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*To my parents, dual Russian-American
citizens, who can look at some images of Russia
from their new perspective*

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Abbreviations

DLR *Dreiser Looks at Russia*

DRD *Dreiser's Russian Diary*

1. Introduction

It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma [...].
(Winston Churchill, *BBC Broadcast*, 1 October 1939)

The above words of Winston Churchill reflect the essence of the Western image of Russia. In the United States and Europe, this country has long had a reputation of a cold, mysterious and aggressive land, where people value good literature and arts but are prone to misery. Whether American authors visiting the ‘enigma’ in the twentieth century confirmed or refuted such stereotypes will be investigated in this paper.

Five books and one published manuscript of the following five prominent American writers who travelled to Russia from the late 1920s to the late 1950s will be analysed in the current study: Theodore Dreiser (1927), the literary critic Edmund Wilson (1935), John Steinbeck (1947), the Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas (1955) and the President of Princeton University Gaylord P. Harnwell (1958). The texts created by the above authors are travelogues belonging to the category of travel writing. They are not homogeneous, ranging from diaries, where events appear in chronological order, to systematic accounts of various aspects of Russian life. These sources are: 1) the book *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928); 2) the manuscript *Dreiser's Russian Diary* published for the first time in 1996; 3) the part “Soviet Russia” in the book *Red, Black, Blond and Olive: Studies in Four Civilizations: Zuñi, Haiti, Soviet Russia, Israel* (1956), which is a modified version of the second part of the book *Travels in Two Democracies* (1936) by Wilson; 4) the book *A Russian Journal: With Photographs by Robert Capa* (1948) by Steinbeck; 5) the book *Russian Journey* by Douglas (1956); 6) the book *Russian Diary* by Harnwell (1960).

The time span of about thirty years, during which the selected writers undertook their journeys, refers to the Soviet era of Russian history under Stalin and Khrushchev. It was a contentious period in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Most American citizens could not travel to Russia, and those who succeeded in receiving their visas were restricted in their itineraries. For this reason, there is a limited availability of American travelogues on Russia which cover the period of time in question and have literary and informative value.

Travellers always compare people, things and traditions in foreign countries with those in their homelands. The way they perceive the new and the unfamiliar might be influenced by their

previous knowledge about the target country. Such preconceived notions depend on individuals' cultural, ethnical, religious and educational backgrounds, their frames of reference, values and systems of norms. A relatively new discipline within comparative literature – imagology – deals with images, prejudices, stereotypes and representations of national characters in literary texts; it provides a theoretical framework for the current analysis.

The overall aim of this thesis is to investigate how images of Russia are constructed in the chosen primary literature. The main research question may be formulated as whether the American writers formed their opinions about Russian people on the basis of their preconceived ideas, their autoptic experiences or in any other way. Furthermore, this study addresses the following relevant questions: 1) Did the images forged by the authors reflect the stereotypes and prejudices against Russians which circulated in American society at the time? 2) Did the traits of the Russian national character, if seen diachronically, change under the influence of the Soviet regime if compared to those in tsarist Russia? 3) Did the national character features alter within the period of time from the late 1920s to the late 1950s? 4) Were there any aspects of Russian life which all five writers highlighted in their works? 5) Did the authors hold contradictory viewpoints about Russia, and were there inconsistencies in the judgements of one and the same writer? 6) Which American auto-images can be traced in the primary literature analysed?

The structure of this paper follows the steps required to answer the above questions. The theoretical part covers those concepts and terms of imagology which are relevant to the selected texts; it also touches upon the features of travel writing and methods of textual analysis. The next part offers contextualisation; it concentrates on the historical background and on the basic stereotypes and prejudices against Russia in American society in the twentieth century, both in popular culture and in scholarly works. Finally, the practical part focuses on images of Russia and Russian people in the chosen travelogues; its sections examine the writers' 'mental luggage' and elaborate on the construction of the Russian national character with regard to the theory of imagology. It should be noted that the term 'image' in this study is understood in a broad sense, as referring not only to stereotypes and national character traits but also to landscapes, things, arts and traditions. Therefore, further thematic sections of the empirical part illuminate those aspects of Russian life which most writers paid attention to during their journeys. Within each section the texts are analysed chronologically, from Theodore Dreiser to Gaylord P. Harnwell.

2. The Theory of Imagology, Terminology and Methods

2.1. Imagology and Its Key Concepts

Imagology as part of comparative literature “studies the origin and function of characteristics of other countries and peoples” (Beller, “Perception” 7) in literary texts. Most scholars trace the discipline of imagology, as it is known at the present time,¹ to Hugo Dyserinck’s Aachen programme of the 1960s (Beller, “Perception” 9; Leerssen, “Imagology: History” 23; Świdarska 24; Zacharasiewicz, *Images* 5). The most important achievement of Hugo Dyserinck and his disciples was the postulate that images of foreign groups of people are constructions and not realities; this revolutionary idea led to de-ideologisation of comparative studies. Małgorzata Świdarska adumbrates the most distinguishing features of the Dyserinck school: images have not only an aesthetic or socio-psychological value but also a purely literal one; it is necessary to investigate the origin, the structure and the function of images within literary texts (24-28).

The question may arise what exactly an *image* is. Joep Leerssen defines it as “[t]he mental and discursive representation or reputation of a person, group, ethnicity or ‘nation’”; he claims that in literary texts images relate to “attributions of moral or characterological nature” and “collective psychologisms” (“Image” 342). For Manfred Beller an image, which is codified in literature, is “the mental silhouette of the other, who appears to be determined by the characteristics of family, group, tribe, people or race” (“Perception” 4). It should be noted that in the above definitions the mental aspect is primarily meant. Other scholars interpret the term ‘image’ more broadly; thus, according to Karl Ulrich Syndram, this concept embraces depictions of geographical places and inhabitants with their customs and traditions (qtd. in Świdarska 31).

One of the most important tasks of imagology is to understand the mechanism of the creation of an image by an individual. Beller points out that “our way of seeing and judging is conditioned by preconceived notions, prejudice and stereotypes” (“Perception” 4). It is a known psychological fact that human beings perceive reality selectively and that they notice only those aspects which fit into their own frames of reference. Observers look at things from their own perspectives; they compare others with their compatriots, paying attention to characteristics which differ or coincide with those they are used to. Moreover, travellers possess some prepacked “mental luggage” (Stanzel 1) regarding people and places of a target country, and they do not easily change their opinions. Judgements of individuals can be positive or negative,

¹ More on history of imagology see Leerssen, “Imagology: History” 17-26 and Świdarska 21-42.

depending on their mentality, education, habits or religion (Beller, “Perception” 4 and “Technik” 39). Thus, images which writers create in literary texts may be understood as hybrids. On the one hand, they can reflect prejudices circulating in societies to which observers belong; on the other hand, they can be results of autoptic experiences in foreign environments.² It is to be kept in mind that images forged by authors from the same country or group often differ significantly both synchronically and diachronically.

Most scholars in the field of imagology indicate that this discipline has borrowed its basic concepts from sociology and cognitive psychology. Scholarly works often comment on the lack of unanimity concerning imagological terms.³ Świdarska underscores that the initial Aachen programme of Dyserinck showed deficiency in terminology and methodology (33). Beller asserts that “in imagological criticism as current in various disciplines, a wide-ranging terminological cluster including *topos*, *commonplace*, *prejudice*, *stereotype*, *imagotype*, *cliché* etc., is applied more or less as synonymous, often without conceptual distinction or precise definition” (“Perception” 8).

Each single term used in imagological studies may cause a long debate about its definition and application. Due to this fact, an attempt will be made to clarify those concepts which will be used in the current paper for the further practical analysis of the chosen texts. The definitions will be mostly based on the reference book *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey* (2007), edited by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, where most basic concepts are clarified by the editors.

The most important term *image* has already been defined; correspondingly, *hetero-images* refer to the representation of ‘the other,’ and *auto-images* are characterisations of one’s own group. In the Aachen school, it was postulated that the former are always accompanied by the latter (Świdarska 32). Leerssen also mentions the term *meta-image*, which means “how a nation believes it is perceived by others” (“Image” 344).

The next terminological group pertains to images in forms of ‘clichés,’ ‘stereotypes’ and ‘prejudices.’ It is very important to understand the difference between them, even if the semantic boundaries might seem vague. Manfred Beller defines *prejudice* as “the key concept for any preconceived and unsupported opinion and attitude that influences our perception, description and judgement of others” (“Prejudice” 404). This definition implies that the observer acquires

² Cf. Zacharasiewicz, *Images* 2.

³ Cf. Świdarska 14, 25, 29, 31.

a positive or negative feeling about what he or she experiences in an unknown environment of a foreign country in accord with what is familiar, as opinions and attitudes usually have an emotional component and not only a cognitive one.

Stereotype, being a complex concept, embraces “one-sided characterisations of others” (Pickering 47). Beller in his thorough article “Stereotype” in the above-mentioned book calls for distinguishing between different approaches in social psychology, history, cultural studies and literary studies, referring to many scholars in the corresponding fields (429-33). Generalisations about other groups of people, as ‘stereotypes’ are understood in social psychology, relate to their verbal representations in texts, and Beller stresses that “[i]n literary analysis, the preoccupation with stereotypes is implicitly concerned with demonstrating their lack of trustworthiness [...]” (430). Most scholars differentiate between *hetero-stereotypes* and *auto-stereotypes*, which Beller defines as “standardized images” of others and selves respectively (429). It is worth noting that stereotypes can stay unchanged over a considerable period of time, even if new information becomes available (429). For instance, Stanzel emphasises “the persistence of originally European stereotypes in America,” and he explains that American travellers who visited the Old World in the nineteenth century held old prejudices of their ancestors (7). Although stereotypes are known to be resistant, they can give way to new ones in the course of time, and the pendulum may swing. Old generalisations do not disappear altogether;⁴ they remain in storage, ready to be reactivated when the time comes. Hetero-stereotypes of other nations are always ambivalent, and Leerssen speaks in this context of “the ultimate cliché, which is current for virtually all nations: *nation X is a nation of contrasts*” (“Rhetoric” 279).

Cliché, which is the last term in the trio comprising also ‘prejudice’ and ‘stereotype,’ is defined by most English dictionaries as an overused or trite idea or phrase. An example of a cliché would be the expression ‘the mysterious Russian soul.’ Beller draws attention to the danger of interchanging these three notions: “Literary scholars may be well advised to distinguish between ‘prejudice’ as a moral judgment or attitude, ‘stereotype’ as that attitude’s fixed expression, and ‘cliché’ as a stylistic turn of phrase” (“Prejudice” 404).⁵ A very useful approach, “a hierarchical nesting of concepts,” which sheds light on the interrelation between these terms, is pointed out by Beller with reference to Bernd Mütter: “[A] set of clichés would form a

⁴ Cf. changing images in Zacharasiewicz, *Images* 11-12.

⁵ Cf. Świdorska 36.

stereotype, a set of stereotypes would constitute a prejudice, and a set of prejudices constitutes an image [...]” (“Stereotype” 431).

The next term, *ethnocentrism*, defined as “measuring other cultures by the standards and patterns of one’s own culture” (Leerssen, “Ethnocentrism” 323), is an essential concept of imagological studies. It connects the observer’s prejudices and stereotypes with his or her selective perception of unknown places and people. The familiar is seen by every group or individual as a norm, which is then compared with the new from an ethnocentric perspective. That is why, as Leerssen indicates in the same article with regard to Dyserinck, it is advisory to carry out imagological research from “a supranational point of view” (324).

One of the most important and complicated concepts of imagology is that of *national character*. The number of works devoted to it in the areas of social psychology, anthropology and literature is legion. In order to better understand what ‘national character’ implies, it might be helpful to have a look at the concept of *nation*. Nations in Europe formed from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and those agglomerations shared common territories, languages, ethnic backgrounds, traditions and religions (Leerssen, “Poetics” 64; Beller, “Perception” 11). Whether it is possible to speak of the ‘Russian nation’ in view of the country consisting of more than one hundred ethnicities is a controversial issue, which would require separate research; it may be simplified by arguing that in this case ‘nation’ is coterminous with ‘state.’ In the imagological discourse, as Leerssen asserts, nations “are usually characterized and mutually distinguished by their ‘culture’: their mores, manners and customs, and by their purported character, outlook, mentality or *Volksgeist*” (“Nation” 380). The word ‘character’ in this explanation requires further clarification.

In connection with the historical development of the concept ‘national character’ in imagology, three vivid examples are usually pointed at. The first two are systematised lists of national characteristics by Julius Caesar Scaliger of 1561 (Beller, “Imagology” 17; Leerssen, “Poetics” 64-65) and by Julius de La Mesnardière of 1640⁶ (Leerssen, “Poetics” 66), which touch upon temperaments, traits and proclivities. The third is the Styrian Tableau of Nationalities, which appeared before 1725 (Stanzel 3-4; Zacharasiewicz, “Theory” 67-69). This board incorporates illustrations of ten male Europeans in their traditional costumes and a table with seventeen distinctive features for each nationality. It is very telling that the Muskawith, or the Russian, followed by the Turk, is also positioned in this tableau and that his attributes are far from being

⁶ 1642 in Leerssen, “Rhetoric” 272.

favourable. As Leerssen claims, the meaning of the word ‘character’ has not changed since the seventeenth century; it is still “*a fundamental predisposition that motivates behavior*,” which “became that inherent personality blueprint that offers a psychological underpinning and causation [...] for behavior and acts” (“Rhetoric” 272).

The contemporary understanding and use of ‘national character’ in the area of imagology is precisely stated by Franz K. Stanzel: “My subject is national character in literature, i.e. national stereotypes” (1). Leerssen, in his turn, explains that “national stereotyping is specifically concerned not with reporting facts concerning a given nation but with defining its *character* – in the [...] motivational-temperamental sense of the term, the sense that emerged in the course of the seventeenth century” (“Rhetoric” 282). One may suppose that national stereotypes, in the long run, revolve around psychological traits ascribed to a particular nation. But Leerssen warns against this simplification:

[...] a nation’s “character” [...] is that essential, central set of temperamental attributes that distinguishes the nation as such from others and that motivates and explains the specificity of its presence and behavior in the world. Thus, national stereotyping sets in when the utterances concern in some way a psychologism or temperamental predisposition [...] and when the attributes predicated to the nation are held to be *typical* and *characteristic* [...] – in other words: a psychological *proprium*. (283)

Among various character traits of a group of people only those are relevant which form a unique constellation not found in other groups. Leerssen speaks in this case of *ethnotypes* – “stereotypical attributions” or “representations of national character” (“Imagology: On Using” 13, 16). Facts and verifiable descriptions (such as political structures or traditions) do not constitute a national character per se, but they may contribute to its construction when “factual reporting shades into national stereotyping” (Leerssen, “Rhetoric” 283). One has to keep in mind, however, that “[t]he demarcation between imagined discourse and testable report statements is not always obvious” (Beller, “Imagology” 28); in this case the researcher draws his or her own conclusions about certain traits of character on the basis of specific facts.

Imagologists have noticed that character traits manifest themselves in binary oppositions and that “some ten to fifteen characterological polarities will cover the greater part of the terms in which our national auto- and heterostereotypes are articulated” (Beller, “Stereotype” 433). Leerssen offers three examples of such oppositions (also as explanations why national stereotypes change in the course of time): South vs. North, strong vs. weak, and central vs. peripheral (“Rhetoric” 275). Northern nations are supposed to be “less pleasing” than southern ones, strong nations are allegedly heartless and cruel, and on the periphery one encounters

backwardness and timelessness in comparison with “dynamism and development” of the centre (276-77).⁷ Another polarisation would be East vs. West, which provides such generalisations of the former as marked by oriental despotism, oppression, slavery, cruelty and “mythical character” (Beller, “East/West” 317-18).

In related disciplines the notion of *national identity* appears alongside with ‘national character’ as an important construct. Robert Crew distinguishes between multiple facets of a national identity, such as history, state policy, sentiment, ideology, industrialisation, culture, community, rhetoric and ritual (32-43). However, Leerssen warns that image studies concern “a theory of cultural or national stereotypes, not a theory of cultural or national identity” (“Imagology: History” 27).

One more concept within the frame of imagology, *the theory of climate zones*, or *climate theory*, is of ultimate importance. It postulates that people’s dispositions and characters are in direct correlation with the climatic environments in which they live (Beller, “Climate” 298; Leerssen, “Poetics” 60; Stanzel 3). Beller asserts that “[c]limatological motifs are particularly prevalent in travel accounts and in autobiographical texts” (“Climate” 302), which easily explained by the fact that travellers are physically exposed to various weather conditions.

In the case of Russia, a country which geographically lies on both the European and Asian continents, such a concept as *orientalism* is necessary to elaborate on. Bernd Thum begins his article “Orientalism” in the reference book on imagology with the enumeration of Western stereotypes of the East: despotism, cruelty, fanaticism, megalomania, collectivism, inefficiency, exploitation, laziness, ostentation, patriarchal sexism and lasciviousness (389). The scholar explains that the Orient, as a mental construct, is related in the European mind to the geographical areas which do not include Russia (390). Nevertheless, in view of the chosen texts, it is useful to keep this concept as part of the analysis arsenal.

Studying national stereotypes in literature may be enriched by employing the concept of *gender*. As Ginette Verstraete points out, oppositions between nations touch on the issue of “women’s liberation” (331); a progressive society is believed to be the one which gives more rights to its women, in whatever form it might be.

⁷ Cf. Leerssen, “Imagology: On Using” 18.

2.2. Travel Writing and Methods of Textual Analysis

Imagology deals with discursive constructions of national stereotypes in texts, and it may be debated which writings are suitable for imagological research. Most scholars stress that sources appropriate for textual analysis do not need to be limited by strict boundaries of canonical works, such as prose fiction, poetry and drama. On the contrary, it is exactly in the area of imagology that texts outside these genres, like travel writing or autobiography, are favoured, and more material thus becomes available. Nevertheless, sources deserving to be studied are required to be literary, “non-trivial, non-banal, non-ephemeral” (Leerssen, “Literature” 353).

The terminology debate among literary scholars about ‘travel literature,’ ‘travel writing,’ ‘travelogue,’ ‘travel book’ is endless (Borm 13, Youngs 1-7). It appears reasonable to assume that *travel literature* is an umbrella term for both fiction and non-fiction, whereas *travel writing* encompasses texts reflecting the writer’s personal experience. The latter is not considered a genre but a hybrid of genres; it is rather a category (Youngs 4) which includes travel guides, travelogues, travel books, travel diaries, memoirs and letters. As far as *travelogue* and *travel book* are concerned, there is no unanimous opinion about the difference between these terms, and they are often regarded as synonymous (Borm 13, 17-19).

Albert Meier underscores that the category of travel writing is very heterogeneous and that it comprises both descriptive and narrative texts, which contain “informative and poetical components” in various proportions (446). Further on, such works can be current or retrospective, and they are often accompanied by illustrations or photos of the visited places. Meier also states that this category of literature “reveals much more about the traveller than about the depicted areas” (447). Indeed, the personality of the writer is of tremendous importance, and his or her individual perspective depends on the general horizon of experience. It is worth mentioning that the correlation between a personal image and a collective hetero-image is almost impossible to measure (Beller, “Technik” 47).

Travel writing is an ideal textual material for imagological studies of codified images. The question may emerge about the methods and techniques of coping with such texts. Joep Leerssen in his article “Imagology: History and Method” (2007) outlines several methodological assumptions for researchers, some of which concern the procedure of textual analysis (27-29). Thus, it is necessary to undertake certain steps: to identify the genre of the text in question, to contextualise it historically and to “establish the intertext of a given national

representation as trope” (28). Świdarska (with reference to Paul Ricœur) speaks of cultural contextualisation as a prerequisite for image interpretation (63).

The methods which are usually mentioned in imagological works include hermeneutic, inductive, deductive and comparative ones, the latter being indispensable and the most important. The comparison, as Leerssen stresses, should occur on two levels. First, similarities and differences are to be established between two different nations, the one to which the writer belongs and the one which he or she observes. Second, resemblances and contrasts within nations have to be indicated, such as based on gender, age or geographical location (Leerssen, “Comparison” 310).

Beller in “Die Technik des Vergleichs in der Imagologie” (2012) outlines a mechanism by which writers compare what they perceive and then present the processed information in their works. He distinguishes between three modalities of comparison. The first one is analogy between things in a foreign country and those familiar in the home country: $\pm A = \pm B$. Beller explains that in this case the phenomena are the same in both cultures and that the description is neutral (39, 41). More often, however, authors find differences and opposites, seeing the other predominantly in a negative light. This mode is called antithetic argumentation: $A <---> B$; here one can find clichés, stereotypes, prejudices, and hetero- and auto-images (42). The third mode is reciprocal argumentation: $\pm A <---> \pm B$. It implies that the author, judging the character traits of the other nation negatively, indirectly evaluates his or her own nation positively (and vice versa); in other words, he or she creates auto-images (43). This classification of Beller appears to be promising for practical textual analyses. It should be borne in mind that comparisons have to be conducted on a meta-level (Beller, “Technik” 42; Leerssen, “Comparison” 310). This requirement might be difficult to follow, as researchers belong to particular cultures and can involuntarily overlook their ethnocentric views.

National characterisations in texts will predictably manifest themselves as “specific instances and combinations of generic moral polarities” (Leerssen, “Imagology: History” 29), with a high probability of being ambiguous. It also ought to take heed of Leerssen’s statement that “[t]he attribution of characteristics to national or ethnic groups appears in many cases to obey structural rather than case-specific patterns” (Leerssen, “Rhetorik” 275).

3. Contextualisation: Historical Background and Western Prejudices against Russia

3.1. Historical Background, 1900-1960

In order to provide historical contextualisation of the analysed travelogues, the milestones of the first six decades of the twentieth century in Russia and the United States will be covered in this section. Although Theodore Dreiser, the first of the selected writers, undertook his journey in 1927, it seems reasonable to start with the beginning of the century. Pre-events determine the subsequent happenings, and in the case of the Soviet Union it may be necessary to consider the situation in the country before the October Revolution of 1917, which divided Russian history into ‘before’ and ‘after.’ It is necessary to stress that also those events will be highlighted which are referred to in the primary literature.

The Russian Empire before 1917. Russia began the twentieth century with rapid industrialisation and economic growth, although the country remained mostly agrarian. About 77 percent of the population of 135 million in 1900 were illiterate, and workers’ and peasants’ living conditions were hard (Heller and Nekrich 16-17, 174). After 1905 the Russian Empire became a constitutional monarchy with the Duma (an elected assembly), but Tsar Nicholas II tried to preserve his autocracy (17). In 1906 the so-called Stolypin land reform was launched, and in 1908 a law on compulsory primary education was introduced (16-17). Those reforms were impeded by the outbreak of World War One in August 1914, the negative consequences of which resulted in a shortage of food supply, mass discontent and chaos (20). At the time “[t]he country lived its own life and the government lived its – in a vacuum,” as Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich claim (21), and the Russian Empire was on the way to the October Revolution of 1917. It needs to be noted that the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century are alluded to as the Silver Age of Russian culture.

The United States before 1918. By 1900 the US became the world’s leading industrial country with advanced technology, developed democracy and the highest per capita income in the world (Reeves 2, 6). American farms used the latest equipment, which led to high production levels (6). Only 10 percent of the total population of around 76 million were illiterate (6). Yet the negative side included periodic recessions, exploitation, discrimination of women and ethnic minorities, social Darwinism, child labour, depressions, terrible workers’ conditions and strikes (1, 9, 11, 20). Americans were seeking reforms “to build a more equitable, honest,

organized, and democratic society” (20). Belief in God, optimism and patriotism were essential characteristics of the nation’s spirit, and pragmatism became a part of American values (2, 23). US citizens did not accept socialism, as they believed that anyone who worked hard was able to live in prosperity (6, 11). In 1917 the United States entered World War One, and the total number of deaths in the expeditionary force reached 112,000 (74).

The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union from 1917 to the 1920s. The involvement of Russia in World War One completely discredited the tsarist regime (Heller and Nekrich 20). On 2 March 1917 the tsar was forced to abdicate, but the new Provisional Government did not manage to rule efficiently (27-28). The Bolsheviks with Lenin at their head seized power on 7 November 1917 by promising to the masses the most desirable bread, land and peace. “The reality, however, was a new war, forced grain requisitioning, famine, and unprecedented terror” (50). After World War One was over for Russia in March 1918, the civil war between the Whites and the Reds broke out, which ended with the victory of the Reds in November 1920 (733, 735). The population in the country in 1917 was estimated to be around 179 million (16); Russia’s losses in the two wars amounted to 2 million and 10 million people respectively, and one million intellectuals were forced to emigrate after the Revolution (120). In the aftermath of those terrible events, thousands of homeless children roamed the streets of big cities.

The Bolsheviks initiated the mass campaign of the liquidation of illiteracy; they established total government control over production and distribution, nationalised all enterprises, and banned private trade (Dmytryshyn 106-07; Heller and Nekrich 59-60, 734). In the newly organised labour camps, prisoners of war, criminals and ‘enemies of the people’ had to work under unbearable conditions (Heller and Nekrich 81, 116). Although the peasantry after the revolution received some land, the government relentlessly confiscated grain. As a result, the famine of 1921-1922 caused further human losses of 5 million (117-20). In 1921 the threat of economic disaster and revolts made the Bolsheviks allow limited private ownership and free market under the New Economic Policy (NEP), which brought some economic recovery (114). At the end of 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded. After Lenin’s death in January 1924, Stalin came to power by outwitting and eliminating his rivals. The latter’s opponent Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Politburo in 1927, and in 1929 he was forced to leave the Soviet Union (737). By 1929 the economic liberation in the USSR came to an end.

The United States in the period from 1918 to the 1920s. The October Revolution led to the break of diplomatic relations between the US and the USSR, which were restored only in 1933 (English and Halperin 22). In the aftermath of the Russian events, the Red Scare of the 1919-1920 broke out, characterised by strikes and a nationwide hatred towards American Communists and radicals (Reeves 82).

By 1920 the population of the United States numbered 106 million, 51.4 percent of whom were urban (85). As Thomas C. Reeves recounts, at the time “[a] new America was dawning, a nation of huge cities, massive industries, exciting inventions, and sweeping changes in traditional social and moral standards” (81). The US became the world’s leading financial power with the laissez-faire model of capitalism; American business flourished, and by 1929 every fifth American possessed a car (McElvaine 18). However, American farmers lived through a hard period, as overproduction caused decreasing prices and poverty (Reeves 97, 102). In 1920 American women received the right to vote (in 1917 in Russia), but not many of them had jobs (31). In the same year prohibition of alcohol became part of the American Constitution (30), with the consequences of smuggling, bootlegging and increased deaths; the ban was cancelled by most states in 1933 (92-93). Unfortunately, the American economy was not protected against financial pyramids, and the stock market crash of 1929 gave way to the Great Depression (101-02). As far as culture is concerned, the 1920s were marked by the unique American jazz music and commercial entertainment (90).

The Soviet Union in the 1930s. In the USSR it was the decade of industrialisation and five-year plans, and by 1939 the Soviet Union produced ten percent of the world industrial output (Heller and Nekrich 317). By coincidence, this success remarkably contrasted with the world crisis in capitalist countries. The Soviets desperately needed technological aid, and the US business needed new markets during the Great Depression; as a result, American companies and engineers provided assistance for the Soviet industry (231). This rapid industrial growth, however, occurred parallel to the depressed consumption of consumer goods.

In the agricultural sector, an unprecedented tragedy of collectivisation broke out, accompanied by the liquidation of the kulaks (wealthy peasants). Whole families were deported to the far regions of Siberia, and their possessions were confiscated; in consequence, agricultural production dropped drastically. In 1932-1934 the brutal requisition of grain led to famine (Heller and Nekrich 238); figures differ as to the number of victims, averaging between 5 and 10 million in the whole Soviet Union (Dmytryshyn 169).

The commanding class of Communist Party administrators with Stalin on top controlled the obeying class in the Soviet political pyramid; the system of consumption and privileges mirrored that power hierarchy (Heller and Nekrich 262). Stalin used the assassination of the Politburo member Kirov in December 1934 as a pretext for terror and mass purges against ‘saboteurs,’ ‘spies’ and ‘enemies,’ which reached their nadir between 1936 and 1938 (Dmytryshyn 180; Heller and Nekrich 278). Thousands of people were imprisoned in labour camps or executed; the exact figures are not known, as no mortality rates were published after 1932 (Heller and Nekrich 242).

