

REENTRY SHOCK: HISTORICAL TRANSITION AND TEMPORAL LONGING IN
THE CINEMA OF THE SOVIET THAW

by

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Nostalgia is the longing for a lost, and often substantially reimagined, time or place. Commonly regarded as a conservative impulse available for exploitation by hegemonic forces, nostalgia can also be a source of social questioning and creative inspiration. This dissertation examines the ways in which nostalgic longing imports images and ideas from memory into present discourse and infuses works of art with complication, contradiction, and ambiguity.

In the early 1960s, emboldened by Nikita Khrushchev's cultural Thaw, many Soviet filmmakers engaged both personal and social memory to craft challenging reflections of and responses to their times. These filmmakers reengaged the sundered spirit of the 1920s avant-garde and reimagined the nation's artistic and spiritual heritage; they captured the passing moments of contemporary history in a way that animated the

permanent, productive, and sometimes stormy dialogue between the present and the persistent past.

Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba* (1964), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966, released 1971), and Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate* (1961, released with changes in 1965 as *I Am Twenty*) were planned in the anxious years surrounding Khrushchev's fall, and the films mark a high point of Thaw-era cinematic audacity. Each film is epic in scope; each deploys temporal longing to generate narrative ambiguity and dialogue between historical epochs. The films are haunted by ghosts; they challenge the hegemony of the "now" by insisting on the phantom presence of a thousand "thens"; they refurbish old dreams and question contemporary assumptions. The Thaw permitted the intrusion of private memory into public history, and the past became a zone for exploration rather than justification. Easy answers became harder to come by, but the profusion of questions and suggestions created a brief silver age for Soviet cinema. For us, these films offer an extraordinary glimpse into creative life during one of the great, unsung social transitions of the 20th century and reveal the crucial contribution of individual memory in the artistic quest for formal diversity, spiritual inspiration, and ethical living.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This was real life, meaningful experience, the actual goal of all quests, this was what art aimed at—homecoming, return to one's family, to oneself, to true existence.

—Boris Pasternak (1958, p. 164), *Doctor Zhivago*

My nostalgia was for all the silly disappearing Soviet things—for the relationships, plain and simple: for the kitchen conversations; for the smell of reel-to-reel audiotape mixed with cigarette smoke and booze; for being young and having a clear and comprehensible future; for my parents, young and happy; for the heady spirit of household dissidence and its blend of romanticism, danger and hope; for rules of life that are known to all—or, if you will, games that have become entangled with life.

—Andrei Bilzho (2008), “Little Contradictions”¹

Then it's not the past I yearn for, but the idea of a time when everything important has not yet happened.

—Lawrence Raab (1994), “The Uses of Nostalgia”

In the summer of 1993, when I was in my early 20s and already besotted with Russian culture, I had the good fortune to land a job at Mosfilm Studios in Moscow. The history of the studio had captured my imagination from afar, and each day that summer I felt that ghostly feeling one sometimes gets when inhabiting the present of a place whose past one has dreamed about. Whenever there was time, I liked to roam the studio grounds, or rather hover among them, convincing myself I could hear the talking stones.

¹ A note on translation and transliteration: Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Russian sources are my own. For all Russian bibliographic information, I have used the Library of Congress transliteration system. In the body of the text, I have used spellings more customary for the English-speaking reader. I have also omitted hard- and soft-signs for transliterated terms in the body of the text.

Here was a heavy building of beige brick, neoclassical, built to Stalin's tastes, its authority softened by volunteer shrubs sprouting from the rooftop balustrade. Alongside it, a graveyard of rusted out baby-blue studio buses, each grill aged to uniqueness, destroyed in its own special way. There was a traffic light in an alley between soundstages; the lights had been removed; you could look right through it and see the sky. The studio had once been one of the world's great centers of filmmaking. Now on certain days I could walk from one end of the vast grounds to the other without bumping into anything resembling a shoot. For me, a kid from Las Vegas, there was a strangely familiar air to the place—it felt like the hollowed downtown of an American city after the construction of a suburban mall. And the feeling was apt: Russian film fans had gotten their mall—the miles of roadside kiosks hawking cheap pirated copies of Hollywood films, many of them straight-to-video jobs of which I had never seen or heard. Without its once lavish state support, the studio had no way to compete with such masterworks.

My job was to translate, coach dialogue, and occasionally dig holes on the set of what was at the time Mosfilm's marquis project—a Russian-Italian-American joint venture. We were making a Western. Starring an Italian. Filmed chiefly on a military base an hour outside Moscow. Each morning we all came to the studio, boarded one of the less distressed of the picturesque blue buses, and headed for the set. On my first day of work I had taken the Metro to Kiev Station, caught Trolley 34 to the gates of Mosfilm, and showed my documents to the guard. I'd arrived early. I didn't know who to look for, where to find them, or quite how to explain my presence. I knew the history of the studio, but its present, and my present, were something of a mystery. The guard waved me

through. I wandered onto the grounds. And there I did what one does on a film shoot. I waited.

I could have kept waiting all day. There, just inside the gate, was a long row of displays encased in scratched and fogged Lucite—posters of the majestic movies of Mosfilm’s past. Here was Grigorii Chukhrai’s 1959 classic *Ballad of a Soldier*. Over there—Mikhail Kalatozov’s 1957 masterpiece *The Cranes Are Flying*. Eight-thousand miles and eleven time zones from home, I found myself longing for a lost time and place, but it was not a time or place in which I or any of my ancestors had ever lived. In the third year of the bewildering Muscovite 90s, in the heart of the world’s first attempt at a post-Socialist society, I found myself missing a Russia where the chocolate came not from M & M Mars but from the Red October Chocolate Factory, where the soundtrack of the times emitted from the voice box of Vladimir Vysotsky rather than the synthesizers of a Scandinavian globo-pop outfit called Ace of Base, and where the Shock Worker movie theatre on the embankment of the Moscow River was showing *The Cranes Are Flying*. This fantastic daydream made no sense: I had studied the Soviet century, its deprivations, its brutalities both grandiose and audaciously petty. I could not possibly “miss” the Soviet Union. And yet, on that day, in that peculiar way, what could I say but that I missed the place?

In the years since that summer in Moscow, my career as a journalist and scholar has shuttled me between Moscow and Las Vegas several times. I watched as Moscow, for a time, began to resemble Las Vegas in its hurly-burly oligarchic-capitalist growth; I watched with both hope and frustration as Moscow tried to find the elusive golden mean

between private freedom and public spirit. I had no illusions that my beloved Soviet moviemakers of the late 1950s and early '60s—the years of the post-Stalin Thaw—had the answers to the problems of post-Soviet Moscow, 21st-century Las Vegas, or anyplace else for that matter. But the beautiful questions they posed tore through the surface of my present just as they had breached the surface of mid-century Soviet society; the filmmakers' creative engagement with *their* world invited me to perceive *mine* from countless odd angles. And as the years passed, I remained nostalgic for the world of the cinematic Thaw—for its air of openness and youthful risk, for the filmmakers' aesthetic search and their ethical quest, for their open-ended lyricism and their willingness to ask questions without answers.

When I began work on this dissertation, 15 years after I had first set foot on that *pirozhki* western film set, I decided to interrogate my own nostalgia for an age I had never directly experienced: How, and why, did I generate an imaginary vision of that lost world? How does my nostalgia shape my perception, engagement, and creative activity in the present? What is the artistic process of my own memory construction, and how does it build upon the creative processes of the filmmakers who inspired me? I was not looking to generate a grand theory of the era, or to give a comprehensive history. My interest was in the emotional dynamics of authorship in a given place and time, the relationship between creativity, context, and memory. Because of this, I chose to focus not on the whole of the industry's production during the Thaw—there were plenty of films “made-to-order” for commercial or ideological purposes—but on what we might call *auteur*

cinema, films that, even given the collaborative nature of the medium, reflect the personal visions of their directors, screenwriters, and directors of photography.

In the process of examining the landmark films of the era and the lives of the artists who made them, I began to see that my nostalgia was built upon the nostalgia of the filmmakers themselves. Directors such as Mikhail Kalatozov, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Marlen Khutsiev seemed to have encoded their work with ineffable temporal longing. Moreover, it was precisely through this longing that they had created their vibrant, haunting visions of the nexus of private consciousness and public time. What had begun as an investigation of my nostalgia for the worlds created by Kalatozov, Tarkovsky and Khutsiev became instead an investigation of the nostalgia that had created those worlds.

* * *

Nostalgia is the longing for a lost, and often substantially reimagined, time or place. It connects personal recollection with communal memory. In an age of rapid change across a swiftly shrinking planet, individuals and communities are increasingly turning to memory to retain some sense of local identity and cultural integrity, reaching across time to ameliorate the contraction of space. We can expect nostalgia to be an enduring and politically salient feature of the globalized landscape for many years to come. The yearning backward glance may seem—and indeed often is—a conservative impulse, a desire to impose a sanitized memoryscape on messy reality. But in these pages I hope to contribute to our understanding of how nostalgia—temporal longing—can also empower creativity and challenge convention.

To understand the function of temporal longing in shaping personal and cultural identities, we need to examine the ways in which it can be a catalyst for creative reflection on bygone days that, in their essential difference, present a provocative counterpoint to the present. In this dissertation, I explore how yearning immersion in rich memories, sundered pasts, and disappearing moments helped Thaw-era Soviet filmmakers create images that challenged the unambiguous, instrumental, and hegemonic narratives operating in the broader culture. My study builds upon Svetlana Boym's (2001) brilliant division of the usually unitary notion of nostalgia into "reflective nostalgia"—creative engagement with the ambiguous and admittedly unreachable past—and "restorative nostalgia"—desire for a wholesale importation of the forms, concepts, and mores of an idealized past.

The globalizing, digitizing 1990s were not the first time national and local cultures had to cope with totalizing transnational narratives that thumbed their nose at cherished tradition, devalued intimate personal and community memory, and left bewilderment and alienation in their wake. Soviet citizens, in fact, were quite familiar with such narratives. Russia spent the entire 20th century in the midst of one sort of transition or another—fraught moments when one world seemed to be disappearing, another was yet unformed, and ghosts of earlier ages hovered in the cultural ether, ever prepared to haunt or inspire. These pages focus on one of the most hopeful of the century's transitions, the era of cultural and political readjustment that followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and came to be known as the Thaw. This period, which ended with the authoritarian retrenchment of the late 1960s, is a crucial fulcrum in modern

Russian history, an epoch in which both the Soviet regime and the nation's intelligentsia attempted to re-brand Soviet Communism and revive the utopian promise of the October Revolution of 1917.

After years of Stalinist terror, during which fearful idolatry had displaced personal ideological faith as the motivating force behind socialist construction, the Communist Party sought to rekindle the old secular religion. Under Nikita Khrushchev, enthusiasm was to replace coercion; the nation would be built through a divine synthesis of personal inspiration and Party leadership. Khrushchev's program, such as it was, turned out to be piecemeal, conflicted, and inconsistent in its methods, but it irrevocably broadened the range of permissible expression in the Soviet Union. It also shaped a generation of leaders who would, in the late 1980s, put to the test its central unrealized humanistic notion—that socialist progress could be achieved through individual enthusiasm.

From my perspective in early 1990s Moscow, with its vague hopes and concrete pains, its shimmering opportunities and its palpable ethos of every-man-for-himself, the cinema of the Soviet 1950s and 60s seemed not only relevant, but magical: It captivated me with its air of anxious renewal, its fraught meditation on individuality within the public sphere. The landmark films of the era attempt to locate freedom at the intersection of private integrity and public responsibility. This emphasis is in part the result of historical circumstance: The post-Stalin era was fueled by nostalgia for what one might call "imaginary Leninism", for an idealized vision of the 1920s atmosphere of political enthusiasm and creative ferment. (The Khrushchev regime's vision of the Leninist spirit favored heartfelt socialist consciousness, and the artists' vision favored creative

spontaneity. These visions did not always coexist in harmony.) The focus on private embrace of the public good had even deeper roots in the Russian Orthodox principle of *sobornost*, or conjunctivity, which holds that individual uniqueness is desirable precisely for the selfless contribution it makes to the social whole.² Long before the Revolution, Russian artists had seen themselves not simply as the nation's mirror, but its conscience.

The Stalin regime had defied this tradition by denying artists their place as moral ombudsmen; it had anointed them “engineers of human souls” and then proceeded to tell them how those souls were to be engineered. In the late 1950 and early 60s, the artists of the Thaw greeted their expanded freedom as an opportunity to embrace their traditional social role. Aware that Soviet society had fallen far short of its utopian promises, they reacted not with cynicism or resignation but with an energetic quest for the artistic, ethical, and even spiritual, integrity that would help the society fulfill its humane potential. It was a naïve dream, and by the end of the 1960s, with the Soviet authorities long since having demonstrated their strident disinterest in the artists' private visions of public life, a vague sense of Quixotic absurdity hung over the whole project. Perhaps it was this absurdity that I found so endearing, this almost willful capacity to envision oneself as free, and to project that freedom onto the public square.

In an important way, the Thaw was a return home for the Russian arts after a long twilight journey into Stalinist terror. The thematic and narrative conventions of socialist realism did not disappear entirely; nor did the often-arbitrary administrative management

² The classic metaphor of *sobornost* comes from the 19th-century Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov's description of the peasant commune as a choir in which every individual sings with his or her utterly unique voice, and the voices merge harmoniously in a unified social choir (Riazanovsky, 1965, p. 135).

of the culture industry and the careers of the men and women who worked in it. But the change in degree of domination was so significant that it amounted to a fundamental qualitative change in the lives of artists. In the Stalin years, rigid aesthetic discipline was enforced by total bureaucratic coercion: the “cast-iron” screenplay, which, once approved, was not to be changed; the threat of the camps for the ideologically and aesthetically disobedient; the hypnotic thrall of Stalin’s cult of personality; the ever-shifting campaigns against Trotskyism, formalism, cosmopolitanism—all of these kept artists forever off-balance, insecure, far from self, far from “home”.

While Stalin’s aesthetic preferences leaned toward grandiose neoclassicism and traditional Aristotelian narrative, the culture he built was utterly dependent on *one moment in one place*. The secret to life and livelihood was encoded in the very latest vibrations emitting from the old fortress in central Moscow. Authoritative communication began with the radio sign-on *Govorit Moskva*: This is Moscow speaking. Personal memory and idiosyncratic, polyphonic dialogue between eras had no place in this model; how could one long for what was missing when the strictly enforced social teleology of the nation held that nothing could possibly be missing?

The transition from this state of affairs toward one where terror and the cult of personality had been renounced created an opening to memory, a reentry into the polyphonic eddies of Russian cultural history, with all its aesthetic and ethical debates. In the 1960s, the Soviet intelligentsia engaged in energetic polemics around three dualities: fathers and sons, physicists and lyricists, and town and country. The first debate—ostensibly between the dreamy ’60s youth and their hardheaded war-generation fathers—

was a role-reversal reprise of the discourse, immortalized by Ivan Turgenev, between the hardheaded proto-revolutionary sons of the 1860s and the dreamy liberal fathers of the 1840s. The second discussion—which posed the parlor-game question of whether the poet or the particle researcher was more important to the national future—had associative links to the vibrant 1920s discourse on the interwoven roles of science and art in Soviet life. The third polemic was an echo of the 19th century debate between Slavophiles, who sought to build Russia’s future through a revival of the spiritual traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and the social traditions of the peasant commune, and Westernizers, who believed that the future wellbeing of the country depended on its absorption of Western culture and science. In both the earlier times and the 1960s, each of the pairings constituted not a strict dualistic choice, but a sliding scale of adaptations, a field of conversation across space and time.

The Thaw, then, for all its enthusiasm for modernization and the glittering future, represented a return from a culture of the determinate instant, in which regularly updated answers from the center illuminated the artist’s path (the answers were often arbitrary, and the path was tortuous, but it was illuminated all the same), to one in which the past, and individual longing for shards of that past, once again had meaning. Looser bureaucratic management of culture in the Khrushchev years made room for open and fierce debate, from the ideological warfare between Alexander Tvardovsky’s liberal journal, *Novy Mir* (New World) and Vsevolod Kochetov’s conservative *Oktiabr* (October) to the scene at the Manezh exhibition of modern art just outside the Kremlin gates on December 1, 1962, when Khrushchev raged at the young sculptor Ernst

Neizvestny, and Neizvestny raged right back at him and lived to tell the tale (and to continue creating modern art, including Khrushchev's tombstone).³ Paternalistic advice in studio meetings, administrative harrumphing at higher levels, and a situational system of carrots and sticks that included everything from project approval to living space ensured that artists continued to live anxious lives and lead careers subject to administrative whim. But the end of terror, the revival of debate, and the cultural uncertainty as to what exactly art should look like allowed them to continue their always invigorating, sometimes shocking, reentry into Russian history.

* * *

This study is a meditation on the power of temporal longing to inspire creativity. Temporal longing shapes our perception; it pierces the accepted present with splinters of discarded pasts; it can stir convention and transform the texture of the moment, generating complication, contradiction, and ambiguity. Temporal longing calls upon memory, engages idiosyncratic associations, and forges shifting sets of images in the mind's eye. It imports diversity into every moment in time. It layers all that has been lost, learned, and longed for upon the time-space of the present. It constantly redefines that present.

³ The Russian cinema historian Naum Kleiman, a contemporary of Neizvestny's, writes that when Khrushchev thundered his rage at the exhibition, "it was understood that the problem was not 'antisocial abstractionism' but the predictable attempt to tighten the screws in a society newly emboldened after the 22nd Party Congress" at which Khrushchev had continued the de-Stalinizing theme he had introduced at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 (Fomin, 1998, p. 303). The fragility of Khrushchev's position, weakened by the Cuban Missile Crisis and the disappointing results of his agricultural policies, required him to constantly toggle back and forth between anti-Stalinist tolerance and blustery conservative posturing. This toggling had been seen earlier, as when, during the heady early days of the Thaw, Khrushchev had forbidden the publication of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and, after its publication abroad, had forced Pasternak to refuse his Nobel Prize. Many years later, Khrushchev wrote in his posthumously published memoirs that he regretted his rough treatment of Pasternak.

In the early 1960s, Soviet filmmakers, emboldened by Khrushchev's cultural Thaw, engaged both personal and social memory to craft challenging reflections of and responses to their times. They reengaged the sundered spirit of the 1920s avant-garde, reimagined the roots of the nation's artistic and spiritual heritage, and captured the passing moments of contemporary history in a way that made it clear that today is in permanent, productive, sometimes stormy dialogue with an ever-present yesterday.

Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba* (1964), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966/71), and Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate* (1961, released with changes as *I Am Twenty* in 1965) were planned in the anxious years surrounding Khrushchev's fall, and they mark a high point of Thaw-era cinematic audacity. Each of these films is epic in scope; each deploys temporal longing to generate narrative ambiguity and dialogue between historical epochs. The films are haunted by ghosts; they challenge the hegemony of the *now* by insisting on the phantom presence of a thousand *thens*; they refurbish old dreams and question contemporary assumptions. They enable the unpredictable intercourse between disparate images, days, decades, centuries; they replace continuity with contiguity, causality with poetic association. The Thaw permitted the intrusion of private memory into public history, and the past became a zone for exploration rather than justification. Easy answers became harder to come by, but the profusion of questions and suggestions created a brief silver age for Soviet cinema. For us, these films offer an extraordinary glimpse into creative life during one of the great unsung social transitions of the 20th century, and reveal the crucial contribution of individual memory in the artistic quest for aesthetic impact, spiritual depth, and ethical engagement.

I begin this dissertation with an in-depth account of the historical context of the Soviet Thaw, beginning with a description of the cinematic ferment of the 1920s—the object of the immediate post-Stalin nostalgia—continuing with a discussion of the solemn “grand style” of high Stalinism, and concluding with an account of the Thaw intelligentsia’s challenge to the Stalinist synthesis. Next, I discuss my theory of nostalgia and the relevant literature that undergirds it. In chapter four, I offer a case-study analysis of Kalatozov’s *I Am Cuba* (1964), a striking example of nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism that engages both political consciousness and the thirst for formal spontaneity. The film sheds light on the socially crucial symbiotic relationship between idealistic Leninist nostalgia the Khrushchev-era enthusiasm for socialist modernization. The fifth chapter offers an analysis of the intertwining relations between spirituality, materiality, and reflective nostalgia in one of the acknowledged masterpieces of the Thaw, Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Andrei Rublev* (1966/71). In chapter six I analyze Marlen Khutsiev’s *Ilich’s Gate* (1961/65) and delve into his polyphonic layering of history upon the public and private spaces of 1960s Moscow.

* * *

In *I Am Cuba*, *Andrei Rublev* and *Ilich’s Gate* we encounter images that both communicate the reflective nostalgia of their producers and enable the reflective nostalgia of their consumers. We are invited to contemplate the filmmakers’ longings, and to feel our own. Images in these films are in constant conversation with neighboring images, with history, and with us. What makes the conversation unique—even in the ostensibly propagandistic *I Am Cuba*—is that the longing it enables has no prescribed

object. It is ineffable, inchoate, a sentence with an open-ended predicate. Longing itself is the point. These images present us with neither the commercially and ideologically viable directive *Believe in THIS* nor the ostensibly open but empty inspirational canard *Don't stop believing*; instead they send us back to our memories—to our sensations of lived time and lived-in space—with three implicit questions:

How shall I express myself in the world?

What does the material world mean to me?

How am I to live among others?

Reflective nostalgia does not only reopen ancient questions, though. By importing an open-ended past into an unresolved present, it also opens creative approaches to answering them: formal diversity, spiritual connection, and ethical quest.

The films place their emphases differently, but they are united by their insistent raising of these challenging questions, gentle sequels to the accursed questions of the late 19th century, “What is to be done?” and “Who is to blame?” These questions were hardly new to the Soviet 1960s, but they were a revival of the lost art of open-ended asking. I am arguing here that they were precisely the fruit of a productive and creative reflective-nostalgic sense of the world. We often think of nostalgia as meaning that we miss something, but it is worth turning the thought inside out: something is missing. Kalatozov, Khutsiev and Tarkovsky knew that something was missing, and they were humble in their admission that they did not know what that *something* was.

The three filmmakers brought different longings to their art, and different attitudes toward the Soviet inheritance. Kalatozov was born in 1903; his aesthetics and

enthusiasm were forged in the crucible of the 1920s. Kalatozov's films retain an aesthetic and ideological connection with the heroic mythos of early Soviet avant-garde culture, where individual spontaneity, personal bravery, and aesthetic risk went hand-in-hand with earnest support for the Leninist project. For Khutsiev, born in 1925, and Tarkovsky, born in 1932, the ethic of the pre-revolutionary Silver Age and the stormy, vibrant 1920s were mediated by culture, elders, and hearsay; their relationship with the Soviet and Russian past was more nuanced, their longings more distant from mythologies of politics and progress. They had different angles of reentry into Russian memory, and the images they created brought different shocks to the Soviet 60s.⁴

Alexander Prokhorov compellingly argues that Soviet Thaw cinema was built upon the Stalinist trope of the positive hero, and sees Pasternak's Yuri Zhivago as the avatar of the new Thaw positive hero (Prokhorov, 2002). But the Zhivago model of positive heroism is not simply an adaptation but a transformation: Here we have a searcher who does not know what he is searching for, whose destination cannot be pointed out by any learned elder, whose values lack a fixed social roadmap. And we as consumers are not put in the position of readers of a cut-rate whodunit, watching the protagonist grope toward an answer that we already know. Instead we share in the uncertainty, the mystery of stumbling through life. Pasternak's vision is reflective nostalgic, as opposed to the restorative nostalgia that characterized Stalinist popular culture from the late 1930s onward, during the aesthetic ascendancy of what the brilliant architectural and cultural critic Vladimir Paperny (2002) calls "Culture Two"—a

⁴ Kalatozov died in Moscow in 1973. Tarkovsky died in Paris in 1986. In 2010, Khutsiev lives and works in Moscow, where he is seeking funds to complete *Nevechernee*, his film on Chekhov and Tolstoy.

hierarchical, vertical culture in which the answers to all secrets are known completely, but are available only at the summit of the step pyramid where Stalin resides. In the Zhivago vision, man has no complete answers: The wisdom to ask is shared by all and the power to answer is held by none. The structure of moral hierarchy favors those who remember well, live creatively, appreciate space and time, and do not impose their will.

Prokhorov reminds us that the international Zhivago phenomenon of the late 1950s and early 60s was as much a response to the political context of the book's creation and publication as it was to its literary merit. But Zhivago's reflective nostalgic vision was and remains an bracing response to modernity, one that does not reject the motion of time but finds that what is gone is not truly gone if one can use it for the creative and spiritual sustenance of self and the ethical framing of one's relations with community. In a bewildering new world, Pasternak's hero forges a personal and creative vision from the stuff of a lost one. The self he creates is both old and new; it does not countenance the difference between the two—ethical and spiritual existence does not unfold in categories of old and new.

As Anatoly Zubok details in his magisterial *Zhivago's Children*, Pasternak, one of the last great torchbearers of the pre-revolutionary and 1920s intelligentsia, passed his ethic along to the young cultural intelligentsia of the Khrushchev era, and, far from greeting it as antiquated, they built their worldview around it. I argue that what was most energetically alive in this worldview was its creative, reflective nostalgia, its longing search for the ghostly continuation of roads long since cut off. And I believe this contribution is relevant beyond Pasternak's era and the borders of his homeland. We in

the West have made a religion of obsolescence. This church even has a name for its enemies: Luddites. The longing backward glance is in disrepute among both corporate technocrats and political progressives. By all means, we'll get out of the way if we can't lend a hand—but has anyone checked where we're going? And is it possible that the things we miss—the things that are missing—might help us find our way?

In his famous meditation on Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus," Walter Benjamin (2007b) sees in the posture of Klee's angel a metaphor for the tragedy of man within history.

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (pp. 257-258).

The image of blind travel through oncoming time is chilling, particularly if we consider that the stuff at the angel's feet—at *our* feet—is truly debris. But while it can never be made whole, it can be made *valuable*. After all, the geography of Benjamin's meditation has the winds of progress blowing not from the future—which would, of course, blow the angel backward—but precisely from the past. In other words, this *debris* is all we have from which to construct tomorrow, or even today. As we fly through time, backward and blind toward what's next, each of us has no choice but to perceive the world *through* the debris—through a lens we forge from the crushed crystalline fragments of our

remembered (or re-membered) past. To look through this composite substance, fashioned from lost yesterdays and dim remembrances, is to penetrate the terrifying blankness of the oncoming day. The backward glance gives the hollow present form and value and resonance in time. But because of the vagaries of memory and longing and the percussive collision with the *now*, the past-present we glimpse is always new, and always surprising. We are dazzled, disturbed, and renewed by it. This feeling, generated at the impact point of past and present—of longing, hope, and fear—is essential to creativity, individuality, and progress. It is our reentry shock upon return to a dimly known, perhaps even loved, but suddenly unfamiliar world.

Kalatozov, Tarkovsky, and Khutsiev continued Pasternak's legacy of idiosyncratic memory, of forging a perceptive lens from the shards of a shattered past. They created works that transcend the political and cultural epoch in which they were produced. They interrogated their own longings and generated bracing image-questions about aesthetic selfhood, spiritual connection with the material world, and ethical existence among others. They asked answerless questions in a language beyond knowledge. They invite us to do so, too.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT:

THE ROOTS AND REALITIES OF THE SOVIET CINEMATIC THAW

1. Longing and Leninism

In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart (1993, p. 4) argues that nostalgia is always utopian, narrative, intolerant of history, and “prelapsarian”; this is a reasonable criticism of *restorative* nostalgia, but it dispenses entirely with *reflective* nostalgia, which resists the narrative yoke, meditates upon the inchoate richness of the sad past, and invites old visions to spur new thinking. It is true, though, that both types of nostalgia deal selectively with history, and that sometimes they revise it with fantastic visions conjured up by longing. The ahistorical tendencies of nostalgia are often troubling; the fixed mythologies of restorative nostalgia in particular, with their attachment to narratives of lost purity, can short-circuit not only healthy social change, but also sincere individual feeling about the world and one’s place in it. Selectively historical nostalgia, however, can also be a boon to creative thought, individual liberation, and community progress. As a case in point, the first and perhaps most formidable tool in the Thaw intelligentsia’s efforts to leave Stalinist thinking behind was a nostalgia for a demonstrably imaginary Leninism.

The ironic generation of the Soviet 1970s would later mock, the Thaw intelligentsia's idealistic neo-Leninism—its longing to reconnect with the energy, relative openness, and lost promise of pre-Stalinist communism—for its naiveté, its conviction that Soviet socialist utopia had been scuttled by Stalin alone, and could still be constructed on Leninist principles (Genis & Vail, 1996). The dissident intellectual Liudmila Alexeyeva (1990) writes movingly of how her early Thaw awakening was buttressed by intensive reading of the Leninist classics—and how, after she had read enough, she came to the sad realization that the Source of All Answers did not have a satisfactory answer for her. But the childlike, principled idealism of the 1960s was a uniquely productive kind of self-delusion: not self-delusion to *avoid* the inconvenience of an honest and principled life, but precisely self-delusion to *inspire* an honest and principled life on the terms available within the culture. The fairy-tale framing of Leninist idealism was actually a clever and inspired choice for the Thaw generation, which had few other viable inspirational wellsprings to look toward. In practice, the Thaw intellectuals cleverly used Leninist idealism as an umbrella with which to import European social-democratic ideals into their lives, along with the aesthetic ideals of the global intelligentsia in film (glimpsed in Italian neorealism and the early films of the French New Wave), literature (Hemingway became an icon⁵), and architecture (the Thaw

⁵ Vladislav Zubok (2009, pp. 174-175) writes that Thaw intellectuals went so far as to adopt Hemingway's fashion sense—the rough-knit turtleneck, the beard, the pipe. Hemingway had been popular in the Soviet 1930s, but the onset of high-Stalinist solemnity left no place for his prickly bohemian independence, and after 1945 his works were removed from libraries and bookstores. A new translation of Hemingway's novels had hit Soviet bookstores in 1959, and both his work and his biography—his independent nature, his leftist idealism, his anti-Stalinism—had resonated with the Thaw's young romantics. For the writer Vasili Aksyonov, whose mother Yevgenya Ginzburg had spent 18 years in the camps (1937-1955), Hemingway and American jazz provided an inspirational path away from Stalinism and toward the independent

brought a renewed interest in both homegrown 1920s modernism and the Western European high modernism of Le Corbusier).

In the pages that follow I will trace the development of Soviet cinema from its origins in the stormy and creatively vibrant 1920s through the emergence of the solemn “grand style” under Stalin to the birth, maturity, and conclusion of the Thaw. Along the way I will pay particular attention to the ground-breaking contributions of Mikhail Kalatozov, the early biographies of Marlen Khutsiev and Andrei Tarkovsky, and the culture of individuality and creativity fostered at the All-Union State Cinema Institute (VGIK) by the old master Mikhail Romm. In the history of Soviet Cinema, with its tantalizingly blocked pathways, its fits and starts and long periods of intense social control, we find many of the roots of the temporal longing that fueled Thaw filmmakers.

2. The Leninist Inheritance

It will be a free literature, because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed and careerism, will bring ever-new forces to its ranks. It will be a free literature because it will serve not some satiated heroine, not the bored ‘upper ten thousand’ suffering from fatty degeneration, but the millions and tens of millions of working people—the flower of the country, its strength and its future.

—V.I. Lenin, “Party Organization and Party Literature,” 1905 (Lenin, 1975b)

These musings on the proper literature for the Bolshevik Party were to become far more relevant when twelve years later there rose a Bolshevik state. Could Lenin’s hopes

thinking that had cost his mother so dearly. With his *Ticket to the Stars* (*Zvezdnyi bilet*, 1961), Aksyonov became a pioneer of Thaw-era “youth prose,” which was a kind of cousin to the screenwriting of Genadii Shpalikov, Khutsiev’s co-writer on *Ilich’s Gate*. Shpalikov, in turn, was a great admirer of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the poet-hero of the Soviet 1920s who had committed suicide in 1930. During the Thaw there was tight inspirational interlinking between the Silver Age inheritance of Blok and Akhmatova (which had bridged the pre-Revolutionary era with the Lenin years), the 1920s revolutionary spontaneity of Mayakovsky, and the independent and improvisational nature of Western jazz and literature. The great tug-of-war of the Soviet 1920s was between revolutionary spontaneity and disciplined Party consciousness; the Western modernism that made its way into Thaw culture was a sort of associative gateway to the stomped-out spontaneity of the Soviet 20s—the martyred heroes Mayakovsky and Hemingway became posthumous brothers in arms.

for the literature of his party be realized in the literature of his nation? What form was the literature for the millions to take? What sort of writings would both educate and entertain such a vast number of people? And how was the new literature to reach the three-quarters of the population who remained illiterate?

The answer was simple. The literature for the millions was cinema.

But Soviet cinema would have to go through years of financial, ideological, and artistic strife before it would settle on how it was to take up this mantle. For the Soviet film industry, the 1920s—full of vibrancy and brilliance though they were—were a decade of aimlessness and quarreling. Profitable, nonideological films and inaccessible, unprofitable radical avant-garde films vied for supremacy, but neither fulfilled the needs of the regime. Not until the end of the decade did a resolution of this problem begin to take shape.

How are we to explain the mess Soviet cinema got itself into? Lenin left the artists of his nation with a straightforward mission: create art featuring revolutionary content, but in a form that could be understood by the millions. Cinema had a special place in this formula. Because it was a silent, visual medium, it could cross all the ethnic and educational boundaries and bring the Communist message to the multicultural, three-fourths illiterate Soviet populace. For this reason, Lenin once told Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Enlightenment, “Of all the arts, for us cinema is the most important” (Taylor, 1979a, p. 44).

Other Soviet oligarchs were similarly bullish on film. Trotsky said it was “the best instrument for propaganda,” and Stalin declared that it was “the greatest means of mass

agitation.” For the leaders of the new revolutionary state, the beauty of film lay in its vast potential as a tool of propaganda, defined by Richard Taylor as “the attempt to influence the public opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values” (Taylor, pp. 28-29). The ideal Soviet cinema would convey the Bolshevik message so clearly that workers and peasants from Kamchatka to Kiev would leave the movie theatre convinced the Communists were correct.

In a non-ideal world, however, ideology and clarity were joined by a third necessary element of Soviet film: profitability. Starting in 1921, the industry was to be self-supporting, which led it to import a good number of popular, politically incorrect foreign films, as well as to devote a good portion of domestic production to what came to be known as “bourgeois” (non-ideological) films (Thompson, 1992, p. 19). Lenin himself gave this program a blessing in a January 1922 directive to the Commissariat of Enlightenment indicating that there should be two types of cinema:

- (a) entertainment films, especially for publicity purposes and their receipts (without, of course, any obscene or counterrevolutionary content),
- (b) under the heading ‘From the Life of the Peoples of the World’, films of a particularly propagandist content, such as the colonial policy of the British in India, the work of the League of Nations, the starving in Berlin, etc., etc. (Taylor, 1979a).⁶

So there were to be propaganda films *and* foreign and domestic entertainment films for profit, which would not necessarily be ideological (but which would go under

⁶ In the same document, Lenin distinguished between documentary and feature films. Later, the legend of the “Leninist proportion” arose, with documentarists arguing that Lenin wanted 75 percent of films to be documentaries and 25 percent to be features—feature films being divided into the “entertainment” and “propaganda” categories listed above. Taylor states that there is no evidence that Lenin ever stated such a proportion between documentary and feature films (Taylor, 1979a).

the scissors of Glavrepertkom, the state censorship office, to remove “counterrevolutionary” material). This was a departure from Lenin’s shrill cry of 1905, “Down with non-partisan writers!” but he spoke then merely to a Party and now to a whole nation and a new industry which, unlike literature, could not function without great sums of money (Lenin, 1975b).

