1930s as a means of social incorporation, telling the stories of the contributions of the so-called 'little' people to the project of Socialist construction) published a special issue dedicated to questions of consumption. Its articles exhibit a complex, self-reflexive relationship to so-called Western models of consumption and ideals of beauty. In one, 'A Beautiful Thing.'[17], V. Lebedev proclaimed that 'freedom from fashion is one of the greatest victories of Soviet construction.' 'Let's say it straight out,' he wrote: 'Fashion, which is a result of bourgeois civilisation, is powerless in our country. […]We approach fashion critically, it is transformed in relation to our consumer.'[18]

Alongside this praise of a supposedly fashion-free world, however, Lebedev called for 'variation' in Soviet style, and for a socialistically-appropriate form of 'beauty.' There must be a distinctly Soviet form of clothing. The drive towards conformity symbolised by the Iungshturm uniform was subtly rejected in discussions of fashion in the early 1930s.[19] As improved mechanisation enabled the development of factory-made clothing, and the infamous *sovetskii standart* [mass-produced items] appeared, the emphasis of Soviet discussions of fashion shifted away from a drive towards the uniform, and towards a call for variety. In parallel, the poor quality of much

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[15] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1999), p. 103.
[16] Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (London, 2003), p. 94.
[17] V. Lebedev, 'Krasivaia veshch',' *Nashi dostizheniia* 1934, 6, p. 101-3 (102).
[18] Lebedev, 102.
[19] Elena Eikhengol'ts, 'Problema massovoi odezhdy,' in *Izofront: klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv. Sbornik statei ob"edineniia "Oktiabr'"*, edited by P. I. Novitskii (Moscow, 1931), pp. 55-69 (61).

of the new mass-produced clothing brought increasing emphasis on the 'right' of the ordinary man or woman to clothing of a good standard. In *Nashi Dostizhenii*, for example, a short story entitled 'A Life of Luxury', told the story of one Kostia Zaitsev, member of a prosperous provincial collective who, on an outing to the city, buys silk pyjamas with atlas decoration.[20] He is called into his local management office and accused of 'breaking away from the masses [*obryv ot massy*]'. Ultimately, however, it is not Zaitsev that the story criticises, but the small-minded management who view his interest in good quality products as an un-Soviet attitude. The story ends with Zaitsev having not just the pyjamas, but also a couple of excellent suits, a good watch, 'Nowadays people want not just boots, but good boots,' the narrator concludes.[21]

This emphasis on quality was evident in many discussions of consumption in the second half of the 1930s. The ability to discern became a marker of Soviet achievement: 'The new consumer is demanding,' another article in *Nashi dostizhenii* proclaimed: 'we're building the Dnepr power station, the Belomor canal, so surely we can make a nice suit?'[22]. In film, this rhetoric of the discerning consumer was treated directly in Konstantin Iudin's 1939 film, *Devushka s kharakterom* (*A Girl with Character*). The film's heroine, Katia Ivanovna, inadvertently arriving in Moscow from Siberia, finds work in a fur shop in one of the new Soviet department stores. In one intriguing scene, she is initiated into the secrets of Soviet-style sales patter. This scene, at once comic and serious, reflects the new reality of Soviet consumption, and captures the key slogan of the day: 'we treat fashion critically.' **Clip.**

Thus discernment became the key category that was to differentiate Soviet fashion from its bourgeois equivalent in the West. The ability to distinguish a good quality product from poor, and a concurrent obsession with the need for quality products, was not just a pragmatic response to the reality of poor-quality goods. It became a form of fashion in itself – or at least, a displacement of traditionally fashion-related categories such as choice and style into different fields. In Soviet terms, the stylish consumer became the discriminating consumer. Shopping was configured as a kind of empowerment: the Soviet consumer was, whether by choice or out of necessity,

[20] Pavel Nilin, O roskoshnoi zhizn', *Nashi dostizhenii*, 1934, 6, pp. 56-61.
[21] Nilin, p. 61

discerning. And it was this emphasis on the ability to discriminate – to 'treat fashion critically' – that made Soviet fashion as ideologically acceptable.