The United States in the 1930s. The Great Depression in the US was a difficult period of time, during which “[i]nvestments declined, businesses failed, stores and factories closed, banks collapsed, unemployment soared [...]” (Reeves 101). Impoverishment and desperation spread in the country, the national income halved, and many families lost their homes (102). Moreover, thousands of farmers went bankrupt because of droughts and dust storms (103). At the time the ideas of social justice began to gain more attention in society, but most people rejected socialism (104, 110). As the President Herbert Hoover was unable to improve the situation, Americans voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 (104-05). Roosevelt and the federal government tried to recover the economy with the help of numerous reforms known as the New Deal, such as federal loans, relief funds or mortgage protections (107-08, 115). New jobs were generated within the Civilian Conservation Corps programme, and farmers were assisted financially to tackle overproduction (107-09). The Social Security Act of 1935, being the first step on the way to the welfare state, helped to create the national systems of unemployment and old-age insurances (110). In general, the 1930s challenged the American faith in the inevitability of progress and individual self-sufficiency (McElvaine 205).

The Soviet Union in the 1940s. Despite the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union began on 22 June 1941. The attempts of Hitler to quickly capture Moscow, Leningrad and Ukraine were met with the fierce resistance of the Soviet forces (Dmytryshyn 214-15, 227). It was essential for the nation to evacuate its strategic factories to the East in order to provide the Soviet troops with the necessary military equipment (Dmytryshyn 229; Heller and Nekrich 384). The decisive battle of Stalingrad, which lasted from July 1942 to February 1943, ended in Soviet victory (Heller and Nekrich 399). By October 1944 the territory of the USSR was liberated (417), and by April 1945 the Soviets gained control of the Eastern European countries and reached Berlin (426). It is a remarkable fact that the US and the USSR shared the triumph of the victory in Europe and the Far East as allies. However, in the following

years the Soviets were reluctant to recognise American help as being crucial in winning the war. The Soviet Union had the most devastating losses of all war participants: the total number of war victims is estimated to be from 20 or 21 million (443) to 26 million (Reeves 137).

The post-war economic recovery of the Soviet Union was successful in heavy industry, but it failed in agriculture and in the production of consumer goods (Heller and Nekrich 464). Most people lived in extreme poverty, and thousands of prisoners of war and dissidents suffered in GULAG camps.

After the war the USSR enlarged its territory and established influence over Eastern Europe (Dmytryshyn 238). As communism was spreading, the Cold War set in between the USSR with its controlled satellite states and the USA with its allies. Behind the iron curtain, in September 1949, the Soviets tested their first atomic bomb (Heller and Nekrich 464; Reeves 146).

The United States in the 1940s. At the beginning of World War Two, the US maintained a policy of neutrality, and American industry was not military-oriented (Reeves 120-22). The involvement of the United States into the war occurred gradually. Thus, in August 1940 Roosevelt delivered navy destroyers to Britain as an answer to Churchill's pleading for help, and in January 1941 the US introduced lend-lease aid to the countries fighting the NAZI, including the Soviet Union (121, 123). In December 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the US declared war on Japan; shortly afterwards Germany was at war with the United States (125). As a result, the US industry began to produce arms and military equipment, and in 1942-1943 American and British air forces bombed Nazi-occupied territories and Germany (126, 130). On the D-Day of 6 June 1944, the Normandy landings initiated the liberation of France and other Western European countries (131). Although Germany capitulated in May 1945, further operations in Asia continued until August 1945; Japan surrendered after American atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The total death number of Americans in World War Two amounted to 322,000 (137).

The war stimulated the national economy, which resulted in increased production, better technologies and the rise of wages (Reeves 139). The US helped Western Europe to recover in the post-war years under the Marshall plan, parts of which included financial assistance, the intention to gain new markets for American products and the wish to prevent the spread of communism (143). Soviet predominance in Eastern Europe made the policy of containment an important element of US politics, and in April 1949 ten Western countries founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (143).

The Soviet Union in the 1950s. After Stalin's death in 1953, the era of de-Stalinisation under Khrushchev commenced; the 'cult of personality' and mass repressions in the preceding decades were denounced, and thousands of political prisoners were granted amnesties (Dmytryshyn 269-70; Heller and Nekrich 526, 531). The country experienced 'the thaw,' during which Soviet intellectuals hoped for more freedom of expression in literature and arts. The post-war economic recovery continued in the 1950s; a slight shift towards consumer goods production was noticeable, but the strategic heavy industry remained a Soviet priority (Dmytryshyn 282). Big investments in science made it possible for the USSR to develop a hydrogen bomb by 1953 (ten months later than in the USA) and to launch the first Sputnik in 1957; the latter achievement challenged the United States (Heller and Nekrich 464, 556-57). Meanwhile, Soviet agriculture remained problematic, and this time the government chose to assist the agrarian sector instead of resorting to the terror of the 1930s-1940s. Some centralised aid was unsuccessful, such as the cultivation of virgin lands or Khrushchev's famous maize campaign, and the output of the collective farms remained insufficient (546). The Soviet system always tried to build an image of the 'successful' and 'humane' socialism opposed to the 'rotten' capitalism; for that reason, foreigners visiting the Soviet Union were not allowed to move freely in the country even after the Stalin epoch.

The United States in the 1950s. The fear of Soviet aggression and of a possible nuclear war led to the Second Red Scare and anti-communist hysteria of 1948-1957 (Reeves 149). The most notorious figure associated with that period was senator Joseph McCarthy, who gave his name to the era of McCarthyism. Americans with pro-communist sympathies were blacklisted and fired, and 'red' literature was destroyed or banned (149). As the US started to confront Communists around the globe, the fear grew stronger; consequently, the defence budget of the USA increased drastically, and in 1952 the United States tested the first hydrogen bomb (153). In 1958 the USA launched their first satellite Explorer (four months later than the Soviets); thus, the Soviet-American space race began, accompanied by the arms race (165).

In the 1950s the Americans enjoyed peace and exceptional prosperity under President Eisenhower (1953-1961). By 1956 the US economy became post-industrial, when the number of white-collar earners exceeded that of blue-collar workers (156). That period was the golden age of churches and religion, as well as the time of desegregation of African-Americans, first in the army and then in other public areas (158, 162).

3.2. Russia as Seen in the West

In this section it will be tried to cover the essential clichés, stereotypes and prejudices against Russia which were spread in the United States in the twentieth century. The purpose is to ascertain what the American people might have known about Russia at the time, as it is not always possible to reveal which preconceived notions the writers held prior to their trips. The stereotypes and prejudices presented below are not arranged in any systematic way, and solely a general outline is given. On the one hand, it is necessary to consider the political situation and relationships between the two countries, which influenced the set of stereotypes in mass media and popular culture at every particular moment. On the other hand, scholarly publications on the Russian national character also have to be taken into account.

Concerning prejudices in American society, it appears reasonable to have a look at what the average contemporary of the chosen writers knew about Russia. Richardson Little Wright in his non-scholarly book *The Russians: An Interpretation*, which was published in 1917 (before the October Revolution), provides several possible views: “Russia is a region of extreme cold, where people are jailed for speaking their own minds”; “[i]t is governed by a bureaucracy that grinds down the people”; “[i]ts population is largely composed of anarchists and Jews” (1). Many Americans, however, would have confessed half-apologetically that they did not know much about the Russian Empire (1). Russia was “deliberately misrepresented, misinterpreted and maligned,” Wright claims, and for most US citizens it remained “an empire of enigmas” (2).

After the events of the October Revolution, public opinion about Russia in the United States largely depended on the political atmosphere between the two countries. Robert D. English and Jonathan J. Halperin underscore that in the twentieth century the US and the USSR, being either allies or adversaries, saw “periods of cooperation and confrontation” (15). American images of the Soviet Union changed correspondingly: “From the ‘Red scares’ of the 1920s to the ‘fellow travelers’ of the 1930s, from spies and ‘wreckers’ under Stalin’s terror to allies united against Hitler, from McCarthyism to ‘peaceful coexistence’ and from cold war to detente [...]” (15). The authors believe that the “perceived immorality” of the Russians because of the imposed atheism by the Soviet regime was “particularly repugnant” to Americans (17). Choi Chatterjee and Beth Holmgren bring to the fore “the binary oppositions that American national agencies honed to demonize the Soviet enemy – evil empire versus bastion of freedom, totalitarianism versus liberal democracy, centralized command economy versus the free market” (1).

Edward J. Brown from the Harriman Institute of Columbia University in the City of New York writes about the attitude towards Russia during the Cold War of the 1950s-1960s: “Speaking for myself, and for most of my colleagues too, our ignorance of the Soviet Union was, at that time, as deep as a well and as wide as a church door” (227). The political atmosphere in the United States was an obstacle which prevented even highly educated people from finding objective information about the Soviet Union. The scholar states that the period from 1947 to 1954 was a nightmare, as “the myth of a red menace” was spread in American universities; moreover, “there was a semi-official ideology to which you were supposed to subscribe and if you deviated you were afraid” (231). Brown also claims that “[a]ny objective, unvituperative statement about the Soviet Union was certain to be challenged” (231).

Many hetero-stereotypes and prejudices may be elicited from both non-scholarly and scholarly sources which touch upon the Russian national character. Such sources are far from being homogeneous; they include works from various disciplines: history, social psychology, cultural anthropology, philosophy and even psychiatry. It is very telling that a demarcation line in the views of American and European authors tackling Russian stereotypes is almost impossible to draw. Martin Malia, an American historian, implies no difference between the United States and Europe when he refers to the ‘West’; moreover, when he distinguishes between several ‘West,’ he speaks of the Left and the Right or of the rationalists and the romantics (8). The intellectual thought of the Old and New Worlds appears to be united; as David C. Engerman underlines, “American scholars built their visions of Russia from imported material” (12). Regarding Stanzel’s conclusion that Europeans had brought images of other Europeans with them at the time of their migration to the North American continent, as well as his postulation that European stereotypes persevered in America (7), it is not surprising that the outcomes are so similar. One should also keep in mind that sometimes scholarly works allude to Russian auto-stereotypes, especially when researchers use Russian sources. Moreover, some scholars try to identify typical Russian character traits by analysing Russian classical literature, Dostoevsky and Gogol in particular (e.g. Cox 87; Peterson 6, 9, 60).⁸

The first impulse when attempting to find essential traits of the Russian national character is to consider the article “Russians” by Bruno Naarden and Joep Leerssen in the aforementioned imagology reference book. Of special interest is the opportunity to analyse which features the scholars have chosen from an immense amount of literature available. Taking into account

⁸ Cf. Lewis Dabney’s reference to Edmund Wilson’s book published in 1972: “*A Windows to Russia* uses the very language of the Russian classics as a mirror of the national character” (632).

Leerssen's statement that "successive counter-images do not abolish each other but accumulate," forming "a compound layering" ("Image" 343), it is justifiable to look at some centuries-old stereotypes. In the sixteenth century, Russia had a reputation of being a backward land with no culture or intellectual thought, ruled by a despot, Ivan the Terrible (Naarden and Leerssen 227). By the early eighteenth century, the Russian Empire, westernised by the reforms of Peter the First and Catherine the Great, was seen as a part of Europe with colonies in Asia, governed by oriental despotism. And in the nineteenth century, Russia was regarded as a backward, exotic and autocratic Eastern European state, a transit zone between Europe and Asia, on the one hand, and as a country of literature, music and ballet, on the other. From the Western point of view, the Russian character incorporated "natural submissiveness, meekness, endurance and patience" (228-29), and the Russian literature "was considered to reflect a temperamental disposition towards the anti-pragmatic, and a meditative, moral and even mystical character" (229). The October Revolution of 1917 caused Russia's cultural isolation from the West, then the epoch of Stalin's rule continued the tradition of oriental despotism, and the Russians became to be seen "long-suffering and patiently enduring" (229). During the Cold War, Russia had a reputation of being a half-Asian state with a lack of culture (229).

It can be interesting to turn to American authors and scholars and probe into their findings. Richardson Little Wright puts forward his own generalisations about Americans and Russians: "[W]e are very much concerned with making a living. Russia [...] is very much more concerned with making a life" (x). In regard to the Russian character in the 1910s, Wright infers: "The Russian is lethargic, but he also can be quickly stirred to the depths. The Russian is the blindest sort of idealist. His race is the most persistently idealistic of any under the sun. That is why the Russians make such poor business men and such good musicians, such poor politicians and such faithful soldiers" (193). The author adds that Russia is "a singing nation, a dancing nation" (210), it is full of paradoxes (3, 172), and its "national contradictions are puzzling" (3). He states: "Of the various national souls in Europe, none is more difficult to analyze than the Russian, none is more elusive, none so persistently defiant to superficial examination and sketchy generalizations" (2). Additionally, Wright touches upon Russia's strong affinity with the East and warns against judging it according to American standards (4).

David C. Engerman claims that the historian Samuel N. Harper, who had an influence on the Russian studies in the US, ascribed the following traits to the Russian character in the first three decades of the twentieth century: "highly charged emotional currents," "work habits as spasmodic alterations of arousal and discouragement," "apathy and lethargy," pessimism and

backboneness (24). The author stresses that Harper's "descriptions and analyses of Russia [...] bore remarkable similarity to the European traditions that dated back some centuries" (25).

The above-mentioned American scholar Martin Malia recognises the subjectivity of the images of Russia from 1700 to 1999, but he does not go so far as to accept their 'constructed' nature (9). It is worth having a look at the table of contents of his book *Russia under Western Eyes* (1999), in which the titles of the five blocks, into which the author periodises Russian history, contain what imagologists of today would call prejudices: "Russia as Enlightened Despotism: 1700-1815" or "Russia as Oriental Despotism: 1815-1855." The next period is titled "Russia as Europe Regained: 1855-1914," which implies that the Russian Empire was accepted by the West as a European state at the time. Malia puts the question whether after 1917 Russia was "an Asiatic country which extended ominously into Europe" (292), and he posits that during the Cold War period it was seen as oriental, autocratic and totalitarian as opposed to the democratic and open West (5). The latter was "the home of freedom, reason, and dynamism; and its obverse [was] the realm of despotism, obscurantism, and stagnation [...]" (6).⁹ Among characteristics ascribed by the West to Russia, the scholar mentions aggression, nationalism and chauvinism (6). Yet at times Westerners felt "a sentiment of kinship, even of adulation" towards this land (7), and Malia tries to explain such oscillations: "Russia has at different times been demonized or divinized by Western opinion less because of her real role in Europe than because of the fears and frustrations, or the hopes and aspirations, generated within European society by its own domestic problems" (8).

Notwithstanding the fact that primarily hetero-images of Russia as seen in the West are focused upon in this section, one exception will be deliberately employed. No outline of the Russian national character would be complete without quoting Nikolai Berdyaev, a Russian philosopher who lived mostly in France after his forced emigration in 1922. Berdyaev's book *The Russian Idea* was published in the Russian language in 1946 and translated into English by R.M. French in 1947. The most frequently quoted passage¹⁰ is the following:

The mutually contradictory properties of the Russian people may be set out thus: despotism, the hypertrophy of the State, and on the other hand anarchism and licence: cruelty, a disposition to violence, and again kindness, humanity and gentleness: a belief in rites and ceremonies, but also a quest for truth: individualism, a heightened consciousness of personality, together with an impersonal collectivism: nationalism, laudation of self; and universalism, the ideal of the universal man: an eschatological

⁹ Cf. Chatterjee and Holmgren 2.

¹⁰ Cf. Hellberg-Hirn 167.

messianic spirit of religion, and a devotion which finds its expression in externals: a search for God, and a militant godlessness: humility and arrogance: slavery and revolt. (3)

Although every nation is a nation of contrasts, in the case of his former compatriots, according to Berdyaev, this universal appears to be exaggerated: “The Russians are a people in the highest degree polarized: they are a conglomeration of contradictions” (1).¹¹ The explanation offered by the philosopher is hardly surprising: “The Russian people is not purely European and it is not purely Asiatic. Russia is a complete section of the world – a colossal East-West. It unites two worlds, and within the Russian soul two principles are always engaged in strife – the Eastern and the Western” (2). It is evident that Berdyaev was able to analyse the Russian national character from inside and outside, as a Russian and as a European.

As may be inferred from this compilation of stereotypes, prejudices and images in the West in general and in the United States in particular, the attributes of the Russian national character seem to be the following: *extremely contradictory, both European and Asian, predisposed to suffer under autocracy and despotism, enduring, mystical, meditative, non-pragmatic, prone to obscurantism, and creative in literature, music and dance*. Robert Belknap, the editor of the book *Russianness: Studies on a Nation's Identity* (1990) summarises that “Russians emerge in study after study as isolated, old-fashioned, neglecting practice for theory, practicality for morality, caught between a longing to imitate the West and a loyalty to local ways [...]” (7). He emphasises that “the sensationalist picture of Russians as alien, passionate, mystical, or as iron devotees of a noble or ignoble cause” must be looked at more carefully and critically (7).

4. The American Images of Russia in the Selected Texts

4.1. A Review of the Primary Literature

The books under discussion are travelogues written by Americans who visited the Russian Republic in the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1958: Theodore Dreiser (November 1927-January 1928), Edmund Wilson (May-October 1935), John Steinbeck (August-September 1947), William O. Douglas (the summer of 1955) and Gaylord P. Harnwell (July of 1958). The chosen

¹¹ As far as ambiguity is concerned, even the article from the area of psychiatry by Henry V. Dicks, which is based on the results of interviews with Soviet defectors of 1952, reveals “ambivalence as the outstanding trait” (637). Cf. a journalistic account of Hedrick Smith (although from the 1970s): “[...] a people with more sharply contradictory drives than I had imagined” (5).

literature¹² fulfils certain criteria. First, the travellers were either well-known writers or outstanding personalities. Second, the journeys took place in successive decades of the twentieth century. Third, the texts fall under the category of travel writing and contain first-hand experiences of the authors. Finally, all the texts are non-trivial and have a certain literary value.

The book *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (1928) by Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) reflects the writer's experience in the Soviet Union of 1927-1928, ten years after the October Revolution. Dreiser was invited by the Soviet government with the promise that all his travel expenses would be covered. The novelist agreed to travel to Russia under the following conditions: he would be free to choose his itinerary, he would be provided with a secretary and an interpreter, and he would be able to express his opinion and not be forced to publish any book or report (*DLR* 9). The Soviet officials agreed to take the risk and put the writer on the guest list. Dreiser sailed from New York to Paris on 19 October 1927, then he spent several days in Berlin and arrived in Moscow on 4 November. His tour lasted eleven weeks and included Leningrad, Novosibirsk, Novgorod, Rostov-on-Don, the Black Sea area and several cities outside Soviet Russia, such as Kiev, Odessa, Tiflis and Baku. The writer's itinerary was divided into the official part in Moscow, Leningrad and Rostov-on-Don, with almost inevitable visits to Soviet factories, plants, nurseries and theatres, and the private part, when he was able to choose destinations himself. The book consists of eighteen chapters, each of which focuses on a certain aspect of Russian life. "What I offer are my experiences and observations honestly set down," Dreiser writes at the beginning of his book (10).¹³

In 1996 *Dreiser's Russian Diary* was published, which had been available only as a manuscript at the University of Pennsylvania prior to that year. The diary reveals that the writer was accompanied by his secretary and lover Ruth Kennel, an American woman who lived and worked in Moscow. The editor James L.W. West III states in 'Editorial Principles' of the book that the manuscript "is the product of two hands, Dreiser writing as himself and Kennel writing both in her own persona and in Dreiser's" (20). It is clear from the fonts used by the publishers which parts are created by whom, as Dreiser's handwriting is italicised. The general editor Thomas P. Riggio explains in the introduction to the travelogue that the novelist made additions,

¹² Four other books were considered while choosing the suitable primary literature: *Through Embassy Eyes* (1939) by Martha Dodd, *The Russians* (1975) by Hedrick Smith, *Russia: The People & The Power* (1976) by Robert G. Kaiser and *Notes from a Trip to Russia* (1984) by Audre Lorde. The second and the third books were not chosen because they are accounts of journalists who lived and worked in Moscow for four years and cannot be classified as travelogues. The first and the fourth books by American female writers contain insufficient material.

¹³ Dorothy Thompson's claim that Dreiser plagiarised parts of her book in *Dreiser Looks at Russia* will be touched upon in the next section.

corrections and rearrangements in the segments written by Kennel (4). The diary contains numerous typos, misspelled names and omissions, and several pages are missing. The editors provide detailed commentaries, thus enabling the reader to fully understand what the travellers meant.

It is a fascinating experience to compare *Dreiser Looks at Russia* with the private diary. The analysis of the writer's journey would certainly be insufficient without this additional manuscript. Riggio opines that "the Russian diary is far more instructive and colourful than the travel book," and he is rather critical in stating that the latter "probably would have been a better book had [Dreiser] followed his usual method of building a narrative around selected portions of his travel diaries [...]" (5).¹⁴ The scholar Michael David-Fox adds that Ruth Kennel helped edit the travelogue published in 1928, and he lambasts it as "a hastily-written, poorly organized work" (233).

Edmund Wilson (1895-1972) in the book *Red, Black, Blond and Olive: Studies in Four Civilizations: Zuñi, Haiti, Soviet Russia, Israel* (1956), the four parts of which depict the writer's journeys to the corresponding countries, chronologically describes his impressions of Russia during his visit from May to October of 1935. The section "Soviet Russia" of this book is a slightly modified version of the second half of the travelogue *Travels in Two Democracies* (1936), in which the first part is devoted to the United States and the second part to the Soviet Union. Wilson had a three-month visa (which he prolonged while being in Russia) and the right to travel freely (221).¹⁵ The writer began his trip from London to Leningrad on a Soviet steamer; after spending some time in Leningrad, he travelled by train to Moscow and then to Gorky, Ulyanovsk, Stalingrad, Rostov-on-Don and Ukrainian Odessa. In addition to his extensive cultural programme, Wilson saw collective farms and factories, and he was also invited by his Russian and American friends to visit them in their homes. At the end of his tour, the writer came down with scarlet fever and had to be treated in hospital in Odessa for six weeks.

The 1956 edition contains Wilson's comment on his own text: "[...] I have made no attempt to emend it in the light of later events or subsequently acquired knowledge. The tone and the point of view are a part of the original experience, which I could not reinterpret now" (148). Yet the author extended his work by additional thoughts and reflections in square brackets, thus

¹⁴ Cf. Gammel and Srebrnik 111.

¹⁵ All quotations from Wilson's travelogue in this paper are based on the 1956 edition.

showing graphically the original text and the added fragments. Some of these insertions trace personal stories of the people he had encountered in 1935.¹⁶ It is obvious for the reader that in the 1950s Wilson was far more critical of the Soviet Union than two decades before.

The travelogue *A Russian Journal: With Photographs by Robert Capa* (1948) by John Steinbeck (1902-1968) is the outcome of the tour of the writer and the photographer to Russia from 31 July to mid-September 1947 (Shillinglaw xix). The trip was sponsored by *The New York Herald Tribune*, and afterwards Steinbeck was obliged to write several articles for the newspaper (Jacobson 50). At that post-war period many residential areas still lay in ruins, and the Russians were rebuilding their country; apart from that, it was the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. As far as the itinerary is concerned, Steinbeck and Capa went from the US to Stockholm, then to Helsinki, and then to Leningrad; their travel plan included Moscow, Ukraine, Stalingrad and Georgia. The companions used the services of two Russian interpreters, one of whom accompanied them during their trips within the Soviet Union. The book is interspersed with Capa's photos; it presents events in chronological order, in nine chapters, "day by day, experience by experience, and sight by sight, without departmentalizing" (Steinbeck 7-8), and from time to time the author's narration is humorous and entertaining. Susan Shillinglaw, who wrote an introduction to *A Russian Journal* in 1999, blames Steinbeck for too a favourable account, which can be explained by the fact that "visitors were shown so very little of Stalin's domain, always circumscribed" (xii).

The book *Russian Journey* (1956) by William O. Douglas (1898-1980), the Supreme Court Justice of the US, is the result of the author's travel to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1955. Douglas went from Iran to the southern Soviet Republics of Caucasus and Central Asia, and then he visited the Russian cities Barnaul, Novosibirsk, Sverdlovsk, Kazan, Moscow and Leningrad. As the writer explains, he "traveled like any tourist, paying [his] own expenses, and without official status" (28). Douglas was accompanied by a Russian interpreter (31); the American Fred Flott, who spoke Russian fluently, became his companion for the second half of the tour (8). Numerous vivid descriptions, illustrated by the author's black-and-white photos, make *Russian Journey* a valuable source of images of the Soviet Union. One can clearly distinguish between the narrative and factual parts, and the question might arise whether the latter fall under the category of travel writing.¹⁷ The writer summarised his observations in

¹⁶ An example would be a story of the literary critic Dmitry S. Mirsky; he emigrated in the 1920s, then returned to Russia in the 1930s but was sent to labour camps during Stalin's purges, where he went insane and perished (279-99).

¹⁷ Jeri L. Laber classifies this book as a travelogue (211).

eleven thematic chapters, adding copious statistical information. Owing to his profession, Douglas could not help giving the reader a very detailed explanation of the Soviet legal system and its courts.

The last book, *Russian Diary* (1960) by Gaylord P. Harnwell (1903-1982), the president of the University of Pennsylvania, is written in the form of a diary and provided with the writer's monochrome photos. Harnwell spent two weeks in the Soviet Union in June and July of 1958. He travelled in a group of prominent American scientists and professors with the purpose of learning more about Soviet science education. The guests visited universities and research centres in Moscow, Leningrad and some capital cities in the Caucasus and Central Asia, but they had few opportunities to encounter common people outside the prescribed itinerary. As Harnwell reveals in his diary, he used a dictation machine to record his impressions during the journey, and then he wrote them down in a modified form. The educator decided to publish his notes only because of the encouragement of his friends (5).

4.2. Preparations, 'Mental Luggage' and Expectations of the Writers

In this section the writers' reasons for going to the Soviet Union and their knowledge of Russia prior to their departures will be investigated. Above all, the literary texts themselves will be screened for any indications of the travellers' preconceived notions.

Theodore Dreiser did not plan his journey to Russia long in advance. On 3 October 1927, he was informed that a representative of the Soviet government wanted to make him an offer to travel to the Soviet Union and to see the achievements of the last ten years (*DRD* 27). The writer felt sceptical at first, but he began to take notes in his diary starting that day. On 11 October he indeed met Mr. Biedenkapp, the Executive Secretary of 'International Workers Aid,' who informed the novelist of all the details. Dreiser had only nine days to make all the arrangements before his departure. Apparently, he did some research on Russia, as his diary entry of 18 October reveals a list of Soviet luminaries with whom he planned to meet personally, such as Eisenstein, Meyerhold and Stanislavsky (35). It is also known that he was familiar with Russian literature classics (59).

Arthur D. Casciato considers Dreiser's two conversations, one with Diego Rivera and the other with the American publisher Ben Huebsch, during which he practiced "the role of skeptical debunker that he would play again and again," as part of his preparation for travelling in Russia (179). With Rivera the writer discussed art, communism, collectivism and the role of the

individual aboard a ship across the Atlantic on 24 October (*DRD* 38). Huebsch was Dreiser's fellow-traveller from the beginning of the journey, but their conversation occurred on the train to Berlin on 28 October (44-46). The novelist was interested in what the publisher thought about communism; their discussion also touched upon capitalism, and it gradually moved to the assumption that "[n]ot all nations are alike temperamentally" (46). Furthermore, the reader can find the following sentence in the diary (it is not clear whether Dreiser or Huebsch said it):¹⁸ "[...] some nations or races might have (as in the case of the Jews & the Slavs) a giant capacity for misery – just as some others – (the English and Americans and the Germans) appear to have a capacity for iron and almost clanking material organization – and routine" (46). It can be seen from this conversation that the writer had certain stereotypes of Russia even before crossing the frontier, a supposition which is confirmed by Thomas P. Riggio: "Not a systematic thinker, Dreiser held 'views' that reflected his deepest prejudices [...]" (15).

It is worth stressing that Dreiser's diary contains a copy of an article by J.H. Pierce, published in the *Pottville Journal* and dated 12 November 1927 (214-16), with some information about the target country: "Russia, half medieval and half Asiatic when the veneer of foreign culture was removed, always lived behind a veil of mystery, terrorism and romance" (214). One may suppose that the writer was influenced by this article and used it for his book *Dreiser Looks at Russia*.

Riggio in the introduction to Dreiser's diary mentions that the writer had been familiar with the works of Walter Duranty and Emma Goldman. The former supported the new Soviet government, and the latter was disillusioned by the USSR after her initial enthusiasm (10-11). The editor also refers to the "diehard radicals" Scott Nearing, Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman, who were known to the general public in the United States. Other famous Americans, like John Dos Passos and Max Eastman, "publicized their negative conclusions about the aims and future of the Communist state" (6). Thus, it seems evident that Dreiser had been acquainted with publications which supported opposite opinions before he went to Russia.