Nonetheless, the revolutionary times precluded the passive acceptance of such a compromising policy as the one Lenin mapped out in 1922. Both radical artists and left-wing Party members objected to the distribution of “bourgeois” and foreign films. The radical artists took revolutionary art policy one step further than Lenin at his most audacious ever had: not only should old *ideas* be abolished in film, but so should old *forms*. Indeed, the cinema attracted radical young artists because it was a comparatively new form of expression, a revolutionary mechanical form. In postrevolutionary Russia, where progress was inextricably linked with technology, it seemed to the artists that the cinema—which, after all, owed its existence to technology—would be most useful if mechanical principles were utilized in filmmaking. Film form should be efficient, precise, and functional—that is, aided by its *efficiency* and *precision*, the new cinema would serve the *function* of preparing the Soviet public for the coming age of socialism and industrialism. Thus was the current artistic trend of Constructivism (an ethos holding that art should reflect the practicality and efficiency of the machine age) particularly applicable Soviet film (Kepley, 1992). The cinema should not merely be photographed plays. In form as well as content, it must be *new, revolutionary*.

In the view of radical young avant-garde artists like Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, and Dziga Vertov, this new form was to be attained through the use of *montage*—quick editing of film sequences, creating a juxtaposition of images that would have the most powerful effect on the viewer. The meaning of a shot came entirely from its relations to the sequences surrounding it. The problem was that such avant-garde methods, adopted for their functionality, did not serve their function. Rather than leaving common viewers with indelible ideological lessons, avant-garde films tended to confuse them. In later years, the radicals' overreliance on montage would be denounced as “formalism”—emphasizing experimental form over proper socialist content—and, more dramatically, as “the dictatorship of the scissors” (Youngblood, 1991, p. 139).

The young radicals had different conceptions of montage and how it should be utilized, and they would battle amongst themselves throughout the 1920s over whose theory of filmmaking was to be *the* model for Soviet film. Combativeness and intellectual intolerance were endemic to the makeup of these artistic radicals. They had come of age in revolutionary times and enlisted on the side of Marxism-Leninism, an ideology that claimed to have all the answers. For the young filmmakers, this meant enlisting in the thrilling struggle for a utopian tomorrow, casting aside the staleness of yesterday, the world of their parents. The artists were not students of Communist ideology—it was enough for them simply to imbibe the spirit of times in which militancy denoted progressiveness. And on the *terra incognita* of Soviet cinema, each radical hoped to define himself as the high priest of celluloid progress, the filmic Lenin. Thus, in their artistic philosophies, the radicals tended to reflect the omniscient pretensions and polemic

vigor of Marxism-Leninism. Like Lenin in politics and Mayakovsky in poetry, a young filmmaker-theorist (a uniquely Russian phenomenon) would often claim that *his* way of doing things was the *only* way of doing things. Nevertheless, the young radicals had much in common—most importantly, their general outlook on life and art: out with the old, in with the new.

In the first years of the Soviet regime, the cultural life of the old Empire was in a state of upheaval. In order to gain some sort of control over the nation's independent cultural organizations, many of which had sprung up in the wake of the revolution, the Government had in April 1918, formed under the umbrella of the Commissariat of Enlightenment a “section of independent cultural organizations,” to be called Proletcult (Leyda, 1983, p. 125). Peopled as it was by some of the most hyperactive minds of a hyperactive era, Proletcult was a tumultuous and troublesome—if wholesomely revolutionary—grouping, and in 1920, as Proletcult held its conference in Moscow, Lenin sought to offer some firm guidance. The message of his October 8, 1920, Draft Resolution for the Proletcult was unequivocal:

- 1) All educational work in the Soviet Republic of workers and peasants, in the field of political education in general and in the field of art in particular, should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat for the successful achievement of the aims of its dictatorship, i.e., the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the abolition of classes, and the elimination of all forms of exploitation of man by man.
- 2) Hence, the proletariat, both through its vanguard—the Communist Party—and through the many types of proletarian organizations in general, should display the utmost activity and play the leading part in all the work of public education.

3) All the experience of modern history and, particularly, the more than half-century-old revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of all countries since the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* has unquestionably demonstrated that the Marxist world outlook is the only true expression of the interests, the viewpoint, and the culture of the revolutionary proletariat.

4) Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this direction, inspired by the practical experience of the proletarian dictatorship as the final stage in the struggle against every form of exploitation, can be recognized as the development of a genuine proletarian culture.

5) Adhering unswervingly to this stand of principle, the All-Russia Proletcult Congress rejects in the most resolute manner, as theoretically unsound and practically harmful, all attempts to invent one's own particular brand of culture, to remain isolated in self-contained organization, to draw a line dividing the field of work of the People's commissariat of Education and the Proletcult, or to set up a Proletcult "autonomy" within establishments under the People's Commissariat of Education and so forth. On the contrary, the Congress enjoins all Proletcult organizations to fully consider themselves in duty bound to act as auxiliary bodies of the network of establishments under the People's Commissariat of Education, and to accomplish their tasks under the general guidance of the Soviet authorities (specifically, of the People's Commissariat of Education) and of the Russian Communist Party, as part of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship (Lenin, 1975a, pp. 424-425).

The resolution was a good illustration of Lenin's outlook on culture in general, not just on the Proletcult. The culture of Communist Russia was to be revolutionary in content, but not in form, and was to operate within the general confines of Soviet authority.

* * *

The cinema of the 1920s didn't shape up in accordance with Lenin's tastes. First, there was the stubborn persistence of bourgeois-type films and bourgeois views on film. A 1922 issue of *Cinema Life* demonstrates this problem. In one column the magazine proclaims that cinema should be a propaganda vehicle; in the next it sings the praise of prerevolutionary starlet Vera Kholodnaya, star of *The Woman who Invented Love* (Youngblood, 1991, pp. 2-3).

At the same time, artistic movements blossomed which advocated the complete liquidation of traditional art. For example, the constructivist, ultra-leftist journal *Cinema-Foto* argued furiously against NEP, against "bourgeois cinema," against art:

Be firm and courageous, believe, for not all have enough courage, not all have enough faith, *under the temptations of NEP*, many leave. But of those who remain, from those who enter, comes a real *cinema-army*, an army of iron will and great knowledge. Let the army forge ahead, let the army believe in itself, in its work, and in the idea of precise cinematography and victory. The army will conquer (Youngblood, 1991, p. 5).

The radical filmmakers used similar rhetoric. Dziga Vertov was the founder of a film "collective" the members of which called themselves *Kinoki*, or Kino-eyes. The Kino-eyes believed that the future of Soviet cinema lay exclusively in documentary, non-acted film. Vertov and his comrades proselytized passionately for this point of view. The 1919 *Kinok* manifesto proclaims:

WE proclaim the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and the like, to be leprous.

- Keep away from them!
- Keep your eyes off them!
- They're mortally dangerous!
- Contagious!

WE affirm the future of cinema by denying its present.

“Cinematography” must die so that the art of cinema may live.
WE call for its death to be hastened (Michaelson, 1984, p. 7).⁷

The *Kinoki* hadn't seen much progress by 1923. In their “Resolution” dated April 10, they declared, “As was to be expected, the first new Russian productions shown recall the old ‘artistic’ models just as Nepmen recall the old bourgeoisie.” Shortly after this resolution, Vertov published a series of statements, including the following:

The death sentence passed in 1919 by the *kinoki* on all films, with no exceptions, holds for the present as well. The most scrupulous examination does not reveal a single film, a single artistic experiment, properly directed to the emancipation of the camera, which is reduced to a state of pitiable slavery, of subordination to the imperfections and the shortsightedness of the human eye.

We do not object to cinema's undermining of literature and the theatre; we wholly approve of the use of cinema in every branch of knowledge, but we define these functions as accessory, as necessary offshoots of cinema.

The main and essential thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film.
 We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space (Michaelson, 1984, pp. 13-14).

Another radical film “collective” of the 1920s consisted of nineteen-year-old Leonid Trauberg, seventeen-year-old Sergei Yutkevich, and sixteen-year-old Grigorii Kozintsev. This group flush with the confidence of youth, proclaimed that for their “Workshop of the Eccentric Actor” (FEKS), “art” was the circus, the advertising poster, and Charlie Chaplin's backside. The future of Russia's cinema for the masses lay in the Russification of American “vulgarity” (Youngblood, 1991, p. 11)

⁷These lines are from Vertov's “We: Variant of a Manifesto”. Vertov's real name was Denis Kaufman. On the eve of the revolution, he took his new name. “Dziga” was an onomatopoeic representation of the sound of a camera crank turning. “Vertov” was derived from the verb “vertet”—to rotate (Michaelson, 1984, p. xviii).

Operating on a slightly more sophisticated level, but likewise preaching their ideas to the exclusion of all others, were Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein. Kuleshov, upon returning from the Civil War, had established an experimental studio in Moscow where he and his “collective” (which included Vsevolod Pudovkin, who went on to become another of the great directors) acted out “films without film,” due to the lack of supplies. In the course of his experiments, Kuleshov—also drawing from American film forms⁸—developed a unique concept of montage, often called “The Kuleshov Effect.” A frame, which should be kept simple and direct, derives its whole meaning from the frames that surround it. If this context is changed, the meaning of the frame to the viewer changes. “The content of the frames themselves,” he wrote, “is not as important as the joining of two frames of differing content and the manner of their joining and interchange” (Taylor, 1979b, pp. 135-136).⁹ Kuleshov was slightly less bombastic than Vertov in promoting his theory, but his words nevertheless bear the mark of the revolutionary. Cinema should have no attachments to stage drama; it should be an art of its own, based on montage:

⁸The American film had the greatest affect on the Soviet avant-gardists was D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. There is a legend that Lenin saw the film and hoped to hire Griffith to run the Soviet film industry (Leyda, 1983, pp. 142-143, 150); Kuleshov not only learned the rudiments montage from American films, but also gained some ideas on film content. Kuleshov believed the hero of a film should be “brave, quick, and strong,” as in American Westerns, that the Soviet Union should have adventure films in which “the strong people overcome all obstacles and enemies,” and that the film should have a happy end, so that the audience is rewarded for its sympathy for the hero (Taylor, 1979b, p. 136). In its bare rudiments, this looks ironically like Socialist Realism, but, of course, the latter was defined not only by its basic plot elements but also by its strict adherence to the Party line of the moment and, therefore, by the totalitarian times in which it was practiced.

⁹ Kuleshov also developed the concept of the *naturshchik*, a performer who, rather than using false, theatrical gestures, would use his natural movements to perform, and therefore “had to know the significance if his own movements in their particular context” (Taylor, 1979b, p. 137).

Actors, directors, designers, write on your banners in clear letters the most important commandment of the cinema: the inspiration of the cinema should be cinematographic inspiration.... In the cinema such a means of artistic thought is the rhythmic alternation between separate immobile frames or short sequences with an expression of movement, i.e., what is technically known as montage. Montage in the cinema is the same as the composition of colours in painting or a harmonic sequence of notes in music (Taylor, 1979b, p. 135).

Meanwhile, Eisenstein, working in theater at the time, devised his “montage of attractions,” which was later applied to his films:

An attraction ... is any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator.... These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion (Eisenstein, 1988, p. 34).

When one considers that Eisenstein was later attacked as a “formalist,” one whose fetish for form overshadows his dedication to conveying an ideological message, it is enlightening to see that, for Eisenstein, the very purpose of innovative form was to convey ideology.

While the artistic radicals competed with each other to be the father of the new Soviet cinema, moderates, as typified by the editorial board of the journal *Cinema Gazette*, set aside arcane questions of “revolutionary” form. They were concerned with the ideological propriety, comprehensibility, and profitability of films. They sought a new cinema, non-bourgeois, even revolutionary, yet viewer-friendly and profitable. In the

early- and mid-1920s, they must have had real doubts as to whether such a cinema would ever rise from the ashes of the revolution (Youngblood, 1991, p. 12).

By the late 1920s, there was in the film world a veritable war between two clashing legacies of Lenin. One legacy was symbolized by War Communism on the political front and by the remarks of “Party Organization and Party Literature” on the cultural front. The other legacy was embodied by NEP in politics and by the 1922 directive on culture. Both legacies had gone farther in the Soviet cinema than Lenin would have hoped: First imported, then domestic “bourgeois” films dominated the Soviet market, while radical films took on such recondite forms that few Soviet workers and peasants bothered to see them. In Hegelian parlance, Soviet cinema had a thesis (comprehensible, profitable “bourgeois” films) and an antithesis (inaccessible, unprofitable radical films). All that remained was to find a synthesis. This synthesis was gradually hammered out between 1928-35. With a shove from the state, both bourgeois and radical avant-garde film fell onto the ash-heap of history. In their place rose simple scripts, positive heroes, and clear-cut Party messages. Socialist realism, ideologically correct and accessible to the millions, was the synthesis.

* * *

What is striking, and instructive for a student of Soviet memory, is the electric excitement with which those who were young filmmakers during the 1920s would later look back at the factional, conflict-ridden world of their youth. The era, for all its missed opportunities and infighting—perhaps *because* of its missed opportunities and infighting—emerges as a magical period of experimentation, energized debate, and

youthful competition. It was a world in which people barely past their teens could presume to be inventing “new” culture, in which they could regularly dream up wildly playful ideas with some reasonable hope that the ideas could actually entering into the discourse of the new national culture. Whatever socialist slogans might have been in circulation at the time, the real watchwords of the young revolutionary artists were “Let’s put on a show” and “Let’s see what sticks.” The old film industry had abandoned ship, and for a time the kids were free to frolic and fight without adult supervision.

It was an environment in which the teenage Lev Kuleshov could become a sort of rabbi of cinema for other young filmmakers hoping to master and transform the art. And even when young artists worked with older authorities, it was in a spirit of co-discovery. Sergei Yutkevich, a standout actor of the 1920s who later became a renowned director, recalls how he and Eisenstein became friends as teenagers studying under the theatrical visionary Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose slogan called for “a theatrical October”. Eisenstein and Yutkevich met with Meyerhold in a small hall in a newly communal mansion on Novinsky Boulevard in Moscow, where Meyerhold and his family lived. “A minute and creaking wooden lift led to a classroom in which were lines of plain school desks,” writes Yutkevich. “This classroom and a small hall were the entire premises of [Meyerhold’s State Theatrical Studios].” Yutkevich and Eisenstein felt that Meyerhold’s scientific approach to theatrical mis-en-scene, and his devotion to body mechanics, went against the naturally spontaneous nature of his character.

It was fascinating to watch this born improviser trying to inculcate in us a system which, according to his propositions, would leave no place for anything unplanned. After a few lessons, Eisenstein confided to me that he had

had enough of drawing circles and squares and that he intended to wake Meyerhold up a bit and force him to unveil the true *cuisine* of his creation. When the bell announced the end of the lesson, we asked Meyerhold if he would stay behind a bit to answer some additional questions... He was in no hurry to leave and willingly stayed behind... Our curiosity excited Meyerhold. He warmed to it and started to tell us earnestly and in great detail a host of astonishing things. Thus it was that bit by bit we managed to divert our teacher from his taste for *schemas*. His classes were fed by an irresistible fantasy (Marce, et al., 1973, pp. 23-24).

Equally evocative of the era—and revealing about the nostalgia the era could inspire—are director Grigorii Kozintsev’s memories of revolutionary Kiev in 1919, when he was 15 years old:

Men wearing the red star on their caps and their fur hats liberated Kiev. These men had chased out the occupiers and the bandits; they stopped the pogroms and the summary executions; they established the People’s Government. And immediately, in the revolutionary town, every kind of art began to flourish. Men full of go and jollity took over the tables and the chairs of the officers of the Ukrainian Department of Arts. Innumerable committees, sections and subsections discussed projects for producing all the great classic plays of the world, for organizing popular festivals and for decorating the squares in honour of the first of May. Theatre studies and art studios proliferated. Everyone took to art with passion, and with passion people taught it. What was not taught? There were lectures on the troubadours and minstrels, on the Baroque art of the Ukraine, and on the Japanese theatre...

Kozintsev went to high school by day and to painting classes with Alexandra Exter by night. Later he joined up with an agit-train, creating plays to inspire the Red soldiers at the revolutionary front.

I tried for the first time to mount an agit-sketch, a short propaganda play. It was performed in a goods wagon, with

the open doors providing the stage. The soldiers (our audience) sat on the ground in front. That was real happiness! After the narrow formulas of school, these words which spoke of the majesty of labour, of social justice, of the final and decisive struggle seemed to come from some marvelous story-book. And the thing that was most amazing in this new life was that I, a mere lad, could take part in it, work for it (Marce, et al., 1973, p. 92).

In the light of memory, the rivalries that had complicated the emergence of Soviet cinema become for Kozintsev the summit of competitive comradeship, and the diversity of approach that had once seemed problematic is revealed instead as creative fecundity.

Reflecting on the near-miracle that his generation of dreamy and stubborn young artists had built the Soviet cinema from the ground up, Kozintsev writes,

What is good is that each one of us participated in this construction in his own fashion, and followed his own path. What is still better is that we all of us felt the community of the effort undertaken. No one worked in isolation; each could hear the pickaxe of his neighbor. Blow after blow, in the most diverse areas, the land ceased to be fallow and barren (Marce, et al., 1973, p. 108).

3. Before the Thaw

By a Party Central Committee decree of April 23, 1932, a single, centralized Union of Soviet Writers was formed. Membership in the Union was officially voluntary, but, as Gleb Struve writes, membership “was too closely bound up with all sorts of material and other advantages” to be seriously regarded as voluntary. The decree indicated that members of the Union were to accept the general policy of the Party and the Soviet Government, support socialist construction of society, and, most significant, adhere to the literary method of socialist realism. The aim of this method was defined in the Union statute as “the creation of works of high artistic significance, saturated with the

heroic struggle of the world proletariat and with the grandeur of the victory of Socialism, and reflecting the great wisdom and heroism of the Communist Party ..., the creation of artistic works worthy of the great age of Socialism” (Struve, 1971, pp. 253-256).

Katerina Clark (1985) argues that socialist realism was based on a canon of socialist favorites including Gorky’s *Mother*, Ostrovsky’s *How the Steel Was Tempered*, Gladkov’s *Cement*, and Furmanov’s *Chapayev*. These exemplars were trumpeted by voices in high places, financial inducements were held out to writers who wrote in the tradition of these works, and a literary institute was founded in the early 1930s to train young writers to emulate the canonical works (Clark, 1985, p. 4). These and new exemplary works continued to be cited at congresses of the Writers Union, sometimes by title, sometimes by author, and sometimes by the name of a positive hero whose type should be reproduced in future works (Clark, 1985, p. 261). Clark argues that in any type of socialist-realist work, be it about a great leader, a general, or a worker, there is a positive hero who overcomes all obstacles to perform a task for the public good, in the process developing “consciousness”—an awareness of his or her place in the great plan of societal progress. Really, “consciousness,” as opposed to its anarchic opposite, “spontaneity,” amounts to selfless support for “actions or political activities that are controlled, disciplined, and guided by politically aware bodies” (i.e., the Party) (Clark, 1985, p. 255). Through inexorable effort on behalf of a consciously mapped out plan, society would blossom into Utopia. Struve argues that, whereas bourgeois realism had a “more or less negative attitude to reality”, socialist realism was “fundamentally optimistic” (Struve, 1971, p. 257). Thus, socialist realism, both in its plot restrictions and

in its fundamental nature, imposed severe restrictions on what the artist could express and how he could express it.

Through the 1930s and 40s, creative exuberance ebbed and flowed in Soviet cinema. Even as the avant-garde was in the final stages of its destruction, the end of the First Five Year Plan in 1933 brought the Soviet Jazz Age, a brief outpouring of popular song and cinema that was largely over by the end of the dark year of 1937, the high point of Stalin's terror. Stalin had used the December 1, 1934 murder of the popular Leningrad Party Secretary Sergei Kirov as a pretext to launch his purges, and as the bloody decade progressed in the camps of the Far East and the basements of Moscow's Liubianka Prison, Soviet culture shored up the superstructure of coercion and discipline through the creation of Stalin's personality cult. The high modernism of the avant-garde and the highjinks of the Jazz Age were replaced in music, cinema, and architecture with high solemnity (Stites, 1992) (Paperny, 2002). Stalinist architecture was neoclassical, Stalinist music was sanitized folk and canonical Russian classical composition. Stalinist theatre and film had rigidly traditional dramaturgy—positive heroes, comprehensible plots with clear beginnings, middles, and ends, unambiguous antagonists—and a studied, solemn attitude of socialist consciousness and Soviet patriotism. This did not mean that the quality of the work was necessarily low—many of the Stalinist principles were the flip side of Hollywood precepts, and Stalinist cinema had its blockbusters, from *Peter I* to *Volga Volga*, that are beloved to this day. But it did preclude formal experimentation and, just as important, it rejected outright any indeterminacy in plot, atmosphere, or ideology. The world of these films was clear and heroic and ostentatiously self-assured.

After a period of liberation during the Great Patriotic War, when cinema operations were displaced to Alma-Ata and a certain benign neglect reigned in the film industry, the Stalinist synthesis reached its most intense and limiting phase in the postwar years. During these years, which became known as “the period of few pictures,” studios were expected to produce only masterpieces; only proven masters were to make these films. In the broader culture, Stalin’s lieutenant Andrei Zhdanov was waging a withering attack on “rootless cosmopolitans”—that is, Jewish intellectuals—and a grandiose restorative-nostalgic nationalism was adopted as state policy. The generally liberating Russian nationalism of wartime—a breath of organic culture after the canned Soviet statism of late-1930s Stalinism—was replaced with a crippling xenophobia, and the 1946 Zhdanov’s edict had as their goal precisely to wipe out the supposed Western influences that had seeped into the Soviet Union during the war. During the period of few pictures, young filmmakers waited on the sidelines, doing secondary tasks, brimming with experiences of childhood in the ’20s and ’30s, of participation in the Great Patriotic War, fearing that their tales would never be told.

Irina Izvolova (1996) has written brilliantly on the prevailing discourse of the period of few pictures.

At the start of the 1950s, Soviet cinema was a sort of monolith, achieved in the formation of the so-called “grand style.” “Grand” here means “[all-inclusive], unified style”, excluding the existence of small and, in general, any other styles. The development of cinema as a “terrain of ideas” had ended. Soviet cinema never did find [everyday] reality very interesting; it was attracted to the ideal. Within this ideal existed cinema itself... Everyday and cinematic reality changed places. Cinematic reality became the truer of the two. Whatever had just been put on film took on the

status of a historical fact. In this cinema, the image and the fact become unified and impossible to sever from one another. . . . What remains outside the frame should not exist, and this means that it does not exist. There are no invalids, no ration cards, no lines, no dark stairwells and basements. (p. 77).

This was not, Izvolova argues, varnishing reality. The cinematic reality had a logic of its own, and in late Stalinist society that logic superceded the logic of the naked eye's perception of the unmediated world. Seeing in this way was a reasonable adaptation to postwar Soviet life. One learned to embrace solemnity as the highest register of social affect. The greatness and purity of the hero was the cinematic residue of the Soviet dream. "Man on the screen is great and monumental," writes Izvolova. "He is already not a man, but a demigod. Within 'the grand style' he is first and foremost an embodiment of the sacred Word" (p. 78).

In such a style, as Yevgeny Margolit (2001) writes, nature and atmosphere could not exert force on their own; they could not spontaneously challenge and perhaps even defeat the demigod; they could not enter into an equal dialogue with him. Monumental man had a handle on his environment, and in the socialist grand style his mastery was not to be challenged. This mastery was at the very root of Soviet ideology. "Soviet philosophy is a philosophy of social titanism," write Nicholas Berdiaev (1960) in *The Origins of Russian Communism*. "The titan in it is not the individual but the social whole. For it even the laws of nature are not binding." In the Soviet philosophy, writes Berdiaev, these laws can be changed by will, and the notion that they cannot be changed, and that man can be subject to *them* "is regarded as an idea which belongs only to bourgeois science and philosophy...

Soviet philosophy is in opposition to the enlightened materialism of the eighteenth century. For it everything is controlled not by enlightenment of thought, not by the light of reason, but by the exaltation of the will, the revolutionary titanic will. Philosophy should not only take cognizance of the world but it should re-make the world; it should create a new world (p. 150).

The cinematic masterworks of the Thaw would break with the grand style by challenging man's mastery of both nature and atmosphere, from the assault of the unforgiving wilderness on the geologists in Kalatozov's *The Unsent Letter* (1959) to the quiet way in which the flow of street life seems to possess Khutsiev's characters—and the films themselves—in *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956), *Ilich's Gate* (1961/65), and *July Rain* (1966).

In the years of the grand style, though, the ethic of social titanism reigned supreme, and was applied to Russian history and national memory. A superficial Russian patriotism was encouraged in the art of the late 1940s and early 1950s. There were biographical books and films about forgotten 19th century scientists, designed to show that history's great innovations do not come from the West, but from Russia (and Soviet Communism, by implication, is another in this great line of innovations). Meanwhile, anti-American spy films began appearing. The point of the works of this era was not to put people in touch with the true meaning of their national identity, but rather to expunge any positive feelings they might have toward the liberal-capitalist West (Treadgold, 1981, pp. 424-426).

This art was as far from the anti-rational, anti-materialist beliefs of the 19th century Slavophiles as imaginable. The historical works were about the matter, not the

spirit, of history. And works about contemporary Russia picked up where they had left off before the slight wartime liberalization: This art was to serve the five-year-plan; it was to depict the New Soviet Man and Woman, whose purpose in life was to march without hesitation toward material progress and the Communist future—man as a piston in the great materialist engine. The complexities and weaknesses, the private joys and sufferings of the human heart had no place in this equation.

But such art, it became clear, was no art. On April 7, 1952 *Pravda* published an article attacking the current sad state of the film industry. The lack of three-dimensional characters was lamented, the lack of correspondence between the mediated and unmediated worlds (Cohen, 1974, pp. 226-227). With Stalin's death in 1953, the roiling substrata of Soviet culture began to shake the surface. The horrific trampling that took place as bewildered mourners rushed to see the Great Man as he lay in state seemed to signify a psychological turning point for Russia. Things could not go on as they had when the tyrant lived. Ironically, it was the bloody MVD director Lavrenti Beria who emptied many Siberian prisons at that time (releasing not only the wrongly persecuted, but also many a hardened criminal—this is depicted in Alexander Proshkin's *The Cold Summer of '53*, a Gorbachev-era film). Beria likely had his own reasons for this act—but the image of people *leaving* prison instead of just going there had to have had an effect on the Soviet people. The arrest of Beria in late summer added to the air of change.

Around that time, young audience members at a reading asked the poet Olga Bergholz to read them some contemporary lyric poetry. She searched her mind, but she couldn't think of any. She decided to look through the Soviet literary magazines in search

of poems that dealt with the human heart. She couldn't find any. She described the state of Soviet poetry:

In a great many of our lyrical works the most important thing is lacking: humanity, the human being. I don't mean there are no human beings in any of these poems. Indeed, there are operators of bulldozers and steam shovels; there are horticulturalists all carefully described, sometimes well and even brilliantly described. But they are described from the outside, and the most important thing is lacking in all these poems—a lyric hero with his own individual relationship to events and the landscape (Crankshaw, 1959, p. 101).

At this time, Grigorii Malenkov, part of the scrum of high officials struggling for the mantel Stalin had left behind, was departing from the Stalinist tradition by putting an influence on the production of consumer goods. It was a material policy change with spiritual implications: People, to put it grandly, were starting to matter again. In addition, he made some cautious negative statements about the personality cult that had taken shape around Stalin. Meanwhile, the confused post-Stalin “collective leadership” of Malenkov, Beria, Nikolai Bulganin, Khrushchev, et al. created throughout the Communist world the impression of weakness at the top. Revolts began in Eastern Europe, most notably in East Berlin. There was an uprising at the Vorkuta prison camp in Siberia. Meanwhile, Soviet artists continued to grow bolder (Treadgold, 1981, pp. 436-463).

Alexander Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novy Mir*, published his poem proclaiming that Soviet artists had failed to uphold their responsibility to truth and humanity. Vera Inberg of Leningrad said frankly that nobody read Soviet poetry and nobody ever would so long as it told only of “the same old dam, the same old steam shovel.” At the October,

1953 congress of the dramatists' section of the Writers' Union, playwright Sergei Mikhalkov—Andrei Konchalovsky's father—said Soviet audiences had been “taught to see on the stage that which departs from the truth of life, from the real difficulties, misfortunes, joys and sorrows of living Soviet people.” He added, “The divergence of dramatic literature and reality is almost compulsory” (Crankshaw, p. 104).

In the October edition of *Znamya*, Ilya Ehrenburg published an article that merits quotation at length:

An author is not a piece of machinery, registering events. An author writes a book, not because he knows how to write, not because he is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and may be asked why he has published nothing for so long. An author does not write a book because he has to earn a living. An author writes a book because he finds it necessary to tell people something of himself, because he is pregnant with his book, because he has seen people, things, and emotions that he cannot help describing...that is why I cannot understand some critics when they blame such-and-such a writer: he has not written a novel about the Volga-Don Canal, about the textile industry, or about the struggle for peace. But would it not be better to reproach another author, who has written a book, although he felt no spiritual compulsion to do so and could have quietly left it unwritten?...

In pre-revolutionary times an author's life was not an easy one, and in Chekhov's letters there is mention of how the editors of a newspaper or magazine would order a story from him. But even the most impudent of editors refrained from suggesting to Chekhov the subject of his story. Can one imagine Tolstoy being given an instruction to write *Anna Karenina* or Gorki being ordered to write *Mother*? (Crankshaw, 1959, p. 105).

In late 1953, composers Aram Khachaturian and Dmitry Shostakovich spoke out for the right of the artist to “independence, boldness and originality” (Treadgold, p. 442).

In December, writer Vladimir Pomerantsev wrote an article for *Novy Mir* titled “Sincerity

in Literature.” Here he frankly advised writers: “Don’t think about prosecution ... Be independent” (Crankshaw, p. 106; Treadgold, p. 442; Zubok, 2009).

In January, the organ of the Writer’s Union, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, responded.

Pomerantsev, the paper argued,

claims that the degree of sincerity—that is, the directness of things, must be the first test. No, the first test for the Marxist has been and will continue to be the evaluation of the ideological-artistic quality of the work. Thus, under close scrutiny, the basis of the article is seen to be false (Crankshaw, p. 107).

This statement, wrote the contemporary American observer Edward Crankshaw, was not a rejection *per se* of the trend toward humanism in Soviet literature. “It told the artists of the Soviet Union that they could be as human and personal as they liked, even that preoccupation with ordinary human values and conflicts would be encouraged—provided only that in the last resort the validity of the Leninist exegesis was not questioned.” This, Crankshaw quipped, was like telling Copernicus he could make “as many fascinating discoveries as he liked ... provided only that he did not demonstrate that the earth was not the centre of the universe” (p. 107).

But the Soviet artist still had far more breathing room than before, even as the liberalization slowed somewhat in 1954. In that year the novel that gave the era its name, Ilya Ehrenburg’s *The Thaw*, was printed—not without difficulty—in a small edition. Floodgates were not exactly opening. But the melting ice was allowing a trickle of “new thinking,” to use a Gorbachevian phrase, into public life.

Meanwhile, the authorities, who wanted a flourishing literature and had realized that literature without the personal element was lifeless, attempted to harness the Thaw to

help expose corruption and other “survivals of the past” and “relics of the capitalist mentality.” Writers would be allowed to show the seamy side of life. Satire, thus, would be encouraged to an extent. Khrushchev (p. 185) would later specifically praise Sergei Mikhalkov (father of the future filmmaker Andrei Konchalovsky) for his satires. Several writers, such as the dramatists Gorodetsky, Marienkhof, and Zorin, depicted problems not simply as tangential to Soviet society, but rather as closely related to its very nature. This was more than the leadership had bargained for, and all three were vigorously attacked in articles and speeches (Crankshaw, pp. 108-109). Even faced with such opposition, the artists did not give up hope. Many somehow had faith that a real, Stalin-style crackdown was not forthcoming. Exile and death did not await the man who spoke out of line, even if censure did.

4. The Thaw

(a) Beginnings

The dates assigned to the Thaw vary. An argument could be made that it began percolating in the months after Stalin’s death; indeed, a case could be made that the cinematic Thaw had its roots in a decision made while Stalin was still alive to increase film production, thus creating opportunities for young filmmakers who had had few opportunities to work during the period of few pictures. But the consensus beginning of the Thaw proper is February 25, 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev made his “Secret Speech” to the 20th Party Congress and enumerated some of Stalin’s crimes. In the years that followed, the dismantling of Stalin’s “cult of personality” was an avowed, if erratically executed, official policy goal. The liberalization of early 1956 was followed by

a chill after the Soviet Union's crushing of the Hungarian Revolution in November, but subsequent waves of Thaw and chill arrived each year of Khrushchev's leadership, ebbing and flowing with historical events.

The Moscow International Youth Festival in summer 1957, the launch of Sputnik the same year, and Yuri Gagarin's ascent into orbit in 1961 were all attended by relative cultural liberalization; the Cuban Missile Crisis and the collapse of Khrushchev's Virgin Lands agricultural policy were followed by tighter cultural policy and bluster from on high. The wavering approach had much to do with Khrushchev's need to maintain his power within the Politburo. In times of good national news relative liberals such as culture minister Ekaterina Furtseva had substantial power (she was Marlen Khutsiev's booster during the making of *Ilich's Gate*); during times of policy failure, conservatives such as Leodid Ilichev and Mikhail Suslov held sway (they are generally assumed to have influenced Khrushchev's attack on *Ilich's Gate* at his meeting with intelligentsia at the Kremlin on March 8, 1963, when Khrushchev was still reeling from the previous autumn's Cuban Missile Crisis).

In the years after the Secret Speech, films broke new ground with their "humanism". Lev Kulidzhanov and Yakov Segel presented an unvarnished depiction of daily life in *The House Where I Live* (1957). In *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957), director Mikhail Kalatozov painted a deeply emotional, nonjudgmental portrait of a woman manipulated into marrying another man while her sweetheart is off at war. In *Ballad of a Soldier* (1958), director Grigorii Chukhrai portrayed a soldier as a boy with a boy's concerns—love for his mother, interest in a pretty young girl he meets—rather than as a

politically conscious fighting machine. His heroism is almost accidental—and it is not that heroism, but his simple kindness that is his most important trait. In 1961 Khrushchev, speaking at the 22nd Party Congress, reiterated his desire to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union. That same year, Chukhrai brought out a new film, *Clear Sky*, which dealt with the touchy issue of a Soviet pilot who had been a prisoner of war to the Nazis returning home only to face Stalinist persecution.

(b) The decline and after

These advances notwithstanding, Khrushchev had no intention of allowing an overall liberalization in the arts; there was only to be a partial, cautious liberalization, and its purpose was to aid his policies. Now and again during his years in office he harshly warned artists who acted as if they were “free”; this included a direct attack on Romm in a June 21, 1963 speech to a plenary meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee (Khrushchev, 1964, p. 219). Having renounced Stalinist terror, Khrushchev envisioned a society sustained by the heartfelt Communist enthusiasm of its citizens. A cultural scene dominated by blatant falseness and lifeless stereotypes would have little chance of generating such enthusiasm. Thus Khrushchev wanted more frankness and humanity in art. He did *not* want a general cultural freedom in which artists functioned outside Party authority and could work as easily against his needs as for them. And he was not unwilling to oppose those who failed to espouse the kind of enthusiasm he wanted.¹⁰ This

¹⁰ In the cultural sphere, this opposition tended to be limited to menacing verbiage. Of course, state censorship continued—the boundaries of the permissible were broader than under Stalin, but culture was far from free. And in some instances, harsher methods were used. Boris Pasternak was given a choice when he received the 1958 Nobel Prize for literature: Turn the award down or leave the Soviet Union. Pasternak turned the award down. The Thaw years also saw Joseph Brodsky exiled and writers Valery Tarsis and Alexander Esenin-Volpin confined in mental hospitals. But harsh penalties were the exception rather than

was clear from Khrushchev's reaction to the abstract art on display the Moscow exhibition "Thirty Years of Pictorial Art," which he and other Soviet leaders visited on December 1, 1962. "We won't spend a kopeck on your art," Khrushchev raged.

Just give me a list of those who want to go abroad, to the so-called "free word." We'll give you foreign passports tomorrow and you can get out. Your prospects here are nil. What is hung here is simply anti-Soviet. It's amoral.... History can be our judge. For the time being, history has put us at the head of this state and we have to answer for everything that goes on in it. Therefore we are going to maintain a strict policy on art.... Gentlemen, we are declaring war on you (Liehm & Liehm, 1977, p. 213).