This re-entry of fashion into the language and symbols of everyday life was very clear in cinema. In *A Girl with Character*, Iudin had used a special costume designer, one M. Zhukova (one of the first instances in which costume design is marked as a special category in film credits). And the same light touch, and ironic awareness of the shifting poles of consumerism and style was evident in his next film, *Serdtse chetyrekh* of 1941, for which Zhukova was also responsible for costume. The film features two sisters, Galina and Shura. Galina, a mathematician, is serious and focused. Shura, her younger sister, is frivolous, a comic foil to her older sibling. At the beginning of the film, these differences are configured as much in the two womens' clothes, as they are in their activities. Galina wears spectacles (a charged symbol of the intellectual – the politician Kirov had stopped wearing them in 1928, apparently in an attempt to shed his image of *intelligent*[23]) and sensible suits and frocks. We first see Shura dressed in a silk pyjama suit, playing the piano while staring lovingly at a sketch of Pushkin. Galina is pictured as having no time for distractions such as love and landscape; Shura is all distraction. **clip.**

In the course of the film, however, the binary distinctions between the two sisters are overcome. Despairing of her sister's frivolity, Galina arranges for them to spend the summer away from the city, in a scientific research colony, where she will provide lessons in mathematics for servicemen. While there, almost against her will, she falls in love with a young soldier-scholar, Gleb. Through love, she enters a different symbolic sphere, and this is visually expressed in her clothing. Shura, meanwhile, while remaining firmly un-serious in clothing and demeanour, herself falls into romance, and the two couples appear happily symmetrical at the end of the film. Thus, through the character of Galina, the distinction between so-called frivolity and so-called seriousness is overcome. Both, we understand, have a place in Soviet Russia.

In case this acceptance of glamour should go too far, however, Iudin makes sure to include a clear foil to his two positive heroines, in the form of their landlady, a manicurist. In this character, dress is a clear index of meaning: her style is a clear parody

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[22] N. Kal'ma, Novyi pokupatel', *Nashi dostizhenii* 1934, 6, p. 106
[23] Lebina, p. 218.

of bourgeois 'high fashion'. It is old-world, 'over the top' – and this in direct contrast to the simple beauty of the implicitly Soviet dress of the other women. **Clip.**

Serdtse chetyrykh is an extremely visual film – it uses mise-en-scene, costume, and the visual impact of its heroines. to both thematic and visual effect. In scenes of the city, for example, Moscow appears *en fleurs*, as floral patterns on women's clothes, parasols and flower sellers combine to create a softened vision of the city against which Galina's purposeful seriousness is set. **clip.** This overt use of floral motifs, incidentally, was shaped by changes in fashion, tied to a broader shift in ideologically-approved textile design. During the 1920s, avant-garde designers had been united in a drive to eliminate 'the plant motif', and to create more politically appropriate designs. This was accompanied by shifts in textile design. In 1928, at a major Exhibition of Textiles in Everyday Life, propaganda designs (factories, tractors etc.) were very much in evidence. In 1933, thematic textiles of this kind were banned, and the floral reappeared as the dominant design. Floral summer dresses became a key signifier of the new leisure ideal in Soviet culture.

Serdste chetyrykh was banned from 1941-44. It was perceived to present the wrong kind of image of the Red Army for the period of war in which it was made. Its emphasis on leisure and its lightness of touch, although recognised by Zhdanov and the other censors as a valuable contribution to the quest for appropriate Soviet comedy, were simply too frivolous for the seriousness of the moment. In its drive to admit a softer element into the representation of the Soviet everyday, however, it was very much a film of its time.

The next film on which I wish to focus is Trauberg's *Aktrisa* (*The Actress*) of 1943. The heroine of the film, Zoia, is a successful actress and singer, first seen on stage in extraordinarily rich costume. The film is set during the war, and she has been evacuated from the city to the provinces, and his temporarily housed in the home of the old-fashioned Agafiia. Her piano, her glamorous clothes and equally glamorous parrot sit uncomfortably within the domestic interior of ordinary Russia. In parallel, her profession seems at odds with the serious business of war. As her landlady writes disparagingly of the actress to her son at the front: 'she's a parrot herself.'

In the first part of the film, Zoia is clothed in a series of remarkable outfits, and consciously pictured according to the aesthetic codes of Hollywood and glamour to which she belongs. **Clip**. The narrative of the film tracks her rejection of that world. Beset by conscience, she abandons the theatre and takes up work as a nurse, dissolving her former self in the anonymity of a white nurse's uniform. She falls in love with one of the patients, whose eyes have been damaged in battle; he is a lover of operetta – and more specifically of one particular singer, Zoia Vladimirovna herself, one of whose records he has carried with him into battle at all times. In one crucial scene, when the patients acquire a record player and they are about to play this cherished record, it breaks. In an attempt to hide this tragic fact from the blind patient, Zoia sings the song herself. Her patient recognises her voice, and their romance is assured.

For our heroine, this enables a reappropriation of the world of the theatre. Her blinded lover recognises her voice, without seeing her, and in this way liberates her from the *kraski* and *kostiumi* of her former world – and allows her to return to them in a new way. In one scene, see her dressing for an outing, looking at herself in the mirror, implicitly testing out different versions of herself. **Clip.** Through her lover, and the other patients, she recognises the value and necessity of entertainment and glamour to the collective good. She reassumes her art, but – crucially – she does so 'critically' and consciously. This, then, is a fashion version of the archetypal socialist realist path to consciousness. It creates a new, ideologically acceptable, version of style and entertainment.