One controversial fact is necessary to take into account. Dorothy Thompson, the correspondent for the American newspaper *The New York Evening Post*, travelled to the Soviet Union at the same time as Dreiser did, and upon returning she published her book *The New Russia*. A month later *Dreiser Looks at Russia* saw the light, and Thompson accused the novelist of plagiarising parts of her work, all in all about 3000 words (Kurth 143). The novelist's lawyers, however,

¹⁸ David-Fox attributes this sentence to Dreiser (240).

managed to prove that her writing also contained passages which were similar to some other texts (Brain 110). Riggio underscores that the American Anna Louise Strong had given Dreiser and Thompson the same notes in Moscow and that both used them in their books (13). It is worth noting that Dreiser's diary has references to his conversations with both women; with Dorothy the writer discussed "*communism as opposed to capitalism*" (71), and Anna Louise shared with him her ideas about the Russian temperament (107). Thus, a possible plagiarism might be traced to the same travel experience and mutual discussions of Dreiser and Thompson. What this unpleasant story sheds light on is that the novelist talked to other Americans during his journey and that he was provided with written materials about Russia.

Edmund Wilson was "a visiting journalist known to be sympathetic with the Soviet regime," as the writer describes himself in his book (198). Wilson reveals surprisingly little about his prior knowledge of Russia. The reader finds out, however, that he had read articles in British newspapers "about more trouble in Russia, with men named Lenin and Trotsky coming to the top" during his previous visit to England (150). In 1935 the author took "books about Lenin and a Russian Grammar" with him when he departed from London for Leningrad (150). It is significant that Wilson was the only one of the selected writers who was able to speak a little Russian; he was constantly improving his reading and speaking skills during his trip, and he even complained about the anomalies of Russian grammar (266). In general, Wilson was interested in the communist theory and not opposed to socialism.¹⁹ The writer's preconceived notions may also be partially elicited from the beginning of chapter three of his travelogue:

[...] if one knows only the western European countries, one can form no real idea beforehand of what Russia and the Russians are like [...]. It is probably impossible for an American – it was impossible for me, at any rate – to imagine Russia correctly. Before one goes there, one is likely to feel [...] the affinities between Russians and Americans; and if one is an advocate of socialism and a reader of *U.S.S.R. in Construction*, one is likely to have a vision of the Soviet Union as simply the United States plus one's ideal of socialism. Actually, the Soviet Union is not like that at all. (166)

John Steinbeck describes in every detail in *A Russian Journal* why he was inspired to go to Russia. Once, sitting in the bar of the Bedford Hotel in New York with Robert Capa, with no definite plans for the nearest months of 1947, he made the following observation:

In the papers every day there were thousands of words about Russia. What Stalin was thinking about, the plans of the Russian General Staff, the disposition of troops, experiments with atomic weapons and guided missiles, all of this by people who had not been there, and whose sources were not above reproach. And it occurred to us that there were some things that nobody wrote about Russia, and they were the things that

¹⁹ See Wilson's *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History* (1940).

interested us most of all. What do the people wear there? What do they serve at dinner? Do they have parties? What food is there? [...] What do they talk about? Do they dance, and sing, and play? [...] It seemed to us that it might be a good thing to find out these things, to photograph them, and to write about them. (3-4)

This series of questions makes the reader think that the author was preparing for his first journey to Russia. Yet in chapter three a sudden revelation emerges that he had visited Moscow in 1936.²⁰

After receiving confirmations of other people that a report about authentic Russia would have interested the reader in the United States, Steinbeck and Capa applied for Russian visas. The Soviets were reluctant at first to let the photographer into their country, but in the end the visas were issued. Unfortunately, Steinbeck broke his kneecap and had to wait for two months to recover (Jacobson 54). It is worth noting the companions' firm intention before their departure, outlined in the travelogue:

Together we decided on several things: We should not go in with chips on our shoulders and we should try to be neither critical nor favorable. We would try to do honest reporting, to set down what we saw and heard without editorial comment, without drawing conclusions about things we didn't know sufficiently [...]. We knew there would be many things we couldn't understand, many things we wouldn't like, many things that would make us uncomfortable. This is always true of a foreign country. But we determined that if there should be criticism, it would be criticism of the thing after seeing it, not before. (4)

During the preparation period, the writer heard numerous prejudices against Russia, and he received various warnings and pieces of advice. One old woman said: "Why, you'll disappear, you'll disappear as soon as you cross the border!" (6). A man suspected Steinbeck and Capa of their collaboration with the Kremlin, and told them that the Russians had bought them, otherwise they would not have been able to get the visas. An elderly gentleman was sure that the travellers would at once be taken to prison and tortured and that the Russians did it to everybody. And a businessman advised them to drop a few bombs "on the Red sons-of-bitches" (6). Steinbeck concluded that "thousands of people were suffering from acute Moscowitis – a state which permits the belief of any absurdity and the shoving away from any facts" (7). In the end the travellers set on their journey "with the finest equipment of rumors" (7) available, which were easy for them to discard, as they knew that many American journalists lived in Moscow and reported about the Soviet Union. It is logical to presume that Steinbeck was aware of prejudices and stereotypes of Russia and that he was fully prepared not to be distracted or influenced by them.

²⁰ Zachary J. Jacobson asserts that the actual year was 1937 (54).

Zachary J. Jacobson claims that Steinbeck suffered periods of depression at the time; the writer hoped to regain his vitality in the months preceding his departure, and he looked forward to his journey as a possible remedy (50). The writer's life was "problematic and painful" (51), and "underlying his search for the 'truth' about Russia was a quest to escape the inauthenticity of his own land" (53). The scholar emphasises that during the trip Steinbeck "flitted between the foreign and familiar" (60), not perceiving everything as exotic.

William O. Douglas applied for a Soviet visa for five years in a row, and finally he was rewarded in 1955, two years after Stalin's death (5). The reader can find the reason behind the lawyer's tour in his travel book: "I was anxious to see what socialism under a totalitarian regime had done to a people and a nation. I was curious about the impact of the police state on individual freedom" (5). As far as the writer's initial prejudices against Russia are concerned, the text provides a thorough record of them: "I entered Russia with misgivings. Russia, under Stalin, had become a sinister force – cold, aloof, and ominous. It was the police state where people disappeared overnight, never to be heard of again. Its slave labor camps were notorious. The police were ever present. [...] The foreigner who traveled Russia did so at his own risk" (17). It seems obvious that Douglas was aware of the possible danger of going to the Soviet Union because the book offers evidence of how businessmen and correspondents from abroad had been arrested and tried on false pretences. "Russia under Stalin was Russia under Ivan the Terrible. It was even worse, for while Ivan the Terrible was friendly to the West, Stalin conspired against the world as well as against Russians," the writer concluded (17).

On further pages of Douglas's travelogue, the reader discovers what he had been informed about before he started his journey; for instance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs spied on foreigners and used parabolic microphones: "I, therefore, knew before I went to Russia that no conversation indoors or outdoors was really safe" (135). Furthermore, the writer had "heard reports that all Russian industrial labor was in as lowly a state as convict labor," and he "had also read that Russian factory workers were, as some put it, mere 'termites' working blindly in dark, dingy places that never see the light of day" (127). Such prejudices of the 1950s serve as proof that people in the United States and the Soviet Union had limited access to information about each other during the Cold War period.

Gaylord P. Harnwell's preparations for his journey began with a phone call from the University of Pittsburg in the Spring of 1958, with "an exciting invitation to join a few congenial colleagues in seeing with [his] own eyes how the Soviets had achieved their current status in

higher education” (5-6). Taking into consideration the fact that the Soviet Union had launched its first artificial satellite in 1957, the interest of the US in Soviet educational programmes in the field of physics was enormous. For the educator, therefore, that invitation was “a most attractive prospect” (6), which promised “a journey of stimulation and delight” (7). Yet the reader finds no information about Harnwell’s preliminary knowledge of Russia in his book. The only comment provided is that “the superficial unfamiliarity of their customs and traditions only served to emphasise the fundamental nature of education and its institutions the world over” (7). Due to this lack of information, American prejudices against the Soviet Union during the Cold War period may be viewed as preconceived notions which Harnwell might have held.

In the following sections, the books under discussion will be compared, and those aspects of Russian life will be chosen which caught the attention of all the authors. Every traveller, regardless of his or her itinerary, always notices landscapes, buildings, food and clothes of the locals. Apart from these obvious, but necessary physical or material things in another country, people’s characters are usually observed, which are more difficult to identify or single out. Below an attempt will be made to investigate what exactly the writers found familiar, common, matter-of-fact, or maybe unusual, striking and even shocking. Such an analysis is intended to reveal characteristics of the travellers and of the people they encountered, as well as their similarities and differences.

One misconception of a geographical nature arises when dealing with travel books about the Soviet Union. Visitors in the twentieth century used the word ‘Russia’ when they referred to the USSR, although cultural differences between the Soviet Republics were immense. If possible, only those parts of the works will be taken into account which relate to former Soviet Russia.

4.3. The Construction of the Russian National Character

Without doubt, the national character is the most intriguing constituent of the overall image of a given nation. People’s mentality, predispositions, behaviour and psychological traits are primarily considered when the national character needs to be highlighted. The procedure of the analysis of the chosen travel books will be the following. First, typical characteristics of the Russians in the selected literary texts will be screened and inventoried. Then several comparisons will be applied: between images of different regions of Russia, between images of Russia and the United States, and between the writers’ autoptic experiences and their preconceived notions (the latter including dominant hetero-stereotypes and prejudices in the West). Further on, the results will be interpreted in terms of imagological concepts and binary

oppositions. One should bear in mind that generalisations can also be elicited from factual reporting (Leerssen, “Rhetoric” 283). Moreover, features of the national character may overlap with or be derived from physical and cultural aspects, which will be analysed in the further segments.

The texts reveal that the writers’ descriptions of the Russian national character fall under certain categories. Some attributes are centred around ‘work’ (both the processes and the result) or ‘the pace of life’ (the opposition fast / slow), and others are grouped around ‘power’ or ‘morality.’ One of the options would be to systematise features according to imagological concepts, such as ‘gender’ or ‘orientalism.’ It has to be borne in mind, however, that to draw a clear demarcation line between various categories would be an impossible task, as particular attributes might be classified differently. Therefore, the sequence within each sub-section below will be the following: first, general traits will be touched upon, and then specific categories will be illustrated. It is also of great importance that the texts explicitly or implicitly bring to light American auto-stereotypes as well as Russian hetero-stereotypes of Americans.

4.3.1. Theodore Dreiser: Through the Prism of American Ethnocentrism

As a starting point, it may be interesting to look at general traits which Dreiser attributed to the Russian nation. Within the opposition *pleasant / unpleasant*, the writer characterised the Russians as “*wonderful*,” “*easy going*” and hospitable (DRD 60, 66, 153), and his overall opinion was positive: “They appeal to me. I like them” (DLR 66). The author also ascribed intelligence to the locals: “[...] here is a thinking people. And out of Russia, as out of no other country to-day, I feel, are destined to come great things, mentally as well as practically” (21). Further on, he considered the Russian temperament “naturally sentimental and romantic” (163). But people in Russia in the 1920s were *naïve* because they believed in fairy tales about Americans and their machinery (52-53). In Moscow Dreiser met the American Anna Louise Strong, who had travelled all over Russia and who was “*enormously fascinated by the Russian temperament. [...] Like so many others, her conclusions are that the Russians are strong, practical, artistic, sensitive, idealistic, brotherly [...]*” (DRD 107).

It is not unexpected that Dreiser also concentrated on certain negative character traits: “But never doubt that there are still in Russia both greedy and cunning men, with their various brands of graft and trickery” (DLR 255). The writer was inconsistent in his judgements, as in the diary he claimed that there was “*no graft*” in Russia (DRD 108).

A vivid example of how the author applied knowledge of Russian classical literature when observing ordinary Russians can be found in his manuscript:

In so far as I can see, these are the true people of Russias [sic] great writers – Tolstoy, Gogol, Turgeniev, Dostoievsky & Saltykov. One sees their types everywhere – the heavy & yet shrewd peasants [sic]; the self-concerned and even now, under communism, rather authoritative petty officials (Railroad conductors, station masters, etc.) I see a peasant [sic] in a ragged coat & cap go by & he lifts his cap to a depot official. I see them – working classes deliberately & rather stodgily doing this or that. (DRD 59)

Here the writer drew parallels between his ‘ready-made’ images and the scenes of everyday life in Russia.²¹

Anti-pragmatism. In his book *Dreiser Looks at Russia* the writer devotes one chapter entirely to the Russian temperament. He touches very emotionally upon various facets of it and provides illustrations from the point of view of a traveller. With the help of a vivid metaphor, Dreiser explains the feature of the Russian nation which can be correlated with the stereotype of *anti-pragmatism*. The writer imagines that Americans and Russians are in a building with thirty-two floors and a lift. Americans ride to the tenth or eleventh floor and then look from above at all the machinery below, and that is what interests Americans – practical and material life (an auto-image). Russians, on the other hand, are more interested in the floors above, which are “totally enveloped in haze or shadow” (DLR 51), and such is the Russian character, *dreamy* and *non-practical*. Dreiser, using a hyperbole, states that one can be greatly “impressed by the mental and temperamental differences that set nations apart,” and he employs auto-stereotypes to show this difference: “Americans are so brisk, and esoterically or philosophically so limited” (50). On the contrary, for Russians to dream is more important than to enjoy material life. “And there you have the intellectual and [...] the emotional difference between the two nations – or races, for they are more like different races than different nations,” the writer concludes (51-52). The novelist was irritated by the fact that Russians dreamed of having a better life but were not capable of cleaning their toilets and cooking their food properly (63). In response to the Russian fantasies about outstripping America, the author exclaimed sarcastically: “Good Lord, I often thought, if only they would! But not with their temperament! They talk too much and do too little” (60).

Dreiser claims that one of his Russian friends confirmed those observations and even explained the reason behind them. In the short summer period, the peasant worked from sixteen to eighteen hours a day, and during the long winter, he was left with nothing to do; thus “a passive

²¹ Cf. Riggio 9.

weariness” led to “abstraction and reverie” (DLR 52). This is a rare case when the text contains a direct reference to the shaping power of the climate. In another example an American correspondent shared with Dreiser his story of trying to obtain a document from a Russian official, inferring that that man would have rather talked for five hours than did work which required five minutes, for “it would be theoretic, speculative, and his mind could wander and intellectualize and spin fine emotional and philosophical dreams” (55). It may be seen that the author resorted to other people’s opinions, both American and Russian, which might have influenced his own conclusions.

What is surprising is that Dreiser very often supports contrasted points of view. Suddenly the writer directs a question to himself and his American readers, not without irony, if they really “need all the speed and energy and material plethora” in the US, and comments that “after observing these slow, easy-going Russians for a time, [he] was not so ready to criticize as at first” (DLR 76). He judges Americans as being too materialistic, and says that it is “utterly puerile mentality” in comparison with the Russian austerity (250). The trait of thinking and dreaming is praised by Dreiser in the last chapter of his book: “For beyond thoughts what is there?” (245). And finally, he declares: “God, the swish and tang of actual, serious, generous, non-material, highly spiritual mentation!” (250). It should be noted that in the author’s contemplation the hetero-stereotype gives way to the auto-stereotype – the process which Beller calls reciprocal argumentation (“Technik” 45).

Slowness. The next character trait Dreiser was so annoyed with was *slowness*: “*The Russian temperament is slow. Patient, lackadaisical* [sic]” (DRD 80). This feature was often accompanied by *indifference*: “[The Russian] is so slow, and worse, so consciously indifferent to hurry in all of his affairs” (DLR 53). The writer was exasperated with the Russian ‘seichas,’ which means ‘immediately,’ “the most used and also abused word in all Russia. For no Russian ever comes immediately, anywhere” (234). The stereotype of lethargic Russians was thus confirmed by Dreiser. But there were cases when they were not slow. When the author asked an American farmer working in the USSR and introducing new methods of agriculture about “*the proverbial laziness & slowness of the peasant* [sic],” he received the answer that those qualities resulted from undernourishment and that peasants worked faster when they ate enough meat (DRD 106).

Inefficiency / efficiency. Dreiser was also indignant at Russian *inefficiency*, which he observed almost everywhere in the country when he was a customer: in the hotels, on the trains and at the post offices. Although the writer saw exceptions, such as “clean, busy, well-managed,

and productive” factories (*DLR* 156), the overall picture in this respect is presented in both his book and manuscript as negative. Dreiser states: “I marveled then that any system could be so inefficient and endure” (57). If it was a hotel, something was broken, the plumbing was out of order, there was no hot water, or room service was indifferent (*DRD* 66). Once the novelist reported that the bath was leaking in his hotel room, and it was only on the third day that he saw eight men in his bathroom discussing the problem for 35 minutes. The writer was very surprised because in the US a plumber would have fixed that leakage in no time with a pair of pliers (*DLR* 234-35). Another example of inefficiency was that hotels and first-class train tickets were often impossible to book, especially outside Moscow and Leningrad (58). When Dreiser was travelling, trains never departed or arrived on time, being from one to fifteen hours late. Accidents and wrecks were not uncommon; sometimes passengers missed connections while trainmen were calmly eating their meals, and people had to struggle to buy tickets at ticket-windows (57-58). One of the entries in Dreiser’s diary, written by Kennel, reveals his feelings at the time: “I was filled with rage at everything Russian, such a lack of system, such inexcusable negligence” (*DRD* 233). On another occasion the novelist wished to send a Christmas telegram at a telegraph office but had to argue for half an hour about the rate. Afterwards Kennel made a note in the diary: “[The argument] put me in bad humor about these ‘damn fools’ and their inefficiency, ‘dubs,’ ‘What a lousy country, anyway!’ while R.K., also in bad humor, told me I was a typical American who expected to find everything just like at home” (245).

In his book Dreiser blames the Russian government for that poor management (*DLR* 58), as it deprived Russian people of “the urge and tang of competition” (75). The writer speculates whether inefficiency and indifference are permanent Russian characteristics or the ones acquired under the Soviet regime:

[...] some say that this particular zest and go which a westerner misses was never in the Russian temperament at any time, under Czar or Communist. Others, that its assumed absence is more a seeming than a reality; that the Russians do not look and act the zest which they nonetheless feel. However true this may be, I could never sense such a condition existing. Always and everywhere in Russia (including even Moscow in part), there appeared to me to be a kind of trudging resignation, based, I felt, on an absence of that “kick” which lies, for so many, in the hope of financial advancement or the dread of failure. (76-77)

This extract makes the reader think that the trait of being *inefficient* was not newly acquired in the 1920s. *Patience*, for its part, was considered to be a typical stereotype of the Russian nation, and Dreiser confirmed it by his illustrations.

Scholars dealing with Dreiser's works emphasise that he himself was "a creature of moods" and that his judgements were conditioned by the state he was in (Riggio 15). His mood, in its turn, depended on "the quality of the food and lodging" (David-Fox 243). This fact explains why Dreiser's opinions were, at times, either so vehemently negative or positive.

Backwardness. The next stereotype, which may be clearly traced in the writer's book and manuscript, was Russia's *backwardness*. According to Dreiser, Russia was "three hundred years behind in many ways" in comparison with the advanced US (DLR 76), and such a state of things he eventually explained by the Russian temperament. The author's point of view was not only ethnocentric, it was also racist: "*I some times [sic] think that Russians like the negroes are in that less developed state [...], since instead of having to accumulate & organize and execute in a constructive way they prefer to dream & play & talk like children. It is very likely so – and explains their present social backwardness*" (DRD 182). But sometimes Dreiser found ground for optimism; although he believed Russians to be "slow, backward, inclined to meditate too much, to trudge or stand in a resigned sort of way," he also noticed indications of changes, which had to "shake and wake them out of this lethargy" (DLR 67).

Collectivism and fear of responsibility. In the first sentence of his book Dreiser states: "I am an incorrigible individualist – therefore opposed to Communism" (DLR 9). During his journey the traveller observed several scenes where Russians, from his standpoint, had a strong tendency to be collectivists. "*I can never understand that – the herd instinct in these people – but it is true. They appear to have to work and live in groups. Their village, factory and apartment life is communal,*" the author asserts (DRD 150). On his visit to a communal flat Dreiser saw a large kitchen equipped with several wood cookers and sinks (DLR 229). The writer asked his guide, who was a Communist, if it was not a hardship for a woman to cook outside her room with five other women. The answer astonished the traveller: "Far from this being a hardship, it is a social pleasure, one of the daily reliefs from ennui" (229). The writer came to the conclusion that it was in the nature of the Russians to live so close to each other. What he did not take into account was that people had no choice and that they had to adjust their lives to the available conditions.

The feature of *collectivism* can be seen in the aforementioned episode with eight plumbers having a discussion about leaking in the novelist's bathroom. Later an American acquaintance of Dreiser's commented on that case: "No one individual under this form of government is willing to take the responsibility for anything. They prefer to go together in squads, confer by companies. It is easier, safer. They avoid personal responsibility and sleep better" (DLR 236).

The government accepted group work because that way more people got employment. The writer highlights that such *fear of responsibility* was “one of the truest and most illuminating things that was to be learned about the Russian system and the national temperament behind it” (237), thus showing once again that other people’s explanations were sometimes decisive in his understanding of the Russian phenomena.

Mysticism. “Mysticism? Thy name is Slav,” the writer exclaims in connection with the “embalmed corpse” of Lenin (*DLR* 31). Once a local informed the traveller why Tolstoy and Dostoevsky appealed to his compatriots, adding: “They are mystical people, these Russians” (218). Dreiser underscores this feature even when referring to Soviet achievements after the Revolution: “*There is something strange, almost mystic in the fever of these people to consolidate their gains*” (*DRD* 152, cf. *DLR* 94). Here it may be assumed that the writer sometimes saw things through the prism of his preconceived ideas.

Affinity with Asia. The red thread running through Dreiser’s writings is his ethnocentric perception of Russia as “*Mother Asia*” (*DRD* 67). Whenever the writer describes people, or their clothes, or housing, he employs the adjective ‘Asiatic’ with its negative connotation. In Dreiser’s book and manuscript this word is not necessarily related to physical features proper, as in the following quotation: “*I never expected to see so strange a thing – the marching asiatics [sic] of all casts of countenance – from Chinese to European [...]*” (67). The novelist uses this adjective to depict something he was not content with, like a “half-asiatic odor” (*DLR* 133) or “the world-old Asiatic fatalism that meets change or death with indifference” (81). In general, Dreiser ascribed oriental features to the Russian character: “But the Russian is not American (U.S.A.). He is not even the European. Indeed, I take him to be a semi-Asiatic temperament. And because of this, different!” (64). These occurrences fall under the imagological concept of *orientalism* and the opposition *East / West*. Thus, one may notice that Dreiser’s view was extremely ethnocentric²² and that there was a direct correlation between American hetero-stereotypes of Russia and the author’s opinions about the people and things he saw, both in his diary and in his book.

Indifference to cleanliness. One thing troubled Dreiser throughout his journey, that of sanitation: “And as for cleanness – or the lack of it, rather – the sluggish indifference of the average Russian to conditions decidedly not pleasant and yet easily remediable – well, [...] it was amazing!” (*DLR* 59). The writer was incensed at dirt on boats and trains, in houses, hotels,

²² Cf. Casciato 175.

yards and toilets (59, 247). He sarcastically noted that the Russians claimed to be a progressive nation (their auto-stereotype) but that they did not evince “a disgust for uncleanness” (247). This characteristic is related to *indifference* and *laziness*, and it contributes to the overall negative stereotype of *lethargy*.

Mistrust. A separate block within the representation of the Russian national character in Dreiser’s book is centred around *mistrust*:

Unquestionably, one of the most disagreeable phases of Communist Russia – from an American or English point of view – is the inescapable atmosphere of espionage and mental as well as social regulation which now pervades every part of that great land. The prying. The watching. The necessity to account for one’s every move, everywhere, the stranger, I mean. (*DLR* 115)

The writer reports that he felt “an air of suspicion” everywhere (116); his hotel room was searched once (121), and he had to explain the origin of his dollars while crossing the border on the way back to the US (116). The author conveys the atmosphere in the Soviet Union under Stalin: “[T]he present Russian régime [...] distrusts most of its visitors and a very large number of its native Russians – really trusts no one” (115). And the intelligence service of Russia seemed to the observer to be *efficient* in contrast to all other state systems (120).

Despotism and intolerance. Dreiser saw Russia as a dictatorship (*DLR* 12), “tyrannical in its determination to abolish tyranny” (33). Part of the communist control took the form of “the endless outpour and downpour of propaganda” (89), accompanied by *intolerance* of any criticism (95). In his book the writer compares communism with the Catholic Church and its doctrines (96), and he claims that children at schools in Russia were brainwashed with the Marxist dogmas (99-100). Much money was spent on indoctrination, yet there were no means for homeless and ragged children in the streets (242). Contrary to overall *inefficiency*, propaganda was spread with “thoroughness and efficacy” (262), and portraits of Stalin and Lenin hung everywhere (*DRD* 172). The author was very sarcastic about all those displays: “Thus: population of Moscow without statues of Lenin, 2,000,000; with statues of Lenin, 3,000,000” (*DLR* 262, cf. *DRD* 82). People were afraid, as they knew what punishment would follow if they dissented from the official Party line, but many Russians whispered privately to the writer that all was not “as well as the Communists would have [had] the world believe” (*DLR* 121). There were facts of numerous executions, veiled with secrecy and mystery (125), yet the novelist confessed: “I do not know whether by nature the Russian is either suspicious or cruel” (119). In one episode Dreiser observed birds above the Kremlin and contemplated on freedom as opposed to suppression: “*It is a sad, drastic, tyrannical world [...]. Below misery,*

dogma, mysticism – a pathetic slavery to an age old fallacy [...]. How casual and accidental nature can be – freedom, ease, content may be side by side with enslavement & misery [...]” (DRD 126). It is possible to assert that the image of Russian tyranny created by Dreiser relates to the stereotype of *oriental despotism*.

Predisposition to misery. In his book the writer connects the government system of the Soviet Union with the Russian temperament. He refers to his American and Russian friends who thought that “the Russians are a people who crave temperamentally some form of tyranny and cannot really be happy without it. As one individual expressed it – ‘they have a genius for misery’” (DLR 115). This mention of *misery* correlates with the writer’s diary entry about his conversation with the publisher Huebsch (DRD 46), and it is probable that the “one individual” alluded to in the above quotation was Huebsch himself. In this case one may conclude that Dreiser’s prior knowledge coincided with his final impression and that the writer supported the stereotype of Russian *endurance* and *submissiveness*.

Liberal attitude towards women. One aspect connected with the Russian national character, which Dreiser did not lambast, was linked to the *gender* question,²³ and the latter has a role in the field of imagology. The author reports that women in Soviet Russia of the 1920s were emancipated (DLR 19), had equal educational opportunities with men, got paid equally for the same work, and could pursue any occupation (166, 168). Dreiser underlines that “the new moral and economic code for women” was possible because of the growth of a social stigma on women who did not work and who were offensively “classed as housewives” (167). Moreover, unmarried mothers or unregistered marriages and divorces were not frowned upon (168). In the factories equipped with nurseries, women could feed their babies during their working days (the writer was taken to many nurseries, and he was even tired of seeing them) (DRD 240). “The economic independence of women in Soviet Russia is not merely an official theory but a fact,” the observer stresses (DLR 166). By employing his auto-images, he drew parallels with the American public attitude towards women, which was marked by “a definite disapproval of a married woman, and especially a mother, working outside the home” (168). This statement contradicts Dreiser’s claim that in America “nearly everybody works” (75), revealing that under “everybody” he basically understood only the male population. The writer admitted that women in America were “household drudges,” but being a housewife was honourable in the US at the time (169). In this case the auto-image helps highlight the hetero-

²³ Cf.: “Through the lens of the traveler, Dreiser frequently comments on issues of gender and sexuality, a favorite topic in his fiction” (Gammel and Srebnik 111).

image of a liberal attitude towards females in the Soviet Union. Dreiser knew several American women who lived and worked “more contentedly in Russia, under conditions of life amounting to almost physical hardship, than in their own rich and comfortable land” (170), and the writer even provides several examples of such employees, his secretary Ruth Kennel being one of them.