The leadership's conservatism was also instrumental, as we shall see, in the rejection of Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate* in 1963.

* * *

In October 1964, Khrushchev fell from power. He had often talked tough, but generally acted gently in dealing with his country's artists. At first it appeared that the new regime of Leonid Brezhnev would continue with a policy of liberalization in culture.^{11*} It was not to be. In September, 1965, a literary critic named Andrei Siniavsky was arrested. In February, 1966 he and writer Yuli Daniel were tried and sentenced to

the rule in the cultural world of the Thaw (Treadgold, 1981, p. 458). They had been the rule in Stalin's day, not just for dissidents, but for anyone who stepped, seemed to step, or was rumored to have stepped outside the bounds of Stalinist discipline. A harsh penalty in Stalin's era meant death or internment in the camps—which also usually meant death. The point is not that the Soviet Union suddenly became relaxed and free under Khrushchev. It did not. But it *was* a markedly different place than it had been under Stalin; the artists sensed this and time and again tried to go beyond what Khrushchev was willing to accept.

¹¹ Several events led to this impression. Poet Anna Akhmatova, who had had long difficulties with the Communist regime, was honored on her 75th birthday in 1964. Sergei Esenin, whose works had been suppressed for decades, was posthumously rehabilitated in 1965 to commemorate what would have been his 70th birthday. A book of Boris Pasternak's poems was published in June, 1965, with a complimentary introduction, ironically enough, by Andrei Siniavsky (Treadgold, 1981, p. 473).

seven and five years hard labor, respectively, for publishing abroad works critical of the USSR. It was, writes historian Donald Treadgold, “the first significant instance of penal action against intellectuals since the death of Stalin” (p. 474). More trials, more arrests, more repression followed in the ensuing months and years. Full-scale Stalinist terror was not reborn, but there were, in any case, hard times ahead for many Soviet artists and intellectuals. The Thaw was coming to an end.

Some have argued that the end had come with Khrushchev’s ouster. The editors of *Kinomatograf Ottepeli (The Cinema of the Thaw)*—a post-Soviet three-volume set of essays, memoirs, and documents—designate the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 as the end of the Thaw. Others make the case that in cinema the Thaw lingered on into the early 1970s. But any attempt to assign hard dates to the Thaw are inevitably exercises in convenience. The Thaw was less an era than the dream of an era, endangered from the start but enduring all the same. By the mid-1960s, the dream was already slipping away, but in the absence of a renewal of Stalinist terror, its residue endured right up to the final days of the Soviet Union. Many artists continued trying to shape their lives and careers according to the Thaw virtues of sincerity and creative integrity. The transformative years of the late 1950s and early 1960s had set the stage for young filmmakers to engage their own idiosyncratic memories and pursue more unconventional visions in cinema and in life; the authoritarian backlash of the Brezhnev years could hinder this pursuit, but it could not prevent it.

* * *

From the mid-1960s onward, cultural conservatism was a central tenet of Soviet film administration. Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* was suppressed in 1967 not only for "religiosity" but also for violence ("naturalism" in Soviet parlance). But perhaps more important than attacks on such traditional censorship targets as violence and sexuality was the leadership's fear of "difficult," hard-to-understand form. In some cases, this question of form was, perhaps, more important than content in censorship decisions. In 1975, for instance, the authorities nervously discussed *ad nauseum* Tarkovsky's autobiographical film, *The Mirror*, but allowed nearly immediate (though posthumous) publication of one of writer-actor-filmmaker Vasily Shukshin's last short stories, *Before the Cock Crows Thrice*. Tarkovsky's film had very little direct reference to politics at all, while Shukshin's story was an openly brutal lampoon of the Soviet system in which a three-headed snake represents either the hypocritical "collective leadership" of the day or else a censorship office (it criticizes Ivan-the-Fool's song, asking him to take out the "sexuality" and "cruelty") and in which a band of devils talk bureaucrat-speak and try to break into a monastery so they can defile it.

But Tarkovsky's *Mirror* is singularly complex in its form and deliberately ambiguous in its associations—we are to relate to the images in our own, emotional and spiritual way. It was not so politically threatening in any direct sense, but it was intellectually embarrassing for a top brass that could not understand it. Shukshin's tale, however, is written in clear, folksy Russian. If the satirical elements are missed—which would require considerable naiveté—it is an innocuous fairy tale. And even if the satire is understood, at least it doesn't shame the intellect of an insecure, old-fashioned leadership.

Lenin hadn't thought much of innovative form either, but he was tactful enough not to enforce his tastes.¹² Stalin, however, was insecure before the strange machinations he saw coming off the cutting benches of avant-garde filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, and led a crackdown on "formalism"—the supposed domination of form over content—starting from around 1928. Montage was practically eradicated by 1931. While the Thaw signalled the gradual return of innovative form (an early example can be seen in Sergei Urusevsky's photography for Kalatozov's *The Cranes are Flying*) the authorities' fear of it persisted and later flourished through the reigns of Alexei Romanov (1964-72) and Phillip Yermash (1972-86) as bosses of Goskino, the State Cinema Committee.

Like their 1930s predecessor Boris Shumiatsky, Eisenstein's great rival, these post-Thaw industry leaders reasoned that a hard-to-understand film was not conducive to the image of cinema as a people's art form, an art for the masses. Box-office receipts—which were to maintain the film industry and feed state coffers—were a concern as well. For Romanov, they were a grudging concern—he had no great affection for commercialism in film and was most concerned with a film's morality and its Party orientation (Golovskoy & Rimberg, 1986, p. 13). But Shumiatsky in the 1930s and Yermash in the '70s and '80s enthusiastically embraced audience attraction as a central tenet of film-industry management. Traditional narrative forms would draw an audience,

¹² Lenin wrote to a German revolutionary named Klara Zetkin: "I have the courage to appear a barbarian. I cannot appraise the works of expressionism, futurism, cubism, and other 'isms' as the highest expressions of artistic genius. I do not understand them. I take no joy in them" (Macdonald, 1954, p. 34). While Lenin's ideal concept of truly Soviet art was art that was traditional in form and revolutionary in content, he was, at least during the NEP era of "strategic retreat" that began in 1921, willing to tolerate a wide spectrum of artistic styles. In cinema this ranged from apolitical "bourgeois" films which were conventional in form to avant garde films which were revolutionary in both form and content.

they judged; complex, “incomprehensible” form would drive it away. Both Shumiatsky and Yermash looked to Hollywood for inspiration. They wanted to screen films they believed would be popular and they marginalized those films they believed would fail to draw crowds. This is one reason Shumiatsky had little use for Eisenstein, and Yermash was no great supporter of Tarkovsky. Shumiatsky, however, had more empirical evidence for his stance than did Yermash. Eisenstein’s *The Battleship Potemkin* had received top billing in the 1920s and hadn’t fared well with the audience (Taylor, 1979b, p. 95). By contrast, of Tarkovsky’s films, only *Solaris* was not restricted to small-scale release.¹³ We don’t really know how Yermash-era films such as *The Mirror* or *Stalker* might have done with the audience—the Goskino chief simply assumed they would do poorly.

Thus, in deciding the fate of a film, the authorities looked for ideologically acceptable content, moral conservatism, and formal simplicity. They also tried to anticipate its appeal to the audience. Among these criteria, different items were deemed more important in different eras. But a film’s failure to satisfy the authorities on any of these counts could land it on the shelf, on the cutting room floor, or on a single screen on the outskirts of town. This was true before, during, and after the Thaw.

5. The Dreamers

Despite these consistencies in Soviet arts policy, the relative liberalization of the Thaw was an important—and in many ways irreversible—turning point for artists. The

¹³ It was classified as “first category”—meaning wide distribution—while the remainder of Tarkovsky’s films were “second category”—limited distribution (Tarkovsky, 1993, p. 99). The authorities could also deny a film the opportunity to win a broad audience by refusing to advertise widely or print reviews of the film. These actions could be taken for ideological reasons or simply out of the conviction that the film could not attract an audience, and that it would therefore be a waste to promote it.

authorities' post-Stalin renunciation of terror alone could not help but bring artists an enormous sense of relief. Artists could create without the constant threat of death hanging over their heads. Repression persisted in the days of the Thaw, and intensified in the days that followed. The post-Thaw era saw some artists jailed, some sent to mental asylums, some kicked out of the country, and many denied the right to produce or showcase their work—at least not in the form they wanted to.¹⁴ In addition, those who pleased the leadership were often showered with honors and material enticements, while those who didn't sometimes struggled to make ends meet. But the all-pervasive, bone-chilling terror that had characterized Stalin's reign never returned.

The disappearance of terror and the newfound right to explore the personal made the Thaw a time of personal renaissance for many artists. When a man has lived all his life in an outhouse, the move to a one-room apartment seems grand indeed. The importance of the Thaw, in many ways, lies less in what the government agreed to allow than in the changing expectations and psychology of the artists. Writers, filmmakers, painters and sculptors permitted themselves to dream of artistic freedom, and even began to act on those dreams. New psychological horizons opened for the artists, and these horizons could never be completely closed. Young people just starting out in the arts during the Thaw built the foundations of their artistic identities in an atmosphere filled with possibilities and pervaded by the sense artists must never return to the Stalin-era habits of fearful submission.

¹⁴ Dissident writer Valery Tarsis, who was confined to a mental hospital while Khrushchev was still in power, was permitted by the Brezhnev regime to leave the Soviet Union in February 1966—an apparent attempt by the authorities to deal with dissidence by ridding the nation of dissidents. This form of dispensing with internal opposition was attempted in modified form with writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn in February, 1974—he was forcibly exiled (Treadgold, pp. 458, 474-475).

(a) Romm's kids

The young filmmakers who arrived at the All-Union State Cinema Institute (VGIK) during the Thaw had an opportunity to study at the Soviet Union's most opportune moment for artistic exploration since the late 1920s. They were also fortunate, at that moment, to be studying under masters who understood what had been lost when previous golden age had passed. The goals of sincerity and lyricism, set during the Thaw's gestation by Pomerantsev and Bergholz, seemed within reach; artists came to believe that good citizenship and individuality were not mutually nullifying notions. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, many the filmmakers who would define late-Soviet cinema were studying at VGIK—Tarkovsky, Konchalovsky, Vasily Shukshin, Elem Klimov, Larissa Shepitko, Nikita Mikhalkov, Georgi Danelia, Gleb Panfilov. Many of these filmmakers had works shelved in the post-Thaw era. Several of them were active in the *glasnost*-era reorganization of the cinema industry. What else unites them? They all studied at VGIK under Mikhail Romm.

* * *

In the years following Khrushchev's address to the 20th Party Congress, different arts blossomed with the help of courageous leading figures. In literature, this figure was Alexander Tvardovsky, editor of *Novy Mir*, in which Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was first printed. In cinema, it was Romm, of whom Konchalovsky has said, "The 20th Party Congress was sacred to him. It was his inner guiding light and criterion" (Le Fanu, 1987, p. 4). Romm had been one of Soviet cinema's privileged few. During the 30s he had made his reputation with the authorities with his films *Lenin in*

October and *Lenin in 1918*, both of which portrayed Stalin as much more important in those days than he really was. In the period of few pictures, Romm made two anti-American cold war films as well as a two-part epic on Admiral Ushakov. In the mid 1950s, he made *Murder on Dante Street*, set in France. Artistically, says Sergei Linkov, a former student of Romm and an assistant director on Romm's late masterpiece *Ordinary Fascism* (*Obyknovennyi Fashizm*, 1965), this was the breaking point for the old master. It dawned on Romm that he had just made a film about subject matter of which he knew little and felt even less. His students criticized him harshly, and he took the criticism to heart. This episode, along with the political and attitudinal changes sweeping the land at the time, changed Romm forever (Miller, 1993, 1994).

For six years he did not make a film. He was waiting, learning from his students (among whom during these years were both Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky), and encouraging their native creativity while trying to regain his own. As he writes in *Conversations on Film Directing*:

It is important to recognize what there is of your own in yourself and that which is someone else's. First I must shed the skin of habit before making another film. With years, a person becomes more clever, but, in the selection of his impressions—what he sees, what he hears—there is the influence of his profession and of convention. This is bad (Galichenko, 1991, p. 16).

Romm returned to the screen in 1962 with *Nine Days of One Year*, a deeply heartfelt film about a dying nuclear physicist struggling to balance the demands of work, morality, and love. The film is generally regarded as one of the landmarks of the Thaw.

Romm was nothing if not flexible, a survivor, a man capable of keeping up with the times. After training as a sculptor and then trying his hand as a writer in the 1920s, he

found his way into the most modern of arts, the cinema. Soon enough, he was rubbing elbows with Eisenstein. Romm's first film, *Pyshka* (1934), was the last Soviet silent. His last major film, *Ordinary Fascism* (1967), was a complex meditation on cruelty to which the people themselves give consent. It was a brutally graphic study of Fascism—and, quite likely, Stalinism too—so brutal that Romm begged an actress friend, already an old woman, not to go see it, for fear it would upset her ("Every frame and every minute," 1981, p. 40). This film was thoroughly modern and unblushing in the face of the century's depravity; bloody documentary footage is used in a way reminiscent of documentary sequences in Tarkovsky's 1962 film, *Ivan's Childhood*, sequences which even the young Konchalovsky called "disgusting," railing at his friend and future rival. Later on Konchalovsky would admit that the scenes were brilliant, groundbreaking (Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, 1990, p. 188). Romm had seen this right away—the teacher learned from the student.

According to Linkov, Romm had always longed to express himself sincerely, but had instead opted not to buck the brutal tenor of the times during the Stalin era. Romm's admiration for Lenin was real, so even his Lenin biopics, though politically dutiful, can't be seen as entirely cynical works. (In 1956 he removed the portions depicting Stalin (Liehm & Liehm, 1977, p. 212)). As evidence of Romm's internal urge to sincerity, Linkov points to Romm's wartime film *The Dream* (*Mechta*, 1943). Shot at a time when, due to the government's other considerable worries, film production was more loosely controlled than in the 1930s, *The Dream* takes neither great historical deeds nor the war itself as its subject. Instead, like 1920s "slice-of-life" films and NEP-era novels of city

life such as Ilya Ehrenburg's *On Protochnyi Lane (Na Protochnom Pereulke, 1927)*, *The Dream* focuses on people's internal desires, their small-scale relationships, and their longing to transcend a dreary reality.

Even as Romm returned to shooting government-preferred films in the postwar era, he was advocating the acceptance of iconoclasts into VGIK. For instance, when Shukshin came to his interview looking like the proverbial country bumpkin, the board decided to challenge him.

“Have you ever heard of Nikolai Nekrasov?” they asked Shukshin.

He exploded angrily at the question about the 19th century poet who wrote on peasant themes.

“I had a few drinks with him,” he said. “He was a personal acquaintance.”

Romm convinced the committee to take Shukshin because he was impressed with the man's nerve (Galichenko, 1991, p. 12).

When Tarkovsky walked into the room to greet his VGIK interviewers, they noted his air of intellectual superiority and took a quick dislike to him. Romm, however, saw something special in the young man, and convinced them to let him in. Tarkovsky and Shukshin had these experiences with Romm in 1954—before the Secret Speech, before the *Murder on Dante Street* fiasco.

Romm encouraged his young iconoclasts to find their own path in art. He did not tell them what sort of work to create, but only stressed general humanist principles.

Shukshin relates that he was deeply affected by Romm's teaching that “the main theme of art is the necessity of goodness and knowledge among people” (Shukshin, 1993, p. 419).

In Romm's view, kindness was the key to the regeneration of man. His students were

receptive to this view. It is worth noting that Shukshin's first feature film, *There Lives This Lad* (1965), concludes with a scene strikingly similar to the concluding scene of *Nine Days of One Year*: the hospitalized hero, having had his faith sorely tried, reaffirms his belief in life and love and goodness.

Looking back on his film school years, Tarkovsky said that Romm "taught me to be myself" (Tarkovsky, 1992, p. 120). Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky both admired Romm's ability to let his students explore freely in life and art, to make their own mistakes, enjoy their own successes, and, most importantly, draw their own conclusions. "He would listen; and if he was convinced he'd say, 'Do it!'" Konchalovsky said. Romm, he added, "loved passionate people," and he wanted these people to realize their full potential, to become more than just master craftsmen: "His gift was the emphasis he placed on the student's spiritual development. He was interested in teaching us not only to become filmmakers but to become men" (Le Fanu, p. 4).

(b) *Mikhail Kalatozov*

Irina Izvolova writes that, in the minds of the young film students of mid-1950s, the first great cinematic blow of the Thaw was struck by Grigorii Chukhrai's *The Forty-First* (1956), a remake of Iakov Protazanov's 1927 silent Civil War melodrama. "They say that when Chukhrai first brought his film *The Forty-First* to VGIK, the walls of the institute shook from general wonderment," writes Izvolova. "After the screening, they carried Chukhrai from the hall in their arms" (p. 78). The film's pictorial splendor, the way in which it put tone and texture on equal footing with plot, and the attractive portrayal of the White officer with whom the beautiful Red assassin falls in love all

hinted that indeterminate lyricism was catching up with determinate ideology in Soviet cinema. And it was somehow fitting that the film was based on a 1920s classic, because it seemed to represent the revival of that decade's spirit of plastic innovation. But Izvolova argues that the truly groundbreaking films of the Thaw were yet to come, that Chukhrai's film was not the beginning of a new wave, but a brilliant end to the old heroic mythology.

It was left to Mikhail Kalatozov and his cameraman Sergei Urusevsky to break the glass of the new era. And, as Izvolova brilliantly points out, he discovered his path forward by reaching back:

Kaltozov, whose film *The Cranes Are Flying* became the standard-bearer of Thaw cinema, did not suspect any crumbling [of the old order]. In the most natural way, without any hint at struggle or challenge, he returned to himself. The change in the societal climate gave him the opportunity to return to his own path, which had been artificially interrupted after *Salt for Svanetia* (1930). *The Cranes Are Flying* restored the missing link in his work. People did not immediately realize how revolutionary the flight of these cranes really was ... With its appearance on the screen, *The Cranes Are Flying*, it seems, created an uncrossable gulf between the systems of imagery of Thaw cinema and of the cinema of the pre-Thaw period. In reality, the aesthetic of the film was not new; it was rooted in the 1920s (expressive montage, dizzying angles, black-and-white color scheme), but with this system it presented a new heroine (pp. 79-80).

What impresses Izvolova most about *The Cranes Are Flying* is the integrity of the image of the heroine, Veronika, played by Tatiana Samoilova. Veronika is not a prop for the plot, existing in harmony with the standard requirements of war-storytelling convention. She an independent image, keeping the audience forever on its toes: Rather than supporting the plot convention, her image exists in productive dialogue with it. Her own

idiosyncratic longings cannot be contained within the boundaries of what one should expect from a person in her position. The story in *The Cranes Are Flying*, after all, is unique but not entirely unconventional: Veronika is seduced after her sweetheart, Boris, leaves for the war. She extricates herself from her seducer, but Boris dies at the front. Veronika commits herself to helping the war effort at home, and at war's end she takes in an orphan and commits herself to raising him in Boris's memory. Izvolova writes that the likes of Veronika had never been seen in Soviet cinema.

What turned out the most staggering of all the novelties in *The Cranes Are Flying* was not the plot (though the theme of faithfulness was resolved in a new way), but the way in which the heroine's character did not correspond to the represented progress of events. From the first frames of the film, Samoilova's Veronika strikes us with her lack of resemblance to the usual cinematic image of the positive heroine. Even in the film's frames that radiate happiness and love, when neither Veronika nor Boris knows the misfortunes that lie ahead, there is something strange, unusual, indeterminate in the very movement of the heroine, in her careful walk, so different from the grounded and confident stride of even the most tender and romantic heroines of the early 1950s. There is nothing sealed and completed about Veronika (pp. 79-80).

Veronika, writes Izvolova, "is the first heroine...who cannot be copied." Kalatozov, Urusevsky, and Samoilova had shattered the poetic-political unities of Soviet cinema, where each image fit in its appropriate and harmonious place within the structure of mythological socialist life. Veronika entered a story and through her subtle reactions to it told a counterstory. "She is the first private person in Soviet cinema," writes Izvolova. "And she represents nobody but herself. She fell out of the unified choir, and this is what interests the filmmakers" (p. 81).

The emerging worldview of Thaw artists depended on complicating—though not necessarily violating—the sacred Word of unified Soviet mythology. What the creative intelligentsia of the early Thaw years really wanted was to carve out more space within the Soviet mythos for play and meditation and productive enthusiasm. They were not looking to tear down socialist society but to reenergize it and make it their own. The old unities had become foreign to them, and they took the changes that began with Stalin’s death and continued with the 20th Party Congress as permission to craft a new and more open approach to Soviet art and Soviet life. Thaw artists could not move forward without confronting the inheritance of man-as-demigod, the full weight of the grand style and its sacred Word. “Directors of the Thaw tried first of all to free themselves from the burden of this Word,” writes Izvolova. “The appearance of man in a new, non-sacred way, unavoidably led to conflict, breaking the earlier logic of development” (p. 78).

(c) *Marlen Khutsiev and Andrei Tarkovsky*

Kalatozov broke with the logic of the grand style with his inimitable mixture of formal vibrancy, idiosyncratic characterization, and longing for the unharnessed energies of a lost age. He remained, Izvolova writes, without heirs in Soviet cinema.¹⁵ Meanwhile,

¹⁵ Izvolova’s assertion is generally well founded. In *The Cranes Are Flying*, the Kalatozov-Urusevsky team had set off a combination of visual fireworks and emotional depth-charges that even the filmmakers themselves found hard to match in their subsequent joint works, *The Unsent Letter* (*Neotpravlennoe pis'mo*, 1959), a striking depiction of nature’s implacability in the face of human ambitions, and *I Am Cuba* (*Ia Kuba*, 1964), a modern formalist masterpiece in which the filmmakers tacitly challenge the agit-prop conventions of their plotting with a visual treatment rich in complex chronotopic longing. (I will discuss *I Am Cuba* and its context in more detail in chapter four.) When the team parted ways after *I Am Cuba*, it seemed as if their very own subgenre of Soviet Cinema had ended. Nevertheless, the complex characterization of Veronika in *The Cranes Are Flying* did have worthy heirs. We see unmistakable echoes of Samoilova’s complex characterization in Inna Gulaya’s portrayal of a village girl willing herself to believe that a con-man is her father in Lev Kulidzhanov’s *When the Trees Were Tall* (*Kogda derev'ia byli bol'shimi*, 1961) and Galina Polskikh's extraordinary performance as a dreamy schoolgirl coming of age in the Russian Far East in Yuli Karasik's *Wild Dog Dingo* (*Dikaia Sobaka Dingo*, 1962). Polskikh, like

Marlen Khutsiev was busy with his own assault on the grand style. Upon the release of their film *Spring on Zarechnoi Street* (*Vesna na zarechnoi ulitse*, 1956), Khutsiev and his co-director, Feliks Mironer, wrote, “For a long time they force-fed us billboard images of parade reality, but today cinema is leaving the boulevards for the lanes and back alleys, where we find garbage and bric-a-brac and a man without a suit ” (Peremyshlev, 2009). What was new in Khutsiev's approach, though, was not merely the renewal of the lost 1920s tradition of the slice of life film, most famously embodied in Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* (1927). In his tale of a cultured urban schoolteacher who arrives in the province and falls in love with a rough-hewn factory worker and night-school student, Khutsiev did not merely exchange a set of Grand-Style decorations for “realistic” ones; he didn't simply appoint conventional stories with everyday *realia*. Instead, he made the everyday *atmosphere* the central figure in his cinematic world, as central as the people moving in its midst. “In Khutsiev,” write Izvolova, “everything is stereoscopic. Everyday life itself becomes a plot in his films. The description of everyday life turns into lyrical storytelling” (p. 86).

Khutsiev would continue in his subsequent Thaw films, *The Two Fyodors* (*Dva Fedora*, 1958), *Ilich's Gate* (*Zastava Il'icha*, 1961, released as *I Am Twenty* [*Mne dvadtsat' let*] in 1965), and *July Rain* (*Iul'skii dozhd'*, 1966) to give space an

Samoilova before her, takes her character into a terrain of pure subjectivity, dominating the film with her eyes, searching wondering, longing, remembering, reassembling, fully taking in the moment before it passes. Like Samoilova's Veronika, Polskikh's Tanya is not shaped by conventional demands of the plot—which hinges on the return of Tanya's long-absent father—but by her own perceptions of a world that feels increasingly mysterious to her. Nothing in the film—not the young love triangle, not Tanya's relationship with her father, not even her relationship with the town that had once felt like home—unfolds quite like one might expect, but more importantly, nothing *feels* quite the way one expects it to feel, because Tanya's mercurial moods, often depicted with little more than a glance, shape the film more than the plot itself does.

extraordinary role in his films. He refuses to subordinate spaces to plot; instead he makes them the embodiment of time. And one can argue that his subject in these films *was* time—indeed, the crucial opening scene of *July Rain* shows previously bustling Muscovites taking shelter from a downpour in front of a large billboard featuring two watches; film, like unexpected weather, can arrest and elongate the moment, allowing us to look closer and see what is ordinarily missed. In the latter two films, Khutsiev's makes manifest his love affair with Moscow, his determination to capture the unrepeatably intersection of time and place, to look so intently upon the flow of the urban moment that the moment itself appears to have elongated and done away with the conventional perception of time. Khutsiev is known as a neorealist, working in the still-young tradition of his Italian contemporaries such as de Sica, but his brand of realism shades into the territory of the uncanny, creating unexpected intersections between his aesthetic and that of Tarkovsky, who also trains his gaze upon matter with such intensity that it is transformed into time and memory. Both men grew up in periods of crisis and breakneck change, times of industrialization and war. The constant destruction, renovation, scorching, and reconstruction of the Soviet world of the 1930s and 40s was for Khutsiev and Tarkovsky a special challenge to memory, as if the world itself were saying, "Catch me if you can!"

Marlen Khutsiev was born in Tbilisi on October 5, 1925, but his family moved to Moscow when he was young. His mother was a daughter of the disappearing gentry. His father was what came to be known as an Old Bolshevik—by the mid-1930s, this, too, was a disappearing breed. As a child, Khutsiev fell in love with Moscow's streets; he lived on

Nikolskaya Street, near Red Square; he walked on the sidewalks of Smolensk Boulevard, which would later be subsumed into the massive Garden Ring road (*Sadovoe Kol'tso*) expansion that Stalin had proposed in his 1935 master plan for the capital. When Khutsiev was 12 years old, his father was killed in Stalin's purges, and the boy had to return to Georgia. The image of those childhood streets remained with him. He returned to them in 1945 as a student at VGIK, where he studied under the great veteran director Igor Savchenko.¹⁶ (He also worked with the great 1920s director Boris Barnet and would later serve as Barnet's assistant director on *Liana* (1955).) Khutsiev and Mironer shot their diploma film, *City Builders* (*Gradostroiteli*, 1950), in Moscow. The film has been lost (Maliukova, 2005), but its subject matter appears to be a testament to Khutsiev's enduring love for the living urban space. More than 50 years later he would still remember his feelings for Moscow at the time:

It would seem that it's time to stop remembering, but every time I pass the Garden Ring, no matter who I'm driving with, I say, "Did you know that there a lovely, mighty boulevard here? ... Big, beautiful Smolensk Boulevard." When I came back from Tbilisi to start at VGIK, I easily remembered the places I lived in childhood... I remember that old Moscow very well, with Kitai Gorod¹⁷, with a center that had still not been rebuilt. And, of course, with Smolensk Boulevard (Iamshchikov, 2004).

In *Ilich's Gate*, the young hero Sergei's return to Moscow after military service is punctuated by a similar delight in the places and memory-spaces of his youth. The

¹⁶ Khutsiev had been unable to serve in the war due to severe and debilitating asthma.

¹⁷ The name appears to mean "Chinatown" in modern Russian, but it has nothing to do with China—the roots of the name are still debated among historians and linguists. Kitai-gorod was since the 1500s a walled trading enclave at the center of Moscow. In the 1930s many of its last towers were destroyed, and only parts of the wall remained by the 1950s when Khutsiev returned to Moscow.

uncanny time-sense embedded in such chronotopic longing is most brilliantly demonstrated in the scene where Sergei wakes in the middle of the night, as if summoned by the city itself¹⁸. He walks down the wet and deserted streets, past blinking traffic lights, the words of Mayakovsky's "Past One O'Clock" in his head: "I'm in no hurry, and I've no reason to wake you and trouble you with lightning telegrams . . . At hours like this you wake and speak to the centuries, to history, to creation " The poem is melancholy, about a love affair at an end, but at this moment, as Sergei reaches Red Square and his beloved Anya walks toward him—also summoned by the city, the same half-conscious, or superconscious, look in her eyes—it seems the centuries are speaking to them in the same voice.

* * *

Like Khutsiev, Tarkovsky had lost and found multiple childhood homes, and tracked the losses with sharp and longing eyes. He was born on April 4, 1932, in Zavrazhie in the Ivanovo Region north of Moscow and spent his childhood in both nearby Yurievets and in Moscow's Zamoskvaretsky District, an old area near the city center, close to the Red October Chocolate Factory and, more importantly for Tarkovsky, the Tretyakovsky Gallery, home of Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon. Tarkovsky's mother, Maria, had studied poetry and had become an editor; his father, Arseny, was a brilliant poet, but one who remained unpublished well into Tarkovsky's adulthood. When Andrei was three years old, Arseny left the family, and in 1941 he volunteered and left for the front. By that time, Andrei had been in school in Moscow for two years, but during the

¹⁸ In *Ilich's Gate*, when Sergei sits up in bed, he hears the absent Anya whisper his name, "Seriozha." In the film's re-edited version, *I Am Twenty*, the whisper is gone, it seems as one of the many corrections Khutsiev made for his own purposes, and the silent summons is more subtle, with the two lovers brought together by a force greater than them.

war the family was evacuated and returned to Yurievets, only to return to Moscow at war's end. The dual departure of his father—who survived the war and outlived his son—and the comings and goings from city to countryside and back, left their mark in Tarkovsky's films, most directly in *Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1974).

As a young man, Tarkovsky was a *stiliaga*—one of Moscow's young hipsters of the early 1950s, who dressed in colorful handmade zoot suits and thin ties and delighted in Western jazz (Rezhabek, 2007; Zubok, 2009). After secondary school, Tarkovsky attended the Institute for Oriental Languages but decided to leave. His mother, concerned for her son and not thrilled with his Moscow acquaintances, signed him up for a geological expedition as a sample collector. In this capacity, 20-year-old Andrei wandered, often alone, for a year across the Siberian taiga. Years later, Tarkovsky said his mother had “saved” him; what was more, he said, the journey “turned out to be the best memory of my life” (Tarkovsky, 1992, p. 119). He returned to Moscow in 1954; that year he became a student at the All-Union Film School (Le Fanu, 1987, pp. 16-17).

In the course of peripatetic childhood and adolescence, both Tarkovsky and Khutsiev seemed to learn how to arrest time with their eyes and store it in their dreams. They learned that the world around them was unreliable and soon to disappear; they learned to long for the passing image, for its deeper sense. And, in time, they learned how to use this talent in their art.

CHAPTER III
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY:
MEMORY, LONGING, AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE IMAGE

1. Opening the Code: Sincerity, Scripting, and the Soviet Thaw

In December 1953, just six months after Stalin's death, the Moscow-based literary journal *Novy Mir* published a series of essays by Vladimir Pomerantsev titled "On Sincerity in Literature". Pomerantsev criticized the "varnishing" of reality; literature, he wrote, could no longer avoid reflecting and contending with "the vulgarities of life" (Zubok, 2009). Pomerantsev's watchword, sincerity, was taken up by a generation of Soviet artists. In cinema, its great champion was the filmmaker Mikhail Romm, who as a professor at the State Cinema Institute (VGIK) openly encouraged his students to be themselves—to process and portray the world according to their own perceptions and in tune with their own sense of artistic integrity. The ethic of sincerity required not simply that one be oneself, but—a far more difficult thing—trust oneself.

One's experience of the world now mattered, even if that experience contradicted the world-narrative passed down from on high. If sticking to a closed cultural code meant creating works out of joint with what one saw and felt and believed, the code had to be opened. If what one saw and felt was stirringly, disturbingly complex, it would be insincere to ignore that complexity. If the drama of personal life intersected awkwardly—

or did not intersect at all—with the drama of public life, it would be insincere to portray a world in which the two were harmoniously intertwined. The closed “dominant code” of postwar Stalinism was inadequate to the artist who felt a duty (both private and public) to be sincere. Sincerity required a closer look at both the internal and external world; it required the ability to see beyond imposed codes—to create a subjective response to the disorder of the objective terrain.

Stuart Hall (1974) proposed that cultural products are “encoded” according to the producer’s value-set and subsequently “decoded” by consumers. These consumers might decode the product using the same “dominant” code as the producer, creating a direct match between how the producer wants the work to be received and how it is received. On the other hand, an empowered consumer might use a different code to decipher the work, one that negotiates with the work, questioning it in some ways and accepting it in others. Consumers might even deploy an “oppositional” code that willfully reads signs against the intentions of the producer: If you write *stop*, I’ll read it as *go*. Nikita Khrushchev’s extraordinary revelation, in his February 1956 address to the 20th Party Congress, of some of Stalin’s crimes (namely those committed against the Party faithful) no doubt emboldened a subset of Soviet citizens to read highly varnished socialist-realist depictions of Stalin-era life with an ironic or oppositional code. Indeed, by the 1970s, ironic decoding of empty Communist orthodoxy would become a sort of spontaneous passive resistance to the more marked absurdities of the regime. (This stance, as Alexei Yurchak (2006) has argued, was not so much oppositional as creatively adaptive, a way of playing with the available toys in the sandbox.) But in the late 1950s and early 60s—

the post-Secret Speech period known as the “Thaw”—irony was not yet king. Many members of the Soviet intelligentsia took Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization campaign to heart, but they were not rolling their eyes at the communist experiment; they were searching for a way to restore the presumed purity of its roots. And they were looking for guidance and inspiration in this search.

In this environment, the encoders of cultural messages played an extremely important role; in the Russian tradition, artists are expected to provide not simply diversion from reality or even reflection of reality, but instruction on how to live within reality. Beginning in the 19th-century, artists had taken up the “accursed questions” of Russian life—*What is our place in the world? What is to be done? Who is to blame?*—like a high-stakes homework assignment. In answering such questions, it would be unacceptable for artists to continue shaping their answers with an old code that excluded observed reality. While most Thaw-era artists did not dispense with socialist-realist tropes and codes (Prokhorov, 2002), they began to change the way they built their word-and-image worlds upon the increasingly pliable socialist-realist scaffolding. If they wanted to fulfill their cultural duty, to follow the path of Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Mayakovsky, they would need to open the code to worldly input.

To open a code, though, is to violate its fixed nature—that is, to make it unintelligible. Without codes, life can become baggy, formless, intimidating in its chaos. Codes are the child of narrative thinking—the habits of thought that allow us to create scripts for our world and our lives; scripts transform the ambiguous elements of life into recognizable, “priceable” commodities in the narrative economy. If our narrative tells us

that X leads to Y, we can more easily deduce the worth and meaning—that is, the codified value—of X in our lives. Can we really free ourselves from this adaptive scripting, which can so often ease the cognitive burden of life?

The opening of conventional codes is, then, one of the trickiest propositions in the creation of artistic or journalistic artifacts. No representation of life is free from some sort of restrictive code. We are all hemmed in by the limitations inherent in having a point of view, and the need to impose form on a world in flux. But there is a sort of sliding scale of representation, in which we open codes up in a number of ways: One of these is to include in our representation a reflexive awareness of our own point of view; this allows us the privilege of our own script without denying the scripts of others. Another is to populate our represented worlds with multiple voices and multiple scripts, each of which are given the space for expression and integrity—the ability to enter the story, the competition among scripts. Dostoevsky was a master at this development of multiple voices, which Bakhtin called *polyphony*. (Sarah Young (2004) offers an outstanding discussion of competitive scripting in *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative*.)