Of course, the greatest fashion icon of the 1930s and 40s was the film-star Liubov Orlova, wife of Grigorii Aleksandrov and heroine of all his most successful films. In the 1936 film *Circus*, when Orlova played the American trapeze artist Marion Dixon, Sovietness was configured as the rejection of the glamour, falsity and individuality of the West, and the embracing of the simple white trouser suit of collectivity. Marion Dixon throws away her impressive collection of evening dresses to assume the simplicity of her chosen world. She dissolves her stylish self into the anonymity – and implicitly the liberation – of the collective.

Ten years after *Circus*, however, Orlova starred in a film which treated the subject of clothing and belonging in quite different terms. This film was Aleksandrov's *Vesna*

(*Spring*) of 1947. It is, in a sense, a film about Orlova herself, and about the role and meaning of film-making, and of glamour. Like *The Actress*, it seeks to appropriate the tropes of entertainment, of frivolity, pleasure and glamour, to the Soviet cause. And, like that film, and like *Serdtsa cheterykh*, it is explicitly concerned with blurring the distinctions between insiders and outsiders – with overcoming difference in an inclusive model of Sovietness.

In this film, Orlova plays two roles. She is Nikitina, a world-famous scientist, bespectacled, clothed in suits and sensible shoes. And also Shatrova, an actress, beautiful, innocent and essentially light-weight, whose job it is to play the role of Nikitina in a film about Soviet science. At the beginning of the film, these two women could not be further apart. Nikitina is explicitly outside the world of fashion and glamour – indeed, she is sent a hat by a Moscow fashion store, and we see her reject it with a distaste echoed in her assistant's exclamation "Ah yes, beauty is a terrible thing! *(Da krasota – strashnaia dela*)". The film director, setting out to make a film about Soviet science, finds in her the perfect embodiment of his vision of the scientist – stern, serious, and entirely lacking in femininity. She, in turn, is suitably disparaging about cinema itself, seeing in it a world directly opposed to her own: 'You need not facts, but effects,' she says to the Director- 'I am no fan of cinema.'

The actress Shatrova, by contrast, is blatantly styled as Nikitina's opposite. She is glamorous, certainly; but – and this is important – she is also clearly configured as a simple girl. Her glamour is not transgressive, her sexuality not threatening. And this is the key to the film's representation of the world of female style. In the course of the film, polar opposites begin to blur, the binaries begin to collapse. When Shatrova is offered the lead role in a stage performance, on the same day as an initial meeting with the film director for whom she is to play Nikitina, she manages to persuade Nikitina to stand in for her – to pretend, that is, to be Shatrova playing Nikitina. In the confusing scenes of disguise and mistaken identity that ensue, Nikitina discovers the power and liberation of disguise. She is 'made up, clothed and filmed' as someone else playing herself, and these disguises enable her to enter a new, and implicitly softer, realm of emotions.

First, she reject the image of Soviet scientist as an emotionless automaton, explaining to the uncomprehending film-director that: 'Our Soviet scientist is a human

being – with a human soul,' she insists. Later, dressed in a full-length evening dress, Nikitina has a discussion about love with the film-director who she had earlier despised. As they talk, the film studio background shifts, creating layers of fantasy and make-believe. The pair move through fantastic sets, love scenes, dance sequences and military parades, and finally into a dialogue between two Nikolai Gogol's. 'Only in a film studio,' the director jokes,' could you see two Gogols – and neither of them real.' Gradually, then, the unreality of film is transformed into a virtue; the world of effects acquires its own value. And its greatest effect is on Nikitina herself, for it allows her to enter the symbolic realm of romance. Costume and set combine to transport Nikitina into a world of femininity that she had previously rejected, and allow her to fall in love.

At the end of the film, then, difference is overcome. There are no insiders and outsiders, no 'others' in this inclusive vision of Sovietness. Scientists can wear evening gowns , actresses can be serious. Cinema, too, has justified its own role: the film ends with a song, as Orlova appears in both her roles, and two happy couples sing together. The song is both fact and symbol: the message is that Soviet scientist has learned to sing, has learned to appreciate the value and necessity of the apparently frivolous. There is, it is implied, a place for artifice, for fantasy and 'effects', and for glamour in Soviet culture. Ultimately, however, artifice and glamour are neutralised. They are not threatening. And in parallel, fashion loses its power to distinguish the individual, and is appropriated to a vision of collective homogeneity. In a sense, then, clothing means nothing. It no longer carries ideological signficance. It is reduced, in a sense, to an empty sign. And this neutralization ultimately exludes the very possibility of otherness – of being different.