An attentive reader, however, also notices that Dreiser depicts women in communal kitchens cooking in turns, and this alongside the social stigma on non-working females. Apparently, the writer took it for granted that only women were supposed to cook, not men. The question may be raised whether Russian women were really liberated or just had a double burden of working and doing all the housework.²⁴

Additionally, in his book Dreiser touches upon sexual interactions between men and women in Soviet Russia, and he praises their “wholesome attitude towards sex,” not connected with money or religion. The novelist emphasises: “They just do not see sex the way we do. It is normal and natural” (*DLR* 20). In this context the scholar David-Fox opines that Dreiser’s conclusion contains “assumptions about the authenticity of noble savages” (241), which reveal the writer’s overwhelming ethnocentrism.

Dreiser’s portrayal of the Russian morals in the question of gender did not support or refute any stereotype. The reason might be that the liberation of women was a new phenomenon in the Soviet Union, and the West had not formed any stereotype related to it as yet.

Ambivalence. In different parts of Dreiser’s book and of the manuscript, the reader can find his contradictory views about the Russian character, like the statement that Russians were “*practical in some things, [...] impractical in others*” (*DRD* 66). The writer thought: “[...] by turns and according to what one is looking at or thinking about at the time, one can become either abnormally optimistic or deeply depressed” (*DLR* 83); indeed, during his journey the writer considered Russia either “a total loss” or “not quite doomed as yet” (85). In particular, Dreiser noticed contradictions in such a trait as *efficiency*, as the state was especially well-organised in the task of oppressing its citizens.

The conclusion may be drawn that Theodore Dreiser’s overall opinion about the Russian national character was extremely ethnocentric and partially racist. The most cited phrase in the

²⁴ Cf. Robert G. Kaiser’s report (although from the 1970s) about Russian women’s full-time jobs, which they had to do “without reducing the volume of housework” (57).

writer's diary, "I'd rather die in the United States than live here" (*DRD* 276, written by Ruth Kennel), shows the extent of the mental gap which he felt between Russia and the US. As David-Fox points out, "Dreiser compared everything he saw to the advanced industrial civilization of America, which he typically defended abroad but condemned at home" (235). The novelist presented most of the Western stereotypes of Russia: *backwardness*, *anti-pragmatism*, *lethargy*, *despotism*, *misery* and *mysticism*. One may get the impression that the writer followed a list of hetero-stereotypes and collected confirmations from his own experience. He repeatedly stressed that Soviet Russia was half-European and half-Asian and that most of the typical traits associated with oriental countries were true for the USSR. The only feature which Dreiser acknowledged to be advanced was the liberal attitude of Soviet society towards its women. But on the whole, the novelist saw the Russians as a pleasant people.

It can be inferred that the writer possessed some preconceived knowledge of Russia, an example being his conversations with Huebsch on the way to Berlin; those original ideas influenced his perception and subsequent judgements. Thomas P. Riggio claims that the novelist had been inspired by Emma Goldman and that "many of Dreiser's conclusions in 1928 echoed her convictions" (Riggio 11). One can also presume that the writer used Dorothy Thompson's thoughts and that plagiarism did take place, although literary scholars who specialise in his works (for instance, David-Fox and Riggio) avoid direct accusations. Dreiser's book and manuscript often contain references to contradictory opinions of the people who he talked to in Russia. Some of his observations, however, such as Russian *collectivism* or *indifference to uncleanness*, were certainly based on his individual perspective. It is also worth mentioning that in the 1930s the novelist became pro-Soviet (David-Fox 251); apparently, it was Ruth Kennel who "succeeded in getting Dreiser to rethink his prejudices" (Riggio 11).

4.3.2. Edmund Wilson: A Sympathiser's View

"It is much easier to establish friendly relations with Russians than with the people of any other country I know," Edmund Wilson states (193). His first encounters with Russian people occurred on board the steamer on the way from London to Leningrad, where the traveller shared his cabin with three Russian engineers, who "were natural and frank like Americans, but, unlike Americans, were very quiet and behaved toward one another and toward [him] with the most extraordinary consideration" (155). Those engineers would talk in whispers not to wake the writer up, and they would leave the light turned on for him in the evenings when they went to bed earlier. The author made inferences from that experience: "An American coming to Russia

from England discovers, not without surprise, that in certain fundamental respects he has more in common with the Russians than with the English” (164). The traveller ascribed “natural friendliness” to Russians (222), and he noted that it was “harder in the Soviet Union to fob people off with pure bunk than anywhere else in the world” (256), thus attributing the quality of being *intelligent* to them.

Wilson opines that Muscovites in the 1930s were “certainly much pleasanter with each other, for all their jostling and jamming, than New Yorkers” (193). Unlike Americans, who rarely communicated with one another in the subway, Russians called each other ‘Comrade’ in the streets and in public transport. “In Moscow, if anyone behaves hoggishly, there is general remonstrance and protest,” continues the writer, and describes an episode where a man had to get off a tram because he was “made to feel so cheap” (193). The observer remembers his experience of travelling by train²⁵ while being ill: “Russians were much the nicest people to be sick, while traveling, among. They were considerate, amiable, quiet. I had never fallen in with a Russian who was obnoxious, as the Germans were” (334). It may be concluded that in general Wilson considered the Russians a *pleasant* nation.

In the 1956 version of his book, Wilson comments that back in 1935 some individuals who lived in the Soviet Union did not share his positive opinion about nice Russians:

When I spoke of it to an Englishwoman who was married to a Soviet official, she exclaimed, “Why, we’re perfectly bloody, aren’t we?” I mentioned the behavior of the people on the street-cars. “One reason they behave themselves,” she answered, “is that they can be fined for ‘hooliganism,’ if they don’t.” When I told Mirsky that I found the people amiable, I was made to feel by his silence that this had not been his own experience. I pled in evidence how sweetly I had been smiled at by a woman who sold tickets in the subway. “She was probably laughing at your Russian,” he said. (218)

One may see that by 1956 the writer changed his sympathetic attitude to a critical one, and it is not surprising that he had not included these unfavourable views in his first book *Travels in Two Democracies*. It is also telling that he resorted to the judgements of the people who had lived in England before.²⁶

Non-racism. As a traveller, Wilson was thrilled by the seeming “democratic manners” (222) in the USSR: “The Soviet liquidation of social and racial distinctions comes to affect even the attitude of foreigners, and all classes, nationalities and colors are able to meet and talk together freely” (156). The writer welcomed that achievement of the Soviet Union, and once he attended

²⁵ That scene happened on the way from Kiev to Odessa, in Ukraine, but it would have been typical for Russia.

²⁶ It is worth noting that the full name of the literary critic Mirsky appears only in the 1956 version of the book. Apparently, Wilson did not want to do him any harm by mentioning him in *Travels in Two Democracies*.

such a get-together: “Dinner, and party afterwards. Foreigners and Russians; Americans and English; Negroes and Whites. One thing which the Soviets have certainly done is simplify social relations” (221). Wilson even admitted that in the Soviet Union he felt as if he were “at the moral top of the world” (375). It is understandable why the traveller was so impressed by *non-racism* in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, taking into consideration the fact that desegregation of African-Americans in the US occurred only in the 1950s.

A lax attitude to work / work ethic. Wilson visited several factories and plants during his journey, and from his descriptions one may elicit some character traits connected with working habits of the Russian people. The writer reports that at the Red Flag Textile Factory in Leningrad the workers had an hour for lunch, which would have been impossible for labourers in other countries (176). Moreover, the author saw female workers practicing ballet and pirouetting during their break. At the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, Wilson watched with amazement that “they had simply stopped the conveyor, and everybody had gone off to lunch – a thing inconceivable at Ford’s!” (323). But the writer evaluated positively the system of emulation; at the above-mentioned textile factory, work brigades competed with each other, and the winners got special privileges, like theatre tickets or longer holidays (176).

At the end of his book, Wilson provides his final thoughts about the Soviet Union and the things he saw. One of the features which he singles out is the heroism of the Russians in connection with their labour, which can be seen as the *work ethic*:

Whether one runs into a Communist official who is obviously working his head off in an effort to make socialism succeed in the face of inertia at home and hostile pressure abroad; or a professional man or woman of the old bourgeoisie or nobility, who has lost position, property and family, who lives always more or less under suspicion and who may have already done time in a prison or construction camp, yet who still remains loyal to the Revolution; or a member of the Komsomól intoxicating himself with study and work; or a peasant woman applying herself with desperate earnestness to the duties of ticket-taker [sic] on a train or a tram; or a doctor or farmer, now old, but deprived of his whole life’s achievement, yet still sticking to his former work, in the interests of a future he will never see, of benefits he will never share; or a cultivated and charming young woman grown up amid the anarchy of the Civil Wars and the Spartan early years of the Revolution, with no dancing and no pretty clothes and breaking down her physique and her nerves under the exactions of the Soviet programs [...]. (374-75)

Non-pragmatism. The writer illustrates one example of the Soviet attitude to work which might be correlated with the stereotype of the Russian *non-pragmatism*, or “neglecting [...] practicality for morality” (Belknap 7). In the play ‘Aristocrats,’ which Wilson saw in Moscow, but the author of which he does not mention, a bourgeois engineer asks himself a question

whether he has been working on a piece of construction on the White Sea Canal because of his interest in engineering or because of his desire to help the Soviet Union. Russians considered that play “very Russian,” and Wilson was astonished by the mental differences between the two nations: “[...] I cannot imagine an American, once he was embarked on the project, brooding as to whether he was really sincere, whether his attitude was politically correct, in working on a bridge or a dam” (267-68). Thus, in that auto-image only the practical side of work was important, and there was no place for ideology.

Indifference and carelessness. During his journey Wilson sometimes went on excursions in groups with other American tourists and witnessed first-hand the difference between his compatriots and Russians in everyday situations; in one case he saw an American lady “lecturing the guide for having lost some of the members of the party” (323). The writer himself on a Volga boat made an effort to let a bird, which was making “a most piteous and exasperating plaint,” out of the saloon, while the Russian passengers did not bother and were not “the least concerned” (323-24). The author’s observation of Russian behaviour helped him to sharpen the auto-image of responsibility (reciprocal argumentation according to Beller): “It was the American instinct to control, to check up, to see to it that things were properly attended to, that they were brought to a decisive conclusion” (324). In Ulyanovsk Wilson was surprised to see a non-caring attendant: “It never would have occurred to her it was part of her job to give the travelers service,” he complained (315), explaining that good service was “cultivated artificially” only in international hotels in the Soviet Union (316). The last example demonstrates not only *indifference* but also *inefficiency*. On the steamer on the way from London to Leningrad, a waiter made a mistake while serving a dessert, but he corrected it “with Russian insouciance” (162). Finally, while travelling by train from Leningrad to Moscow, the author paid attention to the fact that Russians had built the railway as a straight line, not caring about people living in the villages between the two cities: “It is characteristic of the Russians that the railroad should have been built in this way,” Wilson concluded (191). *Indifference* is not a widely-spread stereotype of the Russian people, but it is related to *dreaminess* and *meditation*. It is plausible to assume that the writer shaped his judgement of the locals as an indifferent people mostly on the basis of his autoptic experiences.

Timelessness and slowness. Wilson states: “Nothing except hours of work ever begins or ends in Russia. Their time behaves so differently from ours” (313). The Russians in the 1930s seemed to “have no sense of time,” and it was understandable for the writer that the five-year plans had been introduced “in the effort to give them one” (355); nevertheless, it was “an

inexplicable miracle” that such plans were fulfilled at all (176). But *timelessness* may be viewed as an asset when it goes hand in hand with *thoroughness*: “But a dinner, a play, a ballet, a meeting, a Russian lesson, an after-dinner conversation, are likely to go on for hours and to deal with the matter in hand far more thoroughly than we usually do” (203).

On several occasions Wilson noticed some old-fashioned habits of Russians, like dinner in the middle of the afternoon: “It is one of the many examples of things which present to Westerners the aspect of anachronisms [...]” (203). The writer provides a plausible explanation of the Soviet out-of-datedness: “[T]he isolation of the Soviet Union has had the effect of preserving, within its close-guarded boundaries, old habits, fashions and tastes which have quite disappeared from the rest of the world [...]” (319), one of the examples being an “old sentimental waltz” back from 1914 (320). Wilson thought that the Russian people had cut themselves from the past but that they were not in their desirable future (254). In the binary opposition *centre / periphery*, timelessness together with the quality of being static is associated with the latter. The Soviet Union in the 1930s may be regarded in this respect as a state on the periphery of the civilised world. On the other hand, Russia was not static in terms of its mechanical techniques (319).

Similar to Dreiser, Wilson commented on a sluggish tempo of everyday activities in the USSR: “[T]he pace of Russian life is in general so much slower and less effortful than ours” (192, cf. 257). For instance, people moved slowly in the theatres (168), or the pace in the Stalingrad Tractor Factory “was much more leisurely than Detroit” (322). And like Dreiser, the author was amused by the Russian word ‘seichas,’ meaning ‘right away,’ which was “said by the Russians more often and lived up to less often than by the people of any other nation” (332).

Non-punctuality and indecisiveness. At a certain point, Wilson needed to extend his visa, and he made an appointment with an official at eleven in the morning. That person was not at his working place at the required time. After several visits the writer managed to find the official, who apologised and said that he had been ordered to work until two at night²⁷ and that his subordinates had not been at work either (203). On one more occasion, Wilson tried to arrange a meeting with Mister S., who appeared to have difficulty in deciding on a suitable day and changed his mind several times (175). The author provides a thorough comment, employing the American auto-stereotypes of punctuality and decisiveness:

I tell this story at length because it is typical of a certain aspect of Russia. Americans who have decided, as I had done, that Americans and Russians are much alike, discover

²⁷ Many officials had to work at night because Stalin used to work until four in the morning.

that in the ordinary technique of life their habits are antipodally different. It is not merely a question of language difficulties or of bad telephone service. It is the native indisposition of Russians to be punctual, to be final, to be precise. Americans settle on a program, check it up and carry it out. Russians, even when they carry out their programs, do so without the settling and checking that seem indispensable to us. And they never do anything right away. (175)

Here Wilson came to his conclusion entirely on the basis of his own experience. The Russian *non-punctuality* and *indecisiveness* may be linked to the stereotype of *dreaminess*, which, in its turn, leads to *backwardness*.

Inefficiency, patience and backwardness. In several episodes the reader can find instances of the *inefficiency* of the Russians. When Wilson intended to take a bath on the international Russian steamer, he found out that nothing in the bathroom worked the ways it had to; there was only one plug for both men's and women's baths, no hot water, no ventilation and no latch on the door. "I was afterwards to learn that latches on bathroom and toilet doors and plugs for wash-basins and bathtubs hardly exist in Russia," the traveller explains (160). Because of the overall inefficiency, people had no choice but to be *patient*, and they were "used to standing in line for things, waiting for meetings to begin, traveling on slow trains through great spaces" (355). The writer stresses this "immense [...] patience" and the fact that Russians were resigned to "waiting for things forever" (368).

Wilson depicts Russia as "a really backward country" (166). The Russian auto-image (and meta-image) that their socialist system was "supposed to be new and advanced" (266) stood in contradiction with how the West saw it. Whether such a state of things was "due to proverbial Russian backwardness" or "to sound Marxist doctrine" the writer was not sure (267). Much like Dreiser, Wilson thought that "in spite of the Russian enthusiasm for emulating American technique, it would take them several decades [...] to approximate American efficiency" (323). The use of the cliché about *backwardness* can lead to the supposition that the traveller was keeping this preconceived stereotype in mind when he faced Russian realities and that his conclusion was of a hybrid nature, a mixture of the known and the unknown. Moreover, the writer provides a documented auto-image, the quotation from Maxim Gorky's letter to Leo Tolstoy as a response to the statement of 'non-resistance to evil' of the latter: "All this is the unhealthy ferment of the old Russian blood, envenomed by Mongolian fatalism and almost chemically hostile to the West, with its untiring creative labor, with its active and indomitable resistance to the evils of life" (368-69).

Collectivism. Wilson describes a communal summer house in the countryside not far from Moscow, where he was invited to (231-32). At the end of the book, among other thoughts about the Soviet Union, the writer opines that Russians accepted collective living “more easily than the people of western nations” and that they were “perfectly resigned to” that hardship (368). This observation might be traced to the traveller’s first-hand experience.

Mistrust and espionage. Wilson states: “I have not been troubled by espionage, as some people complain of being [...]” (197). Still, there were “two mysterious telephone calls” early in the morning when someone at the other end did not answer. The traveller found out later that this was an ordinary method of checking if a foreigner slept at the address he or she was supposed to stay. Once Wilson, while taking a Russian lady home from a café, was followed by a strange man (197). The writer thought that Russians did not trust themselves and that that was the reason why they did not trust each other or foreigners (265). To lessen the indignation of the reader, the author provides some information about the US of the 1930s: “In America, the visiting journalist whose sympathies are not known, though he may be merely reporting strikes or even merely looking at factories, soon finds the police and the officials checking up on his lodgings and his movements [...]” (198). It can be seen that the intellectual knew certain facts about the secret service of the USA which ordinary American people were unaware of.

In square brackets of the 1956 edition, Wilson adds: “It ought to be borne in mind, in connection with these Russian notes, written in 1935, that this was [...] the most liberal period ever known in Soviet Russia. Visitors from abroad were welcomed for the valuta they had to spend, though they were [...] closely watched [...]” (183). The author underlines that while he enjoyed a relative freedom to travel in Russia due to the help of his friends John Dos Passos and Walter Duranty, other travellers did not have such a privilege. The reader gets insight into the standard procedure of treating foreign tourists in Russia at the time: “I should otherwise have been run by Intourist, the Soviet travel office, that kept visitors in special hotels and always under the supervision of guides, both agents of the NKVD”²⁸ (380).

During the months which Wilson spent in Russia, the situation in the country was changing drastically. His Russian friends who had invited him to their communal dacha at the beginning of the writer’s stay in Moscow altered their attitude completely. The following quotation shows how upset the former guest was:

²⁸ NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs) was a secret police agency which dealt with espionage and purges.

They were beginning not to want me at the *dácha*, where they had at first entertained me so warmly. The other boarders had complained to my friends that they were seeing too much of a foreigner. Who was I? What was I up to? My friends weren't quite sure themselves. I found that they were coming to shy at the most commonplace questions on my part. The companion with whom I was swimming asked me pointblank, at a moment when there was nobody within possible earshot, whether I was not a British agent; and, after our return to the house, I was parked in an arbor on the grounds, so that the other inmates would not see me. I never went to the *dácha* again. (262-63)

It is evident that *mistrust* was not the writer's preconceived prejudice because he was really astounded to experience rapid changes in Russia.

Autocracy. Concerning autocratic rulers, Wilson draws parallels between several periods of Russian history. In a conversation with a Russian man he found out how Peter the Great had cut off beards of the nobility with his own hands; the interlocutor provided the Russian auto-image: "That's a strange thing [...] which could happen only in Russia: that the word of one man could regulate the habits and thoughts of a whole people!" (247). Similarly, the writer was astonished by the cult of Lenin and by "what man, as man alone, can accomplish" (377). "It seemed amazing that a single man should have impressed upon the thought of a whole people a conception of society and history which changed the very names of past events" (156), Wilson writes, referring to the local notion 'the Imperialist War' instead of 'the World War.'

Being a profound thinker, Wilson provides his explanation of the Stalin regime. He posits that the Russians, with their illiteracy rate of eighty percent before the Revolution, had had "a paternalistic government for centuries" (242-43). As a result, even in the mid-1930s there was "the tendency to lapse back into their earlier relation to the Little Father" (243). The writer concludes that autocracy was inevitable in the Soviet Union: "Even if Old Bolshevik Stalin had not wanted to be Stalin apotheosized, the people would have tried to invent him" (243). Wilson compares Russia with Western countries and asks a question: "How can they be expected to develop such political institutions as have taken the Western peoples centuries?" (243). It is apparent that the thinker, alluding to the old stereotype of Russia, was not judgemental; he tried to analyse and explicate the reason of the state of things, employing his previous knowledge. It is ironic that the first version of the book, which Wilson published in 1936, is called *Travels in Two Democracies*, where the two parts refer to the United States and the Soviet Union respectively.

Despotism and fear (of responsibility). Wilson's entries about tyranny and fear may be roughly divided into facts and impressions. The writer claims that he did not believe at first when he was told about the habit of Russians to look over their shoulders before talking about

politics (when *mistrust* of others and *fear* conflated). But then he saw such instances with his own eyes and eventually began doing the same (201). When Wilson talked to an American doctor working in Russia about the number of neuroses among Americans and Russians, he found out that the sum total was the same, but instead of the fear to lose money, people in Russia were afraid of “losing their jobs – not of being out of work, but of being transferred or demoted or sent to a prison camp” (269). In the Park of Culture and Rest in Moscow, visitors behaved differently in comparison with Americans: “But these people [...] neither laugh aloud nor sing, they seem not even to talk to one another, and in their faces there is no expression” (216). The writer documents the stages of forging the image of fear by trying to find an explanation of such behaviour. First, he used the information which he had gathered during his stay in Russia: “Are they afraid of being overheard? are they afraid of being arrested for ‘hooliganism’?” Then he proposed a series of plausible suggestions, which manifested his preconceived knowledge of Russian history: “[...] have their hardships sobered them so terribly? – or are they still so numb and dumb from their old subhuman life of serfdom that they have not yet been able to discover how human beings enjoy themselves?” (216). And finally, after staying in Russia longer, he found the real reason in a conversation with a Russian woman, who in a low voice, resorting to the French language, explained that people were afraid: “*C’est que tout le monde a très peur*” (218-19). That fear might have been behind the Russian shyness or the “almost ideal” relations between the police and Muscovites (193, 197). In order to soften the reader’s judgement about the Soviet Union, Wilson makes reference to the known fact that Americans in the 1930s were “afraid to discuss Communism in Los Angeles and San Francisco” (263-64).

Edmund Wilson visited Russia exactly at the moment of negative political changes, when the state began to tighten the grip on its citizens on the pretext of the murder of the Soviet politician Kirov in December 1934:²⁹

The atmosphere of fear and suspicion does really become oppressive. It has evidently become more tense since the Kirov assassination. A foreigner cannot talk to them about politics at all – least of all, about the Kirov affair. If you venture to ask anybody about it, they either refer you to the official statements, which are certainly extremely implausible, or start to explain and then break down, protesting that it is all very difficult for a foreigner to understand. If Americans discuss these matters at a gathering where there are Russians present, the Russians [...] pick up books and begin to read. I came away from the Soviet Union knowing almost as little of its internal politics as I had when I first arrived. (263)

²⁹ The organiser of Kirov’s murder was Stalin (Heller and Nekrich 278).

This extract reveals that the author had made an effort to learn about Russia's politics before he entered the country, and this is the case when secrecy and "policy of suppression" (207) prevented the thinker from being able to draw any adequate conclusions.

As regards brutality, Wilson asserts that the Russians under Stalin "in spite of their efforts to rationalize and humanize their punishments, [...] still carry over from the old regime a good share of plain medieval cruelty [...]" (265). On other occasions he mentions "medieval aspects of the Soviet power" (285) and "antiquated political methods" (266). Such additional nuances contribute to the established stereotype of *oriental despotism*, marked by a considerable degree of cruelty.

Wilson juxtaposes the Russian traits and the tyranny in the country: "[...] it is partly the Russian character which is to blame for the current Terror. The Russians, that is, the traditional Russians, habitually evade responsibility [...]" (264-65). The *fear of responsibility* and *mistrust* were seen by the author as the key components of the organisation of society which led to tyranny. Nevertheless, he claims: "Yet at the same time – it is one of the paradoxes of Russia which make it so hard to explain to people who have not been here – one finds here a kind of freedom that one does not feel in other countries" (216). This statement contributes to the universal truth that every nation is a nation of contrasts and to the stereotype of Russia being a country of paradoxes.

Megalomania. The writer complains in his book that "glorification of Stalin is undoubtedly one of the things in Russia which affects an American most unpleasantly" (241). During a sports parade, which was done on a grand scale, Wilson saw "[p]ortrait after portrait of Stalin" (239), whereas Engels "completely evaporated" and Marx was "beginning to dematerialize," as the author ironically remarks (215). The Russians went so far that it was forbidden to sit when Stalin stood (241), a fact which Wilson compares with the following auto-image: "The whole thing is an apotheosis of Stalin on a scale that makes our poor patient presidents, standing up in the raw March winds, with their silk hats held in their hands, while other people sit comfortably with their hats on their heads, seem the humblest of public servants" (241). However, the observer felt that intelligent Russians were "ashamed of all this," like one person who groaned when he saw on the front page of a newspaper "the inevitable cap and mustache" (245). It should be noted that *megalomania* is associated with Eastern countries and falls under the imagological concept of *orientalism*.

Docility. After staying for some time in Russia, Wilson became disillusioned by certain character traits of the locals which he had admired at the very beginning, like the democratic manners or “the throwing-open of everything” (242). He began to notice “the cold-blooded manipulation of the people by the governing power,” which was only possible because of “the docility and timidity of the Russians” (242). The writer’s auto-image of most of his compatriots as “conformist and credulous” gave way to the new image of “critical and self-reliant” Americans (242). At a particular moment of his journey, in Moscow, Wilson suddenly made a single entry in his diary: “There are moments when the evasiveness, the procrastination, the imprecision and the meekness of the Russians bring out the Iván the Terrible in all of us” (224). This observation coincides with the stereotype of the Russians as a *meek* people. In this case the observer’s judgement evolved over a period of time and was a result of his own experience.

Obscurantism and falsification. Wilson adverts to “a mania for renaming places” (307), which resulted from changing and distorting the facts of Russian history. Russian officials outlawed several historical figures as if they had never existed – Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev to name a few. The writer deplores such misrepresentation: “It is one of the paradoxes of the Soviet Union that the country which most reveres science, which has in many fields proved itself most scrupulous in preserving the human record intact, should be capable of these ostrich-like attempts to conceal its own recent history” (256). It appears that the author saw *obscurantism* as a product of the Soviet System, and there is no indication that he was familiar with similar cases from the pre-revolutionary history of Russia.

Attitude towards women. Edmund Wilson does not touch upon gender questions in terms of equality and rights. He describes, however, a woman he calls L., who worked hard as a technical interpreter for the five-year plan and was often on the verge of a burnout, although she was very well-paid (205-06). Furthermore, the author noticed numerous female workers in the Tractor Factory in Stalingrad (322). But the writer also heard of the opposite cases, when Russian women got married and had children by men they did not care about, “merely in order to get a room to live in,” similar to American women who married for money (269). Wilson mentions, however, that women in the Soviet Union were “certainly much surer of their babies” than poor American ones (220). Once Wilson and other members of his tourist group were taken to a maternity hospital and shown not only newborn babies but also delivering women; a Czecho-Slovak lady was flabbergasted, and the visitors concluded that Russians had “no feeling about anything of that kind” (327-28). The reader may see that women could make careers in the Soviet Union; in terms of female privacy, however, Russians were too collectivist and open.

As Edmund Wilson had not been able to imagine how Russia was really like prior to his journey (166), one can assume that the writer's preconceived notions were not decisive when he forged his images. It is worth noting that, similar to Dreiser, the author had conversations with Russians, Americans and Britons, whose opinions helped him draw his own inferences. Contrary to Dreiser, he considered the Soviet Union "certainly the European country" (165). A profound thinker, Wilson provided deep analyses of the events in Russia, explained historical reasons behind them and found parallels in American society. It is very telling that the traveller's images of Russia were not static; their development and alterations were influenced by the happenings accompanying the author during his journey as well as by his newly acquired knowledge. Although most hetero-images which one can find in Wilson's depictions may be paired with common Western stereotypes of the Russian national character, several traits discovered by the writer were non-typical, such as *non-racism*, *thoroughness*, *indecisiveness* and the *work ethic*. It is possible to presume, therefore, that Wilson resorted to his own experience to a greater extent than to his preconceived ideas or common hetero-stereotypes of Russia circulating in the United States.

4.3.3. John Steinbeck: The Claim of the Absence of Bias

The overall opinion of Steinbeck and Capa about the Russians of the 1940s as a *nice* nation appears to be predictable: "We found, as we had suspected, that the Russian people are people, and, as with other people, that they are very nice" (212). It is not surprising that the writer was pleased when he discovered similarities between the two nations: "Americans and Russians are very much alike. Both peoples love machinery, and both peoples love huge structures" (126). One of the features which the novelist paid attention to was *naivety*: "What Stalin says is true to them, even if it seems to be contrary to natural law" (164). A negative trait of *meanness* can be drawn from an incident in Stalingrad, where, due to an organisational mistake, the flight back to Moscow was cancelled. "Everybody's temper was thin, and the air was full of injustice" on the next day at the airport, reports Steinbeck, adding that "people [...] were mean to each other" and that he and Capa "were just as mean as anyone else" (135). Apparently, the writer did not know that it was common in the Soviet Union that flights were often cancelled, and he experienced just such a moment.