Seen in this light, “open encoding” is the telling of tales in which the master narrative has not pre-determined the actions and attitudes of the characters and the shadings of the setting. It is an encoding in which the accidents of creation are permitted to happen. This very openness to “accidents of creation” is a sort of creative ideology. It is not an outright rejection of scripting, but an awareness that the world is composed of competing scripts, all of them operating above the unscripted stuff of nature, attempting

to tame that nature, sometimes succeeding, sometimes being utterly defeated, but most often having subtle, unexpected, and even unintended consequences.

Scripting, of course, takes place not only in works of art, but in political, cultural, and individual life. We are forever creating stories about our world and ourselves. When we gather a bit of power—whether the power of an older sibling, a titan of industry, or a President—we often consider it a right, or perhaps a duty, or maybe just an irresistible temptation, to make others subject to our scripts. On the grand scale, the competitive rough and tumble of human scripting does spin the tiller of history, but rarely in a direction prescribed by any single script. (This, of course, is one of the insights at the heart of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.)

Totalitarianism consists in the attempt to administratively wipe out not only the humbling underlying inaccessible truths of time and nature, but also all competitive scripting about those truths. Marxism-Leninism could posit neither humbling truths nor competitive dialogue about them. It was an attempt to install a master narrative that dictated both the national dialogue and the sketch of the world in each individual mind. This is why the late-Stalinist insistence on “conflictlessness” in cinema was the apotheosis of Communist cultural hubris. It was an authorial attempt to erase contradictory words and images from Soviet life once and for all; dialectical materialism remained the religion of the realm, but the dialectic was a museum piece, in which all contradiction was pre-scripted by the master and the synthesis was a forgone conclusion, the end of dialectics.

* * *

This dissertation examines the ways in which different scripts of memory and longing operated in the world of the Soviet cinematic Thaw. The key terms for this examination, suggested by Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*, are “restorative nostalgia” and “reflective nostalgia.” Boym is particularly interested in the link between nostalgia and national identity, and I discuss these links, as well as the deeper implications of reflective nostalgia, in the first section of this literature review. Next, I explore Henri Bergson’s phenomenological theories, which emphasize the centrality of memory in the way we perceive and process the material world. In Bergson’s vision, memory allows different temporalities to be contiguous and coexisting in the present moment; coexisting temporalities wind up in dialogue with one another and with the present moment. The next section discusses the integrity of the cinematic image within the narrative economy of a film, and gives particular attention to Deleuze’s “time image”. Subsequent sections include discussions of temporal layering, nostalgic commodification, and nostalgia as the longing for lost possibilities. The penultimate sections of the chapter include a critical discussion of recent literature on Soviet cinema. The chapter concludes with notes on methodology.

2. Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia

Benedict Anderson (2006) has argued that nationalism is characterized by “atavistic fantasizing”; communities create new conceptions of longed-for half-imaginary yesterdays as a source of legitimacy. No sooner does a grouping of people begin to define itself as a community than it casts its gaze backward in search of its very own mythological antiquity. This gaze is characterized by the longing for a lost sense of self,

longing that transforms the mental phenomenon of memory and the social phenomenon of history into the emotional phenomenon of nostalgia. But the backward glance needs not cover a distance of centuries, or even decades. The flow of time brings countless transitions to cultural and personal life, and our sense of loss can adhere to even the smallest units of time. At the most fundamental level, national and civic identity are experienced as personal identity, and it is the small perceptions of personal life that shape the way we define ourselves as individuals—the way we experience who we were, who we are now, what we value, and what we long for.

Boym (2001) has argued eloquently that nostalgic longing is not a purely social process, but exists at the intersection of personal memory and social frameworks. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, she writes that the nostalgic backward glance can take two principle forms, roughly corresponding to the etymological fragments of the word “nostalgia” (the Greek *nostos* means “return home” and *algia* means “longing”): *Restorative nostalgia* emphasizes *nostos* and “attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home.” It proposes to have a concrete idea of what this time or place looks like, a totalizing vision encompassing aesthetics, ideas, and the nature of relations within the half-imagined world. It is a form of “national memory that is based on a single plot of national identity”—a story of what was, how it was taken away, how it must be revived, and how efforts at revival are endangered by unpatriotic conspirators. Restorative nostalgia posits an *us* and a *them*—those who share the vision of revival, and those who stand in the way. Like most totalizing visions, restorative nostalgia functions in a highly coded manner; it loves symbols and knows precisely what they mean. It is a vast abstraction that redefines

our relationship with things in the world, a transparency overlaid on the map of life. It determines the very nature of seeing.

Because it is a collective and programmatic vision, impossible to implement without leadership, restorative nostalgia is an attractive tool for leaders of movements and nations. It is one of the ironies of restorative nostalgia that what begins as a sense of dissatisfaction with the present—a resistance to the hegemony of the *now*—can be co-opted by present leaders. Stalin realized this as early as the 1930s, when, in the wake of the bewildering modernisms of the Soviet '20s, he fostered a nationwide boom in sanitized folk culture (Stites, 1992). His use of nostalgia as a leadership tool intensified during World War II—known in the Soviet Union as The Great Patriotic War—with appeals to the military, scientific, and even religious glories of the pre-Revolutionary past. Selective restorative nostalgic use of the patriotic archive continued, as we shall see, long after Stalin's death. One must consider that at some point restorative nostalgia becomes no longer “nostalgia” at all—no longer an affect, but a strategy, a policy, an ideology.¹⁹

Boym's second type of nostalgia is *reflective nostalgia*. Reflective nostalgia functions at the crossroads of individual consciousness and shared frameworks of memory. It emphasizes longing itself rather than the revival of the longed-for thing; it recognizes that what is lost does not come back in the same form; it “delays the homecoming,” writes Boym, “wistfully, ironically, desperately” (Boym, 2001, p. xiv). Reflective nostalgia, then, is a sort of spiritual suffering, the only treatment for which is

¹⁹ Boym sees restorative, not reflective, nostalgia at the root of late-20th century national and religious revivals.

to think long and hard on “the ambivalences of human longing and belonging.” Those who suffer from reflective nostalgia are less likely than restorative nostalgics to see life as a pitched battle with modernity; they recognize life’s contradictions as a fact of existence, and engage their sense of longing by exploring “ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones.” They are lovers of details, not symbols. They see their nostalgia as “an ethical and creative challenge” (Boym, 2001, p. xiv).

Reflective nostalgics long for fractional shards of multiple pasts; they create from these shards numberless mosaics of past and present. They long not for the details typical of an era, but for those that have personal significance, idiosyncratic images latent in the mind and half-bleached by time. Sometimes one cannot find the image at all, only a yearning for a time before certain things became whatever they are. Reflective nostalgia, in this sense, is the creative ache of trying to remember that for which one has no memory-image, the flash on the horizon that disappeared before we could even be certain what it was.²⁰

Boym’s categories present an interesting parallel to Adorno’s “identity thinking” and “dialectical thinking” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). Like restorative nostalgia, identity thinking is consumed with the importance of abstract labels: the living phenomenon is compulsively re-framed as the symbolic marker, and along the way it is

²⁰ Restorative and reflective nostalgia as discussed here can be seen as distant points on a three-dimensional matrix of *determinacy* (the precision with which nostalgia knows what it wants), *activity* (the aim to actually restore the longed-for place or time), and *totality* (the breadth of social existence to be concretely transformed). At intermediate points in this matrix lie such familiar nostalgias as the impulse behind Disneyland’s Main Street USA, the passion for restoring classic cars, and the appreciation of vintage clothing.

freighted with imposed social significance. In Adorno's view, the added symbolic freight almost always serves the interest of hegemonic forces in society. (Though today one can imagine oppositional identity thinking as well.) Dialectical thinking, on the other hand, embraces the concept of "contradiction," which, according to Adorno, is a type of reflection—the will to see the world as it is, even if it contradicts the preferred symbolic model of the world. This way of seeing the image of life on its own terms is inherently open and liberating. Boym's reflective nostalgia is characterized by this mode of seeing and remembering, and, in the arts, it shows itself in what Hall would call an open encoding of the represented world—that is, one much more available for negotiated or oppositional decoding.²¹

Because of its embrace of both personal memory and multifaceted frameworks of collective memory, reflective nostalgia can often be a hallmark of complex artworks. In writing about the films of the "New Wave" in Soviet cinema that came during and after the Thaw, Herbert Marshall references the Soviet critical model of calling films that fell outside the thematic and stylistic precepts of socialist realism "difficult films" (Marshall, 1992). These films often used poetic collage and Aesopian imagery rather than traditional narrative structure, and, crucially, often dealt with materials from the distant past.

Marshall refers to the makers of such films collectively as "the Archaic School"—he includes Andrei Tarkovsky, Sergei Paradzhanov, Otar Ioseliani, and others. Their work was commonly attacked by the Soviet authorities as "intellectual cinema"; in their

²¹ When we speak of *created things*, there are two instances of nostalgia—the nostalgia of the creator, who "encodes" his artifact with his or her own nostalgic longing, and the nostalgia of the person who beholds the artifact, which may be different than that of the creator (Hall, 1974). Reflective nostalgic encoding is likely to be more "open" and ambiguous than restorative-nostalgic encoding, and thus more inviting to a diverse range of affective and intellectual responses from the beholder.

capacity to bewilder the Soviet authorities, they had much in common with their aesthetic forefather, the great director of the Soviet silent era, Alexander Dovzhenko, who similarly meditated upon the images of disappearing and disappeared time, and was harshly critiqued for both formalism and “biologism”—the presentation of time and nature as not entirely subject to the will of man. Soviet regimes from the 1930s onward eagerly attempted to co-opt national feeling, but filmmakers who offered complex, reflective embodiments of such feeling were often marginalized or suppressed (Dunlop, 1992) (Marshall, 1992).

3. Bergson’s Philosophy of Perception and Memory

Henri Bergson, the great French philosopher of the late 19th and early 20th century, is an important figure in my study of nostalgia, history, and creativity. Bergson was renowned in his time for his logically precise, compellingly written, and scientifically well-informed meditations on the roles of intuition, perception, and spirit in human consciousness. Bergson was a primary inspiration for the mid-century phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and after a period of eclipse his thought was brought into the spotlight once again in the closing decades of the 20th century by the philosopher Jacques Deleuze.²²

Bergson’s insight that memory is the determining factor in the way that we perceive, process, and communicate images in the world helps us link Boym’s reflective nostalgia to the creative process of filmmaking—which, at its base, is precisely the perception, processing, and communication of images. Bergson argues that the deeper

²² Deleuze (1989) acknowledges Bergson’s profound influence on his conception of the cinematic “time image,” which I will discuss later in this chapter.

and broader the memory we “bring” to the perceptive act, the richer our perception of images will be. An open, reflective-nostalgic mind enables precisely the “indeterminate” depth and breadth of memory Bergson advocates. Bergson also posits a coexistence, or layering, of times, that is fundamental to my discussion of nostalgia for a “contiguous” past—that is, for a past that refuses to be truly past. (I will discuss temporal layering in greater detail later in this chapter.) Bergson acknowledges a central paradox of such coexistence when he writes that “the essence of time is that it goes by” and then proceeds to argue eloquently that the past is present in our every perceptive act: “The psychological state, then, that I call ‘my present,’” he writes, “must be both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future” (Bergson, 1991, pp. 137-138). The theory of perception Bergson maps out in his 1896 landmark *Matter and Memory* rewards a broad-based understanding, and the review that follows will give the reader some insight into my frame of reference in this study:

At the root of Bergson’s conception of consciousness is the elementary and vaguely scandalous assertion that the universe exists (p. 63). This universe is a vast constellation of images; at the center of any individual’s world is an image of a special sort—the body. The body moves through space, acting upon and being acted upon by other images. It perceives these external images in two ways: The more primitive, and more important to survival, of these ways is *determinate* perception. The body perceives in an image of the external world exactly what it needs to perceive in order to successfully make its next move: When I see a falling branch above my head, the most important quality to perceive in the branch is the quality of falling; it matters very little

whether the branch is oak or birch, white or tan, whether the branch may have moss on its north side and a sizable knot on its south. In the moment, I am unlikely to recognize any of these qualities. I sense precisely what is necessary for the proper motor reaction—that is, to get out of the way of the falling branch. Out of necessity, the representation of the image or the branch in my mind is something much less than the reality of the image itself (p. 35). Consciousness does not add to an image; it must always subtract.

Consciousness subtracts from the image in *indeterminate* perception as well. It simply subtracts less. The more sophisticated the brain of an organism, the more capable it is of perceiving more than is necessary for the simple (survival) motor reaction. In other words, higher intelligence means the capacity to perceive the functionally useless. (History is littered with connoisseurs of Bergsonian uselessness. Walter Benjamin (1999) spoke of the souvenir collector's capacity to liberate things "from the drudgery of usefulness." The contemplative intellectuals of the Russian 1840s earned for themselves the label "superfluous men".) The Russian philosopher Aleksei Losev wrote that each image holds within it an entire universe of characteristics and connotations—indeed, its very own dialectic of ideas and counter ideas, shattering the Cartesian/Aristotelian dualism of object and idea (Lossky, 1952, pp. 292-297). If you seek an idea about a thing; it suffices to look intensely at the thing. Losev's concept dovetails nicely with Bergson's indeterminate perception: Any worldly image has more within it than we can possibly process. Indeed, our effectiveness as bodies in action demands that our perception subtracts from the object. But when we have both the sophistication of intellect and the

luxury of reflection—in other words, when the branch is not falling—we have the capacity to perceive more in an object than is strictly necessary.

We process the image in two immediate ways. First, we process in order to act in relation to the external world. We can get out of the way of the branch, we can catch the branch, we can shout for help once the branch has struck us and opened an impressive gash in our head. Second, once we have perceived the image, and perhaps attempted to act in relation to the external world, we sense the internal action of our body. This action is processed as affect. We feel pain. We feel fear. Perhaps, when no one comes to help, we feel sadness, or even regret that we have so few helpful friends. The image of the external world has called upon the image at the center of the world—that is our body—to act internally upon itself.

A perceived image becomes part of our trove of pure, or virtual, memories. These memories are essential to all future perception. In Bergson's model, perception and memory are mutually constituted: stirred by a new perception of a worldly image, the relevant pure memory "comes out to meet" the image. Upon this meeting, the memory is no longer pure or virtual, or even memory—it is an active phenomenon, the "memory-image," which completes the perception, fleshes it out, provides it meaning and context. Upon our very first childhood perception of a stove, we do not know it is a stove, but as we acquire a store of memories of the stove, our perceptions of it are completed by those memories: It is a stove. It is hot. Mother uses it to make food. I should not touch it when mother is using it to make food, because that is precisely the moment when it is hot.

Some memories lead us directly to action, without creating the representation of an image in our mind: These memories are nothing more than habits, appropriate learned reactions to familiar objects or constellations of objects in the external world. Other memories form pictures—these are the result of attentive perception. Attentive perception, writes Bergson, “involves a reflection...the projection, outside ourselves, of an actively created image, identical with, or similar to, the object upon which it comes to mold itself” (p. 102).

Bergson argues that memories are not stored as images in the brain. In their virtual, or pure, form, accumulated recollections do not have sensory detail, only the capacity, when activated by current perceptions, to call upon the sensory centers of the brain to reconstruct imagery in the present. The mind’s eye, then, sees in a memory not the past, but an image being created at that very moment by diverse sensory centers at the distant reaches of the brain.²³

* * *

Bergson locates the body between past and future, image and action. It is, he says “that part of my duration which is in the process of growth.” (138) The body, in short, is the place where we feel the flux of the material world. But what is this material world?

Matter, Bergson writes, is “a present which is always beginning again” (138). That is, insensate matter is that which repeats, or “acts” its past, while a living thing is that which acts anew, and thus brings change (beyond geological change) to the material

²³ This is not only in accordance with recent neurological science (see Gerald M. Edelman and Giulio Tononi’s *Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination* (2001)); it also presupposes artistic forms that accept that the images of past and present are layers in a unified spatio-temporal environment: Memory is the mind’s present, not its past.

world (itself included). Useful motion depends on our recognition of the matter that surrounds us; recognition is the process that permits us to compare our immediate perception of matter to our acquired, generalized understanding of what things are. Without this comparison, living things are condemned to forever react to the world only through uninformed guesswork. More advanced brains are those which make more intensive use of memory: that is, they not only react and move, but *reflect*, bringing ever more memory to bear on the imagery of the material world. Our ability to perceive the complexity of the material world increases in proportion to the amount of memory we utilize in the act of perception: in this way, perception becomes reflection. The present perception, which is always technically a memory (“the remembered present,” as Edelman and Tononi (p. 107) call it), becomes an image mediated by thought, a coordinated complex of richly grasped sight, sound, smell and touch, accompanied by conceptual understanding, affective response, and even doubt.

Our capacity to sense such heterogeneity in the material world is not a given: it is, rather, an ingenious solution we impose on the continuity of matter in the universe. Since matter occupies our entire sensory world—air and object alike—our minds must, for the sake of our own survival, learn how to perceive strict boundaries between material objects that, in reality, blur into one another like shades in a rainsplattered watercolor. This blurring of boundaries reflects the reality of the material universe: What we call “space” is a limitless and indivisible vibration of matter; there are no breaks between matter, no emptiness, no place we can declare the end of matter. There is only ceaseless vibration, the hum of creation.

Our minds impose a similar, and even more artificial, disciplining grid on time. Actual duration, Bergman writes, has no “instants”; a motion that takes place in time and space is indivisible; it is not a series of mini-movements that can be measured in units of distance and time. A movement is not a movement at all if we impose these imaginary subdivisions upon it: What is half a movement? An eighth of a movement? To imagine the point at which to measure fractional movement, we must impose an imaginary cessation of the movement in time and space, an interruption to its duration at which we match it up to an imaginary time-grid with arbitrary but agreed-upon units (Bergson calls this “homogeneous time”) and an imaginary space with equally arbitrary units grafted upon the essential continuity and indivisibility of space. The divisible line one would draw to graph a movement in time and space cannot represent actual movement and “duration in its flow” (191); it can only symbolize the duration to make it more convenient for our use.

Bergson does not condemn the use of these imaginary and arbitrary time-space grids; they are essential to facilitate our effective action within and upon the material universe; action becomes almost incomprehensible without them. But, he argues, if we are to speak about true knowledge, and to attempt to understand the nature of how man survives, thrives, and ultimately goes beyond surviving and thriving to reflect and create, we must be willing to admit that we have created a world of minutes and miles as a tool, that nature in reality unfolds not in homogeneous time and space but in movements that occupy certain durations in undivided space, and that these durations may—depending on the nature, capacities and needs of the being perceiving them—appear to stretch or

contract to infinite lengths or imperceptible flashes. (This is precisely what cinema does with time.) “Imaginary homogeneous time,” writes Bergson, “is...an idol of language, a fiction... In reality there is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being.” (p. 207)

If what we call space and time are, in actuality, continuous motion and indivisible duration, they become extraordinarily supple conceptions for the reflective mind. Our indeterminate perception can draw more from the motion of matter, allowing more memory to pour forth into the moment of perception—bringing, indeed, the entire plane of individual memory to bear upon the object under examination. (Bergson (1991, pp. 152, 162) provides insightful diagrams to illustrate this penetration of matter by memory.) As we do this, the pure memory is activated, the various sensory centers of our brain generate inner sight and sound and smell, and what was virtual and image-less is coordinated among the parallel systems of the brain to form a “memory-image”—a present internal image composed of perceptions of the past.

Bergson’s conception of “virtual” memory consists of sensory traces of the past, disbursed to distant nodes of the individual brain, which are summoned by a stimulus and cobbled into a “memory image” (p. 163). The neuroscientists Edelman and Tononi describe a strikingly similar process called “reentry”—“the ongoing, recursive interchange of parallel signals between reciprocally connected areas of the brain, an interchange that continually coordinates the activities of these areas’ maps to each other

in space and time” (Edelman & Tononi, 2001, p. 48). They compare the cobbling together of an image in the mind to a chamber quartet playing without a score, with each musician (read: parts of the brain) instinctively responding to cues from the others to create a unique whole.²⁴

Bergson’s memory image, the remembered past, informs, interacts, and contrasts with the newly perceived image, the “remembered present” that we see before us. The more intently we look upon the images of the material world, the more we can extend the tension of our memory, breaking with the generic, imposed rhythms of homogeneous time and space. We have torn the transparency that human consciousness, for eminently practical reasons, has laid over time and space, and replaced it with one of our own individual making. This is what happens when we become “lost in thought” or experience seemingly interminable “instants”. It is why sometimes, in moments of contemplation we may find that “time has gotten away” from us. (In reality, it is we who have gotten away from “time”.) This variant tension of memory also explains why, in moments of intense concentration, we may experience in our mind an extraordinarily rich and lengthy internal duration during a patch of homogeneous time in which the hands on our watch have scarcely moved.

For Bergson, the essence of sentient life is movement, and the essence of movement is the solidarity of past and present (p. 218). The life-form that is slave to necessity must impose discipline on this solidarity, narrowing the sieve through which

²⁴ This image, in turn, is a fascinating echo of the 19th century Slavophile intellectual Konstantin Aksakovs’s description of unity-in-diversity, or *sobornost*, in the peasant commune as a choir in which each voice retains its utter uniqueness but the voices, attuned to one another, come together in utter harmony.

past can inform present; such a being hasn't the luxury of seeing more than needs to be seen, and cannot countenance the indeterminacy of coexisting and conflicting images of time: The environment cannot be permitted to exhibit more than its most relevant and immediate traits, and the memory is useful only to the extent that it provides useful crib-notes to these traits—notes that enable us to recognize, classify, recall useful responses, and react.

But Bergson is interested in the outer boundaries, or perhaps the boundlessness, of human consciousness. If space and time are best seen as the duration of movement—the duration of the action of matter upon matter—then the division of past and present become less relevant. The action of our mind upon the world consists in perceiving matter in a particular way; this perception draws on previously perceived images that have now become *present* once more as memory-images. Thus the past becomes an active part of the present. It has made itself real in its action upon the world. Granted, this form of action is less easily diagrammed and symbolized as a motion across measurable homogeneous space and time, but it *is* an action: The mind—itself represented in space as matter—i.e., the brain—*moves*. The human brain is a veritable hive of movement, an extraordinarily active bit of matter, and never more so than when it is making copious use of the memory image: Consciousness, Bergman argues, moves constantly back and forth between the demands of present perception and the memory-images that can more deeply inform that perception.²⁵ This internal movement engages an ever-greater number of

²⁵ This constitutive process is another element of the theory of reentry developed by Edelman and Tononi (2001) many decades later.

memories, calling upon them either because of their similarity to the perceived image or contiguity with the similar memory.

The apparent complexity of Bergson's thought has at its core the beautiful simplicity of corresponding to our own consciousness of the way our minds work: I order a cup of coffee and look around the old cafe, I remember a distant day in a similar place, I recall a moment that took place just before we went to the cafe—my small son and a little girl playing on a windblown, deserted blacktop playground beneath the scorching desert sun; I remember the sound of the tetherball chains, the balls themselves long since removed, clanging against the poles; I recall a story I once wrote with a similar concluding image, a story I was proud of, which I ought to have published but never did; I feel a sense of regret sweep over me, and then, a sense of determination to write once more.

The usefulness of my resolve to write again can be debated; what is clear, though, is that the impact of memory upon perception has utterly transformed my experience of the "present" moment in the café. A present that, in its most determinate sense, ought to have consisted in me taking my coffee from the counter, being conscious not to spill it upon myself, and drinking it, was turned into a present in which I perceived not only the hot mug in my hands, but the clanging chains of my son's early childhood and my own creative regret, events spanning ten years in homogeneous time but at this very moment coexisting as the present action of my mind in response to the cues of the material world. The memories are not an adjunct to my perception of the coffee shop, but an integral part of my perception of the shop. My consciousness has managed to find a rhythm of

duration different from the homogeneous, measurable rhythms that purely determinate perception would have required. I have, in these few moments, contracted time and made seemingly disparate scenes share the present moment. I have freed myself from the rhythms of necessity.

Bergson spends much of *Matter and Memory* arguing against both materialism and idealism. He writes with scientific precision and a pronounced taste for the logically verifiable. Nonetheless, what he seeks in the end is to demonstrate the union of body and soul, and he apprehends in memory the unmistakable stamp of the divine. Memory, Bergson writes, allows our consciousness to contract “a growing number of external moments in its present duration”; in doing so, it intensifies our experience of life. The memory-image gives us greater access to, and insight into, the implications of the material world, and enables us to break free from the responses of the automaton. It gives us the liberty to perceive matter and react to it in the unexpected and idiosyncratic ways that bring meaning to life and dynamism to the world. “Spirit borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds,” Bergson writes, “and restores them to matter in the form of movements which it has stamped with its own freedom” (p. 249).

4. The Image

In classical cinema—that is, the Hollywood model—the individual image often has little integrity of its own: It is a sort of commodity within the narrative economy; it is significant only insofar as it impacts the cause-and-effect relationship between shots, preparing the spatial and dramatic ground for the next cinematic visceral shock. In writing about the work of the postwar Italian neorealists, André Bazin noted that

something new had come along: The images Vittorio DeSica captured on film appeared to be closer to life than any Bazin had ever seen; this new kind of image functioned less as a coded sign within an artfully constructed parallel reality than as an “asymptote of reality,” an index of the real material thing, which contained within it and made available to the contemplative viewer an entire universe of often contradictory meanings (Bazin, 2004, p. 82).

Gilles Deleuze further developed this notion: The “movement image” of classical cinema had impacted viewers chiefly at the motor level, the level of shock; its purpose was functional—to orient the viewer within the spatial world of the cinematic action, an orientation without which shock was impossible. Deeply influenced by Bergson, Deleuze believed that in the postwar era a new kind of image had emerged—the time image, the purpose of which was to capture *duration*—to present a moment of existence as it unfolds in time. Deleuze’s description of the “crystal image”—part of his rich taxonomy of the time image—establishes that the image is not simply the site at which a *single* time unfolds, but in which *all* times simultaneously unfold, where past coexists with present: “What we see in the crystal is no longer the empirical progression of time as succession of presents,” he writes, “nor its indirect representation as interval or as whole; it is its direct presentation, its constitutive dividing in two into a present which is passing and a past which is preserved, the strict contemporaneity of the present with the past that it will be, of the past with the present that it has been” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 274).

The time image is significant for the study of restorative and reflective nostalgia in the cinema: Like Bazin’s notion of the image as an “asymptote of reality,” the time

image is inherently polysemic. It is often a long take, giving the viewer time for contemplation. The duration of the shot permits us to see more than a symbolic or iconic representation of reality; we see *through* the icon and glimpse a photographed object, captured in time; indeed, we see time act upon the object and, if the object is a living being, we see it act within time. This is a profound experience, and the image is spared from winding up a mere commodity within the narrative economy, its integrity subsumed by its structural role. The image is given room to be more of what it is, with all the associative richness and multiplicity that implies. Meanwhile, we as viewers are given room to perceive the image more deeply, to bring more memory to bear on the act of perception. Thus the time image, with its invitation to thought and its resistance to easy symbolic usage, is an ideal vehicle for the nuanced expression of reflective nostalgia. The time image is a vehicle for open encoding, and reflective nostalgia, by its very nature, is an emotional register that cannot be expressed in closed encoding.

Whereas restorative nostalgia feeds off the image with a fixed meaning, reflective nostalgia sees in each image a complex emotional world: the object of longing carries with it the mysteries and obfuscations of lost time; this is part of what makes it so tantalizing, and so impossible to simply restore. If the restorative-nostalgic image is a symbol for an imposed concept, the reflective-nostalgic image is an index of lost time itself. As we have seen, Losev conceived of the material artifact as containing *within itself* the entire idea-thing dialectic, upon which no meaning needs be imposed from outside, and within which resides an infinite number of diverse meanings (Lossky, 1952, pp. 292-295). He has a worthy heir in the great Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky, who

made well known his preference for the self-contained image to the symbol, which attains significance only through imposed meanings. “Everything is real,” Tarkovsky told Hervé Guibert of *Le Monde* (Gianvito, 2006, p. 86). An image, he continued, “possesses the same distinguishing characteristics as the world it represents. An image—as opposed to a symbol—is indefinite in meaning. One cannot speak of the infinite world by applying tools that are definite and finite” (Bielawski). Tarkovsky believed that this indefinite, or indeterminate, image allowed his films to be “co-creations” between filmmaker and audience (Tarkovsky, 1986). It is no coincidence that Tarkovsky was, as Deleuze himself says, one of the greatest innovators of the time image (Deleuze, 1989, p. 42). Indeed, years before Deleuze published *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Tarkovsky wrote a landmark essay in the journal *Problems of Cinema Art* defining cinema as “imprinted time” (Tarkovsky, 1967). He developed his ideas further in *Sculpting in Time* (1986), using as a starting point Basho’s Haiku:

The old pond was still
A frog jumped in the water
And a splash was heard

Reeds cut for thatching
The stumps now stand forgotten
Sprinkled with soft snow

Why this lethargy?
They could hardly wake me up.
Spring rain pattering.

For Tarkovsky, the organic merger of image and time in these lines point toward a cinematic ideal.

How simply and accurately life is observed. What discipline of mind and nobility of imagination. The lines are beautiful, because the moment, plucked out and fixed, is one, and falls into infinity. The Japanese poets knew how to express their visions of reality in three lines of observation. They did not simply observe it, but with supernal calm sought its ageless meaning. And the more precise the observation, the nearer it comes to being unique, and so to being an image (pp. 106-107).

It is important to understand, though, that for Tarkovsky the cinematic image presents not simply the fact of an object, but the filmmaker's *perception* of the object.

In cinema it is all the more the case that observation is the first principle of the image, which always has been inseparable from the photographic record. The film image is made incarnate, visible and four-dimensional. But by no means every film shot can aspire to being an image of the world; as often as not it merely describes some specific aspect. Naturalistically recorded facts are in themselves utterly inadequate to the creation of the cinematic image. The image in cinema is based on the ability to present as an observation one's own perception of an object (p. 107).

A Bergsonian account would argue that Tarkovsky brings a very deep store of memory forth to meet the perceived object, enabling him to look more deeply into the object and glimpse facets of it that no one else could see.

In his comments on Lev Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilich," Tarkovsky makes explicit his belief in the constitutive relationship between image and memory. When Tolstoy's dying protagonist sees a glimmer of light, he wants to say to his wife and daughter, "Forgive me"; instead he says, "Let me through." Tarkovsky sees in this crystallized moment the essence of the open image, which reveals itself in countless ways depending on the memories of the beholder: "Clearly that image, which shakes us to the very depths of our being, cannot be interpreted in one way only," he writes. "Its

associations reach far into our innermost feelings, reminding us of some obscure memories or experiences of our own, stunning us, stirring our souls like a revelation” (p. 108).

* * *

Yevgeny Margolit (2001, p. 37) has pointed out that one of the innovations of Thaw cinema is the use of the “subjective camera,” which “deconventionalizes ... traditional, familiar conceptions of the world.” This deconventionalization permits a form of longing different from, and opposed to, the hegemonic forms. There are many things from the past one can long for, and many ways to long for them, but conventional symbols of the past are encoded with preferred meanings that attempt to restrict the viewer’s reading.

This brings us back to Bergson’s determinate and indeterminate perception. In determinate perception, as we have seen, we perceive an image in the world only to the degree that is useful to us; there may be more to the image, but since that “something more” is unnecessary, we never even perceive it. Indeterminate perception is of a higher order, in which we begin to perceive that which is not immediately useful, including the ambiguities and contradictions in an image, and store the image in memory for the reprocessing and recollection that is the stuff of thought (Bergson, 1991). These concepts have important implications for cinematic nostalgia: The symbolic image and the movement image have specific purposes and are to be perceived instrumentally by the viewer, who implicitly understands what to take from the image. The time image, on the other hand, permits the indeterminate perception of the image—summoned by the

filmmaker from personal and cultural memory, defamiliarized by the camera, and reprocessed in the memory of the viewer. This distinction between types of cinematic image underpins two very different registers of longing: restorative and reflective nostalgia.

5. The Layering of Time

Anderson (2006) argues that pre-modern societies regarded time and space as a virtually unified field, a conception of “sacred time” in which all that is holy exists today and has always existed; a village’s past, for instance, is palpably present in its present. Temporal difference resides not in the difference between last year and this year, but between an ordinary day and a holiday. Only with the arrival of print capitalism did this conception of time begin to give way to “empty homogeneous time” in which the content of time was no longer spoken for: Subject to the dynamism and disturbance of capitalism, today was no longer essentially a copy of yesterday, and tomorrow’s realities could not be more or less reliably read in advance. The drive toward productivity and progress meant that today had to *replace* yesterday, and the still-empty and unknown tomorrow would have to replace today (Anderson, 2006, pp. 22-25).

Under Anderson’s conception, nostalgia would be unlikely in a pre-modern society; how can one long for a bygone time if time, in the modern sense, does not go by? Nostalgia, meanwhile, became first a disease of the mobile individual and later a Romantic preoccupation of modern societies. If restorative nostalgia stresses the Romantic search for national identity, reflective nostalgia is closer to the temporal-spatial homesickness identified by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, who coined the term

“nostalgia” in 1688. In the face of relentlessly passing time one longs for the moments that have slipped away without having been properly appreciated or fully explored.

Panofsky (1960, p. 112) and Billington (1970, p. 634) have argued that nostalgia begins precisely when historical continuity and, perhaps more importantly, *contiguity*, has been lost. To paraphrase Panofsky’s elegant formulation, only when one has realized that Pan is dead does one trouble oneself about the resurrection of Pan. Nostalgic appropriators, Panofsky believes, are cut off from the traditions they appropriate. But it is precisely the peculiar survival of the seemingly lost—the contiguity of the past—that sparks the nostalgic affective response. Our shadowy awareness of a lost-but-present past fuels our recollection and reformulation of its imagery. Presence does not preclude nostalgia: What is *present* often feels simultaneously *lost*, and that what is *lost* often feels hauntingly *present*. Time—particularly in Russia—never became as homogeneous and empty as Anderson’s thesis might have us believe. In his landmark essay on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin emphasized the remarkable contiguity of seemingly irreconcilable “historical” types in late 19th-century Russia, where capitalism had entered the social fray as an alien force, inserting its efficiencies and demands for communication across both classes and territorial expanses into a culture where since the time of Peter I, classes had developed in a sort of splendid isolation from one another.²⁶ For Bakhtin, the signal accomplishment of Dostoevsky’s work was to represent the productive dialogic relationship between the

²⁶ The late historian Donald Treadgold once pointed out that Alexander Pushkin and Serpaphim of Sarov—Russia’s greatest poet and its greatest saint—had been contemporaries without knowing of one another’s existence.

thrown-together figures of these different worlds (Morris, 1994). One might even say that Dostoevsky portrayed the dialogic relationship between different *times*.

This relationship was often rich with nostalgic longing. Holy Russia, the Russia of Christian ethics, was not a phantom in the time of Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin, the hero of *The Idiot*. On the contrary, the 1861 liberation of the serfs had injected the peasant commune into the forefront of intellectual discourse. The worlds of the peasant and of Orthodox faith (reflexively connected in the mind of the 1860s intelligentsia) were for the erstwhile Russian gentry at once present *and* cut off. Myshkin's longing for Christian simplicity is fueled by the simultaneous presence and lost-ness of simple Christians. And Nastassia Filippovna's fierce and self-devouring longing for Myshkin himself is a kind of nostalgia for the historically (and, for her, biographically) lost goodness that he represents. He is a flesh-and-blood embodiment of historical contiguity, a merger of the demonstrably present and the irrevocably lost.

Time, then, becomes layered, and nostalgia is the emotional embodiment of communication between the layers. The layers of time retain independent "voices", offering themselves up across the gulf, sparking memory, longing, desire. Bakhtin lauded Dostoevsky for refraining from dominating and determining the voices and actions of his characters, for letting them enter into a fray with one another and spark sincere reactions and discoveries. This *polyphony* of characters' voices is also a polyphony of *times*—a choir of images and memories from past and present colliding in the moment and sparking potent longing among the characters. Here Bakhtin's notion of chronotope—the time-space upon which characters must live their lives—collides with his notion of

polyphony to create a polyphony not only of characters, but contiguous chronotopes: chronotopic polyphony.²⁷

We see this very dialogue of eras in the intellectual-artistic life of the Soviet Thaw. Vladimir Paperny (2002), in his cultural history of Soviet architecture, *Culture Two: Architecture in the Age of Stalin*, writes that the culture of the Soviet 1920s and 1960s were both future-oriented and fueled by the notion of rupture with the past. But while it is true that Thaw intellectuals sought a rupture with the *Stalinist* past, with its emphasis on grandiose Russo-classicism, they did not reject *all* pasts. “There is a curious peculiarity of the futurological wave of the 1960s,” writes Paperny,

It perceived itself to be precisely the second wave. It did not strive to cremate all of the past, but only that which was burned by the 1920s; thus, the 1920s themselves become for the new wave the starting point of the future. Moreover, this new wave was most aggressive toward the epoch that divided it from the 1920s, that is, toward Culture Two. In the realm of politics this was expressed in the idea of a “return to the norms of Lenin”; in the sphere of spatial thought, in the new interest given to the avant-garde of the 1920s (Paperny, 2002, p. 24).

The intellectuals of the Thaw rejected one past by embracing another past, by summoning the longed-for memory-image of the vibrant 1920s and making it active in the cultural

²⁷ The polyphonic dialogue of chronotopes both stirs and is stirred by nostalgic longing. In these pages I use the term *nostalgia* interchangeably with *temporal longing* and *chronotopic longing*, the longing for particular junctures of time and space. A Bergsonian approach to chronotopic longing has several theoretical implications: (1) Time-space is indivisible; the past is embedded in our experience of the present. Today’s chronotope includes within it the gifts of other times and places. (2) The gifts of any remembered time-space, however, are infinitely divisible, according to the needs and perceptions of the individual. The longing mind does not necessarily long for *all* of the facets of a given chronotope. It picks and chooses. (3) Chronotopic longing implies longing for a deeper experience of the *present* space and time. (4) The gift of human communication gives us access to chronotopes beyond our immediate experience. (5) The longing individual imports the gifts of other chronotopes into one’s own lived experience. We constantly reshape our chronotope through dialogue with other chronotopes.

enterprise of the Soviet '60s. The past was made present; artists of the 1960s, nostalgic for the 1920s (whether they had experienced them or not) managed to resurrect and reprocess images of a lost past and layer them onto the present. The artists of the Thaw believed that the Stalin era had cut off the *continuity* of the creative ethic of the 1920s, but through their nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism they managed to make the past *contiguous* with the present, and this contiguity generated a fruitful dialogue between the two epochs.

6. Nostalgia, Postmodernism, and Commodification

Reflective nostalgia is very different from the sort of postmodern nostalgia derided by Frederic Jameson (1991). Postmodern nostalgia emphasizes the re-use of commodified forms in the creation of market-friendly pastiche; Boym's concept of reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, emphasizes affect, the feeling of longing. Reflective nostalgia is not the commodification of forms but the exploration of a non-commodified space where time and matter can be appreciated *apart from* Benjamin's "drudgery of usefulness." In restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, old forms do suffer from both economic and ideological commodification, becoming useful in both trade and politics.²⁸

Both kinds of nostalgia collage the old into the new, but restorative nostalgia imports *determinate public meanings*—ideological superstructures with precise aims—

²⁸ One could say that Boym's reflective nostalgia is precisely the longing for an emotional counterpoint (perhaps embodied only in the memory image itself) to the rampaging processes of displacement, abstraction, and commodification; it is the yearning for a meaningful, contemplative, and specific relationship with spaces and times. This is not to say that cultural artifacts encoded with reflective nostalgia can never become commodified; within the world art film market, Tarkovsky films became a niche commodity. But at the heart of Tarkovsky's nostalgia was personal longing, not the desire to engage a useful past as a tool or bludgeon.

into the present, while reflective nostalgia collides cultural forms and *indeterminate private meanings*. These private meanings often concern the relationship between private and public worlds, but they are idiosyncratic rather than ideological, based more on affective longing than on programmatic restorative social goals. The memory shards imported into the reflective-nostalgic collage are thinner, more delicate, more multifaceted, and more subtly integrated into the present than the sizable chunks of refurbished masonry brought into the restorative nostalgic collage. Reflective nostalgia has the slipperiness of memory, while restorative nostalgia has the sturdiness of social myth.

Boym does not distinguish Western postmodern commodity-nostalgia from restorative and reflective nostalgia. As a thought exercise, though, one might look at Warhol's Campbell's cans, or Lamplight Village, a 1990s neo-craftsman housing development on the outskirts of Las Vegas, Nevada, and call whatever "nostalgia" they express heavier than reflective nostalgia but lighter and nimbler than ideological restorative nostalgia. In some cases commodity-nostalgia may be more closely located to either of the other types on a sliding scale (Warhol would be closer to indeterminate reflective nostalgia, and the housing development—with its purposeful evocation of a "simpler time"—closer to determinate-ideological restorative nostalgia). But commodity nostalgia often lacks both the ideological determinacy of restorative nostalgia and the deeply personal affective longing of reflective nostalgia.

It is important to remember that restorative and reflective nostalgia are not categories of good and evil. Restorative nostalgia may lack the sense of shimmering

possibility and deeply personal emotionality that animates reflective nostalgia, but it is not necessarily negative. It depends what the nostalgia is for. Nostalgia for Dickensian Christmas imagery is not the same as, say, nostalgia for Stalinist monumentalism and the time of “the firm hand.” The nuance can go further: Kipling nostalgia may be longing for Kipling-style adventure and exploration alone—or it can be longing for adventure, exploration, and the power relations of colonialism. (Some might argue that longing for the former is necessarily longing for the latter. But it seems fair to say that the longing to join Riki-Tiki-Tavi in fetes of derring-do may not always imply an embrace of British imperialism.) If in the pages that follow, restorative nostalgia begins to look irredeemably bad, this is a function of the context with which we are working, where restorative nostalgia was often a useful tool of Stalin and post-Stalin conservatives to preach a gospel of autocracy, statist glory, national exceptionalism, reflexive anti-Westernism, and, in some cases, anti-Semitism.

We should also remember that an audience’s affect may not match a producer’s affect—or the producer’s strategic attempt to beget a particular audience affect. A producer may attempt to encode work in such a way that it evokes emotion X, but our perception, under the influence of our own memory associations, may lead us instead to emotion Y. In other words, we as *decoders* may encounter an artifact that appears to the critic’s eye to have been *encoded* with restorative nostalgia and proceed to process it in a reflective-nostalgic way, replete with indeterminate, personal longing. Boym, for

example, sees the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior²⁹ in central Moscow and the re-landscaped, fairy-tale themed Alexandrovsky Garden outside the Kremlin, as perverse examples of restorative nostalgia. And there is every possibility that Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov championed these projects precisely to evoke a sense of imperial grandeur church-state unity, and mystical national rootedness. But do the thousands of families who mill through the church grounds and the garden (with its meandering simulacrum of the long buried Neglinnaya River) really find themselves cast into a restorative-nostalgic reverie on Great Russian exceptionalism? Perhaps, instead, they wind up reflecting on time-befogged memory-sensations of what it feels like to be in a celebratory public space as a child with one's parents, or as a young suitor, or as a lonely adolescent. The idea of open public space lodges in the young mind even when the public spaces of one's youth were not really all that open; it is an ideal of city life that we manage to grab as a cherished, if inflated image, and utilize for comparison for all our lives (we do the same with childhood forests, lakes, and mountains).

The sense of being in a public space, both alone with one's own brimming sensations and together with the crowd, is one of the great imaginative gifts of urban childhood; it gives us our first notions of *sobornost*—all those different faces and strides and moods, all the unpatterned crisscrosses that seem somehow to conceal a pattern—an old man goes this way, a young woman that, a boy in glasses passes between them and

²⁹ Construction of the original structure, whose purpose was to commemorate Russia's 1812 victory over Napoleon, began in 1839. The cathedral was finally completed and consecrated in 1883 (Filatev, n.d.-b). Stalin demolished the cathedral in 1931 to make way for a grandiose Palace of the Soviets. The palace was never built; Khrushchev built a large circular public pool on the site (Filatev, n.d.-a). In the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin and Yuri Luzhkov championed the reconstruction of the cathedral, and major construction was completed with extraordinary speed between 1995 and 1998. The rebuilt cathedral was consecrated in 2000 (Filatev, n.d.-c).

seems for a moment to be coming straight toward you, somehow agitated, full of promise or threat, and then, hearing his mother's worried sing-song, he scampers off. All of this—and not dreams of the conquest of Kazan—may come to mind in Moscow's new “restorative-nostalgic” spaces. We cannot assume that monumental public space puts its users into an ideologically monumentalist state of mind. And, while it is advisable to keep old things standing, with the pockmarks of time intact, it is also reductive to imagine that restorative simulacra are incapable of evoking reflective nostalgia. Nostalgic longing is not programmed to haughtily distinguish between reality and simulacra. And simulacra, once they are realized in space, take on their own reality. When my son was four years old, I took him to Disneyland. On Main Street USA, I felt intensely nostalgic. I was not nostalgic for the mores and gender roles of small-town late-19th-century America. I was nostalgic for my own childhood half-dream of celebratory public space.

* * *

A central critique of nostalgia, then, is that it replaces some “true” past with a false one, painful memory with sanitized imagery. Linda Hutcheon (1998) writes that the past summoned by nostalgia is not the past as we have experienced it but rather as we have idealized it through the lens of longing. Nostalgia, she writes, “is less about the past than about the present. It operates through what Mikhail Bakhtin called an ‘historical inversion’: the ideal that is *not* being lived now is projected into the past. It is ‘memorialized’ as past, crystallized into precious moments selected by memory, but also by forgetting, and by desire’s distortions and reorganizations.” This tendency toward distortion, though, is not always irredeemably negative; nor is it always escapist.

Hutcheon writes that the trajectory of distortion leads us to construct a “simple, pure, ordered, easy, beautiful, or harmonious past.” But our nostalgia, on the contrary, is often for a time of adventure, a time when we felt in some way more alive, when there were not fewer possibilities, but more. We connect to images of pain, anxiety, uncertainty and hardship with a peculiar sense that these very images signified the openness of time. When we are nostalgic for childhood or adolescence, we do not so much smooth over all the passion and chaos as find something to cherish in it. This is not a sanitizing of the images themselves, but a tacit judgment in how to emotionally perceive these images. Here Bakhtin’s historical inversion does indeed play a role, as our present circumstances do not lacquer our past but inform our framing of it.

Indeed, reflective-nostalgic artists are often aware of the willful nature of their nostalgia. Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, as Walter Benjamin (2007a) points out, goes so far as to build a philosophy, even a prescription, around the possibility of us opening up to broader and more indeterminate memory. Bergson, writes Benjamin, “leads us to believe that that turning to the contemplative actualization of the stream of life is a matter of free choice” (pp. 157-158). Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*, then, “involves an imminent critique of Bergson.” But Bergson does not advocate some sort of forced memory production; rather he invites us to make ourselves available to memory. This availability emerges from our attention to life, our recognition of the worth of its moments and its matter. When Proust says that the past is present in an object, but that we stumble upon the object by chance, he is tacitly building upon this notion. Proust’s memories may seem to come unbidden as he bites into his madeleine, but they are no

doubt informed by his state of mind at the moment he takes the bite, the talents of his mature imagination, and his attention to life during the decades between the moments recalled and the mouthful of cookie. In other words, the madeleine may have come to him by chance, but he was supremely well prepared for it. It is not too much of a stretch to say that Proust remembers because he wants to remember, and that the way he remembers is shaped by his mature needs and desires.

Imaginative reuptake of the past is one of the roots of creative individuality; the “idealized” past can become more real and reliable than the “real”. As Boris Pasternak’s *Zhivago* approaches home after the upheavals of the Great War and the Bolshevik Revolution, he reflects that

[t]he first real event since the long interruption was this trip in the fast moving train, the fact that he was approaching his home, which was intact, which still existed, and in which every stone was dear to him. This was real life, meaningful experience, the actual goal of all quests, this was what art aimed at—homecoming, return to one's family, to oneself, to true existence (Pasternak, 1958, p. 164).

Zhivago is quite aware that he uses the stuff of memory, of an invigorating and vanished world, to build a sort of spiritual aquarium around himself. He does not apologize for this tendency:

I have to put up with whatever happens, so why shouldn't I ignore the facts? You tell me my ideas don't correspond to reality. But where is reality in Russia today? As I see it reality has been so terrorized that it is in hiding (Pasternak, 1958, p. 224).

Zhivago is not concerned with consensus factuality, but freedom of perception. Freedom of memory is indispensable to freedom of perception. And memory is a reconstructive

process of the imagination: It emerges from real experience, and very often captures a great deal about the original experience, but it is always geared in some way toward either motor action or affective experience in the present.

Reflective nostalgic affect does not imply a lacquering of the past: to lacquer the past is to seal it as a completed work. On the contrary, reflective nostalgia insists on seeing the past as an open trove of indeterminate images. The past cannot be imported into the present as a sealed fetish item because it is not a unified *item* but a loose collection of images, each of them in associative dialogue with other images in time. Memory images communicate both vertically, with present images, and laterally, with other images from the past. To selectively reflect upon and frame specific images, moods, and phenomena of the past is not to take them “out of context,” but simply to take them. The circuit by which memory is reconstructed does not require the importation of complete historical and ideological context.

Sergei Oushakine (2007) cautions us to avoid interpreting nostalgic longing for the *forms* of an era as nostalgia for the ideology and historic particularities of the era. In his essay, “We’re Nostalgic But We’re Not Crazy,” Oushakine analogizes nostalgic communication with the adaptations aphasiacs make to recover the gift of speech. Just as aphasia sufferers rebuild their verbal world by appropriating and recombining blocks of found language, nostalgic communicators make use of forms from the past not only to summon up old feelings but to adapt those feelings to the communication of new feelings for which no adequate vocabulary exists. Oushakine argues that a “historicizing” critique of nostalgia, while “important,” misinterprets the true nature of nostalgia. The

historicizing critique emphasizes the *context* in which cultural forms were created, rather than the forms themselves, and too often attempts to read nostalgia for forms as a longing to re-acquire the political baggage of that context (Oushakine, 2007).

As Walter Benjamin famously wrote, the nostalgic collector removes old artifacts from the contexts that make them mere commodities and thus liberates them from “the drudgery of being useful” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 19). Similarly, Oushakine suggests that post-Soviet nostalgia can remove artifacts from the Soviet ideological context that made them useful; thus stripped of their former usefulness, old forms are liberated to represent something substantially different than they once did. In our longing to communicate, Oushakine argues, it is precisely the forms that matter. “The cultural logic of these reincarnations,” he writes, “has more in common with the act of mechanical retrofitting (facilitated by the digital age) rather than with the process of political restoration” (Oushakine, 2007).

Seen in this light, nostalgia is not an ideological program but an affective guide to personal communicative choice. It makes its way into the social sphere when similar iterations of nostalgia are shared among different community members who are reflecting upon common experiences or socio-historical narratives. Certainly one's attempt to convey the affect in one's own words and images can evoke nostalgia among others. But the specific longing and image-generation is always individual. When great masses seize onto grandiose pseudo-histories and demand restoration of grandeur, they have seized upon a sealed package of the “past”, shaped neither by personal memory nor individual reflection on representations of the past, but by the present ideological repackaging of the

past by present ideological actors. An argument can be made that such “restorative nostalgia” is, by definition, not nostalgia at all, because it is no longer based upon longing or memory or the personal sense of loss. It is nothing more than the acceptance of an ideological program that happens to tell an effective story about the past. The individual who accepts such a program might have been longing for something before this acceptance, but support of such a program is not an expression of nostalgia, but one of in-the-moment determinate ideological support. Longing has been cast aside and replaced with acceptance of a predefined community of grievance and action. This community is no longer based on memory and nostalgia, but on determinate action in accord with an actively propagandized shared narrative.

Such public restorative pseudo-nostalgia is often seen as “lacquered” or “varnished” memory and is contrasted with “authentic memory”—history with all its warts. But the blemished face of history can be as false as the lacquered one. There is little to be gained from the notion that nostalgia, in all its iterations, is a reactionary, falsifying force—or at best a force that resists progressive change. This school of thought argues first that nostalgia is an avoidance of the new; second, that it is an opposition to the new; third, that nostalgia always harkens back to a falsely reconstructed pleasurable past; and fourth, that true memory will recall a past replete with damage, grievance and repercussion. Such thinking leaves no room for Boym's reflective nostalgia, or indeed nostalgia as real people in the real world actually experience it.

7. Nostalgia for the Lost Possibility

In an interview with Gideon Bachmann, Andrei Tarkovsky defined nostalgia as “sadness for that lost span during which we did not manage to count our forces, to marshal them, and to do our duty” (Gianvito, 2006, p. 94). This bears close relationship to the conception of nostalgia in Lawrence Raab’s poem, “The Uses of Nostalgia”: “Then it’s not the past I yearn for, but the idea of a time when everything important has not yet happened” (Raab, 1994). Nostalgia is a longing for the imaginary possibilities represented by the path not taken: What if “everything important” had been able to happen in an entirely different way? If restorative nostalgic appropriation seeks a return to an imagined version of what *did* happen, reflective nostalgia ruminates upon the tantalizing incompleteness of the past, and upon the many possible imagined versions of what did *not* happen but, in other circumstances, *might* have. Restorative nostalgia depends on the mental slight-of-hand that allows one to believe that the lost world truly existed, was improperly taken away, and now can and should be remade; reflective nostalgia stoically accepts that the past is always unconsummated—all that remains are the cherished signposts gesturing toward a destination never reached. There is a dream lingering here, in this phantom territory of the “might have”—a picture of a world that never reached fruition and which is thus available to an infinite number of imaginative recapitulations, sparked by the past but not constrained by it, enacted in the present but not contained by it. In this way, reflective nostalgia is a formidable progressive force, one that collides two powerful and dialectically related emotions: the longing for what never quite was and the thirst for deeper and more creative engagement with what is.

8. Selected Works on Thaw and Post-Thaw Soviet Cinema

The most comprehensive survey of Thaw cinema is Woll's *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw*, which includes brief but insightful discussions of the era's important films and how they both reflected and impacted the broader political-cultural landscape from Stalin's death in 1953 until the late 1960s. Another impressive, if shorter survey is Prokhorov's (2001) "The Unknown New Wave: Soviet Cinema of the 1960s," part of the University of Pittsburgh booklet *Springtime for Soviet Cinema: Re/Viewing the 1960s*, which includes Prokhorov's essay and Yevgeny Margolit's "Landscape, with Hero," an outstanding critical essay on the way atmosphere, which had been tamed as man's dominion in the films of the Stalin era, took on a vibrant and unpredictable life of its own in the cinema of the Thaw. Margolit (2001) sees Kalatozov's use of natural landscapes in *The Unsent Letter* (*Neotpravlennoe pis'mo*, 1959) and Khutsiev's use of urban landscapes in *Ilich's Gate* and *July Rain* (1967) as landmarks in the portrayal of environments that, contrary to Stalinist dreams of dominion, often frustrate the aims and shape the fates of man. Originally published in the Russian collection *Cinema of the Thaw* (*Kinematograf ottepli*) (Troiiianovskii, 1996), Margolit's essay argues that nature is inherently chaotic and spontaneous, and thus anathema to the Stalinist ethic in which all nature was to be subject to the conscious and purposeful hand of man. Chaos returned to cinematic settings during the Thaw. In *The Unsent Letter*, nature humbles and destroys a state geological mission, and the triumph of its sole survivor is not discovery but survival. In Khutsiev's films, meanwhile, Margolit argues that the streets are not staging

grounds for the designs of man, but rivers that both shape and are shaped by the eddies of human activity.

Meanwhile, Prokhorov's doctoral dissertation, *Inherited Discourse: Stalinist Tropes in Thaw Culture* (2002) introduces an important corrective to the notion that Thaw culture represented a clean break from the culture of late Stalinism. Prokhorov argues that Thaw culture continued to be oriented around the late Stalinist cultural tropes of war and family, and the central narrative device remained the *bildung* of the positive hero (Prokhorov, 2002, p. 46). The significant changes that arrived with the Thaw, then, represented a partial rather than complete break with the culture of late Stalinism: Continuity and transformation can coexist; indeed the transformations of the Thaw actively fed off of the "inherited discourse" of the Stalin years.

Among Thaw and post-Thaw filmmakers, Tarkovsky has been the subject of the most extensive scholarship in both Russia and the West, and this scholarship sheds light not only on Tarkovsky's career, but on the paradoxical situation, at once threatened and oddly sheltered, of auteur filmmakers in the post-Stalin Soviet Union. The classic Tarkovsky text from Russia has long been Maya Turovskaya's *Tarkovsky: Cinema as Poetry* (1989), which was translated and published in the West in 1989, less than three years after the filmmaker's death. Among Western scholars, the most comprehensive study was for many years Johnson and Petrie's *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (1994), which draws on over 50 interviews with Tarkovsky's contemporaries to illuminate his creative biography.

Robert Bird, meanwhile, has produced two impressive works, the monograph *Andrei Rublev* (2004) and *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (Bird, 2008), a review of Tarkovsky's entire career. Bird has particularly sharp insights into the power of the Tarkovsky's images; of special note for our purposes is his observation that the "materiality" of the Tarkovskian image "neutralizes historical clichés" (2004). Bird goes to great lengths to demonstrate that despite Tarkovsky's anti-materialist rhetoric in his book, *Sculpting in Time* (1986), and his diaries, published as *Time Within Time* (1991), the director's cinematic ethic was far from some spooked response to technological modernity. Rather, Tarkovsky was specifically interested in the power of cinematic technology to aid human vision. For him, cinema was a technological wonder that served as a mediating membrane between author and audience, between audience and filmed materiality, and between filmed materiality and the spiritual experience of both author and audience. Tarkovsky's approach, meanwhile, was rooted in profound associations across space and time. Bird—who has done a great deal of research on both Russian icon-painting and the concept of *sobornost*—reminds us that the icon, like the cinematic image, is a mediating membrane between artist, viewer and spirit (or, in the traditional formulation, between viewer and God). Thus there is not simply a continuum between ancient spiritual tradition and modern cinematic technology, but even an overlap and shared purpose.

Tarkovsky's deep spirituality, and his despair with modern materialism, was not a statement of longing to be rid of the *stuff* of the 20th century, but to be free from the straitjacket imposed by its *story*. Instead, he proposes a gateway to other kinds of stories

that propose a different kind of relationship between man and material—whether the material of cathedral walls in *Andrei Rublev* or outer space in *Solaris*. The new relationship sees every interaction as a path toward spiritual understanding, toward a deeply individual solution to the ethical problem of living in the world. These interactions are always mediated by memory, and in Tarkovsky's telling they lead up to the catharsis of sacrifice.

Other worthy filmmakers—most notably for our purposes the great Marlen Khutsiev—have received very limited attention in the West. (Khutsiev is mentioned in many general histories of the Khrushchev era, but only for Khrushchev's attack on his 1961 film *Ilich's Gate*, which was shelved, reedited and released in 1965 as *I Am Twenty*.) Brinton Tench Coxe's (2008) excellent article "Screening 1960s Moscow: Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate*" begins to fill this void by bringing welcome attention to the film's rejection of "a grand narrative of socialist realist Moscow" in favor of "a more intimate, though expressly urban, Moscow space."³⁰ Coxe takes the notion of intimacy a step further, invoking the film scholar Henri Lefebvre's theory that cinematic images are augmented and completed by viewer memories. Joining Lefebvre's idea with Walter Benjamin's notion that Moscow is a city in a state of permanent *remont* (repair, remaking), Coxe argues that Moscow is constantly reinventing and recontextualizing its spaces, and that "in *Ilich's Gate* we find a heightened emphasis on how memory informs the creative narrative of the Moscow text that we engage." Coxe emphasizes the temporal

³⁰ Coxe also makes a much-needed contribution with his "An Imprint of the Times: Marlen Khutsiev's *July Rain* and the End of the Thaw" (2005), which places Khutsiev's treatment of Moscow in his 1966 film in the context of the fading idealism of the erstwhile Thaw youth. The notion that Khutsiev, in this often melancholy film, had a presentiment of the post-Thaw cynicism of the 1970s, is shared by Khutsiev's most renowned Russian commentators Miron Chernenko (1998) and Lev Anninsky (1991).

layering within the film, focusing primarily on the urban geography of the film and Khutsiev's invocation of multiple Moscows. With this urban study of Moscow as his primary goal, he does not reach into the issues of temporal longing and ethical quest that I will discuss later in this dissertation.

Two Western books give a valuable overview of the political economy of the Soviet cinema. Louis Harris Cohen's *The Cultural and Political Traditions and Developments of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1972* (1974) is an exhaustive study of the first 55 years of the Soviet film industry, with large excerpts from Soviet documents, articles, and letters. Val Golovskoy and John Rimberg's *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion Picture Industry in the USSR 1972-82* (1986) offers an insider's view of the Soviet cinema in the Brezhnev years. Nicholas Galichenko's *Glasnost—Soviet Cinema Responds* (1991) offers helpful essays on a wide range of post-Stalin Soviet directors, as does *Who's Who in the Soviet Cinema* (1978), an impressive guide by Irina Shilova and Galina Dolmotovskaia.

Many Russian-language memoirs and articles from Soviet cinema journals such as *Iskusstvo Kino* (*The Art of the Cinema*) have dealt with various Thaw and post-Thaw filmmakers, and also provide invaluable social and political context about the world of Soviet film production in the post-Stalin years. *Iskusstvo Kino*, which has long been the nation's leading cinema publication, prints critical articles, memoirs, and archival materials. For the present work, the journal's outstanding 1988 compilation of documents and letters surrounding the troubled birth of Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate/I Am Twenty* was invaluable (Demenok, 1988). In the post-Soviet era, the journal *Seans* has emerged as a

outstanding source of both memoirs and critical articles. Finally, the excellent three-volume Russian collection *Kinematograf ottepli*, filled with critical essays, memoirs, and official documents, is invaluable for any scholar of Soviet cinema from the death of Stalin to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, which the collection's editors see as the moment when Thaw idealism was dealt its death blow and the era came to a end (Fomin, 1998; Troianovskii, 1996, 2002).

9. Revising Revisionism

A relatively recent trend in Western scholarship has been to examine post-Stalin Soviet cinema as an art form rather than as a canary in the political coalmine. For the most part, this is a necessary corrective to a tendency (though far from a universal one) in the Cold-War era popular press, and in some scholarship, to view the Soviet arts through crude bifocals in which a portion of artists were “dissidents” and the rest were “conformists”. The depoliticizing tendency has a substantial impact on the discourse on the legacy of Andrei Tarkovsky, whose defection in 1984 took on the dubious sheen of a political-cultural triumph for the West, and whose own tendency toward self-dramatization—he titled his diaries *Martyrology*—left his creative biography ripe for revisionism. It also, however, impacts discourse on filmmakers who neither left the Soviet Union nor dramatized their situations, such as Marlen Khutsiev. If Tarkovsky invited deconstruction with his sublime expressions of creative pain and desire, Khutsiev tacitly discouraged discussion of the controversial nature of his polyphonic neo-realism, where variant truths converged and diverged at the crossroads without any clear delineation of which among them might be the truest truth. Khutsiev was not given to

grand pronouncements on his work or the pressures he faced, but his work was in its way as challenging as Tarkovsky's.

In the post-Cold War environment, scholars understandably work to look beyond the hackneyed "dissident/conformist" label and attempt to examine the Soviet Union on its own terms, as a "normal" society with mass-appeal films, art films, and occasional hot-button political films, and not to reflexively confuse the art films with the political ones. Bird (2008) represents a healthy example of this tendency, with his insistence on looking at Tarkovsky neither as a martyr or a prophet, but as a master filmmaker. Nevertheless, in the Soviet context, the artistic statement often *did* become a political one, whether the artist intended it to be one or not. And we do little to increase public understanding of the period's art if in our attempt to see beyond the Cold War paradigm we begin to willfully ignore the specific problems of historical place and time. In the following pages I will introduce and contend with several illustrative instances of the post-Cold War depoliticizing trend in scholarship on Soviet cinema.

* * *

In introducing his generally perceptive essay, "The Energy of Anxiety," Vladimir Goldstein (2008) first mounts a fierce attack on the notion that Tarkovsky's art merited him a role as a public, political figure. He argues that Tarkovsky gained notoriety in the West because it was useful to the West for elite Soviet cultural figures to appear to be suffering under the heel of the regime and bravely fighting back. Goldstein argues that Tarkovsky allowed himself to be used in this way. The result was "the tired image of a suffering dissident intellectual and his or her individualist search for so-called humanistic

values in the face of mountain of cultural and political repression,” an image that now “has to be probed beyond Cold War rhetoric” (Goldstein 180).

Goldstein is making a peculiar case here, one that seems to be more in response to press imagery in the early 1980s than to anything that has been written about Tarkovsky in the responsible scholarship of the last two decades. No responsible scholar regards Tarkovsky as a *political* dissident in the heroic mold of Anatoly Marchenko, Larisa Bogoraz, Ludmila Alexeyeva, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov. For these dissidents, incidentally, the idea that intellectuals suffered in their search for “so-called humanistic values in the face of a mountain of cultural and political repression” was not a “tired image” but a lived experience. If purveyors of snarky post-Soviet scholarship are somehow “tired” of history, perhaps it would be better for them to stop attempting to write about it.

Marchenko had two separate stays in the gulag; the second stay was a punishment for writing a book about the first, *My Testimony* (1969). These figures protested the Brezhnev-era jailing of writers such as Yuli Daniel and Andrei Siniavsky and fomented letter-writing campaigns calling for greater openness in Soviet society.³¹ The political dissidents fought for better treatment of political prisoners, publicly opposed the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, and helped found the Soviet Samizdat movement, with its underground self-publishing and distribution networks.

³¹ The leading mind behind the openness, or *glasnost* campaign of the mid-1960s was Alexander Esenin-Volpin, son of the great early Soviet poet Sergei Esenin, who had committed suicide in 1925 when Alexander was one year old (Alexeyeva & Goldberg, 1990).

Larisa Bogoraz, whose first husband, Yuli Daniel, had been sent to the camps for publishing a book abroad, was herself sent to the camps after protesting the Czech invasion. She became seriously ill with ulcers and could not eat. The response of the camp administrators was to assign her to harder labor. She was forced to carry heavy logs to the mill. She survived, but her second husband, Marchenko, had been sent back to the camps. None of the committed dissidents went unscathed: Sakharov was sent into internal exile, Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the country, and Alexeyeva had to leave when she realized that the alternative was the camps. Marchenko died in the camps in 1986 after guards tried to break his hunger strike by force-feeding him through the nose (Alexeyeva & Goldberg, 1990). Against this background, Tarkovsky's quest for creative autonomy and a better apartment seem to pale.³²

The revisionist critique that Tarkovsky was “not a dissident” is a classic straw-man hunt. While some among the filmmaker's friends and fans have fostered the inevitable mini-cults of personality, even these view Tarkovsky as a seer rather than as some kind of political freedom fighter. Scholarly commentators since the late 1980s, meanwhile, have not emphasized the dissident trope. Indeed, Johnson and Petrie (1994), who published the first and, until Bird's 2008 volume, only comprehensive Western

³² Tarkovsky's later complaints, though concerned higher stakes: On July 10, 1984, Tarkovsky, who had gone to the West with government approval in order to shoot the joint Soviet-Italian production *Nostalghia*, held a press conference to announce that he would not be returning to the Soviet Union. He said he feared that if he returned he would not be permitted to shoot another film. Tarkovsky's old, estranged film-school friend, Andrei Konchalovsky—the two had taken markedly different creative paths in the years since they had co-written the script for *Andrei Rublev*—had told Tarkovsky that these fears were unfounded, but Tarkovsky had responded with unfounded accusations that Konchalovsky had been specially sent by the authorities (Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, 1990). In any case, the authorities' next move did little to demonstrate good will: The government refused to let Tarkovsky's adolescent son Andriusha join him. This was a shameful and cynical attempt to use the boy as human bait to draw the director back to Russia. By the time Andriusha was permitted to leave for Europe in 1986, his father was already dying of cancer in a Paris hospital. Tarkovsky died on December 29, 1986.

study of Tarkovsky's life and work, had already in the early 1990s taken the "revisionist" position that Tarkovsky was no dissident. One wonders what exactly Goldstein, writing nearly a decade and a half after Johnson and Petrie, believed he was revising.

Johnson and Petrie challenge the validity of the biographical legend of Tarkovsky as martyr. "By refusing to accept Tarkovsky simply as a long-suffering and tragic martyr of a monolithic government-run cinema juggernaut," they write, "one can begin to explore objectively his real and substantial accomplishments in cinema." They argue that the key question one should ask in studying the peripeteia of Tarkovsky's career is "not why Tarkovsky was allowed to make only five feature films in some twenty years in the Soviet Union, but how he managed to make *that many* films, considering the extent to which they diverged from the accepted thematic and stylistic norms of socialist realism." This seems an eminently reasonable question. Tarkovsky *did* have a much better time of it in Soviet cinema than Aleksandr Askoldov, who never made another film after the banning of *Commissar* (1967), and Kira Muratova, whose masterpiece, *Brief Encounters* (1967), was banned for more than two decades. But then Johnson and Petrie attempt to buttress their argument with a specious comparison of difficulties faced by art filmmakers in the Communist world and the West: "After all, [Tarkovsky] was making noncommercial films (labeled "difficult" in the Soviet Union) which certainly would have been hard to fund in the West, where the ideological Soviet censorship would (as he was to discover when he moved there) have been replaced by an almost equally deleterious economic 'censorship.'"

Much to their credit, Johnson and Petrie themselves don't seem to buy the

specious argument that the difficulties of producing art films in the West somehow diminishes the significance of the obstacles he faced in the Soviet Union. In fact, *one page* after they sarcastically dismiss views of the Soviet film system as a “monolithic government-run cinema juggernaut,” Johnson and Petrie write,

Goskino was, until the perestroika (restructuring) of the late 1980s, a gigantic, centralized bureaucratic institution which controlled every aspect of the cinema industry: some forty studios in all fifteen Soviet republics, distribution, professional education (the renowned All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, VGIK), film research institutes, trade publications and critical journals (*Iskusstvo kino* and *Sovetskii ekran*), the central film archives (Gosfilmofond), the Central Film Base (the storage facility for “shelved” films and original copies of all films), a print-duplicating factory in Moscow, a script studio, the Theater of the Film Actor, and even a symphony orchestra Despite the recent rapid disintegration of this state-run monopoly and the rise of a multitude of private film-production enterprises [in the post-Soviet 1990s], during Tarkovsky’s time the dictum attributed to Lenin was in full force and *Goskino in full control* [my emphasis-GBM].

This is, of course, a substantially different landscape of command and control than the Western cinematic market. Because the Western market is not exclusively presided over by officials empowered to decide what is ideologically correct and what is not, its judgments—though often hard to swallow—are not “censorship” but systemic hegemony with a good number of cracks and leaks and outlets for oddity. In the West, Tarkovsky made two highly unconventional films, *Nostalgia* and *The Sacrifice*, between 1983 and 1986; the films were released and marketed and nobody took ideological exception to the extreme views of personal and political sacrifice central to both films (Domenico’s public self-immolation in *Nostalgia*; Alexander’s arson of his family home to mystically

prevent nuclear Armageddon in *The Sacrifice*). That's two uncompromisingly individualistic films in four years after five in twenty years in the Soviet Union.

While I agree that Tarkovsky had a busy and fruitful time in the Soviet 1970s, creating *Solaris*, *Mirror*, and *Stalker*, the argument that there is some sort of equivalence in his experiences in the East and the West resembles many Cold War-era attempts on the political left to posit moral equivalence between the Soviet and Western systems. Twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, it is not triumphalist or retrograde to say that the McCarthy hearings, bad as they were, were *not equivalent* to Stalin's purges; and on a more subtle level, that the irritating narrowness of commercial film production was *not* the equivalent of the Soviet Union's organized ideological, aesthetic, and economic control over each artist's fate.