Inefficiency / efficiency. Upon the companions' arrival in Leningrad, their luggage was checked on the plane at the airport. It became clear to the travellers that the customs officer was just curious: "He turned over our shining equipment and fingered it lovingly. [...] He just

seemed to be interested in foreign things. And he also seemed to have almost unlimited time” (12-13). On another occasion, in the restaurant of the Metropole hotel in Moscow, it took the waiters two hours to serve food (16). The reason was a complicated booking system, which required seven book entries from the moment of taking an order to the moment of bringing the food to the table, as the state controlled everything. “And it does no good to become impatient about getting your dinner, because nothing in the world can be done about it. The process is invariable,” the writer adds with irony (17). It is evident that the author acquired the information about bookkeeping from some other sources because no traveller can ever guess what happens ‘behind the scenes.’ These two cases, with the customs officer and the waiters, demonstrate both *inefficiency* and *slowness* at work, and it can be seen that Steinbeck offers only mild descriptions, avoiding strong and negative judgements.

The following episode is comparable to the one depicted by Theodore Dreiser (about water leaking in the bathroom). In their Savoy hotel room in Moscow, Steinbeck and Capa were puzzled by the sanitary equipment: “This bathroom had a peculiarity which was true of all the bathrooms we experienced in the Soviet Union. [...] Whereas all the taps leaked – the toilet, the basin, the bathtub faucets – all the drains were completely watertight” (21). Steinbeck uses direct characterisation when he shares with the reader the opinion of an American correspondent living in Moscow about everyday problems in Russia, for whom “most of the difficulties came from the inefficiency of a bureaucratic system – so many records and so much bookkeeping made it almost impossible to get any repairs done” (192).

A case of *efficiency*, however, can also be illustrated. In the capital Steinbeck and Capa observed preparations for the celebrations of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Moscow, and they saw electricians stringing lights on the Kremlin walls, buildings and bridges: “And this work did not stop in the evening – it went on with floodlights all night, this painting and grooming of the city [...]” (19). The celebrations were supposed to glorify communism, hence the efficiency and fastness of work.

Non-punctuality. During their stay in Moscow, the companions communicated a great deal with American reporters living there, and many facts presented in his book John Steinbeck learnt from those contacts. For instance, his acquaintances recounted about trying to make appointments in the Moscow offices. Here the writer speaks of “the Russian gambit” and explains the rules of the ‘game’: “The man in the government bureau you want to see is not there, is sick, is in hospital, or is away on his vacation. This can go on for years. And if you should shift your attack to another man, he also is out of town, is in hospital, or is away on his

vacation. [...] There is no way to oppose this gambit. There is no defense against it, except to relax” (19). One more interesting thing about the Russian offices, Steinbeck claims, was that they never opened before noon and that officials worked until midnight (20). The travellers were prepared for the worst, but they were fortunate to settle the problem of their visiting status on the following day, getting a hotel room in the Savoy hotel as an outcome. *Non-punctuality* was also related to flights: “There is one thing that you can never tell, and that is what time a plane is going to fly” (46).

Living in the future. Steinbeck asserts in his book: “In Russia it is always the future that is thought of. It is the crops next year, it is the comfort that will come in ten years, it is the clothes that will be made very soon. If ever a people took its energy from hope, it is the Russian people” (59). This characteristic was connected with unsatisfactory living conditions in the post-war period in the Soviet Union, when there was a lack of everything. *Living in the future* may be seen as related to a *predisposition to misery*. Russians sincerely believed in ‘better days,’ and the travellers received numerous invitations from common people: “Come back in a few years and see what we will have accomplished” (108).

Mistrust und suspicion. When Capa wanted to take his first photos in the Soviet Union, he was confronted with mistrust and “the general suspicion toward foreign photographers” (38). Once, when Capa was taking pictures of playing children in Moscow, a policeman appeared and demanded the permits. It took half an hour to clarify the matter, and then the American was able to go on doing his work (38). In the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, which the travellers wished to see, no photographs were allowed, and the writer was puzzled by that restriction: “We do not understand why we were not permitted to photograph this factory, because as we walked through we found that practically all the machinery was made in America, and we were told that the assembly line and the assembly method had been laid out by American engineers and technicians” (122). Here Steinbeck conveys to the reader the absurdity of *mistrust* and *suspicion* towards foreigners in the Soviet Union.

That the guests were closely watched in their hotel in Moscow by the secret police of the MVD³⁰ can be gathered from the following description: “Across the street, on the second floor, there was a man who ran a kind of camera repair shop. He worked long hours on equipment. And we discovered late in the game that while we were photographing him, he was

³⁰ The Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs.

photographing us” (21).³¹ The reader is able to guess at once who that ‘photographer’ was and why he worked so efficiently.

As Steinbeck and his companion visited Russia during the Cold War period, there was tension in the relationship between the two nations, and Russians avoided talking to members of the American embassy. The writer outlines a story he heard in Moscow:

One member of our Embassy [...] said that he had been speaking with a State Department man who had come to Moscow and who complained that he was not able to get in touch with Russian people. The Embassy man said, “Well, let’s suppose that in Washington you heard that one of your secretaries was going out with somebody from the Russian Embassy. What would you do?” And the State Department man replied, “Why, I’d fire her, immediately.” And the Embassy man said, “Well, you see, maybe the Russians feel the same way.” (29)

It was the beginning of the Second Red Scare in the United States, and Steinbeck’s record, explained in simple words for common American readers, reflects that atmosphere. The author uses reciprocity to characterise both Americans and Russians and to show that people of both nations reacted similarly.

Once at the American Club in Moscow, Steinbeck met Russian women married to Americans and Britons,³² who were not allowed to leave the Soviet Union and join their husbands. About fifty of those women, being under suspicion, could no longer find jobs in Russia, and they were employed by the foreign embassies (35-36). “It is just one more of the international stupidities which seem to be on the increase in the world,” the writer concludes (36).

In regard to the question if *mistrust* was a permanent Russian feature or the consequence of the Soviet regime, it is worth taking into account the travellers’ conversation with an American correspondent. Once Steinbeck and Capa, not long before their departure, were invited to his Moscow flat. The host took a book and read to his guests:

The Russians of Moscow are highly suspicious of foreigners, who are watched constantly by the secret police. Every move is noticed and sent into central headquarters. A guard is placed on all foreigners. Furthermore, Russians do not receive foreigners in their houses, and they seem to be afraid even to talk to them very much. [...] Foreigners are permitted to travel in Russia only after great difficulty, and during their travels they are very closely watched. Because of this general coldness and suspicion, foreigners visiting in Moscow are forced to associate with each other exclusively. (193)

To this Steinbeck remarked: “You cannot get it past the censor.” And the answer which followed is intended to surprise the reader: it was a quotation from ‘Voyages in Muscovy, Tartary and

³¹ Cf. Shillinglaw xxiii.

³² Marriages between Soviet citizens and foreigners were forbidden from 1947 to 1953.

Persia,' written in 1634 by Adam Olearius, a German traveller. The companions heard one more extract from another book:

Diplomatically the Russians are very difficult to get along with. If one submits a plan, they counter it with another plan. Their diplomats are not trained in the large world, but are mostly people who have never left Russia. Indeed, a Russian who has lived in France is considered a Frenchman; one who has lived in Germany is considered a German, and these are not trusted at home. (193)

The reader by this time is ready for one more revelation, and so it is: this is a passage from 1661, written by Augustin, Baron de Mayerburg, a French diplomat. The American correspondent continued to read: "The Russians cannot go diplomatically in a straight line. They never get to the point, they argue in circles. Words are picked up, and bandied, and tossed, until in the end a general confusion is the result of any conference" (193). The last quotation dates back to the seventeenth century, and it refers to *indecisiveness*. The host of Steinbeck and Capa concluded: "I don't think Russia has changed very much in some respects. Ambassadors and diplomats from foreign countries have been going crazy here for six hundred years" (193). Apparently, the writer alludes to these old sources, which are supposed to characterise the Russians of the 1940s, not only in order to create an interesting piece of writing to entertain the reader but also to avoid direct judgements and disguise his own opinion.

Tyranny and fear (of responsibility). In Moscow Steinbeck was struck to see tired, serious and non-laughing citizens: "People walk, or rather scuttle along, with their heads down, and they don't smile" (42).³³ The writer's possible explanation, "[p]erhaps it is that they work too hard," (42) makes the reader wonder if he knew about Stalin's purges and, consequently, about the atmosphere of fear in society. It is telling that outside Moscow, in the country and on the steppes, the travellers heard laughter (43). That difference within the same country can be related to the polarity *centre / periphery*, where the latter is positively valorised.

Similar to Dreiser, Steinbeck became aware of the *fear of responsibility* in the Soviet Union. The continuation of the above-mentioned scene with Capa and the policeman was the following:

He read [the permits] but was not quite willing to go out on a limb for a little piece of paper. And so he took us to the nearest call box, where he called some kind of headquarters. Then we waited. We waited for half an hour until a car drove up, full of plainclothes men. They read the letter of permission. Each one read it, and then they had a little conference; we don't know what they said, but then they telephoned again, and

³³ Cf.: "Dreariness became a common trope during Stalin's reign, when Moscow was known as the city where no one smiled" (Jacobson 58).

finally they all came back smiling, and they all touched their caps, and we were free to photograph in that neighborhood. (38-39)

This description reminds one of Dreiser's experience of seeing eight men in his hotel bathroom. The following explanation is then provided by Steinbeck: "This practice seems to be general in the Soviet Union. [...] No one is willing to go out on any limb. No one is willing to say yes or no to a proposition. He must always go to someone higher. In this way he protects himself from criticism" (39). Fear of responsibility pertains to *tyranny* and a possible punishment in case of an error. Punishments were very severe in the post-war Russia, as in this story which the travellers heard: "While we were in Moscow two women were sentenced to ten years of hard labor for stealing three pounds of potatoes from a private garden" (33).

Obscurantism. In the Lenin Museum in Moscow, Steinbeck and Capa saw not a single photo or evidence of Trotsky, as if he had never existed. The author asserts: "This is a kind of historical approach which we cannot understand. This is history as we wish it might have been rather than as it was" (34). The novelist's observation coincides with that of Edmund Wilson, who also touched upon this feature of the Soviet regime.

Megalomania. Steinbeck reports: "At public celebrations the pictures of Stalin outgrow every bound of reason. They may be eight stories high and fifty feet wide. Every public building carries monster portraits of him" (49). The travellers considered such a cult "frightening" and "distasteful," and it was something that they, being Americans, were "incapable of understanding emotionally" (49). That Stalin objected to that worship, as claimed by some locals, did not sound plausible to Steinbeck: "But it seemed to us that Stalin's dislike for anything else causes its removal, but this is on the increase" (49). Furthermore, the companions were informed that Russians needed an icon or someone who would substitute for the tsar and that they loved the leader. Thus, Steinbeck's depiction of *megalomania* in the USSR correlates with Edmund Wilson's thoughts about Stalin and autocracy.

Competitiveness. Steinbeck is the only one of the five authors who focused on the characteristics of the Russian youth as a separate group. From their tourist guide Svetlana, who studied American history at university, the companions learnt about *competitiveness* among the younger generation. Young people in the Soviet Union were often reminded of "much work to be done," which resulted in emulation among them (32). "One takes examinations for schools, and [...] the highest grade gets the scholarship. There are always more applicants for the universities than there are places, so that the competition is very keen. And everywhere the honors and the emoluments go to the most effective person," the novelist explains (32). In the

Soviet system people could not inherit any money or property; one's success was based on "one's own intelligence and one's own effort," and that was the reason why young people had to work so hard (32).

Morality and gender. Timelessness. Morality was characteristic of the Russian youth in 1947. Again, Svetlana, who Steinbeck and Capa humorously called 'Sweet Lana,' was the one from whom they received that information:

It was through her that we learned of the wave of morality that is upon the young people of the Soviet Union. It is somewhat like the morality of an American small town a generation ago. Nice girls are not seen in night clubs. Nice girls do not smoke. Nice girls do not use lipstick or nail polish. Nice girls dress very conservatively. Nice girls do not drink. And nice girls are very circumspect with their boy friends. Sweet Lana was so moral that she made us, who had never thought of ourselves as being very immoral, feel rather bawdy. [...] And this attitude was not limited to Sweet Lana. It was true of most of the young people we met. And it was interesting to us that the attitudes of our most conservative and old-fashioned groups are found in the attitudes of the young people of the Soviet Union. (31)

In this extract *morality* is highlighted mostly in regard to young women. Furthermore, *timelessness* is touched upon, a feature of the periphery; in this case the whole country was seen by the writer as old-fashioned in relation to the West. The reader finds out more about the travellers' personalities when the author mentions that they both liked "a well-turned ankle, or even a few inches above the ankle, clad, if possible, in a well-fitting nylon stocking," also "nice hair-dos, and perfume, and beautiful clothes, and nail polish, and lipstick, and eye-shadow, and false eyelashes" (175), which were looked upon as "products of decadent capitalism" in the Soviet Union (31). Steinbeck complained, therefore, that Russian women were too moral and not feminine enough, whereas the companions were "fairly normal specimens" and had "a definite hunger to be tricked and fooled" by women who used make-up and beautiful clothes (175). It is notable that Steinbeck considered himself and Capa 'normal.' Surprisingly, liberation of women is not illuminated by the novelist; he only points out, for instance, that in the Stalingrad Tractor Factory women did much of the work (122).

John Steinbeck did not reveal as much about the Russian national character as Dreiser and Wilson. It is known that he intended to report without bias, and he indeed avoided direct judgements and characterisations wherever possible, resorting to humour instead. One realises that many of Steinbeck's episodes from which the reader can elicit generalisations about the character traits were based neither on his preconceived notions nor on his first-hand experiences, but on stories and explanations which he heard throughout his journey from other

people, both Americans and Russians. The pragmatic purpose of *A Russian Journal* seems to have been to entertain the reader and to have a commercial success, and that might be the reason why the book contains many irrelevant details not connected with Russia.

4.3.4. William O. Douglas: Through a Western Lawyer's Eyes

Straightaway in the foreword to *Russian Journey*, William O. Douglas informs the reader about his feelings towards Russians: "I left Russia with high respect for most of the people I had met. And for many of them I developed a genuine affection" (9). Sometimes the writer judged the locals according to their attitude to the United States: "In every way the Soviet people were generous and spontaneous in the expression of friendliness to America" (28). Although "friendly and hospitable," they were "complicated personalities" when one tried to talk to them about politics or international relations (37). "After all, the people of Russia have all the idiosyncrasies of other races," the author concluded (37).

To the Russians of the 1950s Douglas ascribes "loyalties, pride, history, racial and national consciousness, a feeling of achievement, a competitive urge" (38). The writer portrays Soviet citizens as people who "move and act with enthusiasm" and "have smiles and a spring in their walk" (39). Contrary to Dreiser and Wilson, who depicted Russians as slow, Douglas saw them "always going somewhere in a hurry" (39). This difference in opinions might be explained by the fact that the latter visited Russia two years after Stalin's death, when there was no fear in society. From the author's point of view, one would have needed to live in Russia all his or her life to understand "a composite of the Russian character" (38). By and large, the traveller describes the Russian people as "a great force moving incessantly and dynamically toward some unknown destiny" (41). He even compares Russians with Americans: "There is unity, determination, and eagerness in the drive that I have found nowhere else except in America" (41).

Surprisingly, being a lawyer, Douglas devotes several pages of his book to Russian peasants and their characters: "A farmer is healthy in spirit and body wherever one finds him. Living close to the soil produces a humble soul. [...] Man can produce new ideologies; but nature has her own scheme that man can only discover, not change" (85). Here the observer points to universal features of farmers irrespective of their nationality. Throughout his travelogue the writer stresses that most Russian citizens were not genuine believers in communism, which was also true of the people of the soil. The Soviet peasant was *hearty* (95), often *naïve*, but he or she demonstrated such features as "genuineness and straightforwardness" (85). The author

underscores: “He is not a cowed, groveling person. He is robust and friendly. He has roots deep in Russia’s soil. He is, therefore, devoted to his nation. He is not greatly concerned with dogma and ideology” (85-86).

Spirituality. Douglas is the only one of the five writers who talks about religion as *spirituality*. An ardent believer, he once heard a choir in a church and felt that “no concentration camp, no firing squad, no secret police could ever subdue the religious spirit of the Russian people” (206).

Hospitality. The author mentions *hospitality* as a distinctive Russian feature all through his book. Sometimes it was so absurd that the writer was barred from visiting places he wished to see only because there was no accommodation for him there: “The Russian, as a host, is first and always a considerate one. The Russian also has great pride, as great as our own. Neither we nor the Russians like to route a foreign visitor to places of squalor” (115). It can be seen that Douglas inclined to be on the positive side in his interpretations of this or that inconvenience during his journey. Here he even resorted to his auto-image of Americans as good hosts. One may conclude that the writer made his judgements mostly by dint of his personal experiences.

Inefficiency / efficiency, backwardness / advance. Douglas, referring to some statistical information, reports that farms in the Soviet Union were overstaffed with a “needlessly extravagant labor force” (89) and that Russia had “ten times the number of workers per acre” (88) in comparison with the US, although work was mostly mechanised. The explanation which the writer provides is that the farmer was “hedged in by politics and red tape” and that he had not “known the thrill of private initiative and freedom” since collectivisation (86). Nevertheless, the observer inferred that Russian peasants would have felt “very much at home” if they had worked on American farms (86).

As far as industry is concerned, Douglas debunks American stereotypes and rumours about Soviet workers being ‘termites’ who did not see any daylight:

Soviet industrial labor is not made up of cowed and groveling people. The thousands of faces I saw in Russia’s factories did not tell any story of suffering and oppression. Russian labor is, if anything, on a crusade to get a job done. In the main, it’s a solid core of men and women, working with enthusiasm and drive. The enthusiasm may reflect no love of communism. It may mean no more than love of a job, of a community, of a nation. What loyalties inspire it is difficult for a stranger to divine. But there was enthusiasm in most every factory or plant I visited. (127)

The author also saw “dark and dingy” factories, with “floors greasy, the machines unguarded,” and with such “hazards to labor” which were unthinkable for Americans; however, there were

also “spic and span” plants (121). It was surprising for the writer that Soviet industry managed to function at all: “Somehow the cumbersome wheels turn. In theory the machine should bog hopelessly down” (124). The fact that the American refuted the stereotype of oppressed workers is proof that he regarded familiar prejudices critically while travelling.

Douglas touches upon Russian *backwardness* when he describes Soviet housing. Although there were areas where Russia was “abreast of America,” by and large living conditions corresponded to those which American people had “in 1890, in 1910, or in 1930” (118). Backwardness also manifested itself in connection with medical equipment and hospitals, where there were no private rooms for patients (132).

As for science, Douglas thought that the Russians in 1955 had all the prerequisites for a breakthrough: “I saw enough to believe that where Russian science lags behind us today it will be abreast of us in a decade or so. I left Russia believing that there is no segment of science where Russians are not working like beavers, trying to catch up” (121). The Soviet success in space exploration several years after the writer’s trip can be seen as a confirmation of that prediction. Also, according to the author, in some areas Russia was “further advanced” than America, and there was “one doctor for 666 people in Russia; in America, one doctor for 790,” the infant mortality rate being approximately the same (132). Apparently, Douglas referred to his own experience to draw inferences about efficiency, inefficiency, backwardness and advance, but he used statistical sources.

Competitiveness. A feature which is connected with efficiency is that of *competitiveness*. Douglas states that Russians were “highly competitive” not only in sports but also at the working place: “The five-year plan suits the Russian character. It suits the competitive urge and helps create a sense of a national effort. I sensed it in every factory I visited” (39). It is interesting to compare this quotation with Edmund Wilson’s opinion that five-year plans had been introduced to give Russians a sense of time (355). As mentioned above, Douglas tended to put things in a positive light and chose more favourable interpretations. The writer explains in detail how the five-year plan worked: there were quotas per year, month or day. Those workers who exceeded them were rewarded with bonuses, and their photos were displayed on noticeboards. But that scheme did not always work smoothly; sometimes it broke down “due to mismanagement or inefficiency” (39).

Mistrust. Douglas knew about parabolic microphones and facts of following foreigners in Russia (135). Once the writer caught an unexpected male visitor red-handed in his hotel room,

and later, when he recounted that incident to his American friend, he was told that that man might have been a secret police agent (135). But the author claims that the police were always nice, courteous and helpful (135).

The traveller was aware of mistrust in the rural areas. Every farm was controlled by a special committee and by a Communist Party cell. “While the Communists on the farm spy on the farm officials, other agencies [...] spy on the Communist officials,” Douglas asserts, so that in end “everyone is spying on everyone else” (87-88). It is not clear for the reader which source the author used to get such an insight, but the explanation in the foreword might provide an answer: at the beginning of his journey, the writer had met an American, William V. Lambert, who had given him “a clear understanding of Russian agriculture” (7).

Obscurantism and falsification. Much information about Russia was kept secret, an example being the number of convict labourers; what was known is that the conditions of those people had considerably improved since Stalin’s death (125). The author was not allowed to visit every city he wanted (125), the reason being secrecy and shame. He also complained that production figures were impossible to find because everything was calculated in percentages and the base numbers were not available (124). Furthermore, Soviet officials evaded some questions the answers to which the lawyer wished to know (9).

Douglas highlights blunt *falsification* in some history textbooks printed in the Soviet Union: “They teach that Russia had the Nazis beaten before we landed in Normandy and that it was Soviet Russia that caused Japan to acknowledge defeat” (189). Such details about propaganda lies the writer probably acquired with the help of his American companion and interpreter Frederick W. Flott (8). The author was also indignant at false stories which he heard in Russia: “They go further and spread tales about the United States. They say for example that our students are afraid that they will be charged with ‘subversion’ merely for knowing how to speak Russian” (190).

Similar to the previous writers, Douglas asserts that Russian officials tried to distort their own history: “It is Lenin who is being quoted these days. Stalin is being quietly forgotten. I discovered that even the literature prepared for kindergarten children is now being rewritten to exclude Stalin and to extol only Lenin” (62, cf. 190). This description reminds one of Wilson’s and Steinbeck’s reports of the elimination of Trotsky from Soviet history.

Tyranny, fear and ‘freedom’ of expression. Being Supreme Court Justice, Douglas was interested in Russian laws, also in those which restricted people’s freedom. “In 1940 workers were ‘frozen,’ not being allowed to leave their employment without permission of the manager,” he states (128).³⁴ And though that law was still in effect in 1955, Russians resisted to obey: “There seems to be a high degree of mobility of labor – too great, according to the officials [...]” (128). It is worth mentioning that the writer talked to many Soviet public servants, who provided only that information which was allowed to be shared. Another example of enforcement may be illustrated by the story Douglas heard in Moscow. For a new farm in virgin lands in Siberia, sixty people were needed, but only thirty volunteered to go; other thirty were assigned without their consent (95).

The writer claims that he did not observe any fear in society during his visit, while under Stalin people had not been able to “smile at an American without fear of retaliation” (29). Nevertheless, his conclusion was not optimistic: “Fear of the government, fear of the police, fear of the invader, fear of the foreigner have left their impact over the ages” (39). Moreover, the Russian mentality held traces of “indoctrination, education, propaganda, political organization, regimentation” of the previous forty years (178). Although Russia in 1955 was not the same as it had been during Stalin’s rule, it was “if anything, more Russian” (62).

Douglas underlines that there was no freedom of expression in the Soviet Union. Russians, however, were of the opposite opinion, and freedom of speech for them had to be “within the discipline of the Communist party” (181). And indeed, one could find self-criticism in Russian newspapers and magazines about “poor housing, inadequately trained labor, wasteful industry, lagging agriculture, antiquated mining methods, miscarriages of justice, inefficient courts, and even ‘feather-bedding’ of labor” (182). The traveller must have resorted to the services of his interpreters in order to find out what information the Soviet print media contained.

Autocracy. At the time when Douglas visited Russia, it was governed “not by one man, but by a committee” (229). Nevertheless, Douglas refers to Russian history and even draws parallels with the US:

In America, we are familiar with the sentiment that if only Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, or whoever the President is, really knew what was going on, he would take steps to remedy the evil. In Russia there is also a feeling that somewhere in Moscow a just ruler sits, an attitude that extended even to Stalin. Moreover, in Russia it has long

³⁴ Also Soviet farmers were actually state serfs; they did not have identification documents (internal passports) and the right to move freely until 1974.

been customary to look to authority for leadership. The czar was always the Little Father. The Little Father is now the top man in the dictatorship. None in recent history symbolizes total power better than Lenin and Stalin. (61)

Similar to Wilson, Douglas confirmed the 'Little Father' stereotype, only in an unusual way, by touching upon American people's attitudes to their presidents as examples.

Endurance. The lawyer does not concentrate on the stereotypes of *endurance* or *misery* the way Dreiser and Wilson did, yet he alludes to them in his book: "The Russian people had slaved and sweated for decades without getting many of the good things of life" (28). In the last chapter, where the overall Russian strategy is highlighted, the author expresses his opinion about the living conditions of the Soviet people: "They have pulled in their belts before; and they can do it again. But they want relief from austerity" (229).

Generalisations about tyranny, autocracy and endurance were not based entirely on Douglas's personal experiences. The author had certainly been familiar with Russian history and particular facts about the Soviet Union prior to his journey.

Attitude towards women. Douglas reports that women had the same rights as men in the USSR. In some areas the Soviets had a definite advantage at first glance: "In Russia 60 per cent of the doctors are women; in America, 6 per cent" (132). What Douglas does not point to is that salaries of doctors in the Soviet Union were not very high despite the responsibility associated with that career. Equality in Russia was understood literally:

Soviet industry treats women on the equality of men. They are treated so equally that the women often do pick-and-shovel work. I saw women digging ditches, loading freight cars with rocks, shoveling dirt at the hydroelectric dam on the Ob River, laying concrete, using welding torches, pouring molten metal, operating overhead cranes in Siberian factories, [...] unloading baggage and express, serving as switchmen, flagmen, and porters on trains [...]. Women have equality of pay and equality of industrial opportunity. [...] Even on the mile-long bridge that was being built across the Ob River at Novosibirsk, a third of the labor force were women. (129)

Whether Russian women felt really liberated when they did such heavy physical work may be a controversial question.

Contrary to Dreiser, Wilson and Steinbeck, William O. Douglas visited Russia after Stalin's era, during a comparatively liberal phase of Soviet history, 'the thaw' under Nikita Khrushchev. The lawyer was an intellectual who was able to analyse facts and draw his own unbiased conclusions. It is plausible to assume that his judgements were neither entirely based on his preconceived notions nor on his first-hand experiences and that he was partially influenced by

opinions of other Russian and American people about Soviet realities. For instance, in the foreword Douglas mentions Professor Harold J. Berman of Harvard, who he met in Moscow at the end of his journey and who helped him “put together the strange pieces of the Russian jigsaw puzzle” (8). It can be presumed that Douglas abandoned and refuted some prejudices he had been aware of. His ‘verdicts’ were not harsh, and he did not attack foreign traditions and cultural specificities. It is worth remarking that Douglas had travelled to Asia before he visited the Soviet Union; thus, he had a broader cultural background for his comparisons than most American travellers. “Russia is to be compared not with America but with Asia,” Douglas asserted (131-32), and this viewpoint differed dramatically from that of Dreiser’s.

4.3.5. Gaylord P. Harnwell: Through an Educator’s Eyes

Gaylord P. Harnwell’s sojourn in 1958 was filled not only with visits to universities and cultural sites but also with talks to high-ranking officials and educators. One can note that generalisations about the Russian national character do not constitute the core of his writing. It is also worth keeping in mind that Harnwell’s trip was not supposed to include meetings with Russian workers or farmers; the author had contacts only with intellectuals, and he was able to observe ordinary Russian from a distance.

Most delineations of people’s features in his *Russian Diary* do not refer to the whole nation. In the Ministry of Higher Education, Harnwell met deputy ministers who were “most cordial and also most elastic in their efforts” to organise a pleasant stay for the author and other members of the American delegation (23). In Moscow everybody seemed to be “kind and anxious” towards the foreign guests (34-35). In general, the educator portrays most people he encountered in Russia as *pleasing*.