As for the argument that the Soviet cultural system was somehow not "monolithic," we can readily concede that there were constant collisions of interests in every meeting from the studio creative councils to the highest levels of central committee—Mikhail Romm could argue with Mark Donskoi; Ekaterina Furtseva could argue with Presidium hardliners Mikhail Suslov and Leonid Ilichev. But the fact remains that in the end there was a single funding source, a single source of ideological acceptance, a single power that could green light a script or market a film. If Goskino or the Central Committee decided you would not make a film, then you would not make a film. There was no shopping your project around to independent producers or the film boards of European social democracies. None of this is to paint the Western culture industries in bright colors: They, too, exhaust and embitter the non-commercial artist. But

the nature of pressure applied is qualitatively different, and the range of production possibilities is larger by an order of magnitude. Since the end of the Cold War it has become fashionable to wink at the difficulties of Soviet artists, to erect the straw man of Tarkovsky-as-dissident and then knock it down by saying that Tarkovsky was not a dissident.

Tarkovsky was no dissident, but he faced difficulties far different from those of, say, an American art film director who can't attract sufficient funding. U.S. government officials rarely harangue American directors for the ambiguity of their images, their lack of conventional narrative logic, and their insufficiently emphasized love for the motherland. And if they do have a problem with a director's unsatisfactory patriotic fervor, there's not a whole lot they can do about it. It is one thing not to receive sufficient money to put the vision in your head onto the screen; it is another to be told by your government that your feelings are alien, unpatriotic and destructive to your countrymen, and therefore would be better left unexpressed.

Tarkovsky was indeed fortunate to direct five Soviet films in 20 years, four of them unconventional (*Ivan's Childhood* (1962) was aesthetically unique in its dream sequences and graphic depiction of dead Nazis, but it was firmly within the tradition of the Thaw-era war film). But scholars are disingenuous if they consider this good fortune a measure of the Soviet system's leniency. It was a fluke. If *Andrei Rublev* had not been shown, against the regime's wishes, at the 1969 Cannes festival, and if Tarkovsky had not as a result become an international celebrity, the film would have languished for twenty years just like Askoldov's *Commissar*, Muratova's *Brief Encounters*, and Andrei

Konchalovsky's *The Story of Asya Klyachina, Who Loved But Did Not Marry*. Moreover, it would have been unlikely that his subsequent films, particularly *The Mirror* (1974), would see the light of day. (As it was, *The Mirror* received second category distribution, showing only at out-of-the-way-theatres and small film clubs.) He would not have received the outrageous favor of being permitted to re-shoot *Stalker* (1980) in full after the peculiar episode in which Tarkovsky said that the original director of photography, Georgii Rerberg, had been working with inferior film stock, and instead of merely replacing the stock, dismissed Rerberg and started over. He would not have been invited to Italy to shoot *Nostalghia* in the early 1980s. He would not have, at long last, received his apartment across the street from Mosfilm. (Western scholars talk about this offering as if it were an outrageous luxury. I lived in the same building in 1993 while working at Mosfilm. It was comfortable, but not luxurious even by Soviet standards. Russian cinematic workers of all stripes, from lighting technicians to sound editors to drivers, lived in these buildings surrounding the studio.)

In the context of Soviet cinema, Tarkovsky was in many ways fortunate. And even with all that luck, he was still systematically harassed and demoralized. A concerted effort was made to frame his cinema as alien to the interests of his own country, a country he wanted to love. By the early 1980s, when he was working in Western Europe, Tarkovsky was sufficiently suspicious of the motives of Soviet authorities that he refused to come home for fear he would never be permitted to make another film. We can, like *Rublev* co-writer and estranged friend Konchalovsky (1990), see Tarkovsky's self-exile as tragic and unnecessary. But his worries were not groundless. Tarkovsky was not

persecuted like Marchenko or even Solzhenitsyn, but he was systematically unloved by the organizations with total control over a creator's access to resources and audience. It is senseless to create a revisionist model that fails to acknowledge the very unique emotional toll taken by the peculiarities of the Soviet artistic system. It is senseless, when one writes about cultural history, to drain the history from it.

Tarkovsky himself found the notion that he was a dissident amusing. There is a scene in Chris Marker's *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenievich* in which a film crew asks Tarkovsky for an interview; the team is making a documentary about dissidents. Tarkovsky answers with a wry smile: "Why not about the *kolkhoz* [collective farm]?" (Marker, 2000). For him, "dissident", like "*kolkhoz*" was a label from a closed set of regime-defined choices. His task was not to reinforce the circular, trapped intercourse within the closed set, the regime's symbolic syllables chasing one another's tails, but to open the set up to a larger universe. Tarkovsky's contemporaries recognized that he could not be comfortably placed in the dissident-regime dialectic. Konchalovsky (1990) offered perhaps the ultimate concise summary of Tarkovsky's character in his essay "I Have Dreams of Andrei": "Andrei was not a dissident. In his pictures he was a philosopher, a man from another galaxy" (p. 195).

This line leads to a key question: In the late Soviet Union, was it possible that a philosopher from another galaxy, no matter how ostensibly apolitical his philosophizing—might be decoded in a way that rendered him unexpectedly "political" in the eyes of the authorities? Like Dovzhenko and Eisenstein before him, Tarkovsky didn't have to be a dissident to wind up finding himself in a politicized, and politically

vulnerable, position. One can say that Tarkovsky is not a political filmmaker, but one cannot depoliticize him as a public figure. Simply by being who he was and creating as he created in the environment in which he lived, he became a political *sign*. The regime—the times—decoded him as such. One could not reach in the peculiar directions he reached without outing oneself as a wrench in a system that fancied itself fine-tuned.

It was precisely because Tarkovsky was cast as such a sign in Soviet cultural politics that he *did* indeed suffer. His ideas, like the ideas of many ostensibly nonpolitical Soviet artists, were greeted not merely with incomprehension, but suspicion. And this suspicion had financial, emotional, and creative costs. It would have been far easier for Tarkovsky to create simpler films, but he kept presenting the studio and Goskino—led until 1972 by the puritanical Alexei Romanov, who dreamed of socialist-realist orthodoxy, and later by Filipp Ermash, who dreamed of Soviet blockbusters—with what were called “difficult” projects. Meetings of the studio artistic council—ostensibly “comradely” discussions in which colleagues offered constructive criticism—were often adversarial affairs, shot through with incomprehension, jealousy, and pro-regime posturing. No doubt Tarkovsky’s own thin skin did not help his cause in these meetings; at the same time, his films never would have come to light without his stubbornness. Tarkovsky had found a way through the leaks of post-Stalin hegemony—yield on nothing and make it clear that progressive intellectuals beyond the Soviet borders have got your back. He wound up with films that never received wide domestic distribution, but at least he wound up with films.

Throughout his career, in the face of official disapproval, Tarkovsky assiduously avoided the path of least resistance; it is hardly melodramatic or “tired” for scholars to consider his career in the context of the resistance he faced, and the ways in which his films, in challenging the conventions of Soviet (and world) cinema, also challenged the political-cultural assumptions of Soviet society itself.

* * *

If we look at art and film within the continuum of public communication, we see that one hardly needs to set out to create a polemical work for the work to wind up having polemical implications. In the complex act of decoding a work, both personal and socio-political predilections come to bear. And depending on these predilections we may look upon work that is different even in ostensibly non-political ways as either a validation of or an affront to our worldview. This is particularly true in societies, such as the Soviet Union, where the weight of a prescribed worldview—from the meaning of history to the relative value of different forms of work to the proper form of artistic, journalistic, and personal expression—lay so heavily upon both the creators and consumers (the encoders and decoders) of communicative messages.

Stalin’s rapacious attacks on “formalism” in the early 1930s are, of course, the classic example of how politically loaded the act of decoding can be in an environment where the range of acceptable encodings is exceedingly narrow, and where notions of the acceptable shift with the whim of a single man. The great “formalist” filmmakers, poets and graphic artists of the Soviet 1920s were, if anything, histrionically fulsome in their support for the Soviet experiment. The pronouncements of Eisenstein, Vertov, Kozintsev

and Trauberg, and Mayakovsky, offer ample evidence of deep-seated enthusiasm for the young revolution (Marce, Schnitzer, & Schnitzer, 1973; Michaelson, 1984; Youngblood, 1991). But the Stalinist decoding labeled them not only as “formalists” but as “bourgeois formalists” and, as they hastened to renounce their “mistakes” and alter their methods, these artists could not help but note that in the give and take of public communication, not only their work but their very persons had been decoded in a way that abruptly transferred them from the vanguard to the retrograde. The context in which they lived had left them politicized in a way diametrically opposed to the encodings of image (and self) with which they had hoped to freight their films.

In the milder political climate of the 1960s, the peculiar power of Soviet decoding still had the capacity to politicize culture and cultural workers in unexpected ways. In *Ilich's Gate*, Marlen Khutsiev set out to make a film about the outsized legacy of the lost generation of 1940s warrior-fathers. By 1962, the children these fathers had left behind were entering adulthood and had somehow to find within themselves the sense of meaning and mission and public spirit that had—according to the sacred stanzas of Soviet social memory--inspired the fathers to give their lives. He made a film about young people searching their private hearts for public meaning—for a unity of the universal questions—*Who am I? What am I here for?*—with the traditional Russian-Soviet collective queries—*How shall we live? What is to be done?* The film was an attempt to find in a time of peace—moreover, a time of peace without terror—a level of public spirit worthy of the warriors.

The film's argument, subtle but available to those willing to hear it, was that in the absence of war and terror, in the absence of the coercive motivating forces of 1941 and 1937, public spirit must become a matter of personal conscience, and that young Soviet people have the moral capacity to make the right choice, to live not only for themselves, but for one another, and to build a nation worthy of their fathers. These ideas were precisely in line with the values of the Thaw that had been unleashed by Nikita Khrushchev's February 1956 speech to the 20th Party Congress. Moreover, they were precisely in line with the philosophical implications of Khrushchev's economic plan: Having renounced coercion as a motivating force in Socialist construction, Khrushchev had indicated that the new force would be *enthusiasm* (Hanson, 1997). Khrushchev sought a new economic engine in neither the people's fear nor their economic self-interest, but in their belief, their sincere faith in the worth of the Soviet undertaking.

Despite this extraordinary aligning of Khrushchev's dream and Khutsiev's, the First Secretary proved incapable of seeing in the film what Khutsiev had put there. Instead of seeing in Khutsiev's hero Sergei a young man forced by the loss of his father to find within himself the wherewithal to become a worthy, incorruptible, and public spirited Soviet man, Khrushchev saw a generation egotistically asserting that its members could go it alone. In an infamous March 8, 1963 meeting with the artistic intelligentsia at the Kremlin, Khrushchev accused Khutsiev of trying to drive a wedge between generations. He deeply resented the film's culminating scene, in which the ghost of the 23-year-old hero's father, who had died in the war when his son was still a baby, is unable to answer the young man's question, "How shall I live?" "Even a dog," thundered

Khrushchev, “will not abandon its young.” He said Khutsiev’s young heroes were at once disrespectful, morally decrepit, and old before their time (Demenok, 1988, p. 100). He believed that the film’s “sons” were rejecting the generation of the fathers, and he brushed past the central dilemma of the film—that the purges and the war had left a generation fatherless.³³

Four days later, at a meeting of the artistic council at Gorky Studios, formerly supportive colleagues lashed out at Khutsiev and his co-writer Genadii Shpalikov for their “mistakes” in *Ilich’s Gate*. The critiques ranged from diplomatic to bizarrely ardent. On the diplomatic end of the scale, the veteran director and studio artistic supervisor Sergei Gerasimov, finding himself in an awkward position after championing the film, made meandering remarks about his preference for realism and followed them by suggesting that Khutsiev, like his generational peers Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, had become dizzy with his own talent. In the middle was director Stanislav Rostotsky’s statement that “the party had a right to be angry [at the film] and could have been even more angry.

I understand Khutsiev’s and Shpalikov’s worries. I understand how hard it is for them. [But] I want them to remember that they are answering not only for this criticism, and not only to the studio, but, if you really want to know, for the future development of our cinema, because any failure or mistake of this kind can put the breaks on the development of art in the direction the Party requires (Demenok, 1988, p. 104).

The director Tatiana Lioznova, meanwhile, said that Gerasimov had gone too easy on Khutsiev and Shpalikov during the making of the film, and then tossed a small rhetorical

³³ Khutsiev’s own father, an Old Bolshevik, had been killed at the height of the purges in 1937.

grenade at the filmmakers: “Why do you hesitate to speak directly about your love for Soviet power?” On the vituperative edge, the actress Maria Barabanova launched into a wholesale denunciation of the film as unpatriotic. She was, she said, unconvinced that Khutsiev was really going to change the conception of his film in response to Khrushchev's criticism. She implied that Khutsiev had no business answering this criticism with anything but wholesale repentance and assurances that he would refrain from his offensive ways: “Khrushchev is the authority. He said ‘No’. And we are all saying ‘No’.” She tarred Khutsiev with the grave Soviet accusation of pessimism, and then with the even graver one of disloyalty:

You showed such disrespect for the Party's voice in the studio. We on the studio's Party control commission might not be gifted, but we're people who know how to think and feel . . . I, a simple viewer walk into the theater, watch a film for three hours, and then the main character says: “How shall I live?” Why did I watch this movie? He doesn't know how to live. Khutsiev should have moved his hero with the plot; he should have brought him to a clear answer (p. 109).

Khutsiev was both bemused and enraged by Barabanova's outburst.

I'll say this to you, Maria Pavlovna: I'm hearing today for the first time about your position on the film. But many times you squeezed my hands in the corridor and said, “How beautiful it is!” Many times you told me this in front of witnesses. It's not right to act this way. Never forget that a moment will come when you have to look a person in the eye. I can look you in the eye, and if after your display today you can look me in the eye, I'll envy your nerve (p. 110).

A fierce speech from the summit of Soviet power, it turns out, had a way of altering previously held opinions in the artistic community.

Khutsiev had to re-edit and “correct” the film, which was released in its revised form, as *I Am Twenty* (*Mne dvadtsat’ let*) only in 1965. The original version of *Ilich’s Gate* was not released until 1990. Like the formalists of the 1920s, Khutsiev found that the Party’s chosen decoding had “read” him in an entirely different way than he had intended. It had seen him as engaging in generational polemics. In his response to Gerasimov, Khutsiev had said that he and Shpalikov had “never for a second in any way tried . . . to make a film opposed that which we serve—that is, our motherland, our people, and our Party.” And there seems little doubt that, though this was a “correct” statement for the occasion, it was also a sincere one. Even three decades later Khutsiev insisted in a 1996 interview that he “never made polemical films” (Troiiianovskii, 1996, p. 190). But Khutsiev’s *Ilich’s Gate* and *July Rain* (1967) were implicated in the polemical discourse of late-Soviet cultural politics, and they and he became part not only of the cultural history of the Soviet Union, but of its inextricably linked political history as well.

* * *

For many Thaw artists, politics were inadvertent, undesired, and unavoidable. The sense of freedom that had given life to their era was itself political in its origins. A tyrant had died and an irascible new leader—a round and red-faced peasant who would have been unable, even if he tried, to put on godlike airs—had the guts to call the dead man a tyrant. The Thaw that ensued was a kind of political dream. Artists convinced themselves that they were allowed to do certain things, and then they did them. Sometimes they even got away with it. Their dreams were not political, but their assumption that they could dream in public was inescapably political. And, even during the height of the Thaw, the

riskiness of the assumption was often made thumpingly clear. In the winter of 1962-63 alone, Nikita Khrushchev heaped abuse upon the era's emblematic sculptor, Ernst Neizvestny, its most celebrated poets, Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, and one of its cinematic pioneers, Khutsiev. A politician has the ability, with a single sentence, to turn an artist into a political figure.

The young creative intelligentsia of the Thaw were people who had experienced the extraordinary moment of being promised—or convincing themselves they had been promised—that they could ignore the codes that had bound their elders. No sooner had they taken up the promise than it was withdrawn—or perhaps it had never really been given. The mind played tricks that way in the years after Stalin's death. Artists let themselves believe that a more secure purchase on life was somehow a guarantor of other, less fundamental, freedoms. The freshest of generations curdled along with its illusions.

The revisionist verdict on the Thaw intelligentsia plays on these illusions; the artists, it turns out, were not only superfluous dreamers, but ridiculous and deluded absolutists—not just Oblomovs, but modern day Myshkins, minus the holiness. In George Faraday's (2000) *Revolt of the Filmmakers*, young post-Soviet film workers, one after the next, condemn the romantic, stubborn art-house ethic of the aging cinematic Thaw generation, arguing that it somehow prevented post-Soviet films from demonstrating sufficient “professionalism” and, in turn, accounted for the ruinous state of the Russian film industry at the turn of the 21st century.

But it was precisely illusions that emboldened Thaw artists to see promises where none had been made and to feel boldness where little was warranted. Illusions permitted Mikhail Romm to stand up at the November 1962 conference on “Tradition and Novelty” and gleefully denounce the entire ideologically reliable wing of the literary intelligentsia. Illusions emboldened Khutsiev and Shpalikov to create their baggy masterpiece, *Ilich’s Gate*, which in its very form challenged the Soviet idea that to all things there is a manageable and ultimately soothing narrative. Illusions also allowed Khutsiev and Shpalikov to believe that what they had created was an appropriate, and even enthusiastic, embrace of Soviet patriotism.³⁴ Illusions sent Shpalikov to the grave of Mikhail Romm on the day Shpalikov would end his own life. Shpalikov wanted to give a speech by the graveside. He was not permitted to speak. Illusions had done him in. In the end, they had killed the creator. But before they killed him they had enabled him to create.

10. Notes on Methodology

There is a story behind these pages, and that story would be difficult to replicate or verify. It begins with the feelings these films produce in me, so my method is from the

³⁴ This illusion was shared by other commentators, who tend to look at the film’s assault on cynicism and embrace of ethical conduct as a indicator of its “Soviet” propriety. Konchalovsky makes a telling play on words in his memoirs when he describes Khutsiev as a deity not of neorealism, but of “neo-sotsrealism” (Konchalovskii, 1998). The view that the film was perfectly “Soviet” and that the attacks on it were merely the ignorance of the uncultured Khrushchev at work neglects the temporal and textural complexity of the film. Both *Ilich’s Gate* and Khutsiev’s 1966 film *July Rain*, however, present a stern challenge to the dominance of clear, traditional plotting and characterization in socialist-realist cinema—its populist, almost Hollywood emphasis on the story arc. Khutsiev’s emphasis on personal ethics and social responsibility is not necessarily a salute to a specifically Soviet reality; it is a statement of much broader support for thoughtful and empathetic conduct in the public sphere. The polyphonic discourse among his characters, settings, and images, meanwhile, hints at the rather un-Soviet possibility that there are different ways to thoughtfully engage one’s time and place, and that the ethical quest lacks a single path or a fixed destination.

very start infected with subjectivity. I love these films. And they invoke in me a peculiar sense of chronotopic longing for worlds both beyond my own and deep within my own. This was my starting point. Next, I asked, *why*? What installed this deep magic into the films—or, to put it more sharply: What is it in these films that helps me to experience this deep magic? What did the makers of the films *do* that charged the synaptic gap between their images and my reception of those images? How did they do it? This, for me, is not a technical question, but an imaginative one, a question requiring a degree of empathetic engagement with the filmmakers and their world. After all, these works of art emerged from the feelings, philosophies, life stories, and historical circumstances of their makers. In the broadest sense, my method can be termed historically based textual analysis. This project would be impossible without study of the history not only of the time and place of the films' creation, but of the broader expanses of Russian culture. In my case, my research here is an organic continuation of two decades of scholarly, occupational, and personal engagement with Russian life and history. Or, to return to one of those unscientific, unverifiable terms—it is the product of love.

(a) Selection of films

I have chosen the films and filmmakers in this study not solely for their social power, nor for their topicality or typicality or popularity. I can, nevertheless, justify my choices on historical as well as personal grounds. Because I am interested in the roots of the affective power of the creative act, I have chosen three *auteur* filmmakers, Mikhail Kalatozov, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Marlen Khutsiev. Each of them was an important figure during the Thaw, and each remains important in the history of Soviet culture.

Kalatozov was the Thaw's great cinematic bridge to the experimental spontaneity of 1920s Soviet cinema; while *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) is generally regarded as his greatest film, I have chosen to focus here on *I Am Cuba* for three reasons: First, while *Cranes* preceded *Rublev* (1966) and *Ilich's Gate* (1961/65) by several years and was a document of the early Thaw, the planning-to-completion arc of *I Am Cuba* occupies the same five-year period (1961-66) as the other two films, a period in which the political foundations of the Thaw were slowly crumbling. Second, *I Am Cuba* is a striking document of Thaw-era neo-Leninism, and analysis of it sheds light on the political context of the era and continues the historical discussion I began in chapter two. Lastly, *I Am Cuba* is the apotheosis of experimental Kalatozov-Urusevsky style, the natural endpoint of the path Kalatozov began three decades earlier in *Salt for Svanetiia* and continued in *The Cranes Are Flying* and *The Unsent Letter* (1959).

I have chosen Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* in part for its great importance as an artistic and historical document—the film is widely considered the great masterpiece of post-Stalin cinema. But I have also selected the film because it is an early expression of the intelligentsia's late-Soviet reengagement with old Russian history and spirituality, a reengagement that divided the intelligentsia into new versions of old 19th-century ideological camps: the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. The discourse around these camps evolved through the 1970s and '80s and helped give rise to both a spiritual renaissance and post-Soviet national chauvinism; at the heart of the discussion is a divide more fundamental than that between East and West—the question of how memory and longing work, the question of restorative and reflective nostalgia.

Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate*, meanwhile, is the Thaw's quintessential expression of youthful hope, tension, longing, and disappointment. Neya Zorkaya (n.d.), the late dean of Soviet film criticism, called it "the key film of the 1960s." Khutsiev's film is particularly apt material for this study: In its setting, its surface concerns, its episodic set-pieces, and its style, *Ilich's Gate* is an utterly contemporary 1960s film. And yet it is virtually bathed in memory and temporal longing.

My focus on *auteur* cinema in these pages is not a dismissal of the collaborative nature of cinema. The genius of Kalatozov is inextricably linked with that of Urusevsky. Tarkovsky's emergence as an artist is bound up with his relationships with his co-writer, friend, and rival, Andrei Konchalovsky, and his camera operator, Vadim Yusov. Marlen Khutsiev's deep understanding of the emotions of Thaw-era youth is to a degree the fruit of his collaboration with co-writer Gennady Shpalikov, and Khutsiev's neo-realist style in *Ilich's Gate* owes much to the camera of Margarita Pilikhina. One might say that each of the directors is a sort of synecdoche for an authorial team.³⁵

Nonetheless, the history of each of these films is not a history of cobbled-together studio creation—it is the history of almost obsessive directorial pursuit of a vision. The naïve beauty of the Thaw—as unsophisticated as it may seem to some contemporary critics—was that artists saw an opportunity to express themselves. We have to ask ourselves, though, what this means: Does self-expression imply self-*absorption*, a separation from the world? Or does it mean the expression of the world as filtered

³⁵ Khutsiev has explicitly underlined the ties between his life and his film: "All three heroes, each in his own way, expressed my situation at the time, my character, my approach to life. At that time my son had just been born, and I was always running with milk bottles like [Slavka]. I dreamed of being like Kolka, uninhibited, bold, able to drop into a conversation on the fly and strike up an acquaintance. And, like Sergei, I was also tormented by the question of how to live" (Musskii, 2005).

through the self? Here I will examine precisely how these filmmakers expressed the *world*, how the filmmakers absorbed the world through the scrim of life and memory and history and made from it something new for us. This was the process by which Thaw artists turned the notion of sincerity into the action of being sincere. And it was something more than sincerity. It was generosity.

(b) *Notes on versions*

Two accepted versions of both Tarkovsky's film and Khutsiev's remain in circulation, presenting both opportunities and complications for the scholar. I have chosen a seemingly contradictory strategy: I am focusing on the originally *released* version of *Andrei Rublev*, but the originally *suppressed* version of Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate*. In the following paragraphs I will explain why.

In 1987, the year after Tarkovsky's death, Soviet film archivists released the director's initial cut under the title *The Passion According to Andrei*. The film, at 205 minutes, is 20 minutes longer than the canonical version, and the episodes unfold in a different order. There is a tendency when discussing *auteur* films that run into bureaucratic hurdles—whether at Western or Soviet studios—to accept the “first draft,” if it is released, as the “real” draft. But Tarkovsky himself—never one to refrain from pointing out suffered slights—always insisted that he had made all of the cuts himself, and that he was pleased with them.

Nobody has ever cut anything from *Andrei Rublev*. Nobody except me. I made some cuts myself . . . And I declare and insist that in my sincere opinion the latest version is the best, the most successful, the most beautiful in the way I understand that word (Bird, 2004, p. 34).

Tarkovsky said that his cuts had only “removed excessive time which was not intended.” In the wake of criticisms for the film’s violence, he had, he admitted, cut back on the gore—in particular, shots of the burning of a cow, the lancing of a fallen horse, and the close-up of masons with gouged-out eyes were removed. But he argued that he had made the cuts for artistic reasons, “in order to induce psychological shock instead of merely creating an unpleasant impression that would only destroy our intent.” Indeed, the elliptical power of the film’s violence remains—we may not see the Tatar warrior lance the horse, but its terrible fall from a wooden stairway in the shorter version is no less terrible. “I do not regret at all,” said Tarkovsky, “that the film has been shortened to its present length.”

Larissa Tarkovskaya, the director’s second wife—they were married in 1970, but she had worked on *Rublev* and the two had been involved since the mid-1960s—said that Tarkovsky

never accepted the smallest compromise—and always got his way. He was the only Soviet director to do exactly as he wanted. He was absolutely without compromise. And when many journalists often asked if he was forced to make cuts in his films, I could provide an answer, since I saw every film cut. He never compromised over a single frame. He did only what he wanted (Leszczyłowski, 1988).

Larissa was a fierce crafter and defender of her husband’s biographical legend, and she was never shy about pointing out the offenses done to him. Here, though, she goes against the grain of the martyr storyline toward a more poignant and productive narrative: the artist willing to exhaust himself in unwelcoming conditions in order to get it right. In any act of editing—particularly after the “suggestions” of someone with

authority—an artist deals with the creative tension between the desire to leave things as they are and the nagging, perfectionist sense that, however off-the-mark the suggestions might be, the thing really could be made better. It is a wringing, emotionally exhausting process, but if after the suggestions one is left to make the changes on one's own, some sort of creative inspiration kicks in, and the changes can shed the logic of the censor and take on the logic of the artist. The initial 205-minute cut, as Bird writes, had been completed in such a hurry that the name of the famous actor and clown Yuri Nikulin, who played the tortured monk Patrikei, was left off the credits (p. 32). It is not inconceivable that Tarkovsky sincerely believed that his removal of 20 minutes streamlined and improved the film. Bird, after an exhaustive analysis of the two versions, believes some of the elliptical power of the original is lost in Tarkovsky's re-edit, in part because transitions between scenes and segments were made slightly more explicit. But these small concessions to narrative coherence do not at all deprive the film of its uncanniness, its temporal disconnects, and its invitation to viewers to imaginatively fill in blanks.

Meanwhile, the 185-minute cut of *Rublev* did *not* on its own secure the film's release—if the film had not been, through confusion in the Soviet film industry, released against the authorities' wishes to the 1969 Cannes Film Festival, it might have, like other mid-1960s film such as Kira Muratova's *Brief Encounters* and Alexander Askoldov's *Commissar*—have languished on the shelf for another 20 years. Instead, the 185-minute version of *Rublev* stunned critics at Cannes, gained an international reputation, and was released in the Soviet Union in 1971. Though for years the film was distributed in various

bastardized editions in the West, it was the 185-minute version that first entered into the international cinematic pantheon. Bird (p. 35) sees a change afoot; today, he says, most festivals show the 205-minute version. “It remains to be seen,” he writes, “which edit of the film, and indeed which version of which edit, becomes accepted as canonical.” Bird believes—and I agree—that the two versions may coexist, with their differences becoming part of the productive and enjoyable discourse about the film. Either of the versions could have fit my purposes in these pages, but I have chosen to work primarily with the 185-minute version, which first entered into Soviet consciousness.

The decision on whether to deal chiefly with one version or the other of Marlen Khutsiev’s masterpiece was a complex one. On one hand, *I Am Twenty* shares several traits that caused me to select the 185-minute version of *Rublev*: It was the version that came to Moscow’s screens in January 1965, more than three years after it had initially been shot. And it remained the only version one could watch until *Ilich’s Gate* was restored and released in 1990. Moreover, Khutsiev had not merely made changes demanded by the authorities; he had taken the opportunity to improve on scenes he felt could have been better in the original. Nevertheless, unlike *Rublev*, Khutsiev’s *I Am Twenty* reflects substantive changes that altered, even if subtly, the ideological tenor of the film.

After two years of pressure from the highest levels of government, Khutsiev managed to make changes to his film that did not destroy its impact or compromise its uniquely prismatic points of view; the arguments I make in these pages hold true for either version of the film—*I Am Twenty* remains a powerful document of the era, of

Khutsiev's extraordinary talents, and of his Tarkovskian stubbornness in the face of powerful opposition. Nevertheless, it is an incomplete document, lacking some of the subtle suggestions and evocations of Soviet life with which Khutsiev and his screenwriter, Gennadi Shpalikov, had expressed their worldviews. I will refer to both versions in these pages, but as a "master version" for discussion, I will use *Ilich's Gate*.³⁶

(c) Mode of analysis: Internal script discovery

In this study, I situate films and images within Soviet cinematic, social, and cultural history. But I also engage the images in these films as cultural artifacts traveling across time and space, often invoking nostalgia, a longing for what has been lost, or for what never was, for unrealized potentialities, sometimes embedded in the image, sometimes notably excluded from the image. Such images perform a crucial function, mediating the relationship between *private* consciousness—the director's, the Thaw viewer's, the contemporary Russian viewer's, mine—and public time and space, the lived world of the *now*, with all its demands for determinate perception and action.

Cinematic images mediate our relation with space and time by engaging us in—and embedding us within—dialogue. There are, of course, many "scripts" within a film besides the one that was written. Each character, having taken on life as an image within the filmed work, has an internal script—an idea of life, a picture inside the head with which the external world is constantly compared. The atmosphere of the film has multiple scripts; different backgrounds seem to tell us different stories and challenge both the master script and the characters' internal scripts. The camera has a script, casting its gaze

³⁶ I have included a scene-by-scene description of the film in the appendix.

on characters from different distances and angles, juxtaposing them with different backgrounds, leaving them out of the frame altogether. Viewers are faced with the task and pleasure of experiencing these scripts and the ways in which they collide and contend. In the end, the scripts collide with additional scripts from the world outside the film—scripts in the culture at the time of viewing, cultural memory scripts about the time in which the film was made, and personal memory scripts in the mind of the viewer.

The film's internal scripts, then, emerge from the photographed matter—they are all grounded in a reality, the reality of the film—but they are successively developed in the determinate or indeterminate mind of actors, directors, camera operators, and, ultimately, viewers, each with reference to his or her own life experiences and experience and awareness of history. In this paper, I am performing the inescapably subjective task of identifying the scripts embedded in scenes, images, character arcs, camera choices, and structure. These scripts contend with one another; sometimes they complement each other, other times they jockey for supremacy. This approach is unavoidably reflexive and contingent. It is an attempt to read the process and product of artistic creation and communication—and to offer one version of how they function both within and beyond the time and place of their creation.

CHAPTER IV
REENTERING TOMORROW:
NOSTALGIA FOR AN IMAGINARY LENINISM AND
MIKHAIL KALATOZOV'S *I AM CUBA*

1. Introduction

A Havana drive-in movie theater, 1959. Convertibles and sleek sedans in neat rows, an occasional couple sitting on the hood of a car, paying little attention to the screen. The cinema-shadow of a grinning Fulgencio Batista, brand new medal for something-or-other around his neck, his well-fed cheek fulsomely kissed by a well-fed lady. Clean-cut young men arrive on foot, move stealthily between cars, hurl flaming bottles at Batista's smile. The screen burns. The boys escape in a convertible of their own.

This is the first scene in the third part of Mikhail Kalatozov's 1964 film, *I Am Cuba*. The film is divided into four associatively linked parts, each of them capable of being a stand-alone short film: The first part contrasts the decadent Havana nightclubs haunted by American playboys with the impoverished lives of the Cuban women the playboys exploit. The second unfolds the tragic fate of a tenant farmer when the land on which he grows sugarcane is sold out from under him to the United Fruit Company. The fourth part of *I Am Cuba* tells of the gathering of Castro's forces in the mountains of the

Oriente Province. But it is the third story, the tale of fresh-faced student rebels intellectually alienated but culturally at home in a world of chrome-trimmed cars, that best captures the attitudes of the celebrated, urbane Soviet filmmakers who had come across the sea to commemorate Cuba's revolution and wound up reflecting upon the lost promise of their own. *I Am Cuba*, on its surface a film about the revolutionary Caribbean future, can be fruitfully read as an expression of nostalgia for a revolutionary Russian past that had been sundered by decades of Stalinism.

* * *

In the late 1950s, Nikita Khrushchev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, undertook a project of terrifying difficulty. He would attempt to simultaneously revive enthusiasm for the ideals of Leninism and transform the relationship of state and subject from one of domination to one of hegemony; tacitly agreed-upon social limitations would replace arbitrary coercion. Among the devices at his disposal in this effort was the enthusiastic faith in modernization that was at the time influential in many regions of the world.³⁷ In its attempt to return to Leninist roots, the Soviet Union set out simultaneously to become the conduit of modernization to the Third World and to modernize itself. Josef Stalin had industrialized the country, but 25 years of coercive domination and warfare had not brought the rewards of modernity—consumer goods, adequate housing with plumbing, a sense of normalcy in which production was an

³⁷ Boym (2001, p. 22) writes that while *modernity* is a “critical project,” *modernization* is “a social process and a state policy that usually refers to industrialization and technological progress.” But the social process and the critical project are inextricably linked: “Modernity and modernisms are responses to the condition of modernization and the consequences of progress. This modernity is contradictory, critical, ambivalent and reflective on the nature of time; it combines fascination for the present with longing for another time.”

economic activity rather than a high stakes struggle for national defense and personal survival.

I Am Cuba sheds light on many of the central elements of Khrushchevism: The modernizing instinct, the ambivalent relationship with material beauty (which becomes both at once a sign of what is desirable, and indeed possible, and an ideological marker of bourgeois decadence) and a nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism—its clear lines of battle, its sense of moral clarity, and, most importantly, its promise of a better day. This vision of Leninism excludes (or simply naturalizes and ignores) the relentless centralizing and fiery intellectual intolerance—the nonstop battle against doctrinal “deviations”—that marked Leninism in political practice. It was precisely these authoritarian traits of Leninism that Stalin had seized upon and intensified by an order of magnitude. Nonetheless, for many Soviet citizens, the name of Leninism continued to be associated with the cultural enthusiasms that were activated by the first decade of the revolution and subsequently quieted and punished by Stalin. The first revolutionary decade was a tug of war between revolutionary “spontaneity” and revolutionary “consciousness”—between, on one hand, the desire to personally channel and embody the energy of revolutionary change in often idiosyncratic ways and, on the other, the recognition that the only true and trustable revolutionary will belonged to the Party.

Both Kalatozov and *I Am Cuba* director of photography Sergei Urusevsky began their artistic careers during the raucous 1920s. Soviet avant-garde art and cinema was a veritable circus of “isms”, which seemed to form, battle, disband and reorganize not by the day, but by the hour. Lenin himself did not much care for these “isms”—“I do not

understand them,” he wrote to the German Revolutionary Clara Zetkin, “I take no joy in them”—but he tolerated them through the years of his leadership (Macdonald, 1954).

After Lenin's death in 1924, the boisterous heyday of avant-garde spontaneity continued through the years of Party power struggles in the mid-1920s and the Stalin's consolidation of power in the late 1920s. By the early 1930s, though, Stalin had put an end to the productive cultural tension of the spontaneity-consciousness debate and designated “consciousness” a clear-cut winner.

By Khrushchev's time, the promise of early Soviet culture had long since been burned up in the cauldron of Stalinism and war. In an effort to enlist artists in the rebirth of Leninist enthusiasm, the post-Stalin party leadership began in the mid-1950s to cautiously broaden the boundaries of socialist realism. Artists were given more leeway to depict life as they saw it; the model of the politically conscious positive hero striving to fulfill a defined historic role gave way to more complex characterizations. Lyricism and humanism made their way onto the nation's movie screens, most famously in the second film Kalatozov and Urusevsky made together, *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957), which won the Palm D'Or at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival for its depiction of tragedy, forbearance, and redemption on the World War II home front.

The film's heroine, Veronika (Tatiana Samoilova), is seduced while her beloved is at the front, but the film passes no judgment on her. The tragedy is private rather than public, emotional rather than political. It is a matter between Veronika and her conscience. Her subjectivity is the gravitational center of the film; the real stars here are Samoilova's eyes. In a bewildering world, Veronika is watchful rather than vigilant:

seeing the world, a necessarily open and spontaneous act, must precede the conscious business of shaping it. The aesthetics of the film, meanwhile, bordered in many scenes on the kind of experimental formalism for which Eisenstein, Vertov, and the other great filmmakers of the 1920s had been denounced. *The Cranes Are Flying* was not in any way an oppositional film, but it signified the new hopes of the Thaw. It was a moment when the extension of artistic possibilities was in general harmony with Khrushchevian hegemony: they worked together, in this case, to chip away at the older hegemony of Stalinist thematics.

By 1962, when Kalatozov and Urusevsky were in pre-production for *I Am Cuba*, the Thaw had already gone through a series of intermittent chills. Kalatozov's *The Unsent Letter* (1959) was attacked for its formalism and pessimism (Doros & Heller, 2007) (Woll, 2000, p. 133). But the general sense of enlarged thematic and aesthetic possibility remained, together with the idealistic hope that artistic spontaneity could play a role in building a new and humane Soviet socialism. For Kalatozov and Urusevsky, the Cuban Revolution seemed to provide a perfect occasion to reengage Leninist idealism and embody socialist spontaneity.

After three years of preparation and production, *I Am Cuba* was released in 1964. The film showed only briefly in Cuba and Russia, and then it was quietly shelved for nearly 30 years. The Cubans, according to the Brazilian documentary film *The Siberian Mammoth*, which traces the fate of *I Am Cuba*, found the film aesthetically unfamiliar and excessively romantic. In a word, it felt *foreign*. Moreover, the history depicted in the film was still so fresh in the Cuban memory that it was no doubt difficult for Cuban

viewers to accept the air of nostalgia (Soviet nostalgia, to boot) and legend that suffused the film. In Russia, meanwhile, the romance of the Cuban revolution, so intense among young people at the end of the 1950s, had begun to fade along with the energy of the Thaw itself. The Cuban missile crisis, the great-power resolution of which left Castro feeling excluded and duped, had complicated relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, the film's innovative techniques brought old-fashioned grumbling about overindulgent formalism. In particular, Kalatozov's intoxicating rendering of the material surfaces and cultural energies of pre-revolutionary Havana won few friends for the film among a Soviet Party leadership still struggling to deliver on its promise of improved material wellbeing for everyday Russians.

What follows is a study of the roots of the peculiar nostalgia in *I Am Cuba*, a temporal longing that both blurs geographic lines and challenges the notion that nostalgia is an inherently conservative emotion. As Svetlana Boym (2001) has argued, reflective nostalgia rejects fixed narratives of lost purity; instead it engages idiosyncratic images of lost time, deploys them in the mosaic of the present, and plays a creative, even progressive, role in life. Against the background of this progressive nostalgia, I discuss the meaning of modernization in the Soviet context and its powerful relevance to the culture and cinema of the Khrushchev-era Thaw. Next, I discuss the careers of filmmakers Kalatozov and Urusevsky in the context of the history of Soviet cinema. Here I pay particular attention to the filmmakers' connections with 1920s avant-garde cinema, the role of the cinema in Soviet modernization discourse, and the ways in which the forward march of modernization merged with the backward glance of renewal. This

historical discussion provides a foundation for the chapter's final section, where I discuss key elements of the filmmakers' transnational nostalgia in *I Am Cuba*: their idealized, exuberantly modernist Leninism, their remediation of formalist film aesthetics, and their delighted embrace of modern urban spaces.

In *I Am Cuba*, Kalatozov and Urusevsky hold the progressive dreams, formalist exuberance, and revolutionary urbanism of the Soviet 1920s up to the mirror of 1950s Cuba. They look longingly upon the idealism of the Cuban revolutionaries and the shimmering surfaces of the erstwhile bourgeois city and ask: Can we believe like revolutionaries, produce like capitalists, and share like socialists? Can the Soviet Union deliver on the Russian Revolution's promises of purpose, justice, and plenty? Cuba, alas, offers inspiration without answers, and the filmmakers—like their 1920s predecessors—wander beyond ideology into a sort of phenomenology of seeing. Revolutionary outcomes remain a mystery, but revolutionary art endures as a palliative pleasure and an emissary of hope.

* * *

While *I Am Cuba* has been celebrated by film critics and scholars for its visual virtuosity (Smith, 1999), it has received little attention as a social document and a telling artifact of Soviet intellectual history. Even Woll's insightful and exhaustive *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (2000) mentions *I Am Cuba* only once, calling it "a wildly melodramatic exultation of Castro's Cuba," though the entire film takes place in Batista's Cuba (p. 184). Zorkaya's survey of Soviet cinema dismisses the film as an "experiment for cinematographers," arguing that in the film "form was predominant" but "contentwise

the film was a typified portrayal of the ‘flaming continent,’ of revolution in general” (Zorkaya, 1991, p. 214). Liehm and Liehm (1977) call the film “a real catalogue or textbook of the formal possibilities of film photography, avoiding carefully any confrontation with reality” (p. 215). Kalatozov is a major filmmaker, with two classics—*Salt for Svanetia* and *The Cranes Are Flying*—on his résumé, the latter of which had major historical significance; it is, then, strange to see one of his works dismissed with such a minimum of reflection.

This dismissive attitude is no doubt partly due to the film’s general unavailability between 1964 and 1993; it is possible that some of the Soviet-era commentaries on *I Am Cuba* are based not on an actual viewing, but on characterizations in a 1964 special issue of *Iskusstvo Kino* devoted to the film (Woll, 2000, p. 184). But the attitude is also the residue of Cold War scholarship on late Soviet cinema, which often examined cinematic content as if it could be separated from form—as if the social significance of a film could only be derived from its literary themes, plot, and characterization. In Cold War and immediate post-Cold War discussions of post-Stalin cinema there was in particular a tendency to examine films for the extent to which their literary elements broke with socialist-realist tradition. John B. Dunlop’s (1992) article “Russian Nationalist Themes in Soviet Films of the 1970s”, while insightful and highly informative, is a good example of this thematic content-based approach. This approach still has its place; in a highly hegemonic cultural context, it is obviously fruitful to examine themes and plot points for unexpected references, unusual characterizations, and sly alterations of emphasis. After all, for all its formal innovation, *The Cranes Are Flying* was rightly recognized as an

epochal accomplishment largely because of its breaks with the past on the levels of theme and characterization. Nonetheless, the thematic content approach neglected the ways in which, even in an ostensibly propagandistic film such as *I Am Cuba*, imagery can subtly complicate the literary devices of plot and characterization. (The slippery properties of the image were never lost on the Soviet censors, who rarely missed a chance to denounce a film's "formalism".)

As the legacy of cultural Kremlinology fades, studies of Soviet cinema are increasingly embracing the unity of form and content in examining not only the aesthetics but the social positioning of a film. Such an approach will be more open to understanding the importance of *I Am Cuba* not only as a showcase for innovative cinematography but also—in part *because* it was such a showcase—as an important cultural and historical artifact. In her article on Kalatozov's final film, *The Red Tent*, Paula Michaels (2006) even goes so far as to argue that *I Am Cuba* ranks ahead of *The Cranes Are Flying* as Kalatozov's masterpiece (p. 315). This may be a debatable point, but it is refreshing to see the film taken seriously as more than a "textbook" of form, and such a comment surely indicates that, more than 40 years after its completion, *I Am Cuba* merits reflective critical study as both a cinematic and social document.

2. Remembering the Future: Nostalgia and Modernization

How can we place the nostalgic backward glance at the heart of Khrushchev's stridently forward-looking Thaw? How is it possible that Khrushchev's famous desire to catch up with the West, and then to surpass it, was motivated by longing for a lost yesterday? In a sense, the post-Stalin Soviet Union, like Castro's Cuba, was a nation

longing to emerge from a prolonged period of imposed and alien political-economic brutality. Forward motion was at once about surging toward tomorrow and putting a battered nation back together. The desire for modernization was laced with a nostalgic sense of longing for lost wholeness. Behind the desire for modernization lies the quixotic desire to be made new—the desire for *renewal*, the thirst to have some lost life force returned to one's nation in a new way. Seen in this light, modernization is not only about obtaining a new way of life, but about *regaining* something that has been taken away. When a community—tossed by history into periods of dislocation, deprivation, transition, and redefinition—casts a backward glance in search of a binding and half-mythological identity, it is searching for a way forward. Anderson (2006) argues that this backward glance is both a catalyst for and product of modernization: The longing for lost wholeness creates an appetite for modernization, but modernization itself often winds up further sundering the sense of wholeness.

The relationship between nostalgic longing and the modernizing desire, then, is cyclical. The dream of moving forward (in Russian, *vperyod*—one of the keywords of early Leninism) is fueled by visions of a lost, and perhaps imaginary, past. But the “modernized” nation often winds up getting something more and something less than it bargained for—neither the novelty nor the sense of renewal materializes in the hoped-for form, and nations are left remembering the fond, dashed dreams of modernization. A new nostalgia emerges, nostalgia for the lost future.

3. Dreamers of an Interrupted Dream

In Anderson's model, and the earlier modernization model of Daniel Lerner (1958), the broad distribution of *stories* creates the imaginative terrain upon which the story of nostalgic identity and modernizing redemption can spread. Stories are distributed not only in space, though, but in time: The modernization narratives of Soviet 1920s art survived in the memories and documents those years left behind. Mikhail Kalatozov and Sergei Urusevsky came of age during the '20s, and both were products of its revolutionary creative ferment. Urusevsky was a painter and a student of the great graphic artist Vladimir Favorsky and the constructivist luminary Alexander Rodchenko (Doros & Heller, 2007; Prokhorov, 2001). Urusevsky shot documentary footage at the front during World War II, and then became a cameraman for feature films. In 1956, he and Kalatozov began their partnership with *The First Echelon*, which dramatized Khrushchev's (ultimately ill-fated) program of cultivating the Soviet "virgin lands." Through their next three films together, *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957), *The Unsent Letter* (1959), and *I Am Cuba*, Urusevsky doggedly pursued his goal to convey reality through the expressive image, which, he believed, should be self-sufficient without dialogue. This desire (which, understandably, was frustrating to the screenwriter of *I Am Cuba*, the celebrated poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (Carlson, 2004)) can reasonably be seen as Urusevsky's longing to recapture the extraordinary expressiveness and independence of the graphic and cinematic imagery of his youth. His guiding principle as a cameraman was "the need to emancipate film from the domination of the word, which enslaves the unused possibilities of visual representation" (Margolit, 37).

At the dawn of the Soviet film industry, Kalatozov was a business student in his native Georgia, but by 1925 he had caught the cinema bug. He began as an actor, then became a cameraman. He learned from the great documentary filmmakers Dziga Vertov and Esther Shub (Doros & Heller, 2007). Kalatozov's first film as a director, *Blind* (1930), was not a great success, but his second, *Salt for Svanetia* (1930), is one of the great documentary films of the Soviet silent era (Doros & Heller, 2007; Leyda, 1983). By this time, Kalatozov had imbibed the spirit of creative shot composition (low angles, slanted frames) and the Eisensteinian "dialectical montage" (editing that doesn't simply move the story forward but collides images in the hope of generating both visceral emotions and synthetic ideas in the viewer). With these techniques in his creative arsenal, Kalatozov brought his camera to a Georgian mountain community where the routines of both subsistence and spirit had changed little since medieval times (Leyda, 1983). The results are striking, a stirring documentation both of the folkways of Svanetia and of the cinematic exuberance of the late 1920s. They are also striking when viewed in the context of Kalatozov's future work: The mix of subjective framing, acrobatic camera movement and high speed tracking of images that some have credited to Urusevsky alone in the team's Thaw-era films are on impressive display in *Salt for Svanetia*.

Kalatozov's silent masterpiece reflects the peculiar temporal ambivalence at the heart of early Soviet cinema and at the heart of the very idea of modernization. The pre-industrial struggle for daily life is so lovingly depicted—even in its tragic moments—that it becomes impossible to read the film as an uncomplicated call for socialist industrial progress. Like Alexander Dovzhenko's *Earth*, which was made the same year, *Salt for*

Svanetia refuses to look forward without simultaneously looking back. The intellectual inheritance of the Soviet revolutionary spirit mixes the utopian, past-denying forward thrust of Marxist modernization with the back-to-the-people dreams of the 1870s Russian *narodniki*, or populists, who simultaneously idealized the peasant commune and sought to transform it through literacy and political consciousness. If, under conditions of capitalism, holiness had melted into air and the sacred had been profaned, the dream of the Socialist modernizer was not to mock the sundered spiritual instinct, but to renew and repurpose it.

In the 1930s, as we have seen, experimental montage fell into official disfavor, as did the mass protagonists seen in *Salt for Svanetia* and Eisenstein's *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin*. Under the vigilant eye of Stalin and Goskino chairman Boris Shumiatsky, the cinema of socialist realism sought “movies for the millions”, with comprehensible plots and individual, politically conscious heroes who brought progress to the motherland. After the triumph of *Salt for Svanetia*, Kalatozov completed his 1932 film *Nail in the Boot* just as the new set of preferences was solidifying into doctrine. The film, to say the least, failed to divine which way the winds were blowing: It was an exuberant, masterful document of the previous decade's avant-garde, a war epic featuring rapid-cut editing, unconventional camera angles, double exposures, and constructivist meditation on the movement of machines. *Nail in the Boot* was denounced for formalism; Kalatozov was given an administrative post at the Tbilisi Film Studio and was not permitted to shoot another film until 1939 (Leyda, 1983).

The cinema still preached modernity—the 1930s, after all, were the years of heavy-industry development and the organizing of the countryside into collective farms based on a factory model. But the goals of the modernizing narrative had become much narrower: What was advocated was not simply modernity, or even Communist modernity, but the modernity of the Stalinist synthesis, in which the Great Man was the source of all revolutionary thought, and revolutionary thought from anyone else had become both superfluous and dangerous. The Stalin regime used communication to seek not the empathy of its subjects, but rather their obedience and loyalty against enemies, real and imagined, internal and external. The cinema's task was not to make propagandistic arguments but to provide quasi-religious fetish images (a task with deep roots in Russian culture, where the painted icon was an object not of representation but of veneration). This is not to say that the cinema of the era was necessarily slavish: Kalatozov's comeback films, *Manhood* (1939), and its wartime follow-up, *Wings of Victory* (1941) gave him the opportunity to develop what Michaels has astutely noted as the central theme of his film work: courage. Kalatozov, writes Michaels, “has a proclivity for what one critic describes as ‘high melodrama,’ but his underlying concern with guilt and innocence, cowardice and bravery helps him to elude banality” (Michaels, 2006, pp. 315-316).

By the late 1940s, though, the very act of communication became suspect, and the Soviet film industry was reduced to producing a handful of grandiose, ideologically correct “masterpieces” each year. The task of these films was not to encourage modernization, which was, in the Stalinist funhouse mirror, already achieved, but rather

to enforce mythologies of the genius leader, the genius country (all of whose geniuses naturally and directly prefigured the current genius leader, and are embodied in his person), and the circling sharks of a hostile world. Kalatozov's contribution to the circling-sharks genre was *Conspiracy of the Doomed* (1950), a film about anti-socialist plotters in the newly Sovietized Eastern Europe.

The disappearance of any kind of realistic rhetoric of modernization found its real-world echo in the “abysmally low standard of living” in the late Stalinist Soviet Union. Roy and Zhores Medvedev argue that the rough conditions of day-to-day life, more than the moral deprivations of dictatorial rule, had eaten away at people's confidence in their government. “People would be convinced of the superiority of the Soviet system,” write the Medvedevs, “only if it could be shown that all the sacrifices demanded by centralization and dictatorial methods produced tangible economic results—not only in the form of heavy industry but in the availability of consumer goods, foodstuffs, and clothing as well as improved housing and working conditions” (Medvedev & Medvedev, 1978, p. 74). One of the biggest literary sensations of the Thaw was caused not by a historical exposé or some abstract paean to freedom, but by Dudintsev's 1956 novel, *Not By Bread Alone*, which depicted a Soviet Union so choked by cronyism and bureaucracy that it had been unable to make even the most modest strides toward technological modernization (Medvedev & Medvedev, 1978, p. 73).

For filmmakers such as Kalatozov, the onset of aesthetic Stalinism seemed to close the perceptual gateway to the creative spontaneity of the 1920s, cutting off a world of tantalizing possibilities. The headlong pursuit of the undefined future had been

replaced by a world in which all the answers had already been written down. Under Stalin, there was no past or future other than the one the leader posited from his perch in the present: The independent temporal imagination, or at least public display of it, was effectively abolished. With his condemnation of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev effectively returned to artists the gift of time. Suddenly, there was space—still limited, but more than had been available in decades—to ponder both the past and the future, and to evaluate the Soviet project of modernization.

Khrushchev himself, a cooperative survivor in the hazardous upper reaches of the Stalin-era party, used his new power to dream anew the dreams of his revolutionary young manhood, when, for a certain type of excitable mind, Leninism seemed to point the way to utopia. The Leninist dream, in Khrushchev's nostalgic version, posited a utopia built upon the sincere enthusiasm of the people; this model had been subsequently hijacked by the Stalinist model of a fortress nation built upon coercion, terror, and the imprinted sense of absolute duty (i.e. *Do this because your life depends on it; spies and wreckers are at your sides, murderous foreigners are beyond your borders, and Comrade Stalin is at your back*). Khrushchev's model was a hegemonic vision of the construction of the Communist utopia as a society built by all, for all, out of the enthusiasm of all. It was a conjunctive dream of a harmonious voluntary society, one that recalled the Slavophilic conception of *sobornost* as the harmonious social choir, where each individual voice, in singing its most heartfelt notes, blends seamlessly into the common song. It was the sort of beautiful vision that holds up well until someone hits an errant note.

Filmmakers such as Romm and Kalatozov shared Khrushchev's enthusiasm for an imaginary Leninism, and they relished the opportunity to discover within themselves sincere voices that could contribute to the new Soviet modernization. They had started their careers during the last gasp of Soviet formalism; they were the heirs of the great cinematic masters of the 1920s—Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Vertov—men who had greeted the promise of Leninist modernity with great enthusiasm and then seen their dreams and careers shattered when it turned enthusiasm was not what the Stalin regime needed from them. (Another of the 1920s legends, Alexander Dovzhenko, had tempered his enthusiasm from the start with a nostalgic sense of the world modernization would condemn to extinction.) Both the older and younger generations of Thaw filmmakers shared Khrushchev's nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism, a nostalgia for the future that had never arrived, but now, perhaps, would. They began the Thaw era in 1956 as supporters of the new Khrushchev hegemony, happy soldiers in the creation of a humane Communist modernity in which individual consciousness and social progress could comfortably coexist and organically support one another.

The Thaw gave Kalatozov the opportunity to return to the themes of courage and discovery—though this time the courage was not only depicted onscreen, but lived behind the camera. With *The Cranes Are Flying*, Kalatozov and Urusevsky pioneered the path back to avant-garde aesthetic exuberance and forward to subjective visions of an unpredictable world. The film's contribution to Thaw culture is well summed up in an inscription on a watch given at an East German Film Festival to Tatiana Samoilova, who played the tragic heroine of *Cranes*: “At long last we see on the Soviet screen not a

mask, but a face” (Woll, 2000, p. 73). Meanwhile, the renowned Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who co-wrote the *I Am Cuba* script with the Cuban poet Enrique Pineda Barnet, has said that *The Cranes Are Flying* “tore down the Iron Curtain”—a statement that projects the film’s effect 30 years into the future, and yet feels entirely apt (Carlson, 2004). The irony is that Kalatozov’s heroic gift to an unknown future was motivated by his longing glance at the long-gone Soviet 1920s. He would glance backward once more, looking to find the lost spirit of the revolution in *I Am Cuba*.

4. Cutting Edge Cuba: Soviet Visions of Spontaneity Lost

When they arrived in Cuba in 1962, Kalatozov and Urusevsky purposefully decided that they would not make a film about Cuba as they found it, a nation already enraged by the U.S. invasion at the Bay of Pigs, embittered by Khrushchev’s willingness to deal with the U.S. during the Cuban missile crisis, and frustrated with the economic dislocations—such as the disappearance of consumer goods—that attended the prohibition of the market and capital flight (Carlson, 2004). They wanted to make a film about revolutionary enthusiasm and idealism, not about great power politics, economic adjustment, or the post-revolutionary gathering of power by Fidel Castro and his associates. (They had, one imagines, seen more than enough power-gathering in Moscow.) The filmmakers’ decision to look back to capture the eve of revolution, however, meant recreating Batista’s Havana, with all its visual seductions. The second sequence of the film—a kaleidoscopic shot of bathing beauties on a rooftop pool, the blinding white modern skyline in the distance—already tips the viewer off to the film’s accidental subtext: bourgeois vulgarity can be beautiful. The next episode, in which a

smarmy, stereotyped trio of nightclub-haunting American men treat Cuba (and Cuban women in particular) as their plaything, is a corrective to the attractiveness of the swimming pool scene, as is a later sequence that takes us to the crumbling, half-flooded slum in which the regretful prostitute, Betty, lives. Nevertheless, the subtext of intoxication with the modern runs throughout the urban episodes of the film, and hints at a nostalgia that goes beyond nostalgia for Leninist energy.

The Russian 1920s, after all, were not only an age of revolutionary spirit, but also of the relative plenty brought by Lenin's 1921 New Economic Policy, which permitted the return of a limited market economy after the austerity (and famine) of "war communism". Behind the longing for the urban vibrancy of the NEP period may lurk a more subversive, if subconscious, nostalgia: nostalgia for 1913 as the last moment of Russian imperial plenty, cultural richness, and gradualist reform before the coming of the First World War and, in its wake, the Revolution. Nonetheless, nostalgia for *plenty* does not contradict nostalgia for the revolutionary spirit—what it does is issue a rebuke and reminder to Soviet power: *Remember that the promise of communism is not to restrict material progress but to accelerate it, not to restrict the fruits of human enterprise, but to make them available to all.* When the camera, as the viewer's eye, actually enters the pool alongside the bathing beauties, it says: *Picture yourself here. You deserve this too.* Full Communism, the kind Khrushchev had promised would come to Russia by 1980, would have to mean the extension of the beauties of modernization to all.

The scene of Betty's ecstatic, angry dance in the nightclub is open to many readings. We can see her as wholly objectified by both the Americans ogling her in the

scene and by the Russians directing and shooting the scene. But this is not their dance; it is hers, and in it she expresses rage and joy and a blessed moment's self-possession in a realm the men cannot begin to grasp. The bar belongs to her for a moment. The country belongs to her. When we watch Betty's dance, we watch not with the objectifying eyes of her audience; rather, Urusevsky, drawing on the full arsenal of expressive 1920s avant-garde angles, manages to capture the dance from the point of view of the dancer. This is not point of view as conventionally understood, but the point of view of the inner eye. It is how Betty might see herself if she were outside herself: This, of course, is the meaning of ecstasy, the experience of being outside oneself.

We will later learn that Betty is not her real name, that she has a boyfriend, a sweet-voiced street salesman who traffics in fruit and drugs, that he has no idea that to support herself she dances at the bar and occasionally sleeps with her audience members. (One of the Americans, a shy, scholarly type, expresses interest in how she lives; he spends the night with her at her home in the Havana slums but seems incapable of understanding that he is doing her no favor, and that she despises him.) It is a landscape in which everyone is compromised but the spirits of art and transcendence remain stubbornly alive. Betty's dance and her boyfriend's avenue songs gesture toward a faith deeper than religion, a spiritual mettle that will prove them useful in the coming revolution.

Kalatozov and Urusevsky understood well that socialist modernization belonged to the category of faith. The technical fetishes of the 1920s, the militant atheism, the loudly proclaimed search for "scientific" solutions in everything from economics to poetry, were

all part and parcel of a young faith, a search for ecstatic self-transcendence; the manifestos of 1920s artistic groups read like shamanistic incantations: there is a worshipful primitivism underpinning the future-worship of young post-revolutionary leftists. Dziga Vertov's Kino Eye group called for “the emancipation of the camera, which is reduced to a state of pitiable slavery, of subordination to the imperfections and the shortsightedness of the human eye,” and went on to declare their allegiance to “the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye” (Michaelson, 1984, pp. 13-14).

This spiritualization of Leninism had deep roots. For many Russians, the Communist promise of an eventual utopia beyond labor and the tyranny of rational time was a renewal of a complex of ancient, unsinkable millennial hopes sometimes summed up as “The Russian Idea.” During the 19th century, Russia’s great intellectual debate was between those who advocated a Western path of development—the Westernizers—and those who believed that Russia had its own path, based on the Orthodox ideal of conjunctive togetherness and the values of the peasant commune—the Slavophiles (Riazanovsky, 1965). In Weberian terms, the Westernizers believed in a rational-legal basis of socio-political legitimacy, while the Slavophiles preferred a mix of traditional and charismatic legitimacy (Hanson, 1997). The genius of Soviet Marxism-Leninism lay in its ability, as an atheist ideology, to somehow co-opt the idealism of both rational-legal Westernizers and charismatic-religious Slavophiles and create a new faith that promised to redeem Russia. Communism was a supra-national ideology of modernization, but its appeal lay in its connection with national myth: the new ideology would allow Russia to fulfill its prophesied role as the “Third Rome”—the leader of the world, at once

exceptional and exemplary—and to create an entirely just, secularly holy society. Within the early Communist movement there was even a group of writers and thinkers who called themselves the God Builders and wanted to make the ideology's implicit religious parallels explicit. Lenin was not amused, though he did make one of the leading God-Builders, Anatoly Lunacharsky, his first Commissar of Enlightenment.

The Stalin era had replaced the unifying *ideal* with the unifying *leader*, and replaced enthusiastic quasi-religious *participation* (a key term for Lerner) in the process of Communist modernization with compulsory, quasi-religious *obedience* to the word of the master. The nostalgic connection with the ancient Russian dream of *sobornost*—an organic, cooperative togetherness in which individual expression and community goals are mutually supportive—was severed. The Stalin synthesis made it clear that the path to progress necessitated the effacement of self. Stalinist modernization was new without offering renewal. While convincing arguments have been made that Stalin's program was the logical next step in the unfolding and realization of the logic of Marxism-Leninism, the culture of high Stalinism, from the mid-1930 until his death in 1953, could not be more distant from the chaotic energy of the culture of the Soviet 1920s. And it was precisely this energy, more than even the most hopeful interpretation of Lenin's voluminous written record, for which the post-Stalin intelligentsia was nostalgic. It would be their job to return the energy of Leninist modernization theory to their own countrymen—to make of their country an inspirational beacon for countries around the world.

By the end of the 1950s, Russians were prepared to revisit the Revolution and reinvigorate their revolutionary idealism. The Cuban Revolution offered a perfect transnational metaphor. As Genis and Vail (1996, p. 59) write, “The Cuban Revolution became a metaphor not only for the October Revolution, but for its contemporary reincarnation—the liberal, Thaw revolution of the 1960s.”

Cuba’s central place in early-1960s Soviet optimism is apparent in the famous May Day parade scene in Marlen Khutsiev’s *I Am Twenty* (1961, released 1965). Among Khutsiev’s iconic images of the 1961 parade—papier-mâché globes festooned with peace slogans, model rocket ships, portraits of Yuri Gagarin, who had gone into orbit on April 12—we meet a group of young Cuban men walking and laughing through Red Square with rock star ease and pride. Meanwhile, a little boy is perched on his father’s shoulders, shouting *Viva Cuba! Viva Cuba!* Earlier, when one of the film’s young protagonists, Kolya, boards a wintertime trolley—number 777, no less, with a conductress named Nadia (Hope)—a simple affirmation has been finger-written in the windowfrost: “Cuba—yes.” Khutsiev’s film follows the struggle of three young men to find themselves as individuals while reconnecting with the ethical ideals of the Revolution. The film’s fleeting citations of the Cuban struggle—much like its visual and poetic references to Mayakovsky, the avatar of 1920s spontaneity—make the case that vibrant individuality and revolutionary idealism are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing.

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The Cuba imprinted by Kalatozov and Urusevsky is simultaneously close to modern Western pleasures, to revolutionary purity, and to ancient spiritual truths. In the

second part of *I Am Cuba*, the sequence of the tenant farmer working on land he considers his own has a strong kinship with Kalatozov's images of laboring villagers in *Salt for Svanetia*. Both draw on the tension between ancient practice and modern intrusion, and on the dream of spiritual ecstasy achieved through labor and sacrifice. Throughout the film's second part Kalatozov and Urusevsky continue to express their dual longings for revolutionary enthusiasm and spontaneity on the one hand, and for material beauty on the other. Perhaps the most optimistic scene in all of *I Am Cuba* shows a peasant girl going to the village store, buying a Coke, taking a swig and singing joyfully. Coca-Cola itself would be hard-pressed to concoct a better testimonial to the global gift of sugar water. This scene, it is true, is followed by the terrifying vision of her father burning the land he farms, which is soon to be taken by United Fruit Company, and dying in the smoke. There is an unstated expectation that the girl and her brother, with nowhere left to go, will join the ranks of the revolutionaries. But the scenes do not function as a juxtaposition in which the latter image renders the former vulgar, the way an Eisensteinian juxtaposition of luxuriating officers and abused sailors might. The Coke-and-a-smile scene retains its integrity: we do not sneer at the apolitical vacuity of soda-sipping, but lament the tragedy that the girl is unlikely ever to sip soda again. And, in some small way, the goal of revolution becomes to get a Coke back into this girl's hand someday.

The curious mixing of revolutionary nostalgia and nostalgia for the promise of material progress and wellbeing continues in the film's most openly political segment, the story of Havana's student revolutionaries. After the students torch the projected

image of Fulgencio Batista at the drive-in movie theater, they pull past a checkpoint, where a well-placed co-conspirator waves them on. They pull onto a Havana commercial street, gleaming beneath the great neon logo of General Electric, and stop in front of a shop with ceiling-to-floor place glass windows. Behind the window are comely mannequins in stylish gowns. The boys feign looking in the window while their leader, Enrique, tells them it will be safest if they do go home that night. The boys scatter, but Enrique remains. The shop windows are not transparently vulgar, simply transparent: what we see through them is not a bad dream, just a dream. Here Urusevsky's photographic passion, his love of the visual material world, trumps any stereotypical ideological project. Political circumstance cannot drain the splendor from the image of the electrified Havana boulevard.

But wait—here comes the navy, the U.S. Navy to be precise. Twenty-some-odd sailors amble onto the screen, arriving, apparently straight from a Gene Kelley-Frank Sinatra wartime flick. One of them plays the harmonica. The others sing, in perfect key, a bawdy tune about their heroic deeds, their invincible country, and “girls in old Guantanamo” who “never say no.” At this unfortunate moment, a pretty young woman in a black dress steps out onto the sidewalk, and the sailors, like hounds at the hunt, give chase. She sprints around a corner, the formerly singing sailors now whistling in hot pursuit, and comes upon Enrique, who is lingering before that magnificent window. She hides behind him. The sailors approach; one of them almost nose-to-nose with Enrique. Enrique does not give way. A tense moment, and, then, from one of the soldiers: “Aw, let's give this guy a break, Steve.” The lead sailor, this Steve fellow, grins at Enrique—an

expression between menace and haughty dismissiveness—and begins singing once more. He turns, the sailors follow, and the pack of hounds transforms once more into the jolly crowd from *Anchors Aweigh*. (In the Russian voiceover, the menace of this scene is intensified significantly by the incorrect translation of the English “give this guy a break” as the Russian equivalent of “show this guy a thing or two.”)

The scene of the singing sailors can be seen in two ways. On one hand, it captures the worst late-Stalin-era habits of the Soviet filmmakers. It is as if Kalatozov had never shot *The Cranes Are Flying* and was back once more to *Conspiracy of the Doomed*. The issue is not that the American presence in Cuba was not problematic—clearly it was (and, in the case of Guantanamo, remains) problematic. But these sailors are pure symbols, stick figures animated not by life or even by ideology itself, but by made-to-order ideologically inflected cultural stereotype. In other words, it was the kind of image late-Stalin era artists learned to conjure in order to satisfy the very clear needs and definite assumptions of the political structure they served.

On the other hand, the scene, with the cinematic splendor of its clean-cut, smiling sailors in dashing white clothes hints at the same ambiguity that fuels most of the film. Before and after they turn into a pack of hounds, these are simply energetic, cocky young military guys, not so unlike the Soviet Navy’s own energetic, cocky young military guys. If one seeks to portray demonic menace, a Broadway tune and the words “give this guy a break” hardly get the job done. After the sailors depart, the film has one of its most touching moments—a moment that captures the Thaw spirit of capturing what is most simply and fundamentally *human* in any circumstance: boy meets girl. Enrique learns that

the girl's name is Gloria; she learns that he is Enrique. She is standing in front of the gleaming window display, a mannequin in a wedding dress, with tall electric candles on each side. Here is Gloria—escapee from American wolf-whistlers and new friend of a devoted revolutionary—framed against a decadent capitalist window display, and the filmmakers seem not to be drawing a contrast between her simplicity and glamor of the dress in the window but saying, simply, *Why not her?* Why shouldn't Gloria have such a dress?

Enrique's subsequent adventures continue to bring to the screen a mix of revolutionary courage, deeply human sensitivity, and intense beauty. When Enrique decides he must assassinate the corrupt police chief who has killed several of his comrades, he heads into a gleaming white building at the top of which a rifle has been planted for him. As he enters, a toothless old man sings a mournful, haunting song of forgiveness. Enrique continues methodically up the stairs, a great glass wall to his side opening up to the whitewashed splendors of modern Havana. The music echoes; he shakes it off. Reaching the roof, Enrique passes a series of brilliant white modernist buttresses. In both *The Cranes Are Flying* and *I Am Cuba*,, Urusevsky employs shots of a hero moving horizontally across a series of vertical markers: they can be birch trees or fence posts, as in *Cranes*, or sugarcane, as in the second part of *I Am Cuba*. The effect is not simply to aestheticize the shot and thus detract from its thematic meaning, but to permit the shot to speak in a voice that complicates mere novelistic thematics. Our lives are lived on a visual terrain, and the visual constantly complicates and ameliorates the “story” of the moment: Life is more than a plot, and a moment in life has meanings that

go far beyond its functional space in some narrative arc. As Enrique moves along the buttresses, the sun-drenched, whitewashed city glistens the distance. The beauties of civilization—and the camera’s attention to them—complicate our sense of his retributive mission. We know he is on his way to end the life of a killer before the killer can kill again, but we can keep neither our eyes nor our mind off all this beauty.

As we have seen, such respected Soviet critics as Neya Zorkaya (1991) criticized Kalatozov and Urusevsky for being so committed to capturing visual beauty that they bleed the thematic significance from the scenes and render *I Am Cuba* a cold exercise in cinematic technique. But the visual splendor of Urusevsky’s shots cannot be separated from the thematics of the film: visuality is an essential part of the message of the film—the world can never be grasped by stories or ideas alone: we need to look closer, and when we do we’ll see that everything is more complicated than we had imagined, both better and worse than we had thought. As in the best silent cinema of the 1920s, the image introduces polysemy into the seemingly pat arc of the story. When Enrique aims the rifle, he sees the murderous cop eating an omelet with his children on the balcony. The old man’s sensitive song returns. Enrique cannot fire. The song is an obvious signifying device for Enrique’s sensitivity, but throughout the scene the subtler signal of visual beauty has communicated a message of life.