Inefficiency / efficiency. An allusion to Soviet *inefficiency* can be traced in Harnwell’s observation of “more than the usual amount of delay and confusion” (68) before his departure from Leningrad for Moscow. In the Kremlin museum there was some disorganisation, as the guide who was assigned to the international group spoke only Russian. At the same time, the writer describes the Moscow metro as *efficient*: “The trains are clean, the escalators good and rapid, and the whole system has an air of businesslike efficiency” (30). From Harnwell’s point of view, such a state of things was an exception, and here he demonstrates his preconceived notions: “It was most un-Russian in this regard. If it had not been for the inevitable confusion at the beginning and the end, our venture would have been an unalloyed good mark for the Soviets” (30). The author’s overall opinion may appear surprising to the reader: “Although the

Soviet system reduces the freedom of enterprise, it contributes to efficiency of operation, and what paper work is made by the system is also to some extent obviated by the system” (124). However, it should be noted that the writer’s observations on inefficiency were rather those of a tourist.

Beneficent tyranny. The political system in the Soviet Union Harnwell calls a *tyranny* of a special kind: “The people appear to regard the Communist Party as beneficent tyranny; there is no one to question the tyranny and few the beneficent aspect. There is, however, no built-in device for correcting abuses when they arise, and the history of human nature is that abuses always arise” (124). The traveller drew his inferences after seeing how Moscow supported cultural traditions of Kazakhstan, Georgia and Uzbekistan. Probably, the system described by the author correlates with the stereotype of *enlightened despotism*.

Attitude to women. As far as the gender question is concerned, Harnwell states: “It is particularly noticeable that men and women participate almost equally in every kind of occupation, be it hard or easy, heavy or light” (69). His opinion is similar to that of William O. Douglas, but it is not possible to ascertain what the educator thought about women’s rights in the Soviet Union.

Ostentation. An unusual episode occurred when Harnwell and other members of the delegation were to depart from the airport in Moscow to Stockholm at the end of the journey. Their flight was an hour and a half delayed because Khrushchev was returning from his trip to Berlin: “Sure enough, at about half past six a large jet landed and rolled up to the airport ramp, right in front of our windows, and out popped the prime minister with a large entourage, and they were all whisked away in the long black cavalcade of cars [...]” (54). This incident demonstrates *ostentation* of the Soviet elite and their usual way of not caring about other people’s plans. The author, however, was not in the slightest irritated by that delay: “It was quite an occasion, and I’m sorry that we didn’t have a chance to speak to him, though I’m glad to have had at least a view of him from a few hundred feet away” (122).

It may be seen that even short diaries, the primary purpose of which is to document the traveller’s experience in a foreign country in the professional field, provide some information about the local national character. As Harnwell describes, during the final dinner given by the Minister of Higher Education of the Soviet Union, the US ambassador stressed that the oldsters among the American delegation were “so conditioned by experience and prejudices as to be almost irredeemable” (123); in this context one may assume that the educator was also not free

from prejudices. Nevertheless, in regard to the question of the proportion between preconceived notions and autoptic experiences, the conclusion can be drawn that the writer did not rely much on the known and the familiar. The author depicted what he really saw, and there were not many instances when he had a reason to complain because his journey was organised on the highest level possible. Nevertheless, a certain degree of ethnocentricity appears to be discernible in Harnwell's book: when he noticed that the material well-being in Moscow and Leningrad was higher than in other parts of Russia, he explained that phenomenon by the fact that both cities are "located in an area long touched by western civilization" (124).

4.4. Material Aspects: Images of Everyday Life

The analysed texts reveal those sides of everyday Soviet life which the writers focused on during their journeys. Three distinct facets fall under 'material characteristics' – those of people's looks, housing and food.

4.4.1. Appearance and Clothing

The physical features of the Russians as an ethnic group are occasionally highlighted in the works under discussion. Theodore Dreiser wrote upon arriving in Russia: "*And the people! This mixture of Europeans & Asiatics!*" (DRD 59). The writer refers to this peculiarity of the Russians as a mixed nation throughout both his diary and book. In a restaurant in Moscow, the author scrutinised the customers, paying attention to the characteristics which were typically Russian from his point of view: "The tall brows; the elongated and waxy Russian faces; the limp and faded and flossy character of some of the beards; the reflective and too often sunken, and not infrequently blazing or burning eyes; the long, thin, and so often graceful, hands" (DLR 215). Apart from facial and bodily features, the writer noted people's aesthetic properties: "Studying thousands [sic] of Russians so, I conclude that as yet the women – and many of the men, are physically too heavy & and stodgy to be attractive. [...] But here & there one sees a boy or a girl – or a man or woman, who is attractive and semi-smart" (DRD 70). That heaviness was also noticed by Gaylord P. Harnwell in 1958, when he encountered "lots of stocky Russians" at the Hotel Ukraine in Moscow (21).

Several descriptions of the authors are narrowed down to selected groups of Russian people or inhabitants of particular cities or areas. In Moscow Dreiser met the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky and his muse Lilichka Brik; inspired by the latter, he attributed the features of that woman to the whole Russian intelligentsia: "[...] that tired look about skin and eyes which is rather

common among Russian intellectuals” (*DLR* 201). Edmund Wilson observed how pale Muscovites were in 1935, but he concluded that it was the case with all inhabitants of big cities, irrespective of the country (215). People in Stalingrad, as the author considered, were “another race from the short formless Muscovites,” and he explained that fact by malnutrition in Moscow during the Revolution and the civil war (322). In Gorky the writer pointed to “people better-looking than in Moscow, good color, without the city blight” (306). Upon reaching Rostov-on-Don, Wilson commented: “The further south you go, the pleasanter the cities seem. The people are taller, easier, freer, better-looking, better-dressed; and they seem to be enjoying themselves as they never do in Moscow” (326). It is to be noted that such findings allude to the *centre / periphery* opposition; Russian people living in the provinces were thought by the writer to be healthier and happier than the residents of Moscow and Leningrad.

Apart from generalisations, the texts exhibit separate portrayals of recurrent appearances of individuals. Dreiser mentions a type he saw in a restaurant – “one of those blond, German-looking waiters so numerous in Russia” (*DLR* 234). Wilson singled out an unusual kind of Russian eyes, which he describes using notable metaphors of precious stones and carnivores: “There is a green-eyed kind that wouldn’t be gentle. I saw a girl in a street car whose green eyes gave a hard jewel-point to her prettiness and plumpness: a kind of beauty I had never seen; and then, in another street car, a boy with the same kind of eyes, very thin, at once wolfish and fascinating [...]” (219).

One striking physical trait of some Russians, discovered by the American writers, concerned their teeth. With the help of a simile, John Steinbeck depicts a strong girl stevedore he saw on a plane in 1947, who had “shining stainless steel teeth, which make the human mouth look so much like a piece of machinery” (13). Aboard the same plane, a customs officer was a “courteous little man with a glittering smile of steel teeth” (12). This physical feature did not escape William O. Douglas’s attention: while on board the boat ‘Pioneer’ in 1955, which sailed from Iran to Baku (18), the writer was served his meals by “a gentle, middle-aged lady who had a mouth full of steel-filled teeth” (22). These examples demonstrate the level of dental care in the Soviet Union in the 1940s-1950s.

The writers could not help noticing how Russian people were dressed. It is not surprising, considering that clothes reveal much information about those wearing them, including social status and taste. Theodore Dreiser was of the opinion that clothes in Russia in 1927 were “*too somber*” (*DRD* 70), “always poor and inadequate,” “wretched,” and looking like “patches and

rags and makeshift” (*DLR* 216, 133, 226). The quintessence of his numerous references to the Muscovites’ apparel manifests itself in the ratio of “thousands who are comparatively poorly dressed to ten – at most a hundred – who are well-dressed” (26).

It is of great interest to compare the lines in Dreiser’s diary, which he wrote on the spot during his journey in Russia, with the sentences in his book. In his manuscript, close to the end of the journey, the novelist recorded: “*By the way, I have decided that the Russians are more like bears than anything else – they just about hibernate in the winter, and they look so big and shaggy in their sheepskins and padded clothes, or like walking mattresses, I think sometimes*” (*DRD* 234). The sentence in the book, based on this note from the diary and containing the same simile, runs: “And then thousands of men and women in padded furs and skirts, looking more like walking mattresses than anything else I can think of” (*DLR* 23). This is one of the cases when the original text of the manuscript can easily be traced. Dreiser added some information about headgear to the same paragraph of his book by mentioning, not without irony, “fur hats or caps – shakos or woollen drums or muffs – only always on the head” (23).

Edmund Wilson conveys to the reader one of his first impressions of Leningrad of 1935: “All the people on all the streets seem to be dressed about the same, and they are all very badly dressed – or rather, they are dressed drably” (166). In the Red Flag Textile Factory in Leningrad, which the author visited as a tourist, the women-workers were making “the simple and rather inelegant clothes” (176), which he had already seen in the streets. But there was hope that Russians would improve their style, as that factory began to produce “colored shirts, bright dresses and fancy ties” (177). The inhabitants of the capital, as the writer noted, did not dress better: “Moscow clothes at the present time are so much the same and so dreary [...]” (261).

On several occasions Wilson provides descriptions of clothing in certain places. An ardent theatregoer, he watched the audience during intermissions. After seeing one of the plays in Leningrad, the author summarised: “The people in the theater were better dressed than the people one saw in the streets, but they were not, as they are at the Metropolitan, a small group of the privileged and rich: they were the same people in better clothes [...]” (167). This observation is accurate, as it is a Russian tradition to wear nicer and better clothes in the theatre, and Wilson compared this custom with American ways. In Moscow, in the eating pavilion of the Park of Culture and Rest, he portrayed “the women [...] in sneakers, the men without neckties” (215), and from this observation the reader can draw inferences that American men of the 1930s wore ties in amusement parks. During his cultural trip to Troitsko-Sergéevsky

Monastery in Zagorsk,³⁵ the traveller encountered local village children who, upon seeing his city clothes, shouted: “Moscow! Moscow!” (252). While watching a *Physkultúr* (Sports) Parade in the capital, the author noticed thousands of men, women and children wearing white athletic clothes and costumes, simple and “designed with excellent taste” (238). One interesting comment Wilson made in the Tractor Factory in Stalingrad: “The woman workers are the only women I have ever seen look [sic] attractive in working clothes: they wore overalls and sleeveless jerseys, many of them pink and red, which stretched tight over their superb breast” (322). Probably, this style of clothes would have suited any woman-worker irrespective of her nationality, but it is in Russia where the observer came to such a conclusion. All these illustrations show that the writer was very attentive to people’s clothes while he was travelling in Russia.

It is noticeable that Wilson repeatedly criticised Russian women for their dull clothes, “invariably flat” shoes and an overall lack of taste (166-67, 205). Aboard the steamer on the way to Leningrad, the writer saw that kitchen girls and stewardesses “insisted on doing their work in high heels, which were badly worn down and pushed out” (154). And when the author finally met a woman named L., an interpreter, he ranked her as “the only really attractive woman” who knew “how to dress” (205). At first glance the author even thought that her garments were from abroad, but in that he was mistaken.

John Steinbeck depicts the post-war Russia of 1947, when many people did not have even the most necessary things, including clothes. The following portrayal may be seen as a snapshot taken in Moscow at the time: “The women used very little or no make-up, and the clothing was adequate but not very pretty. Great numbers of the men in the streets were in uniform, but they were not in the Army. They were demobilized, and their uniforms were the only clothes they had. The uniforms were without insignia and without shoulder boards” (19). In Stalingrad, where one of the most tragic battles in the history of Russia had taken place in 1942, Steinbeck watched people living in dreadful conditions, sometimes in debris. One episode struck Steinbeck enormously:

[...] from behind a slightly larger pile of rubble would suddenly appear a girl, going to work in the morning, putting the last little touches to her hair with a comb. She would be dressed neatly, in clean clothes, and she would swing out through the weeds on her

³⁵ Now it is a UNESCO world heritage site, the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, which consists of several orthodox monasteries and churches. It is situated in the town of Sergiyev Posad, not far from Moscow.

way to work. How they could do it we have no idea. How they could live underground and still keep clean, and proud, and feminine. (115)

Contrary to Dreiser and Wilson, John Steinbeck praised Russian women for their ability to look neat under unfavourable circumstances. In one case the writer admired the attire of his interpreter Svetlana: "Sweet Lana was very trim and neat, and her clothes were well made, simple and well fitting. And when occasionally she had to conduct us to a theater or to a ballet, she wore a little veil on her hat" (31-32). Similar to Wilson, the novelist singled out one well-dressed woman among hundreds, who deserved to be mentioned in his travelogue because of her taste.

Once Steinbeck and Capa examined the types of clothes people were able to buy in a department store; they saw "shoes and stockings, suits and dresses," and they inferred that "[t]he quality was not very good, and the tailoring was not very good either" (41). Close to the end of their journey, in autumn, shops were selling "the thick cotton quilted clothing and the felt boots that people wear in winter" (199). When it got colder, the novelist noticed people in the streets wearing "caps with earflaps" and "fur-lined collars on their thick coats" (199). The writer was very positive about the changes taking place in Russia, and on the last pages of his book he remarks: "It seemed to us that clothing improved even in the two months we had been there [...]" (207).

William O. Douglas only occasionally mentions clothes in his book. He thought that Russians dressed poorly in 1955 (158) and that they wanted "more and better clothes and shoes" (228). Once in Petropavlovsk³⁶ the writer wished to take the picture of the women who stood in a queue to buy milk from a wagon: "The waiting women were dressed in short skirts and quilted coats: shawls covered their heads; and their knee-high boots were thick with mud from Petropavlovsk's unpaved streets. They were the colorful pictures I had been seeking" (30). But the women were obviously not very happy about being taken pictures of. One woman began to shout at the writer, and other women joined her. The traveller did not understand a word, but he presumed that the women were angry because they were ashamed of their poor clothes and looks. The author was able to defuse the situation by picking up a sentence from his small phrase book and letting the angry woman read it aloud in Russian: "May I have this dance with you?" The women burst into laughter, and the American managed to escape (30). One more scene, which is related to clothes in a Russian court, shows that Douglas paid attention to how

³⁶ Petropavlovsk is in North Kazakhstan, about 40 km from the Russian border; the majority of the population there are ethnic Russians.

women were dressed and that he was sensitive to a lack of taste: “The two side-judges were middle-aged women who looked as ordinary and as unsophisticated as any of those in Leningrad’s private market selling their tomatoes and grapes. These lady judges sat in plain house dresses made of rather loud prints” (153).

Gaylord P. Harnwell comments in his diary on how Russians were dressed in the 1950s: “The quality of men’s clothes is not very good but quite up to Near Eastern or Eastern European standards. The ties are of dull patterns and the clothing has much of a simple plain and light-weight sameness. The women seem to have a bit more color about them [...]” (21-22). It is apparent that women’s outfits in 1958 differed from the dull ones described by Wilson in 1935. In a men’s clothing shop Harnwell and the members of his group were “impressed by the mediocrity of the quality of the clothes,” which, above all, were sold at high prices (114). Only in the centre of Moscow, in the famous GUM Department Store near the Red Square, did the educator see some “not too badly dressed” people (31).

From the above analysis it is possible to conclude that the American writers saw the Russians as a heterogeneous people, rather sturdy, with both European and Asian physical features. In general, most authors thought that the locals dressed worse and more poorly than Americans, but there were occasional exceptions of well-dressed Soviet people. Dreiser and Steinbeck took notice of warm clothes made of fur, which were indispensable because of harsh climate conditions. According to Dreiser, Wilson and Douglas, many Russian women demonstrated their lack of taste in apparel. The fact that factory uniforms and sports clothes looked attractive drew only Wilson’s attention. It is also worth mentioning that the post-war period witnessed by Steinbeck was characterised by an exceptionally severe shortage of clothes.

4.4.2. Soviet Housing

In this section it will be shown what the American writers thought about living and working conditions of the Russian people as far as houses and buildings are concerned.

In the Soviet period the so-called communal flat was a standard living accommodation, as housing in the big cities was a considerable problem. Communal flats continued to exist throughout the twentieth century. Theodore Dreiser describes such Russian flats and houses of the 1920s very critically. A typical flat, as he saw it in Russia, consisted only of two or three rooms (*DLR* 35). About three people used to live in each room; there was one communal kitchen for six flats, and a bath in the basement for twelve flats (229). When the writer visited one of

the factories, he saw workers' dwellings, "the what-Communism-is-doing-for-the-workers-kind," where up to ten persons shared one room (228). The author writes indignantly: "And to your honest American horror and astonishment, the housing committees of the different factory workers' unions or cooperatives which build these things for their members still consider that one single toilet for fifteen people living in a three-room apartment is ample" (64).

One more account of living conditions which Dreiser depicts is based on his visit to the famous theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold. The director resided "in a large and handsome house assigned to him and his artistic, technical and financial staff" (*DLR* 65). Meyerhold and his wife had two rooms and a bath; most actresses and actors possessed only one bed in the former grand salon and cooked in the communal kitchen. The author adds that people in many organisations in Russia lived under such conditions, all the staff in one house, "all crowded, packed like sardines, in a single building – rooms, offices, workshops, all" (65). Likewise, the Sovkino film director Sergey Eisenstein occupied a room in a six-room flat, where five other families lived, and that room "was very small for New York or a leading moving picture director but spacious for Moscow" (205). Dreiser points out that there were differences in communal flats of workers and intellectuals: the latter had "quaint and charming abodes of one room or less," whereas the former were not keen on the aesthetic sides of their dwellings (246).

Dreiser disparaged the living conditions in Russian villages. Rural houses had no electricity or water system, and also "no toilet arrangements other than those furnished by the wide open spaces" (*DLR* 133). The interiors of the houses were poor, with primitive furniture and heating, and the writer concluded that "American farmhouses of 1828 in Arkansas, Texas, Wyoming" had been "all better furnished" (133). Furthermore, mosquitoes and flies used to bother the locals in summer. "And over all – in every house, barn, soviet, church, school – that sickly and to me half-stifling Asiatic odor," Dreiser complained (133). It is evident that the theme of 'Asia' accompanies the author's accounts of almost all aspects of Russian life.³⁷

Some bright sides of the Russian housing are also to be found in Dreiser's book. The writer saw dwellings of miners and industrial workers in Siberia and the Don Basin – "newly-built three- or four-room cottages, with a bath, veranda, and a little garden" (*DLR* 16). In addition, a local club building contained "a swimming pool, a bowling alley, a billiard room, a theatre, a reading-

³⁷ Cf. David-Fox 235.

room, library, gymnasium, and restaurant” (16). However, the reader might develop scepticism as to whether those complexes did not serve as ‘Potemkin villages’ to be shown to foreigners.

Edmund Wilson refers to various houses and flats of the 1930s all through his book. He was often invited as a guest to see his Russian, American or British friends (at the end of his stay in Moscow, his Russian acquaintances were, however, afraid of receiving him because he was a foreigner). The accommodation of a Russian ‘commissar’ in the capital, where the writer was taken for tea, “would be for New York a very moderate-sized middle-class apartment” (194). In another instance a foreign engineer, who enjoyed a privileged position, had a flat “in a special new building assigned to foreign ‘technicians,’” which he occupied with his family (300). Furthermore, the author describes a flat he rented for a short period of time from his friend Walter Duranty, *The New York Times* correspondent, when the latter was away for the summer: “The apartment was luxurious for Moscow – it consisted of four or five rooms and included a bathroom and kitchen” (380). It is worth noting that such flats were not uncommon for high-ranking Party officials in the Soviet Union. Concerning housing in Moscow in general, Wilson claims that he “was never able to find anything like a slum or any quarter that even seemed dirty” (208).

Many facts about Russian housing which Wilson introduces to the reader correspond to those delineated by Dreiser. The former pointed to “a special apartment house built by the government for writers” (226), thus alluding to the tradition of assigning houses to people of certain professions. Like the previous author, Wilson mentions communal houses, but without astonishment or critique, rather as something given and accepted as the norm. Once Wilson was invited to a summer house (dacha) of his hospitable Russian friend on the outskirts of Moscow. Eight families shared that house, and thirty persons had one toilet and one kitchen at their disposal (it is not clear from the text where all those people lived in winter). Nevertheless, the atmosphere was very pleasant, and Wilson spent “some of the jolliest evenings” of his life there (231-32). In the same countryside, there were other summer cottages “with cupolas and jigsaw woodwork, not unlike such houses in New Jersey and yet rather unlike them, too” (231). Those houses, Wilson explains, had been built in the second half of the nineteenth century, and they were used as rest-homes in the 1930s.

Once Wilson visited a collective farm outside Moscow. According to the information which the chairman of the farm provided, the farmers lived in houses of their own and kept chickens and cows, but on some other farms people lived in dormitories (210).

While going by train from Leningrad to Moscow, Wilson noticed somewhere on his way log houses which reminded him of America (190). He saw other houses of that type on the outskirts of the capital, and they were “old mud-brown,” with “fancy peaked cornices over the windows and fringes of wooden lace. Some of them seemed to have sunk into the earth till their windows were almost on a level with it” (196). On another occasion Wilson accentuated “[o]ld brown wood-lace frills around the windows” (210). The same type of architecture was depicted by Steinbeck – “little old wooden houses with wooden lace around the windows” (32-33), which he saw in Moscow. Likewise, Gaylord P. Harnwell on his way to Dubna from the capital noticed “interesting and picturesque” village houses, “the log cabin type, often with fancy blue-green carved window frames set into them” (70). Without doubt, all three authors referred to the same style of log village houses.

John Steinbeck’s general impressions of Moscow houses were those of a tourist staying at hotels. The writer had visited Moscow in 1936, and he noticed tremendous changes in 1947: “And the building in the eleven years was enormous. [...] Whole sections of the narrow, dirty districts of the old Moscow had disappeared, and in their place were new living quarters and new public buildings” (18). Steinbeck reports what he was told about districts with government offices in Moscow, where tourists were not allowed to go: “Some of the high government officials have apartments there, and their servants; and the caretakers, the maintenance crews, and the guards, all live inside the walls” (206). This statement gives every indication of being true, as the Soviet elite used to separate itself from common people. Once a famous Russian writer, Konstantin Simonov, invited Steinbeck and Capa to visit him in his country house on the outskirts of Moscow. Simonov belonged to the elite, and he and his wife resided in the summertime in “a simple, comfortable little house, set in a large garden” (203).

In the chapter about Stalingrad, Steinbeck depicts dreadful conditions of people living in the centre of the ruined city: “Underneath the rubble were cellars and holes, and in these holes many people lived. Stalingrad was a large city, and it had had apartment houses and many flats, and now has none except the new ones on the outskirts, and its population has to live some place. It lives in the cellars of the buildings where the apartments once were” (115). The chief architect of the city explained to Steinbeck and Capa that people wanted to live in those locations where they felt at home; besides, there was no public transport in the centre, and the dwellers could not get to work from the outskirts (127). In the meantime, new blocks of flats and smaller houses were appearing, and architects were working on grandiose projects of reconstructing the centre. The companions visited workers’ flats in Stalingrad, which consisted

of two or three rooms and were rather comfortable (129). Capa wanted to take pictures of people who were building their new private houses, and he succeeded: “We stopped at a tiny house that a bookkeeper in a factory was building. He was putting up the timbers himself, and he was mixing his own mud for plaster [...]” (133).

William O. Douglas saw numerous dwellings in Moscow, provincial towns and villages, and for him Russian housing of the 1950s was “backward by American standards” (133). Although he was aware that there were “shiny, new apartments, some of them in great skyscrapers” in the capital, he also pointed to numerous slums (116-17). Douglas’s statement about slums in Moscow contradicts Edmund Wilson’s claim not to have seen any (208). This discrepancy in opinions can be attributed to the fact that the two writers had different ideas about what poor housing was, which depended on the time of their visit, their place of residence in the US and their social status.

Almost three decades after Theodore Dreiser, Douglas disparaged communal flats in Russia. The reader can find figures of “tens of thousands of families restricted to one or two rooms” with shared toilets and kitchens (118). It is not surprising that the author looked at the problem of communal flats from a juridical point of view, pointing to the fact that such living conditions caused disputes in the Soviet courts (117). Douglas witnessed that numerous public houses in Novosibirsk and other Siberian cities had no plumbing, although it was not always the case, and some new buildings were “modern in every respect” (115). Many houses outside Moscow and Leningrad were “dilapidated” and “ready to be condemned” (118). On the other hand, there were numerous positive illustrations. The writer describes workers’ houses with four or five rooms and garden plots in Barnaul, “hooked up with the water and sewage systems” (117). But the lawyer estimated that it would take about twenty-five years to complete a building programme for such a big city as Novosibirsk.

Douglas shares his impressions of the houses in the rural areas, for example, on the Komsomolsky State Farm in Siberia, which was in an hour’s drive from Barnaul. People had radios there, but they had to carry water in buckets from artesian wells (95). Other depictions concern farmhouses to the north of Central Asia, and it is not clear if the author alludes to Kazakhstan or Russia. Nevertheless, his reference to the cooking stove suggests that he meant Russian regions:

[...] the houses of the farmers are made of cheap clapboards or logs. They are usually three- or four-room affairs, poorly furnished and dominated by the ancient Russian heating and cooking stove whose rounded sides reach into at least three rooms. These

homes were mostly furnished in *Tobacco Road* style. Yet the hospitality of the Russian family made me forget their dinginess. (106-07)

The author compared kitchens in Russian houses with those in the US: “None of these homes had any of the conveniences we have come to associate with our kitchens. I saw no refrigerators, electric toasters, electric mixers, garbage-disposal units attached to sinks [...]” (117). Douglas claims that even new houses with good sidewalks and trees near them were “built at the austerity level” and could not be compared with American “modern additions” (117).

Gaylord P. Harnwell made one of his first comments about housing in Moscow on the way from the airport: “The big apartment development [...] appears particularly impressive. There must be room for several hundred thousand persons in it” (22). The buildings were “solid, clean, utilitarian” but “unimaginative in architecture; vast and squarish, with little noticeable relief of line and form” (22). The author witnessed how a new residential block was being built not far from his hotel, and he paid attention to wooden window frames and thick walls made of concrete slabs and bricks; the traveller inferred that buildings in Russia were constructed differently than in the US (74-75). He also noted that all Russian houses had double glazing and that it was easily explained by cold winters (20, 53, cf. Wilson 221). The educator called the Stalinist architecture “Woolworth pinnacle style,” a typical example of which is the main edifice of the University of Moscow (19, 22); there is a black-and-white photo of it in the middle of the book, taken by the author. Harnwell noticed, however, that such buildings were getting out of fashion, substituted by more conservative ones (22).

During his stay in Moscow, Harnwell paid a visit to the American ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who lived in “an old rickety building” with “the smallest and shakiest elevator” the author had ever used (26). Besides, as a member of the delegation of educators, Harnwell had an opportunity to see students’ halls of residence, which he found “simple but adequate, with a Slavic starkness plus the usual overstuffed furniture and the pervading acrid smell” (42-43). In general, the writer found those living quarters satisfactory, and Soviets students, just like American students, were unwilling to show their rooms because of the mess. Similar to Dreiser, Harnwell describes “the pervasive, acrid odor which seems to go [...] with ordinary dwellings” (22); such an odour might have come from the resin of the pine wood used for construction (22).

The main conclusion that can be drawn about Soviet housing is that almost all the writers considered Russian dwellings inadequate according to American standards. The authors thought that communal flats, where several families shared the same toilet and kitchen, were the greatest

housing problem in Soviet Russia. Occasionally, Soviet people lived in new comfortable houses and flats, but even in such cases the interiors and kitchen equipment were far behind American norms. As Soviet society was stratified, the elite used to have better housing conditions than common people. In addition, three writers singled out log houses with wooden window laces, which typified a special architectural style.

4.4.3. Food and Eating Habits

The analysed books provide copious information on foods, meals and traditions of consumption in Russia. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to trace what culinary experiences the American writers had during their journeys.

Theodore Dreiser, with his distinct criticism, found Russian meals in most cases not adequate: “And speaking of food! Oh, do allow me! It will comfort me a little after all the stuff I ate. There is almost no such thing as good cooking in Soviet Russia” (*DLR* 63). He thought that Russians had little idea about spices and sources and that all they could cook were their traditional dishes like borsch and “wretchedly cooked” meat (64). In his diary, while travelling by train from Moscow to Leningrad, the author wrote on 3 December 1927: “[...] *I am troubled [...] by the thought that in Moscow – or any where [sic] in Russia, I will be unable to obtain really pleasing & palatable food. It all has – alas – a heavy gluey sameness – an almost unendurable thought for me*” (*DRD* 181).

The reader might assume that Dreiser was hardly able to enjoy good meals at all, but this was not the case. The manuscript contains references to the dishes which were to the liking of the traveller, like “*an omelette confiture*” (*DRD* 181). Several positive comments appear on the further pages of the writer’s diary. The parts written by Ruth Kennel (and not refuted by Dreiser) disclose enjoyable experiences, one of which took place in a hotel dining room in Kislovodsk, a resort in the South of Russia: “The cooking was the best I have encountered in Russia: we divided our portions and had a great variety – there were beets with smyetana, cabbage cutlets, veal with backed spaghetti, and wine [...]” (243). At a bar in Rostov-on-Don, Ruth Kennel mentioned “the Caucasian dish shashlik, which was appetizingly served with green onions and French fried potatoes” (236). It is significant that the last two examples allude either to Caucasian cuisine (‘shashlik’ is meat on a skewer borrowed from Caucasus and adored by Russians) or to the southern area, where Russian culture had been influenced by elements of other ethnic groups. The scholar David-Fox claims that years later, when Dreiser changed his

view of the Soviet Union and praised it (250), “he even remembered that he had been ‘delighted’ with the food in 1927-28” (251).

Throughout his journey Dreiser consumed alcohol. This fact worried the writer himself, and he confessed in his diary: “*Already – & after so short a stay, I find myself turning to Vodka – vodka plain, vodka in tea, vodka over a desert [sic] in order that I make a go of things*” (DRD 181). Considering that the Prohibition was in effect in the US at that time, it is not surprising that he made use of the opportunity. The writer was so used to seeing that alcoholic drink everywhere that he even amused the director of the cinema factory in Leningrad by his surprise that such an organisation “could run without it” (163, noted by Kennel).

On several occasions Dreiser had dinners with Russian luminaries. Once he ate in the company of Vladimir Mayakovsky and the Briks. The meals partaken of were documented by Ruth Kennel: “[...] caviar in a huge bowl, several kinds of fish, Russian meat rolls, vodka, wine [...]” (DRD 111). What happened to Dreiser afterwards may be regarded as ‘typically Russian’: “I had already satisfied myself on the first course when the actual dinner, soup, goose with apples, and many other dishes, appeared” (111, written by Kennel). On the same day, 18 November 1927, Dreiser was invited to a banquet organised by Gosizdat (a state publishing house which printed the writer’s books translated into Russian), where Mayakovsky was also present. The manuscript provides further information about that event, written in Kennel’s hand: “More food: ten kinds of fish and caviar, and roast pigeons, and more vodka and wine. I think the Russians do nothing but eat, and I am getting the habit” (112). Numerous “toasts to the various foreign writers” (112) at that banquet are worth mentioning, as toasts are indispensable at Russian parties. The reader may wonder if such *culinary extravagance*, which may be seen as a national character trait, was appropriate in the communist state, where most people lived from hand to mouth.

Dreiser had an experience of eating on a train. From Mineralnye Vody to Baku, he and Kennel travelled on a sleeper train which had a dining carriage, and their dinner “consisted of soup, cold fish with horse radish sauce, roast duck with pickles, apple with rice, coffee and cakes, (not real coffee of course)” (DRD 248, written by Kennel). It is worth noting in connection with this episode that such dinner would have been unaffordable for an average Soviet passenger of the 1930s.

The question may arise if Dreiser was able to spot any traces of the Soviet famine of 1921-1922 during his journey. He answers negatively: “I heard of famine in Russia (in Germany before going to Russia), but looking in these Moscow stores, as well as in other stores throughout

Russia, tended to dispel the idea” (*DLR* 30). The author’s conclusion sounds plausible, considering the fact his journey took place when the NEP (New Economic Policy) was still in effect in Russia.

Edmund Wilson’s acquaintance with Russian food began on board the steamer when he was travelling from London to Leningrad: “When we went into the dining-room for tea, we found caviare, jam, candy, sliced sausage and sardines and herring [...]. A man with a kettle came around from time to time and asked you whether you would have some tea: no obsequious service as with the British” (154). The writer often comments on his meals through the prism of the opinions of other foreign passengers, chiefly the British ones:

The unfamiliar Russian food deeply worried these English people. “I’ve never seen tea with lemon before!” said the man with something like alarm. The milder and more naïve of the ladies, when confronted the first morning with caviare for breakfast, took it for marmalade, but, imperturbably masking her surprise, remarked that it would be good to make sandwiches. When sliced sausage appeared, she declined the bologna, saying quietly, “It’s a little unusual, isn’t it?”; but took some salami, murmuring, “It’s more like what we have at home.” [...] The sturgeon, as to which they couldn’t at first be sure whether it were meat or fish, put them all to a severe test: it seemed to be an occasion for as much self-restraint as if it had been a shipwreck. (157)

This extract, written in a humorous tone, reveals what types of Russian foods and dishes were served in 1935 to international passengers. Further descriptions touch upon alcohol, such as vodka, wine and cognac (159), as well as a dessert – “a mound of vanilla ice-cream swimming in pink grenadine and surmounted by a small piece of cake” (162).

Similar to Dreiser, Wilson was once taken aback by the number of courses at dinner. The writer was invited to a “jamboree given by the Journalists’ Club for the Proletarian Division of the Red Army” (274), where, after the usual cultural programme, he enjoyed his meals:

[...] we were regaled with a tremendous banquet. First, we had to drink innumerable toasts, accompanied by bugle flourishes and *zakúsky* with wine and beer. The *zakúsky* (very heavy hors d’oeuvres) were the most copious I had ever seen, and I made the mistake of assuming that they constituted the supper. I was staggered, when I had pretty well stuffed myself, to be faced with a succession of further courses. It took several hours to serve them [...]. (276)

Coffee and ice-cream followed, and the writer left the party only at four in the morning (276). It is worth noting that such a banquet would have been unheard of among poor peasants or workers in the 1930s. Taking into consideration the fact that Russia had faced famine in 1932-1933 and that peasants were undernourished as a result of forced collectivisation, one can imagine what social stratification existed in the society where all people were supposed to be equal.

Wilson demonstrates to the reader what ordinary Russians were able to eat on an everyday basis. On his trip to Zagorsk, he and his companion stayed in a cheap hotel, where they “sent for a samovar, had vodka, bread and butter, sausage and hard-boiled eggs” (251). On another occasion he consumed “black bread and the little Russian cucumbers that you peel and dip in salt” (288). While travelling along the Volga, Wilson went to Ulyanovsk to visit the Lenin birthplace, and there he decided to eat his meals in a restaurant:

I stopped for breakfast at a shabby-looking restaurant on a main business street where everything looked shabby. All I could seem to get was black bread without butter and bad coffee. I asked for an omelet, and, after some demur – they said at first they couldn’t make one – they produced a kind of tasteless fried custard. [I believe that this rundown condition of Ulyánovsk was one of the real reasons for the opposition to my going there. Tourists never saw these dead cities.] (310)

The sentence in square brackets was added to the 1956 edition of the book, and the reader can notice that the tone here is far more critical. Additionally, in Ulyanovsk the writer bought “some black bread, some bad beer, some sour Volga apples, some sausage and some candies” (313). The foods described in these episodes differ greatly from those depicted on the steamer, and the reader can get an understanding of what groceries Russians were able to buy at the time in the provinces.

The traveller asserts that people in Russia had dinner between three and six in the afternoon and that then they ate supper between eleven in the evening and two in the morning (203). This claim might appear staggering to the contemporary Russians, as the habits of the 1930s were indisputably different.

Wilson repeatedly adverts to alcoholic drinks which he ordered and consumed while being in Russia. After seeing the opera ‘The Queen of Spades’ in Leningrad, he reflected on the performance, then “drank vodka in little cut-glass goblets and ate iced caviar,” and in the end he “went to bed full of vodka and Pushkin” (187). Once, sick and in a contemplative mood, the writer “brooded on the fact that they had never been able to think up any better hard liquor than vodka, which is simply a form of raw alcohol” (332).

Two more facets outlined by Wilson are related to food consumption in theatres and on trains. “During the long intermission, they eat sandwiches and cakes and drink tea in large restaurants inside the theatre,” he reports (168). The writer also mentions that he purchased some food on the train on his way from Leningrad to Moscow: “I bought beer and slices of bread with pressed caviare, sausage and cheese, from a man who came round with a basket” (189). Afterwards the

writer drank beer together with a fellow passenger who had helped him to communicate with the seller.

During their journey in the post-war Russia, John Steinbeck and Robert Capa tried various foods and dishes on different occasions. In Moscow they received “ration tickets, three for each day, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. By using these tickets in the ration restaurant in the hotel [they] could eat quite reasonably” (23-24). The writer explains the difference between the ration and the commercial restaurants, the latter being of the same quality but very expensive. Once the travellers had dinner in the commercial restaurant of the magnificent Metropole hotel, which “consisted of four hundred grams of vodka, a great bowl of black caviar, cabbage soup, steak and fried potatoes, cheese, and two bottles of wine” (16). It should be noted that the companions had quite the opposite experience in their hotel in Stalingrad, where they were astonished to have breakfast which “consisted of tomato salad, pickles, watermelon, and cream soda. But it was not an insanity, it was just a normal Stalingrad breakfast” (120). Such low-calorie meals could be easily explained by the fact that Stalingrad lay in ruins and that there was food shortage in the city.

Steinbeck gives an insight into the essential groceries which ordinary Russian people were able to buy – bread, cabbage and potatoes (41). In Stalingrad the travellers talked to workers and summed up what the latter consumed and whether it was affordable:

For the common foods, bread and cabbages, meat and fish, which are the standard worker's food, very little money is necessary. But luxuries, tinned foods, imported foods, are very expensive, and such things as chocolate are almost beyond the reach of anyone. But, again, there is the Russian hope that when there is more food the prices will come down. (130-31)

The reader gets acquainted with several popular Russian dishes, such as ‘piroschki’ (little pies), which Steinbeck and Capa ate for the first time in the car of the courier for the French Embassy on the way from the airport to Moscow (15). Furthermore, the companions enjoyed ‘shashlik’ (64), the same Caucasian dish mentioned by Dreiser. They also noticed that when ice-cream “got to a store, a line formed many blocks long” (208).

Steinbeck reports that no meals were served on the Russian passenger planes; the travellers paid attention to that fact during their flight from Helsinki to Leningrad, when they were hungry. “No food is carried by the plane for the passengers, but the passengers make up for this by carrying great quantities of food for themselves,” the writer explains (11). This habit of taking food while travelling, as the Americans observed, was spread everywhere in Russia (49). At the Moscow airport, while waiting for their plane to Kiev, the travellers saw that everybody had “loaves of

black bread, and apples, and sausage and cheese, and smoked bacon” (49). On the way from Stalingrad to Moscow, a passenger sitting next to Steinbeck “opened his suitcase, cut off half a pound of raw bacon which was melting in the heat, and sat chewing it, the grease running down his chin” (136); that man offered a piece to the writer, but the latter had evidently no appetite to accept it. Steinbeck and Capa continued to see people loaded with food throughout their journey: “In fact, in all the time we were in Russia we did not find anything to eat on any conveyance. You either take your lunch or you go hungry. This accounts for the bundles the travelers take with them: one-tenth clothing and baggage, and nine-tenths food” (170).

During the celebrations of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Moscow in September 1947, Steinbeck noticed temporary sidewalk restaurants, tables and display counters with sandwiches and other food (194). Nevertheless, he saw multiple people from the provinces who came to participate in the festivities “carrying not only their clothes, but food for several days” (190). The writer proposed the following explanation of that phenomenon: “They have been hungry so often that they take no chances when they move, and everyone carries a few loaves of bread” (190). The reason which the author did not take into account was that those people did not possess enough means to buy food in the capital. One scene in connection with the celebrations makes the reader puzzle: “Wagons and trucks loaded with foodstuffs, with cabbages, with melons, with tomatoes, with cucumbers, rolled into the city – the gifts of the collective farms to the city on its eight-hundredth anniversary” (191). It is not evident from the context why those fruit and vegetables were called ‘gifts,’ as they might have been forced confiscations from peasants.

One of the saddest and most striking episodes of Steinbeck’s *A Russian Journal* in connection with food consumption is the portrayal of a traumatised and mentally ill teenage girl who lived in the debris of Stalingrad:

Directly behind the hotel, and in a place overlooked by our windows, there was a little garbage pile, where melon rinds, bones, potato peels, and such things were thrown out. And a few yards farther on, there was a little hummock, like the entrance to a gopher hole. And every morning, early, out of this hole a young girl crawled. [...] Somewhere in the terror of the fighting in the city, something had snapped, and she had retired to some comfort of forgetfulness. She squatted on her hams and ate watermelon rinds and sucked the bones of other people’s soup. She usually stayed there for about two hours before she got her stomach full. (115-16)

Steinbeck shares with the reader his impression that the eyes of that girl were not human. She was covered with dirt, and other people ignored her and did not talk to her, but once a woman gave her some bread, which she devoured like a wild animal (116-17). Capa took a telephoto

picture of the girl, but the censorship scrutinised every developed film before the travellers' departure and removed the negative, not allowing it to cross the border (212). This shows that the authorities who had issued the Americans permission to visit Stalingrad had not foreseen that foreign guests would see such a scene, as in the Soviet Union every unfavourable image of the country was carefully blotted out. Without doubt, there were thousands of such mentally disabled people living in the USSR after the war.

Similar to Dreiser and Wilson, the companions attended sumptuous parties in Moscow and consumed alcohol. Steinbeck describes a banquet which happened at the end of the journey: "The dinner given us by the Moscow writers was held at a Georgian restaurant. There were about thirty writers and officials of the Union there, among them Simonov [...]" (208). The writer elaborates on the topic of alcohol at that party, and confesses that he could not partake of vodka anymore, as his "system revolted against it" (208). The author also reports how he and Capa felt after seeing the Kremlin inside: "We ran away from that place [...] and went down to the cabaret, and ordered four hundred grams of vodka and a huge lunch" (205). Here Steinbeck humorously depicts how alcohol helped him overcome the sad feeling caused by the interiors of the Kremlin.

William O. Douglas does not report much about food on the pages devoted to Soviet Russia. His most striking and shocking experiences concerning consumption took place in the southern Soviet Republics of the Soviet Union, where traditions were different; their analysis, therefore, would go beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, several episodes are worth noting.

Douglas, just like Wilson, got acquainted with Russian meals aboard the boat while sailing from Iran to Baku in 1955. The author describes what foods were available to international passengers in the dining room of the vessel:

The meals (served on the American plan) were excellent. A large bowl of grapes, apples, and peaches was always present. Several different kinds of cheese and cold meats were served with every meal, in addition to dark bread, preserves, caviar, and smoked fish. There were eggs [...] and tea for breakfast. For the other two meals, lamb (or beef), rice, tomatoes followed borsch or a clear soup. (22)

In the village of Kabu, Douglas was invited to dinner at the house of the chairman of the collective farm, where both Azerbaijani and Russian men of the soil were present. The writer gives the names of some of the mixed dishes he ate there:

The dinner started with cold cuts, grapes, and nuts. Then came a long series of single dishes adding up to twenty-one. Their Russian names were all unknown to me at the time. Some, like borsch and lamb on a skewer, were familiar. Most were new: small

meat balls wrapped in dough, boiled and served with a white sauce (*pelmeny*); meat wrapped in dough the size of a biscuit and cooked in deep fat (*belyashi*); meat balls wrapped in cabbage leaves (*farshirovanny perets*). [...] Juicy peaches and sweet apricots ended the feast. (26)

These dishes are recognisable to Russians, and the reader can at once identify ‘shashlyk,’ which is “lamb on a skewer.” However, the author made a mistake in naming the dish “meat balls wrapped in cabbage leaves,” which should be ‘golubtsy,’ whereas “*farshirovanny perets*” means ‘stuffed peppers.’ A staggering number of dishes indicates that the writer was in the company of the local elite. Douglas correctly depicts the tradition of toasts; when it was the writer’s turn, he “proposed a toast to peace” (27):

The dinner continued almost three hours with toasts too many to count. My hosts offered vodka, brandy, and wine. Vodka is the customary drink on these occasions. It is served straight, not mixed; and it’s downed in a gulp, not sipped. Pieces of bread or meat are eaten after each drink to provide a brake on the inebriation which three or four dozen toasts are likely to produce. That much I knew. I also knew that in Russia it is a breach of etiquette for a guest not to respond to a toast in spirits. But the guest, I had been told, could choose his own weapons; he need not go the vodka route. (26)

At the end of his book, Douglas sums up that the Russians “are fed nutritiously, and they eat heartily, perhaps because they once starved. But they do not have the variety of food they crave. They do not have the steaks and chops they want” (229).

One controversial observation of the writer refers to dining carriages on trains. He claims that none of them existed in Russia in 1955: “No trains have dining cars. [...] One gets only hot tea from the porter” (116). In the light of the fact that Dreiser mentioned such a carriage in the book published in 1928, this statement of Douglas appears to be incorrect.

Gaylord P. Harnwell documented in great detail almost every occasion of partaking of meals during his journey. It is worth emphasising that the educator’s experiences of Russian gastronomy occurred on a very high level. His diary provides, nevertheless, a valuable account of Russian dishes, traditions and hospitality.

The author noted what he had for breakfast in his hotels in Moscow and Leningrad: bread, cheese, omelette, tea, coffee, beer and lemonade (31, 34, 51). During his visit to one of the universities in Moscow, the educator had meals at a faculty lunchroom, where he and his colleagues “were served fine red beets, cucumber salad, and cold meats” (42). Not every dish was to his liking: “There was also a cold vegetable soup which was not very much to my taste, but the lunch as a whole was very satisfactory” (42). In the High Energy Physics Institute in Dubna, Harnwell had “a very good midday meal with all the ruffles and flourishes” (72).

The traveller describes at least three dinners he enjoyed in Russia. At the hotel Ukraine in the capital, the delegation had a sumptuous dinner on the first day of their arrival, and the reader can have an idea about the variety of dishes at a Soviet high-end hotel:

We began supper with a vegetable salad, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, caviar, smoked salmon, accompanied by vodka, beer, and Georgian wine, as well as charged and plain water. We then had some very good fried chicken, small bits of white meat secured on a wooden spit and flavored with lemon and herbs. We also had peas, shoestring potatoes, and finished off with ice cream and coffee – a very good meal indeed which went on until 11:30. (20)

In the ‘House of Science’ in Leningrad, the writer attended a party for more than twenty people: “There were vodka, brandy, Georgian wine, and water, beer and fruits, and vegetables, cheese, sausages, sturgeon, salmon, black and white bread, as a first course; next we had chicken and rice and more vegetables; toasts were drunk to beauty and friendship, to the ladies, to the city, and we all made speeches on every known topic” (67). Similar to the previous writers, Harnwell shows that toasts are important in the Russian culture. The next dinner, a cocktail party, took place at the Prague Restaurant in Moscow, and it “was a delicious one of *shish kebab* and many side dishes, plus an unusually varied assortment of wines and liquors” (115). Here the author refers to ‘shashlyk,’ also mentioned by Dreiser, Steinbeck and Douglas.

As has already been stressed, Harnwell had meetings with high-ranking personalities. The final luncheon party for thirty-five people was given by the Minister of Higher Education of the Soviet Union and his wife, and the American ambassador and his spouse were also present:

It was a most sumptuous affair, the culminating crescendo of all we had attended – three wines, vodka, and brandy, hors d’oeuvres of all kinds, including a new way of doing sturgeon, with lemon in aspic. There were delicious little rolls of white meat of chicken, cooked on spits with lemon and spice sauce, vegetables, fish, condiments of all sorts, winding up again with ice cream, cake, and coffee. There were the usual innumerable toasts to learning, peace, the ladies, and any other topic we could think of. (121)

Harnwell also offers an account of what passengers could consume on trains and plains in Russia. On the train from Leningrad to Moscow, he and his group were served drinks: “[...] in the morning hot tea was brought to us in glasses with little metal holders by friendly attendants, both men and women” (69). On the plane from Tashkent to Moscow, “[a] good breakfast was provided – juice, bread, cheese, sausages, and coffee” (114). And his lunch on the plane from Moscow to Tbilisi “came along [...] on nice little seat trays, à la American Airlines – caviar, bread, chicken and rice, cookies, and an orange” (76).

At the end of the journey, Harnwell remembered: “I have not mentioned the number of picnics which we observed in the course of this tour, but there were a good many of them. People appear

to enjoy eating in the open in Russia as much as they do in the United States” (116-17); here the author drew parallels with American traditions. It may come as surprise to the reader that he praised Russian strawberries: “We had a dish of them at the Institute of High Energy Physics, the best flavor of any that I have tasted in years” (74). The educator meant those strawberries which were harvested only once a year in July.

Several conclusions might be drawn from the gastronomic experiences of the writers. First, all five authors were able to enjoy their meals above average Russian standards. Second, all the travellers were invited to dinners, parties or banquets with many dishes and courses, which were more than enough to satisfy their hunger. Third, most authors reported of eating while travelling within Russia, either by boat, train or plane. Fourth, almost all the observers, except Harnwell, described meals of ordinary people of lower social classes. Fifth, all the writers referred to alcoholic beverages, to vodka in particular. Finally, the habit of the Soviet elite to order more than they needed, while many people lived from hand to mouth, demonstrated such traits in the national character as *culinary extravagance* and *carelessness*.

As far as differences are concerned, the authors devoted an unequal amount of their overall delineations of Russian realities to gastronomy: Harnwell provided every detail, while Douglas reported very little about food. Apart from that, some unique observations were documented – Dreiser’s overall negative judgement about the Russian food, Wilson’s attempts to order breakfast in Ulyanovsk, the portrayal of the traumatised and hungry teenage girl by Steinbeck, and Harnwell’s praise of strawberries – to name a few. Thus, the writers’ depictions reflected living conditions in Russian society in different decades.

4.5. Cultural Aspects: Literature, Theatre, Film and Music

All the analysed books cover to a lesser or greater extent cultural aspects of Russian life. The writers were either deeply interested in literature and theatre or attended cultural events as tourists.

Theodore Dreiser devotes two chapters of his book to Russian art, literature, cinematography and music, analysing them from organisational and artistic points of view. He acknowledges that arts played a significant part in Russian life because the entertainment industry in the USSR in the 1920s was underdeveloped (35). “Bolshevik art is a difficult subject. Although I saw various forms of it, I am still dubious of its value,” Dreiser states (*DLR* 188). He opines that in Soviet Russia there was “neither art for art’s sake nor knowledge for its own sake” (97) but only

“propaganda pure and simple” (188). The author wondered why such topics as the Revolution and the civil war stayed in the focus of artistic works, but religion or sex, as he sarcastically remarks, were “considered beneath the interest of a nation called upon to straighten out the economic miseries of the world” (98).

Dreiser’s conversation with Konstantin Stanislavsky, “a tall, magnificent-looking man” (*DLR* 197), is documented in his book. The main question which interested the novelist was how Stanislavsky managed to work and express himself under the new order. As the writer points out, the theatre director had lost “all rights, privileges, means” (197). But, as Stanislavsky said, art was “once more becoming itself – a lovely reflection of life,” and there were still good things which one could take from the Revolution and use them (198). The director also supported Dreiser’s observation about the importance of the theatre in Russia: “The stage and its art will play, and is already playing a big rôle politically and educationally in Russia. In every factory there is a theatre; in every workers’ club a theatrical circle. All Russia now plays” (198). The writer reveals that Stanislavsky intended to stage his play ‘The American Tragedy,’ which “could not pass the censor, first because of the religious sections, and second because of the relationship between employer and worker in the play”³⁸ (*DRD* 194, noted by Kennel).

The writer watched several plays in Moscow, either newly created or older ones: ‘The Break’ about the Revolution, ‘The Forest’ by Ostrovsky and Gogol’s ‘Revizor,’ the latter with “mysticism and symbolism injected” (*DLR* 191-92). Many renowned plays, such as ‘Cherry Orchard,’ ‘Three Sisters’ or ‘Macbeth’ were taboo (98). Dreiser mocked the attempt of the Russian officials to declare that the Soviet theatre was new, progressive and different; in his eyes it was “rather behind than ahead of” American “more progressive producers and stage technicians” (194). The writer paid special attention to the Theatre for Young Spectators, which “intended to effect a change of social psychology in the minds of the Russian young” (199).

The novelist was interested in the Russian film industry. He visited the Leningrad Sovkino studios in the former amusement palace, which were smaller than Hollywood ones (*DLR* 205). The director of the Leningrad Sovkino Greenfield was not very talkative; instead, Dreiser had a long conversation with the director of the Moscow Sovkino Sergei Eisenstein, “young, barely twenty-nine, and handsome” (205). As the latter explained, the film industry in the Soviet Union was a government enterprise under the Department of Education (206, *DRD* 101). Regarding restraints, the director was of the opinion that in Russia “[t]here was, as in America, strict

³⁸ Cf. Riggio 17.

control, but [...] it was political whereas in the United States it was moral” (DLR 206). He clarified that Russian films, including his own, were “all naturalistic as opposed to the western type” (206). Dreiser thought that Eisenstein’s ‘Potemkin’ and ‘October,’ the latter under the name ‘The End of St. Petersburg’ in American translation (207),³⁹ were “far superior to [their] American or Hollywood product” (204), and he ranked other Russian films “among the best so far achieved by the motion picture adventures anywhere” (204-05). As for Russian cinemas, the novelist described them favourably in his manuscript:

These Russian movie houses are built on a better plan than the American. Instead of the crowds waiting in the street & blockading traffic as well as suffering in cold or rain, all are permitted to enter & wait in a great enclosed lobby where, during the waiting, an orchestra plays American jazz & sentimental songs. When the first show crowd is out, the second is admitted from this lobby. (DRD 92)

As far as literature is concerned, Dreiser points to its similar indoctrinating purpose. He thought that Russian literary works of the 1920s were not of good quality (DLR 200), but he did not take into consideration emigration literature or the one which was forbidden. The author declares in his sarcastic tone, keeping, apparently, the Silver Age of Russian culture in mind:

[...] I heard of no novels, poems, plays, or even essays, of any transcendent merit, and was assured by more than one conservative and trustworthy critic or reader that since the Revolution, and regardless of the inspiring import of Communism, there had been nothing that equaled, let alone transcended, any of the magnificent things achieved under tyranny and, what is still worse to the Communist mind, Czaristic capitalism. (DLR 202)

It is significant that the novelist managed to talk to the poet Mayakovsky, “large, blond, dynamic,” looking “like a prize fighter and dressed like an actor.” This proletarian poet “was all for the machine age,” the writer comments, “on the ground that it would liberate Russian energies – mental energies – to better things” (201).

Dreiser’s special interest lay in the publication of his own novels in Russian translation through Gosizdat, which had already printed his ‘Color of a Great City’ and some stories. The writer talked to the manager of that publishing house, who explained to him why some parts of the previous book had been cut – “to make them accessible to the workers” (DRD 104, noted by Ruth Kennel). Nevertheless, the novelist signed an agreement and gave Gosizdat further rights to print his books.

³⁹ Dreiser watched those films in the US, but it is not evident from his book and manuscript whether before or after his journey to Russia.

In regard to music, Dreiser noticed that “choral ensembles and instrumental groups” were spread throughout Russia and that big cities had their own symphony orchestras (*DLR* 203). His diary reveals that he watched the opera ‘Prince Igor’ at the Bolshoi Theatre, which was for him “*of no particular dramatic value but much local color*” (*DRD* 107). He also saw the ballet ‘Esmeralda’ and was impressed by the leading ballerina Geltzer, who was in her fifties “*but as active and graceful as a girl of 20*” (136).

In summary, Dreiser criticised in his usual sarcastic manner the limitations of expression for actors, writers and artists in Russia, who were not free to choose the subject matter for their creations. He concluded: “The Government has a political theory to establish and blindly [...] seeks to subsidize if not actually to force and so to betray if not enslave the arts to its service” (*DLR* 208).

Edmund Wilson, a keen theatregoer, watched at least nine plays, operas and ballet performances during his journey to Russia. The title of one of the chapters of his book is ‘Leningrad Theaters,’ although this part is about Leningrad in general. The writer ascribed to the Russians a “wonderful theatrical sense” (169), and he thought that they tried “to make up for the meagerness of some aspects of their lives by lavish expenditure on the theater” (179). Moreover, dramatic arts were important in the Soviet Union in 1935 because there was no “pageantry of church and court” (225). In his travelogue the author often juxtaposes Russian and American theatres:

They take the theater seriously [...], as no one has for years with us. They do not allow anybody to be seated from the moment the curtain goes up: they will not even let you into a movie once the picture has started. During the long intermissions, the people have tea and discuss the play. Even productions the Russians think inferior seem to me satisfactory in a way that our skimmed and hurried comedies and our knocked-together revivals never are any more. (202-03)

In particular, Wilson compares the behaviour of audiences in the two countries, and he underlines that Russians “instead of jostling and squeezing like an American crowd, walk slowly around the lobby, [...] all moving in a stream at the same pace” (168).

The first opera Wilson refers to in his book is Verdi’s ‘Otello,’ which was “equally novel and equally powerful” (167). The author was aware that every theatrical piece was supposed to have a Marxist interpretation, but he did not see any in that opera; therefore, he inferred that “the black-and-white situation ha[d] something to do with its popularity” (167). A famous play in 1935 was ‘Peter the First’ by Alexey Tolstoy: “It was done in a magnificent theater, all imperial gold and white and with a box all in gold for the Tsar. The production was the most gorgeous I

have ever seen [...]” (178). This description corresponds to the above-mentioned remark that Russians did not save on theatrical performances. Another opera which Wilson watched in Leningrad was Tchaikovsky’s ‘The Queen of Spades’ in Meyerhold’s interpretation in the Mariinsky Theatre: “The fables of Pushkin, when we hear of them abroad, have little significance for us, and the music of Chaikovsky is perhaps never really good except in Russia,” the writer concludes, pointing justifiably to the fact that Pushkin was well-known only in Russia (186).

In Moscow Wilson watched ‘The Pickwick Club,’ “in which the Russians [...] were making a (perhaps diplomatic) effort to understand and appreciate the English” (200). It is in foreign plays that inaccurate hetero-images are most likely to be noticed, as in the following case: “Mr. Pickwick and the other gentlemen were continually kissing each other as Russians do but Englishmen don’t” (200). But, considering the attempts of Russians to render a foreign character, the writer gave them credit: “Yet it seemed to me that more study and imagination had gone into this production to make it English than had gone into, say, Jed Harris’s *Uncle Vanya*, in New York, to reproduce the Russian atmosphere of Chekhov, and with more successful results” (200-01). The next play, ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ which Wilson saw in Moscow at the Theatre of Revolution, impressed him as a piece for Komsomol, with actors “leaping on and off balconies and running up and down stairs [...] with the kind of energy required for parachute-jumping [...]” (201). Again, the author could not help drawing a comparison with New York theatres: “[...] I was doubtful whether it was not really true that the Russians had been closer to Shakespeare than the American production had been” (202). ‘Romeo and Juliet’ lasted from seven-thirty to twelve-twenty, and for Wilson it was the longest play he had ever “sat through” (201-02). Wilson ironically states: “The most popular Soviet dramatist at the present time seems to be William Shakespeare; nor could I see that he was being mistreated” (228). The writer also enjoyed the play of the actors in Ostrovsky’s ‘Talents and Admirers’ at the Art Theatre, who showed “so perfect an illusion of life” that he was “unable to imagine them out of their roles” (205).

On one occasion Wilson bought a ticket for ‘Evgeny Onegin’ at the Bolshoi theatre, but the opera was substituted by ‘Carmen’ in the Park of Culture and Rest. Wilson describes the confusion with the tickets, which had to be exchanged at a considerable distance from the entrance, and his managing to get in through the artists’ entrance (213). This episode may be regarded as an example of the Russian character trait of *inefficiency*.

The writer expected proletarian interpretations of old plays in the Soviet Union, and he went to the theatre “prepared for anything”; he underlines, however, that in 1935 “the period of

extravagant distortion of the classics” was over (178). In the 1956 edition of his book Wilson adds in square brackets:

The theater, the ballet and the opera still enjoyed perhaps a greater degree of independence than any other institutions in the Soviet Union, and their continuity had been less broken than in the case of any others with the cultural world of old Russia. What I saw was, I suppose, the last of this. Their greatest man of the theater, Meyerhold, [...] was less than three years later to have his theater closed. When he attempted, in 1939, to defend himself against charges of “formalism” and of obstructing the progress of “socialist realism,” and denounced the mediocrity of the Soviet stage, he was arrested and evidently done away with, for he has never been seen since.⁴⁰ (183)

Aboard the steamer from London to Leningrad, three Russian engineers, who Wilson shared his cabin with, took his Russian grammar book and started reading aloud exercises in the form of extracts from Pushkin. “I observed for the first time how poetry, like music, is for Russians a natural food,” the writer stresses (163). He generalises about Russian readers of the 1930s: “[...] literature is one of the things for which the Russians have a special genius; and it is probably in the long run impossible to fool them about the quality of writing” (228).

Wilson devotes several pages of his book to Russian literature. He claims: “In no country I have ever been in, even France, has literature such prestige as in Russia [...]. Books at the present time are hardly less necessary to the Russians than food and clothing themselves” (224-25). The traveller mentions such names as Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Babel and Bunin (226, 229); it is clear to the reader that the American, being a literary critic, had a profound knowledge of Russian authors and their works.

Wilson was of the opinion that writers in the Soviet Union received much honour and that they were not restricted in earning good money and achieving high standards of living (225). But he was aware that men and women of letters had “the same temptation [in Russia] as elsewhere to cash in on a popular success by playing up to the official point of view” (225), and he did not approve of the attempts of Russian officials to dictate to writers what they had to create (227). What he noticed was that the Russians tried “to reestablish the continuity of the Russian literary tradition” and “to find in their own literature a treasure.” New editions of Tolstoy, Lermontov, Dostoevsky (his novel ‘The Possessed’), Turgenev and Chekhov appeared, with extracts which had not been published before. “As for Pushkin,” stresses Wilson, “he has become, under the Soviets, the object of such a cult as Shakespeare has never enjoyed in England” (228). One more tendency which the American observed was that ancient classics were being translated

⁴⁰ Meyerhold was arrested in 1939, tortured, and murdered in 1940.

into Russian. But “the dogmatic Soviet criticism [...] made of every work of literature a move in the game of propaganda and tried to rule on the attitude of the author as ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’” (289).

Concerning American literature in Russia at the time, Wilson directs the reader’s attention to its influence on Russian minds:

It is unexpected and stimulating for an American, after leaving the writers at home preoccupied with what they imagine to be the Soviet point of view about literature, to find the Russians studying intently everything that reaches them from the States – rather dissatisfied now with their own post-revolutionary literature and seeming to feel that in America we have been able to do the kind of thing that they would like to do themselves. Very amusing to reflect that the three living American writers most popular in the Soviet Union – Upton Sinclair, Dos Passos and Dreiser – are all people who have recently been in wrong with the literary Communists at home. (195)

Young people in Russia were “up against a social machine,” as the author asserts, and they associated themselves with characters of American writers (190). Furthermore, Wilson mentions Hemingway, whose books had recently been translated. In the 1956 edition he adds that the works of Dos Passos “were, of course – up to the moment when [...] he protested against the purges – enormously popular in Russia [...]” (380). What the writer also admits is that he “was altogether too optimistic” about the literary tendencies in Russia of the 1930s in view of the later events and Stalin’s repressions (229).

John Steinbeck’s experiences of Russian cultural life were not as extensive as those of Dreiser and Wilson. He and Capa visited Russia at the time when the play ‘The Russian Question’ by Konstantin Simonov, who had been to the United States, was on in more than three hundred theatres throughout the country. This play was enormously popular, and every time the companions talked to common people, they were asked to express their opinions about it. Steinbeck provides a short summary of the play. An American correspondent takes a job offered by a newspaper tycoon to go to Russia and report that the Russians want war with the Americans. The correspondent, after returning from Russia, publishes a book that is the opposite of what was required, because he has seen that the Russians are against a war. The power of the angry newspaper tycoon is so strong that the journalist cannot find a job, he is broke, and his wife walks out on him (106). Steinbeck and Capa commented on this story, they said that it was bad, that the actors did not “act like Americans,” and that no publisher in the US had so much power as to order what to write, “the proof being that Mr. Simonov’s own books [were] printed in America” (106). The travellers were so provoked by that story that Steinbeck wrote a humorous synopsis of ‘The American Question’:

In our play, Mr. Simonov is commissioned by *Pravda* to come to America and to write a series of articles proving that America is a Western degenerate democracy. Mr. Simonov comes to America, and he finds that America is not only not degenerate, but is not even Western, unless the viewing point is Moscow. Simonov goes back to Russia and secretly writes his conviction that America is not a decadent democracy. He submits his manuscript to *Pravda*. He is promptly removed from the writers' Union. He loses his country house. His wife, a good Communist girl, deserts him, and he starves to death, just the same as the American must in his play. (107)

Steinbeck informs the reader that Russians, upon hearing this synopsis, usually began to chuckle and laugh (107). It is worth emphasising that the companions not only met Simonov personally at the end of their journey, but they were also invited by him and his wife to have lunch in their summer house not far from Moscow (203). 'The Russian Question' shows that its author was a career man who strictly followed the guidelines of the Communist Party and who cunningly employed Russian stereotypes and prejudices against Americans in his play. The American publisher depicted as "a hard, crude, overpowering, overbearing newspaper baron, a man of no principles and no virtues" (106) was a typical portrayal of a capitalist, and that image was indoctrinated in the minds of ordinary Soviet people. That one man could have so much power as to prevent somebody from finding a job was the hetero-stereotype of Americans held by Russians.

The novelist offers the reader an insight into his and Capa's intentions in Moscow, after travelling to other regions of the Soviet Union, to go to the theatre and to see ballet schools (198). Steinbeck devotes only one paragraph of his book to the Russian ballet:

The ballet had opened, and we went nearly every night – the loveliest ballet we have ever seen. It started at seven-thirty and did not finish until after eleven. The casts were huge. A commercial theater could not support such ballet. Such performance, and training, and sets, and music, must be subsidized or they cannot exist. There is no way to make the sale of tickets pay for this kind of production. (202)

Here it is to be noted that, similar to Wilson, Steinbeck brought to light a feature of a luxurious theatre life in the Soviet Union.

William O. Douglas dedicates two chapters of his work to culture and literature in the Soviet Union in 1955. He mentions "great operas and brilliant ballets" which he saw in Russia, such as the opera 'Ivan Susanin' in Leningrad and the ballets 'Swan Lake' and 'The Fountain of Bakhchisarai' in the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, the latter with the prima ballerina Ulanova (172). Similar to Wilson and Steinbeck, the author points to sumptuous theatrical performances and a staggering number of people employed by theatres: "The Russian people dress poorly; and their diet [...] does not have much variety. But nothing of splendor or luxury, either in

quantity or quality, is spared in the Russian theater. When it comes to the opera and ballet, all of Russia goes on a splurge” (158). And, like the previous writers, the lawyer tries to explain why dramatic arts were so popular in Russia “[...] the Soviets have gone into entertainment on a vast scale. Part of it is for propaganda purposes. But the true reason strikes deeper. Russians love music and the theater. The opera and the ballet are almost as important to them as bread. That, at least, was my impression, an impression that has supporting evidence” (158). As proof, the reader is presented with the historical fact: during World War Two the Russians moved their factories to Siberia, and in Novosibirsk “[o]ne of the first demands was for housing. Another was for an opera house”⁴¹ (158). Douglas emphasises that Soviet theatrical stars enjoyed privileges in society and that they were revered by grateful spectators: “These people are almost gods, being above the storms and stresses of life. They represent great spiritual values – the values of beauty, rhythm, and harmony. The Russian gives these values perhaps the highest place in his scheme of things” (159).

What impressed the writer was that small and big orchestras, dance ensembles and theatrical groups travelled all over the Soviet Union and showed their productions in remote areas. All those actors, dancers, singers, musicians and designers got their salaries from the state. “The Soviets truly blanket the nation with traveling musical troupes and theatrical companies,” the writer states (159). Furthermore, the system of looking for talents functioned all over the Soviet Union, and promising musicians and dancers were sent from distant factories and farms to Moscow, where they received professional training (159). The author compared that screening with “the American baseball industry” (159).

As far as is literature is concerned, Douglas reports that in 1955, two years after Stalin’s death, there were tremendous changes; Russian, Soviet and foreign books which had been banned were allowed to be published. The traveller discovered that Russians were interested in American literature, but only the writers classified as ‘progressive’ were available in translation in Russian libraries, such as “Theodore Dreiser, Howard Fast, Jack London, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain and O. Henry” (185). The author mentions a new periodical ‘Foreign Literature,’ which planned to print Hemingway, “Longfellow, Steinbeck, Caldwell, and Sinclair Lewis” (176). In general, Russians had a limited access to American books and could not have a clear picture of the US: “No wonder [...] that the Russians misunderstand America so thoroughly,” Douglas asserts (185). It is plausible to suppose that the lawyer was more interested in the books of his compatriots obtainable for Russian readers than in Soviet writers

⁴¹ Now it is The Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre.

and their works. Rather than provide a few local names, he generalises about freedom of expression in the USSR: “Today an author need not deal with a political issue. He need not prostitute his skill to promote a propaganda drive of the Kremlin” (178). But despite that loosening of control, literature was still regimented, and Russian writers had to toe the Party line. “[...] I left Russia feeling that this growing tolerance [...] did not reflect any fundamental change. The dictatorship is still as complete and powerful as ever. [...] The new tolerance will be permanent only so long as it serves Soviet ends,” Douglas concluded (177).

In comparison to the previous writers, Gaylord P. Harnwell experienced very little of Russian cultural life. During his sojourn he watched a ballet, an opera and a puppet show. The ballet ‘Swan Lake,’ as the educator describes, “was a marvelous experience [...]. The dancing was exquisite and swanlike; [...] and the final scene [...] was terrific” (44). The opera ‘Sadko’ by Rimsky-Korsakov, according to Harnwell, “was a marvellous oriental pageant with good strong tuneful music; an excellent performance, and [he] enjoyed every minute of it” (67-68).

Almost all writers, except Harnwell, came to the conclusion that theatre, literature and music were tremendously important for the Russians, more important than material things. This attitude may be seen as a trait of the Russian national character. Yet the travellers were appalled that arts were used for propaganda purposes in the Soviet Union and that writers, artists and musicians were deprived of the privilege of full self-expression.

4.6. The Russian Landscape

Russia occupies a vast territory, and this fact finds its reflection in the analysed works. Theodore Dreiser travelled “over enormous spaces” of “that gigantic land,” “for hundreds and even thousands of miles” (*DLR* 151, 59, 81). For Edmund Wilson the steppe in the Don area was “as vast as the sea” (329). And William O. Douglas even noticed changes in his worldview after his journey: “One who loses himself in the limitless expanses of Russia for some weeks comes out a different man” (7).

Not only the size but also the surface of the terrain struck the American travellers. The steppe, which Edmund Wilson perceived, was “as smooth as the top of a table” (329). John Steinbeck indicated that “most of Russia is completely level. An airplane can find a forced landing field almost anywhere” (12). He flew several times during his stay in Russia and saw Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad and Rostov-on-Don from above. After each flight he was impressed by “endless,” “great” and “interminable flat lands” (13, 211, 188). One decade later Gaylord P.

Harnwell saw the same landforms beneath when was approaching Moscow by plane: “Our view extends over large stretches of forest with some cultivated land, all apparently rather flat” (17).

It is not surprising that the writers juxtaposed unknown landscapes with those in their native country, as the territory of the United States has extensive flat areas. Edmund Wilson remarks: “We think in America that Kansas is flat, but you have to go to Russia to know how flat the earth can be” (329). To William O. Douglas it seemed that he was “back on the Great Plains” when he reached Siberia (6). And Gaylord P. Harnwell, while flying from Stockholm to Moscow, compared Scandinavian and Russian territories, noticing that the latter was “rather more like the United States – wilder, with woodlands and pasture and tilled fields” (17).

The variety of the scenery did not escape the attention of the writers. A number of accounts are to be found in Wilson’s travelogue. On the way from Leningrad to Moscow, the writer was “absorbed by a totally new landscape: forests of slim straight pines and birches with fine white stems,” which he metaphorically called “hirsute” (190). Once Wilson was taken by one of his friends to the countryside in the vicinity of Moscow, and there he saw quite a different scenery: a river, “grassy banks,” meadows and bushes (260). On another occasion, not far from the capital, he again observed something completely new: “It is hard to find words for this countryside: loose, level, untrimmed, running to wilderness. The groves of wild wispy trees produce a peculiar delight and yet elude the grasp of the mind, as the landscape is free from cultivation” (231). In the Volga area, which is not completely flat, Wilson travelled by steamer along “a formless river” from Gorky to Ulyanovsk, and on the way he perceived “fields of yellow grain” (308), “[t]he eternal flat green shores” and “low pelted hills” (318). There the writer discovered similarities with the sky in the United States – “white clouds which seem painted in relief on the blue, as in the skies of the American Southwest” (318). William O. Douglas depicted a state farm near Barnaul, in West Siberia, which was similar to “the rolling land of northern Minnesota and southern Canada” (94). Barnaul is situated not far from the Altay Mountains, and this area is hilly, with numerous ponds, rivers and streams. The writer noted the trees growing there: beeches, which were spread in the ravines, and pines; the latter were similar to “the jack or black pine of [the American] Far West” (94).

The unusual and non-typical features of the landscape are worth mentioning. On the way from Helsinki to Leningrad, when the plane was flying very low, John Steinbeck was touched by the post-war marks: “Once in the air, the scars of the long war were apparent on the ground – the trenches, the cut-up earth, the shell holes, now beginning to be overgrown with grass. And as we got nearer and nearer to Leningrad, the scars became deeper, the trenches more frequent”

(12). Likewise, the writer refers to the shell-torn ground in the chapter about Stalingrad (121). Two years after the tragedy, there were still numerous ruins and traces of war in the European part of Russia.

The feelings which the Russian landscape evoked in the travellers were not incontrovertibly positive. Theodore Dreiser, who lambasts various aspects of Russian life throughout his book and manuscript, found the Siberian and Don Basin terrains not very attractive: “[...] and God, how bleak and windswept these places are!” (*DLR* 15). John Steinbeck, in his peculiar humorous manner, complained about the way from the Moscow airport, which was “miles and miles from the city, and the road [went] through pine forests, through farms, and through endless potato and cabbage patches” (15). Only Edmund Wilson, who held a favourable attitude towards Russia from the beginning of his journey, found something pleasant even in Russian geography: “I can understand how people become fascinated with Russia: the old ambiguous borderland between the West and the East, uncharted, unsurveyed, undelimited, unplowed, unmastered, unaccountable till now to civilization” (224).

As can be seen from the above descriptions and extracts, the American travellers were impressed by the vastness and flatness of the Russian territory. The writers mentioned steppes, forests, fields and bodies of water as typical features of the Russian landscape, and they pointed out to numerous similarities between Russian and American sceneries.

5. Conclusion

This paper has aimed to investigate how Russia and Russian people are represented in American travelogues from the late 1920s to the late 1950s. With the help of the comparative method within the frame of imagology, an effort has been made to answer the research question about the mechanism of forging images by American writers. The original supposition was that an image is a hybrid of the individual’s preconceived notions and first-hand experiences. Yet the process of image-creation appears to be more complicated, and several additional factors have to be taken into account. First, the preparation for the journey determines one’s knowledge of the destination country; in this respect it has been necessary to ascertain whether the authors undertook their trips spontaneously, as did Theodore Dreiser and Gaylord P. Harnwell, or were well ‘equipped,’ as in the cases of Edmund Wilson, John Steinbeck and William O. Douglas, who had read about Russia beforehand (and Wilson had even learnt the language). Furthermore, it has been important to consider the writers’ preliminary attitudes towards the Soviet Union:

thus, Wilson and Douglas held favourable judgements, Steinbeck and Harnwell were neutral in expressing their views, and Dreiser was biased against Russians. The next factor is the duration of the tour, as lengthy periods of time provide more opportunities to encounter local phenomena. Moreover, the longer the experience, the higher is the probability that an image, which is a dynamic construct, will be modified by the observer. Harnwell was in Russia only two weeks; Dreiser, Steinbeck and Douglas travelled for two to three months; Wilson had an opportunity to journey for almost half a year, and it is in this case that developments and changes of images can be well traced. Next, the purpose of going abroad has to be taken into consideration. In this regard Harnwell's trip was related to his professional field, Douglas visited the Soviet Union mostly as a tourist, and Dreiser, Wilson and Steinbeck combined tourism with their literary work. Finally, one of the most decisive factors refers to the opinions of those individuals whom the travellers met and spoke to during their journeys. It is connected with the previous two, namely, the duration and the purpose of the tour. In the travelogues in question the authors communicated with English-speaking people and with Russians, with the latter either in English or with the help of their interpreters. Dreiser, for instance, apart from interviewing the Russian luminaries, was exposed to the opposite points of view of other Americans he met in Moscow; Wilson had opportunities to talk to American and British persons, as well as to Russians either in English or Russian; Steinbeck held numerous conversations with common Russian people and American correspondents; Douglas spoke to Russian officials and to Americans who helped him put together the parts of the Russian 'mosaic'; Harnwell talked to Soviet scientists and to both Russian and American officials of high rank. Thus, the current study has shown that the constellation of the following elements had an impact on the formation of images by this or that writer: preconceived notions and attitudes (which were determined by the length and intensity of the preparation for the tour), autoptic experiences, and conversations with Americans, Britons and Russians in the Soviet Union (determined by the purpose and the duration of the journey).

The analysis of the five books and one manuscript has revealed that the writers confirmed certain prejudices against Russia which circulated in American society at the time. Such stereotypes as *the love of arts and literature*, *non-pragmatism*, *inefficiency*, *backwardness*, *lethargy*, *endurance*, *misery*, *autocracy*, *tyranny*, *megalomania*, *obscurantism*, *mistrust*, *collectivism*, *affinity with Asia*, *isolation* and *ambiguity* were most frequently touched upon by the authors. It should be emphasised that Theodore Dreiser was prejudiced against Russia from the start of his tour, and his views were extremely ethnocentric and even racist. Edmund Wilson, although a sympathiser of the Soviet experiment at the beginning of his visit, gradually

discovered more and more unfavourable facets of Russian life as his long journey proceeded. John Steinbeck tried to be unbiased, but his conversations with other Americans influenced his opinions, and several negative stereotypes found their reflection in his travelogue. William O. Douglas, contrary to the previous writers, expressed fewer unfavourable judgements. Gaylord P. Harnwell had a short trip and, therefore, forged sparse stereotyped images. It is to be noted that certain character traits appear to be enhanced in the books by Douglas and Harnwell, resulting in such features as *efficiency* and *enthusiasm*. This diachronic change can be explained by a different political atmosphere in Russia during Khrushchev's thaw in comparison with the oppressive Stalin regime. Other non-stereotypical features highlighted by the writers include *hospitality*, *work ethic*, *thoroughness*, *competitiveness*, *indecisiveness*, *non-punctuality*, *fear of responsibility*, *liberal attitude towards women* and *culinary extravagance*. Besides, all five writers thought that the Russians were *nice* and *pleasant* people. In addition, the travellers accentuated the contrast between Moscow and the provinces, the centre being wealthier, the periphery being happier. The positive features set in opposition to the negative traits prove the imagological postulate that every nation is a nation of contrasts. Moreover, almost all the authors confirmed the stereotype that the Russians were a people of contradictions; extremely ambiguous conclusions were drawn by Theodore Dreiser, who was influenced by his conversations with American persons with different viewpoints.

As regards the question of the persistence of certain features of the Russian national character through the centuries, the answer can be found in the travelogues by Steinbeck and Wilson. By providing several extracts from the texts written by European travellers of the seventeenth century, Steinbeck affirmed that *mistrust* and *suspicion* had been distinguishing characteristics of the Russians for at least three centuries. Wilson, who had a good knowledge of Russian history, pointed to the sustaining stereotypes of *autocracy* and *backwardness*. To conclude, particular attributes of the Russian national character persisted irrespective of the epoch or the political system, be it tsarism or communism.

One of the objectives of this thesis was to investigate which aspects of Russian life the writers paid most attention to and what images they thus constructed. All the authors focused on such predictable material aspects, usually noticed by tourists, as the appearance of the people, clothing, food, eating habits, housing, hotels and overall living conditions. Regarding appearances, Dreiser was extreme in his judgements and resorted to the image of the locals as 'Asiatics,' implying that they were a mixture of Europeans and Asians. Clothing in the Soviet

Union, from the point of view of the travellers, was predominantly poor and tasteless. Further on, the writers concentrated on communal flats and poor housing conditions of many Russian families, assessing them according to American standards. In the matter of Russian food, the authors' opinions ranged from severely critical to exceptionally praising. In general, all five travellers agreed that most material things in the lives of Russians were of worse quality in comparison with American ones.

As far as Russian arts and literature are concerned, the writers concurred that these forms of expression were as important for Russians as bread and material possessions. The travellers also pointed to the educational and propagandistic purpose of the theatre and literature and to the limitations of artistic freedom. It is worth noting that the availability of American books for Russian readers was of special interest for Dreiser, Wilson and Douglas.

The Russian landscape was depicted by the authors as remarkably vast and flat; compared to the even lands of the United States, it was one of the few things which reminded them of their home country. It is telling that images of material, physical, cultural and geographical aspects tended to be generated on the basis of immediate personal experiences of the travellers.

The writers repeatedly compared Russians with their own nation and ascribed such character traits to Americans as pragmatism, practicality, efficiency, punctuality, responsibility and resistance to autocracy. Dreiser stressed that US citizens overestimated material things in their lives, and Wilson was aware of American racism. Thus, the imagological postulate that hetero-images are always accompanied by and linked to auto-images and that negative characteristics are predominantly attributed to the other can be substantiated.

It remains to be pointed out that not every facet of Russian life has been tackled in the analysed texts. Additional studies may be suggested for such aspects as religion, education and the acquisition of goods and services. Furthermore, American auto-images and the influence of the Russian journeys on the authors' consecutive writings and worldviews might deserve a more extensive investigation.

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7. Appendix

Abstract

This thesis aims to examine images of Russia in American travelogues by Theodore Dreiser, Edmund Wilson, John Steinbeck, William O. Douglas and Gaylord P. Harnwell. The time span from the late 1920s to the late 1950s refers to the Soviet era, which was characterised by contentious relations between the US and the USSR. Five books and one published manuscript are analysed with the help of concepts and methods of imagology, the research question being whether the writers described Russia on the basis of their preconceived notions or personal experiences. The analysis of the selected texts focuses first on the construction of the Russian national character, and then on the representation of those aspects of Russian life which drew the writers' attention: appearances and clothing, food and eating habits, housing, arts and literature, and the landscape. This study shows that the authors confirmed both positive and negative hetero-stereotypes of Russia, some of which proved to be persistent, irrespective of the epoch or political system; other stereotypes, however, underwent reversals even within three decades. Occasional contradictory opinions of the travellers reflected the ambivalence of the Russian national character. Additionally, by comparing specific phenomena in the Soviet Union and the United States, the writers revealed and sharpened numerous auto-images. The main conclusion drawn is that the authors forged images not only by resorting to their preconceived knowledge and to autoptic experiences but also to the judgements of the Russian and American individuals who they communicated with during their journeys. These three components, in their turn, were influenced by further important factors: the preparation, the duration and the purpose of the trip.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit Bildern von Russland in den Reisebüchern von Theodore Dreiser, Edmund Wilson, John Steinbeck, William O. Douglas und Gaylord P. Harnwell. Die Zeitperiode zwischen dem Ende der 1920er und dem Ende der 1950er Jahre liegt in der sowjetischen Ära, in der die Beziehungen zwischen den US und der UdSSR angespannt waren. Fünf Bücher und ein veröffentlichtes Manuskript werden mit Hilfe von Konzepten und Methoden im theoretischen Rahmen der Imagologie analysiert. Die Forschungsfrage ist, ob die amerikanischen Schriftsteller Russland anhand vorgefasster Meinungen und Stereotypen oder ihrer persönlichen Erfahrungen dargestellt haben. Die Analyse geht auf die Konstruktion des russischen Nationalcharakters ein und bezieht sich auf jene Aspekte des russischen Lebens, auf denen der Fokus der meisten Verfasser lag: Aussehen und Kleidung, Lebensmittel und Essgewohnheiten, Unterkünfte, Kunst und Literatur, und die russische Landschaft. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Autoren manche verfestigten Heterostereotype von Russland, sowohl positive als auch negative, die von der Epoche oder dem politischen System unabhängig waren, bestätigt haben. Andere Stereotype haben sich im Laufe von dreißig Jahren allerdings geändert. Die verschiedenen Sichtweisen der Reisenden ergaben sich vermutlich aus der Ambivalenz des russischen Charakters. Durch den Vergleich sowjetischer Phänomene mit entsprechenden in den Vereinigten Staaten haben die Schriftsteller zahlreiche amerikanische Eigenbilder aufgedeckt. Hauptresultat der Studie ist, dass die Fremdbilder der Autoren nicht nur durch vorgefasste Kenntnisse und eigene Erfahrungen geprägt wurden, sondern auch auf Grund von Meinungen russischer und amerikanischer Personen zustandekamen, mit denen die Verfasser während der Reisen sprachen. Diese drei Komponenten wurden wiederum durch die Vorbereitung, Länge und den Anlass der Reisen beeinflusst.