The film’s openness to beauty and to ostensibly “bourgeois” human sensitivity complements rather than contradicts the filmmakers’ high regard for the courage and revolutionary enthusiasm for Enrique and his fellow students. Indeed, Enrique’s friend and revolutionary mentor, Alberto, has told him that individual acts of terror are *not* the

road to revolutionary success. The students set to work printing bulletins to alert people that Castro, contrary to reports in the Havana press, is alive and gathering his forces in the Sierra Maestra. The police raid the printing-room and a young student, knowing full well the probable consequence, rushes to the balcony and begins showering the completed bulletins on the people below. A policeman shoots him and he falls to the ground, the bulletins still drifting down around him.

Enrique witnesses the tragedy and is moved to take a new kind of action. Wized by his abortive attempt to be an assassin, he adopts a more disciplined revolutionary consciousness to complement his impassioned spontaneity: His next appearance is in the canonical socialist-realist role of Orator. Speaking from the steps of the university, he exhorts his fellow students to continue their battle for justice. The peaceful demonstration is interrupted by a police warning; shots are fired; a dove falls. Enrique picks up the dove and walks stoically down the steps and onto the broad boulevard. The students follow him; Alberto begins to sing, and all of the students join in. The police turn their hoses on the students. Gloria moves anxiously through the crowd, calling for Enrique. (This shot echoes the scene in *The Cranes Are Flying* where Veronika searches a crowd in vain for her beloved Boris on the day he leaves for the front). In the chaos that follows, we hear only the sound of the hoses as Enrique, his eyes glazed with an infinite sadness, picks up a rock and walks toward the police chief. The chief fires. Enrique is hit but keeps moving forward, the hoses bearing down on him from both sides and forming a cross. Another shot, then another. The screen goes momentarily black. We witness Enrique's fall

through his eyes, as the world around him is soaked and blurred by the unyielding, all-consuming spray.

Such scenes may invite the label of Communist kitsch, but 20th-century history offers many examples of similar (if less stylish) episodes when the solidarity of the people confronted the blunt edge of established power. Is a portrayal of the peaceful protests led by Mohandas Gandhi “anti-colonial kitsch”? Shall we call a rendering of the March on Washington “civil rights kitsch”? If the dove is something of a leaden symbol, it should also not be forgotten that 20th century protest movements were, at their heart, romantic, and were prone to such leaden symbolism. Kalatozov is not simply parroting socialist-realist tropes but sincerely celebrating the youthful sense of revolutionary solidarity. In any case, as Steven Holden of *The New York Times* pointed out in a 1995 review, Urusevsky’s camera makes the film “much more than a relic of Communist kitsch” (Holden, 1995). Indeed, the word “kitsch” implies a hackneyed, borrowed aesthetic, which makes no sense in discussion of a film whose enduring legacy has been its novel impressionistic vision of the world.

The final scene of the students’ story begins with the ringing of church bells. The bell is one of the enduring symbols of Russian culture, both a marker of the city amid the vast countryside and “a means of bringing the word of God into the presence of men”; in traditional Russian culture, the sight and sound of the bell did not simply augment the Word, but, in a way Urusevsky would no doubt appreciate, *embodied* it: “There was no reason to write discursively about the imperfect world of here and now,” writes James

Billington, “when one could see—however darkly—through the beauty of sights and sounds a transfigured world beyond” (Billington, 1970, pp. 37-39).

Urusevsky’s shot of the bells introduces a sequence that invokes the exuberantly inventive spirit of 1920s avant-garde Soviet cinema: Rushing down from the belfry, the camera captures Enrique’s funeral procession through the streets of Havana. We see Gloria moving sadly through the crowd, then Alberto as he takes over for a pallbearer. The camera scales the side of a building, enters a cigar shop (oddly, the only scene of workers in an ostensibly socialist film) tracks along the shop while a Cuban flag is handed from one worker to the next and then hung out the window in tribute to Enrique and the revolution. Now the camera moves above the flag, past the balcony, and out over the teeming street as the city celebrates a new martyr and dreams of a better future.

Both the “orator” scene and the funeral procession recapitulate classic socialist-realist set-pieces. Kalatozov also used the orator device near the conclusion of both *The First Echelon* and *The Cranes Are Flying*. These devices, writes Semyon Freilikh, conclude a film with the hero in “a monumental stance, directing his gaze into the future, thus illuminating his communion with the life of the next generation” (quoted in Woll, p. 34-35). But such traditional tropes do not negate a filmmaker’s sincerity or reduce the film to the ranks of time-serving propaganda. Prokhorov (2002) has eloquently demonstrated that even the most trailblazing films of the Thaw did not represent a complete break from socialist-realist cinema. Certain tropes and conceptions had become part of the Soviet cinematic language—what changed, sometimes subtly, sometimes markedly, was the context in which these tropes were applied and the aesthetics with

which they were shot. In any case, Stalinism can lay no exclusive claim to the images of the heroic orator or the mourned martyr. What's more, for a filmmaker eager to reconnect with the revolutionary energy of the 1920s, the impassioned orator harkens not back to the hidebound administrative cleverness of Stalin, but to the romantic vision of Lenin, freshly arrived at Finland station in 1917, exhorting the gathered masses to build a new world.

5. Conclusion

Mikhail Kalatozov's nostalgia for the Soviet 1920s is nostalgia for an invigorated, meaningful sense of social justice, for sincere emotion and even a sort of socialist spirituality in the performance of one's social role, and for the courage to hold fast to high and heartfelt principles. It is also nostalgia for the unfulfilled and tantalizing promise of better material conditions for the people. For the Soviets of the 1920s, as for the Cubans of the 1960s, the promise of revolution was in large part a promise of modernization. The material product of human production was to be equitably divided, but it was also to become more plentiful, and, eventually, superior, to what had been offered under capitalism. It should come as no surprise that an ideology built around the means of production should espouse a fundamental goal of enabling more effective production.

Kalatozov and Urusevsky had arrived in a newly socialist Cuba whose marketplaces were newly emptied and proceeded to recreate the last days of commercial Havana, with its alluring shop-fronts, its street-sellers with carts full of oranges (among more illicit goods), its hotel pools, its jazz, and its gleaming modern buildings. Their

images of this lost Havana—a Havana that spoke simultaneously of revolution and (improperly distributed) abundance—created an intense ambiguity at the heart of *I Am Cuba*. Those nightmarish days begin to take on the qualities of a daydream. The renunciation of bourgeois vulgarity remains at the film's narrative surface; meanwhile, the layered images below are replete with longing for the glistening city, for a union of its energies and pleasures with the enthusiasm and justice of the Revolution.

Memory offered a precedent for such hopes: The filmmakers had gotten their first taste of revolutionary aesthetics during the vibrant, heroic Soviet 1920s, years that were devilishly difficult in their everyday reality but thrilling in their unfulfilled promise. The spirit of creative experimentation that had given jazz to the West had its analogue in the visual culture of the Soviet 1920s. From the designs of the Stenberg brothers and El Lissitzky to the films of Sergei Eisenstein and the architectural visions of Vladimir Tatlin, early Soviet culture had been not merely modern, but the vanguard of modernism—a modernism that was the product of idiosyncratic individual vision liberated, inspired, and emboldened by the spirit of revolution. The promise of Leninism, for Kalatozov and Urusevsky, was the promise of justice, idealism, personal courage and heroism. But it was also the promise of spontaneous creativity, electrified modernity, and the unfolding splendor of the material world.

CHAPTER V

REENTERING ETERNITY:

NOSTALGIA FOR THE SPIRIT OF CREATION IN

ANDREI TARKOVSKY'S *ANDREI RUBLEV*

1. Introduction

Rolan Bykov is sweating. Leaping, spinning, standing on his hands, kicking a drum with his feet, singing things that ought not be sung in polite company. Fortunately, he is not in polite company, but on a film set, in a crude log hut, performing for actors dressed as peasants, having great fun describing the sexual misadventures of the 15th century Russian nobility. The film is Andrei Tarkovsky's 1966 masterpiece, *Andrei Rublev*, a meditation on the life and times of Russia's greatest medieval icon painter. Bykov plays the role of the *skomorokh*, the itinerant jester whose rough stock-in-trade is the profane leavening of a heavy life. His motion is elemental; it stirs the stillness like a hard spring wind; in medieval huts, as on Soviet film sets, the anarchic spirit is an indispensable and dangerous thing. The jester rests, accepts water from his grateful audience. Outside a window frame, rain falls hard upon the countryside. Three monks have entered for shelter; one will betray the jester. Henchmen of the Grand Prince will

arrive, pull the jester outside, bash his head into a tree trunk. He will lose his freedom. He will lose his tongue. The film will go unseen by the Russian public for five years; the Soviet authorities will consider it too blunt in its presentation of a cruel age. In 1969, the film will show at Cannes and win the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) Prize. By 1971, the authorities will relent, and *Andrei Rublev* will make its way onto Soviet screens and begin its long ascent into the Russian cinematic canon.

Bykov would later say that he saw in Tarkovsky's works a nostalgia "not aimed at the past" (Bykov, 1990, p. 155). What can this possibly mean? Isn't nostalgia all about the past? And what kind of nostalgia can one attribute to a director whose vision of the past includes such things as the removal of jesters' tongues? Wouldn't this be the opposite of nostalgia? Bykov's words, however, are not to be dismissed. Tarkovsky's cinematic nostalgia, he said, replaced longing for a lost past with "a yearning for the future, whose roots he sought as an artist interested in history." Like any good jester, Bykov gave conventional thinking a sly twist, and in doing so offered a gateway to a deeper understanding of Tarkovsky as a director, *Andrei Rublev* as a film, and the position of both filmmaker and film in Soviet culture.

In this chapter, I will take up Bykov's invitation and analyze the ways in which *Andrei Rublev* encourages and rewards a creative reconsideration of the very concept of nostalgia. In the first section, I outline the film's narrative and point out the crucial questions it raises about the nature of hope and longing. The second section introduces and develops Svetlana Boym's typology of nostalgia. Next, I discuss the conventional portrayal of Rublev as a historical figure and the film's challenge to that portrayal.

Finally, building on the ideas of Henri Bergson, I explore the ways in which the materiality of the film's images embodies an ambiguous, open-ended, and highly spiritual brand of nostalgic longing.

2. The Narrative Arc of *Andrei Rublev*

The film's narrative begins in the summer of 1400 with Rublev's departure from the Trinity Monastery in the forests outside Moscow; it ends 24 years later on the eve of his return to the same monastery, where he will paint his greatest icon, *The Old Testament Trinity*. The young Rublev we meet at the start of the film has acquired a deep but untested faith from the monastery's founder, Sergei Radonezhky. But as a monk-iconographer in the wider world, Rublev witnesses the depravity of his times, the fundamental imperfection and imperfectability of humanity. He is deeply disturbed by the deep chasm between the ideals of the spirit and life as lived by actual bodies, by the parallel disharmonies between man and man and man and nature. The apogee of his crisis comes when he must kill to save the life of an innocent. He will stop painting, stop speaking, renounce his artistic gift. His learned faith, as Tarkovsky (1986) has put it, will be burned in the crucible of experience. But it will be reborn.

Andrei Rublev dispenses with the traditional socialist-realist biopic model of a positive hero who stands astride the action, disciplining the camera never to stray far from his path. Instead, the camera leaves Rublev repeatedly and for extended periods. Tarkovsky's method is not simply to recreate Rublev's life (approximately 1360-1430)—of which only the barest outlines are recorded in medieval chronicles—but rather to draw from the history of his time a vision of the world with which the artist had to contend.

Only once, fleetingly, do we see the great painter paint, restoring a tiny fire-damaged icon of St. George. The film is not about the working life of an artist, but the life the artist must perceive in order to work.

As we alternately follow and depart from Rublev's path, Tarkovsky ushers us through a rogue's gallery of his imagined 15th century: We meet an inventor-balloonist who takes flight even as his countrymen do all they can to stop this devilry; we enter the cabin with Bykov's soon-to-be punished jester; we study with Rublev at the feet of the elderly, deeply conflicted icon painter Theophanes the Greek, who is simultaneously full of pity and brimstone for the tormented and tormenting Russian people (at one point Theophanes must pause in his creation of holy images at a Kremlin cathedral to beg the crowd outside to stop torturing its victim). Later, we share with Rublev the searing vision of flesh and firelight at a pagan midsummer night's bacchanal and watch the next morning as the princely authorities ruthlessly hunt the pagans down; we witness the white perfection of undecorated church walls and the brutal blinding of the masons who built them; we ride with Russia's Tatar overlords and the renegade forces of the Grand Prince's brother as they savagely destroy the ancient town of Vladimir. Amid the chaos of the raid, we watch a Russian raider drag a simple young woman—a holy fool—up a ladder. And we watch as Rublev follows with an axe and saves her. In the dreadful aftermath, as snow falls in the ruined cathedral, Rublev will meet Theophanes's ghost, confess to killing the raider, and take a vow of silence that will last 15 years.

In the film's final episode we meet Boriska, a boy whose deceased father was an expert bell-caster but who himself knows nothing of the craft, and we watch as Boriska,

driven by a deeper knowledge, leads a vast crew of older workers to cast a bell for the leering Grand Prince. Rublev himself is off-screen for most of Boriska's tale, but he is, just as we are, watching. When the bell is complete, Boriska wanders off alone and collapses in exhaustion. Rublev breaks his vow of silence, comforts the boy, and proposes they go to the Trinity monastery together, Boriska to cast bells, Rublev to paint once more. In the epilogue that follows, the black and white film bursts into color and we see for the first time the works of Andrei Rublev.

From this sketch of events, we can understand how Rublev's youthful faith might be shattered. But how could faith be reborn from such unpromising narrative material? Is Boriska's triumph—which earns not so much as a nod of acknowledgment from a Grand Prince who was more than ready to execute the boy if he failed—the sole source of hope on this bleak landscape? Does hope grow from the *occurrences* in the film, from the “story” within history? Rublev's early faith was destroyed precisely by his perception of the social conditions and conventions of his time, none of which have changed by the end of the narrative. His thirst for a lost and illusory faith can hardly have been “quenched” by worldly events, and his longing for a better world must remain precisely a longing.

How, then, does the film account for Rublev's renaissance? The question requires us to consider the ways in which Tarkovsky has quietly seeded the cinematic soil with both history and counter-history. On one hand, the film presents painstakingly wrought events that appear to leave one with little to long for; on the other hand, it discovers beneath, within, alongside, and obscured by those events numberless spiritual possibilities that remain latent in man and nature, ready to inspire us if only we pause

long enough in the business of living to grant attention to life. *Andrei Rublev* rejects *restoration* of the past while inviting us to intense *reflection* upon the shards of latent beauty that lie within the past, beyond the past, and within us. As we shall see, by lacing his film's images with ineffable indeterminate longing—longing at once temporal, material, and spiritual—Tarkovsky used one kind of nostalgia to shatter another.

3. The New Nostalgia

In a 1983 interview for *American Film*, Tarkovsky told J. Hoberman and Gideon Bachmann that nostalgia is “sadness for that lost span during which we did not manage to count our forces, to marshal them, and to do our duty” (Gianvito, 2006, p. 94). This is a radical reframing of the notion of nostalgia, in which the longing is not for what *did* happen, but precisely for what did not. In his films, Tarkovsky creates a narrative on one level, but on another he looks beyond the very concept of *happening* to fix upon polysemic images that invite the viewer's creative contemplation of possibilities lost and found. He not only liberates his tale from the social straitjacket of Boym's restorative nostalgia but actively shreds it. Restorative nostalgia calls for a past frozen into a system of conventional, ideologically inflected fixed images, prepared and packaged for superimposition onto the present. It is less an affect than a policy platform. But reflective nostalgia is the stuff of individual idiosyncratic longing, the collision of our unique and often dreamlike personal recollections with frameworks of social memory (Boym, 2001). It is often a longing for a past that is difficult to define, or even to picture—the lightning image of an opportunity briefly glimpsed and then lost in time.

In *Andrei Rublev*, Tarkovsky summons this flash in many ways, most notably through the ambiguous use of natural images that exist both within Rublev's time and beyond it. At the conclusion of the film's prologue, just after the balloonist's fateful crash, Tarkovsky's camera lingers on a horse rolling over on the damp green riverbank. The scene that precedes the image of the horse has nothing to do with horses, nor do the scenes that follow. Tarkovsky's aim in the shot is clearly not to encourage us to piece together the relationship of horses to the life of Andrei Rublev or to the historical arc of the 15th century; the shot's purpose, it seems, is not really for us to think about horses at all. Yet the presence of the horse, so indifferent to the dreams of the balloonist and the suspicions of the villagers, is deeply affecting, a supra-rational invocation of the integrity of life beyond history, beyond the social and political norms that so often enclose our daily experience and sense of possibilities.

Tarkovsky will return to equine imagery throughout the film. In the devastating scene of the Tatar-Russian raid, his camera, in an early example of what would become the classic Tarkovskian long pan, will move left-to-right past a crowd of invaders slamming their way through the cathedral doors behind which the townspeople hide, past the grinning face of the Tatar chieftain and the guilty grimace of the Grand Prince's younger brother, who has collaborated in this atrocity, and finally to the impassive and beautiful face of the young prince's white horse. At the start of the shot, the chieftain asks, "Aren't you sorry for the cathedral?" The prince does not answer, just scratches at his nose and stares into the distance as the camera moves by him and lingers on his steed. The horse, unlike its rider, is not a collaborator but a visual gateway to some undefined

space beyond all this, a time both before and after, a moment worth longing for. The camera, as if awaking us from this brief dream, cuts to another horse being pushed from a wooden staircase, falling through the railing, writhing on the ground, where a raider plunges a spear through its heart; on the left side of the frame, a prostrate woman pulls her skirts down as a Tatar raider stands over her. There is here nothing historical worth restoring; there is only the endangered beauty that lies beyond history, forever inviting sad reflection upon our better angels.

4. Layers of Memory: Rublev and *Rublev* in Russian History

Tarkovsky's depiction of the raid on Vladimir demonstrates his utter rejection of restorative nostalgia, his flat refusal to varnish a harsh historical epoch or portray it as the means to a glorious end. The 15th century is not presented as a steppingstone to Russian unity, and indeed, Tarkovsky does not confuse the moral category of *unity* with the political one of *unification*. Unification became a fact in 15th century Russia. Unity did not. In the heat of the raid, Tarkovsky shows us terrified face of Rublev's young apprentice, Foma, as he beholds an attacker. "Brother, what are you doing?" says Foma, "We're both Russians!" This plea for national fraternity earns a most un-brotherly response from the attacker: "I'll show you, you Vladimir scum!" Foma flees, but soon takes an arrow to the chest. Tarkovsky films him in slow motion as he takes his last strides, reaches desperately forward toward some indeterminate space in the air, and falls alongside the riverbed. White paint flows downstream.

This is the third time Tarkovsky has shown us the image of paint on the river. In an early scene, Foma washes his brushes while Rublev and Theophanes discuss the

crucifixion; later, paint flows past the blinded masons after they collapse in pain by the riverbed, their eyes gouged out for the crime of accepting a commission from the Grand Prince's brother. Paint carries the promise of the creative act, but society is forever responding with acts of destruction—crucifixion, blinding, the torching of towns—that dissolve the dream of art, sending it downstream to be rediscovered by some later generation. Tarkovsky longed not for the mythological glories of national history, but for the promise of this flowing paint, for the imaginary possibilities represented by the path not taken.

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In 1962, the film critic Yuri Tiurin met with Tarkovsky and his cameraman, Vadim Yusov, and the three looked at Rublev's icons in a 1959 collection assembled by Mikhail Alpatov. The book, which had been given to Tarkovsky by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, was in a dust jacket, and on the dust jacket was a reproduction of Rublev's icon of the Archangel Michael. The image, Tarkovsky told Tiurin, manifested a certain feeling—"the people's nostalgia for brotherhood" (Tiurin, p. 14). Just what kind of nostalgia was this that Rublev's work seemed, for Tarkovsky, to contain and evoke? Was it restorative, fixed and officially approved—the nostalgia of the symbol? Or was it reflective, multifaceted, and evoked by the art itself—the nostalgia of the image? If the film was born from Tarkovsky's perception of the images, and of the time in which Rublev created them, we must take a look at those times, as well as at the social meanings that through the centuries have gathered like barnacles upon both Rublev's images and his era.

Rublev's birth date is generally placed sometime between the late 1350s and 1370. He was born in the vicinity of Moscow, and spent much of his life in the Moscow-Vladimir-Suzdal area of central Russia. (Sergeev, 1998, p. 32). This was also the center of Russian power during Rublev's lifetime, the field upon which Russian princes and Tatar Khans vied for dominance of the country. (The Tatars were the descendants of the Mongol invaders who had shattered the advanced Orthodox culture of Kievan Rus' in 1240 and who ruled Russia for more than 200 years, a period known as the "Mongol Yoke".) As a young man, Rublev became a monk and icon painter at the Holy Trinity Monastery in the forest in the outskirts of Moscow. The monastery had been founded by Sergei Radonezhky in 1340 as a center of ascetic worship. By Rublev's adulthood, it had already become one of the most important spiritual-political centers in appanage Russia. Before the battle of Kulikovo Field in 1380, Sergei himself had blessed Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi, who then rode into battle, the icon of the Vladimir Mother of God in tow, and secured the first ever victory by a Russian force over the Tatars.

Around the turn of the 15th century, Rublev, already with some renown as an icon painter, left for the Spas-Andronikov monastery in Moscow. By 1405, he was painting the walls of Grand Prince Vasily I's new Kremlin chapel (Sergeev, 1998, p. 73). From 1408-1410, he was painting in the Assumption Cathedral (sometimes translated as the Dormition Cathedral) in Vladimir, which had been built in 1160. Between 1410-1420, he returned to his old home at the Holy Trinity Monastery and painted his masterpiece, The Old Testament Trinity. Rublev died on January 29, 1430 at the Spas-Andronikov Monastery, where he is buried (Sergeev, p. 316). In 1551, the great Stoglav church

council met in Moscow and declared that all future icons should be painted in accordance “with ancient images such as the Greek artists painted and as were painted by Andrei Rublev and other highly praised artists” (Sergeev, p. 325).

Four hundred years later, the officially atheist Soviet regime would invoke Rublev as a symbol of national pride. During World War II, Stalin had instituted a policy of official nationalism and framed the war not as a defense of Soviet communism but as a battle for the survival of Mother Russia. For obvious reasons, the legacy of Dmitrii Donskoi as a prince-liberator was useful during the war. But the age of sanctioned and selective mythological nationalism continued after the war and outlived Stalin himself, and the 1950s brought a sort of “Rublev boom”. According to longtime Russian journalist and film critic Yuri Tiurin, the most influential commentator on Rublev in the 1950s was Natalia Demina. Writing in a style that captures the burgeoning idealism, national pride, and lyricism of the Thaw, Demina saw in Rublev’s work an expression of the classic Slavophile model of a Russia that may seem to be sleeping, but always rises to the occasion. In 1956 she wrote that Rublev’s work reflected “complete truthfulness and sincerity of feeling,” but that this sincerity did not belong to Rublev alone:

In the decisive moments of history, the strength of the people’s soul is called into action and remarkably heroic deeds are accomplished. One must give proper due to artists who managed to instill in their creations the image of those through whom the highest truth of the national character was expressed (Tiurin, p. 15).

This is a rather complicated way of affixing ultimate responsibility for Rublev’s images on “the people”. The man, in this formulation, was merely the medium. Rublev’s work, Demina wrote, expressed “the national self-consciousness of the Russian man.” An

ambiguous historical figure is thus turned into a fixed national symbol, credit for a job well done is subtly transferred from the individual to the collective, and personal genius becomes a public commodity.

Demina was hardly alone in her views. A good deal of literature was published on Rublev in the 1950s, and, by the early 1960s, Rublev had been adopted as an idealized nationalist symbol by everyone from the nationalist artist Ilya Glazunov (who painted an angelic, blue-eyed Rublev, remarkably different from the figure in Tarkovsky's film) to respected art critics and historians. Dmitrii Likhachev, perhaps the greatest of all Soviet scholars of Russian cultural history, had set the tone for looking at Rublev as a national treasure:

The time of Rublev was an epoch of rebirth of faith in man, in his moral strength, in his capacity for self-sacrifice in the name of high ideals. It was a time of the rebirth of interest in our own history, in the culture of the time of independent Rus' before the Mongol invasion. The time of Rublev was one of the flowering of literature, epics, and political self-awareness (Sergeev, p. 7).

The conservative film critic Rostislav Yurenev, meanwhile, defended the contemporary relevance of Tarkovsky's antique subject on the debatable grounds that the film conveyed "the feeling of national pride in the unsinkable talent of the Russian people" (Tiurin, 2004, p. 11). He did not mention that one of the unsinkable talents the film conveyed was the talent for slaughter.

In the discourse of the 1950s, the figure of Rublev became entangled with the fact of the victory at Kulikovo Field, which took place when Rublev was between 10 and 20 years old, two decades before he would paint the first of his known icons. The victory, as we shall see, was hardly the end of the Mongol

Yoke, and by 1382 the Khan's army had invaded Moscow and torched much of it to the ground. The battle of Kulikovo Field has, however, been widely interpreted as the flashpoint of a new Russian self-confidence that would play out over the next 150 years as the various Russian principalities were brought under unified Muscovite rule. The battle of Kulikovo Field is not only seen as the rebirth of Russian self-consciousness (a restorative-nostalgic glance back at the lost golden age of Kievan Rus'), but as the moment when Russia saved Western civilization from Mongol barbarism. Tiurin explicitly connects Rublev's legacy with Dmitrii's:

Rublev's historical assignment consisted in, first, the idea of the political unity of the Russian lands under the rule of the Muscovite Grand Principedom, and, second, in the necessity and possibility of complete independence from the intolerable Golden Horde (Tiurin, 2004, p. 16).

Dmitrii Donskoi's victory was not only a political or martial event, but a cultural one, and in the mid-20th century, the best elements of the cultural epoch that followed Dmitrii's reign were symbolically yoked to the great victory. In 1960, the Soviet Union officially celebrated the 600th anniversary of Rublev's birth. That year, the Andrei Rublev Museum of Ancient Russian Art opened at the Andronikov Monastery, where the artist lived and is buried. The date of the opening was September 21 (September 8 old style), the day of commemoration of the victory at Kulikovo Field. Andrei Rublev had been drawn into the Soviet

narrative of international struggle and encirclement, one of the central tropes of the Stalin years.³⁸

The Soviet glorification of the age of Rublev willfully neglected the complications of that age. The period after Rublev's death in 1430 brought decades of savage civil war between the Russian princes. All the while, the Tatars, though weakened by their own internecine strife, continued to collect tribute from the Russian lands, conduct raids, play the Russian princes off of one another, and arrogate to themselves the right to anoint their favorite of the moment as Grand Prince. The Mongol Yoke would not be decisively thrown off until 1480. Meanwhile, the impressive cultural developments of the early 15th century—a “Russian Renaissance” embodied most notably by Rublev's icons and frescos—were unmatched by a similar spirit of innovation in the political sphere (Vernadsky, 1969). The Muscovite state that coalesced in central Russia between 1450 and 1550 emerged only at an extraordinary price: brutal civil war, the subjection of all personal wealth and freedom to the will of the Tsar, the end of church independence, the subjugation of the arts to the preferred political narrative of the Muscovite principedom, and the general decline in the quality of iconography (Crummey, 1987, p. 192).

Georges Florovsky argues that Russian art “definitely declined in the fifteenth and especially the sixteenth century and lost its originality and daring” and attributes this

³⁸ The nationalist appropriation of Rublev reflects not only instrumental politics but also the century-old Slavophile tension between the ancient concept of *sobornost*, or conjunctivity—in which unique individuals cooperate seamlessly to shape a harmonious society that is enriched by their uniqueness—and Slavocentrism, which posits the world as an apocalyptic battlefield with Orthodox Slavs on one side and Everyone Else on the other (Riazanovsky, 1965). On one hand, Rublev's message was said to be one of love; on the other hand, it was interpreted by Soviet commentators as a call not only for harmonious national *unity*, but for the national *unification*, under the firm hand of the Muscovite Grand Prince, of a long-suppressed genius-people now ready to take on all comers.

decline to the Muscovite penchant for top-down aesthetic system-building (the very phenomenon at play in the Stoglav pronouncement of 1551):

Cultures are never built as systems, by orders or on purpose. They are born out of the spirit of creative initiative, out of intimate vision, out of spiritual commitment, and are only maintained in freedom. It may be contended that Moscow missed its opportunity for cultural progress when it yielded to the temptation of building its culture on the social order of the day—*po sotsial'nomu zakazu*, as it were (Florovsky, Andreyev, & Billington, 1969, pp. 217-218).

Against the historical background of 15th and 16th century Muscovy, then, it is difficult to read Rublev's work—noted for its extraordinary gentleness of line and form—as an expression of the political thrust of his times or as a harbinger of political harmony and artistic effervescence to come. Perhaps one can more accurately regard it as the terminus of a particular path of cultural development, a historical dead-end, beyond which lay the ghost-path that Tarkovsky would reflect upon almost six centuries later.

* * *

From the very beginning of *Andrei Rublev*, Tarkovsky lays down markers to this ghost path alongside images of the rougher historical realities that impeded its way. In the film's prologue, he brings us memorable images of the Russian countryside from the point of view of a peasant's jerry-rigged hot air balloon. The sequence is so visually breathtaking, and the parallels with the film's primary narrative of an innovator finding his "voice" so powerful, that it is easy to look past a key narrative element of the scene: In the opening shots, villagers, monks, and princely authorities are frantically trying to *prevent* Yefim's fateful flight. Thus in the film's opening minutes, Tarkovsky gives us both a reflective-nostalgic vision of peasant ingenuity and a firm rejection of the

restorative-nostalgic conception that the *nation* and *the historical epoch* were supportive of and responsible for such genius.

The scene is an echo of a historical tale, probably apocryphal, of the 18th century peasant Kriakutnyi flying in a balloon filled with black smoke. In the 1950s, the Soviet government seized upon the tale of Kriakutnyi as evidence that a Russian, and not the American Wright brothers, had made the first flight, and the tale was absorbed into the store of similar historical appropriations of the late Stalin era portraying the superior genius of the Russian people. In 1956, Kriakutnyi even wound up the subject of a postage stamp (Bird, 2004). The genius of the Russian people, of course, is not to be underrated, and Tarkovsky here likely has in mind that Yefim is a sort of peasant genius. But Yefim is also a Russian genius hounded by Russians themselves, and Russian authorities, to stop with his devilish innovations. Seen in this light, Russia is both a cradle of geniuses and a destroyer of them.

In the Soviet era (indeed, in the modern era, whether in the East or West), there was reason to be nostalgic for the anarchic, innovative spirit of a peasant like Yefim, living at a time when the flight was still a mystery, a dream, and a subject of creative speculation. This is the nostalgia that Boym sees as a prime symptom of modernity. It is a nostalgia not only for pre-industrial slowness, but for a time when the miracles of the machine age still resided in the realm of the imagination, when they were thrilling dreams rather than industrial efficiencies, when they belonged not to economics, or even to science, but to art. Tarkovsky expresses this reflective nostalgia through Yefim, with his childlike cry of wonder, "I'm flying! I'm flying!" Meanwhile, the people below grasp

angrily at Yefim's friend, demonstrating that society, in the moment, punishes its innovators. Only later does it appropriate them as symbols of national greatness and put them on postage stamps.

* * *

In the introduction to their screenplay for *Andrei Rublev*, Tarkovsky and his co-writer, Andrei Konchalovsky wrote purposefully in the register of restorative nostalgia, a register that is completely absent in the film: “[The idea came about] from our profoundly conscious love for the Motherland, for our nation [*narod*], and from our respect for its history, which laid the way for the October Revolution, from true respect for the nation's lofty traditions which are its spiritual treasure, which has been deeply imbibed by the new socialist culture.” Tarkovsky and Konchalovsky went on to note that Rublev was the first artist listed in Lenin's 1918 decree, “On the construction of monumental propaganda” (Bird, 2008, p. 41). This was a purely instrumental approach, one that likely helped the young filmmakers win approval to start production. But the film itself, while expressing Rublev's dream of brotherhood, of an end to the ceaseless violence of his time, offers no hint that such brotherhood was already developing, or that the culture was flowering, or that the Mongols were in retreat.

Tarkovsky's comments to the Soviet film journal *Ekran* in 1965, while he was shooting the film, point more to a fascination with Rublev as an utterly sincere artistic innovator than with Rublev as a symbol of national greatness. “As a rule, icons in [Rublev's] time were cult objects with conventional representations of the saints, nothing more,” Tarkovsky said. “With Andrei it was different. He strove to express an all-

embracing harmony of the world, the serenity of the soul. . . . The main thing that I want to express in my film is the burning of a person in the name of an all-consuming idea, an idea that possesses him to the point of passion” (Gianvito, 2006, p. 15). In 1969, Tarkovsky again discussed Rublev not as a fixed symbol of the nation, but specifically as a self-reflective, spiritually self-reliant creative individual:

He looks for a moral ideal within himself, and thereby expresses the hope and love and aspirations of the people, born of their living conditions. He expresses the attraction towards unity, fraternity, love—everything that the people lack yet which Rublev feels to be indispensable. This is how he foresees Russian unification, a certain progress, and the hope in the only future that can get people involved by opening perspectives for them (Gianvito, 2006, p. 22).

At first glance, this statement resembles Demina’s view that Rublev was a sort of medium for the people. Indeed, Tarkovsky shares with Demina and Likhachev a general understanding of Rublev’s work as an expression of nostalgia for the lost unity and cultural richness of Kievan Rus’. But there are crucial phrases he uses that point to a vision of Rublev’s “nostalgia for brotherhood” not as a national, shared, unitary vision—restorative nostalgia—but as an individual, idiosyncratic, open one—reflective nostalgia. For Tarkovsky, Rublev is less a medium for the people’s aspirations than a prophet showing them what they can aspire toward. He gives them precisely what they *lack*. The moral idea is not borrowed from the people, but sought *within the self*. It is *Rublev’s* insight that unity, fraternity, and love are indispensable.

Rublev’s breakthrough, then, *served* the people, but ultimate responsibility for that breakthrough lies not with their communal sensibilities, but with his uniquely individual perception of the world. The difference between the harshly beautiful

angularity of Theophanes's work and the willowy curves of the hands, necks, and eyelids on Rublev's "Old Testament Trinity" are as striking as any abrupt transition in 20th century modernism. Individuality somehow shines through in an art form where the individual aesthetic was an afterthought—if indeed it was ever a thought at all. For Tarkovsky, Rublev's appearance on the historical stage was significant precisely because his icons encouraged *new ways of seeing*. The sense of "opening perspectives" is a key element in Boym's reflective nostalgia; it is the backward glance of the person willing to contemplate multiple paths, and the possibilities they might have offered (and may yet offer), not of those who seek a heroic narrative to validate and solidify their national identity. Tarkovsky's Rublev may indeed be the herald of better times to come, but it is questionable, even after six centuries, whether those times have yet arrived. The film sees the "nostalgia for brotherhood" embodied in Rublev's work not as an indication of the current of his times, but as a corrective to it.

* * *

Against the backdrop of the medieval world, Rublev remains for most of the film an alienated figure, stymied not only by the horrors of his time but by the enforced disharmonies between the manifest pleasures of Creation and the instrumental demands of culture. He is, for instance, incapable of painting a traditional representation of the Last Judgment upon the newly whitewashed walls of the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir. Iconography is, of course, a highly conventional art form; one does not simply change the meaning of a biblical episode. Rublev's friend and mentor, Daniil, encourages

Andrei to simply get on with it, to paint sinners boiling in pitch and a devil with smoke billowing from its nostrils. He says this in the cheery tones of a kindly uncle.

“Smoke isn’t the point!” Rublev shouts.

“Then what is?” Daniil asks.

“I don't know! I can't paint all that. It disgusts me. I don't want to terrify people.”

Daniil, at once bemused and annoyed, answers calmly: “It's the Last Judgment. I didn't make it up.”

Rublev has reached an impasse. He cannot see the way he is expected to see, the way that makes it possible to live and work in harmony with unharmonious times. He is angry at the need to create angry icons, on strike against artistic conventions that no longer make sense to him. In a flashback that follows Rublev’s conversation with Daniil, the Grand Prince visits the cathedral. It is summer, and the unadorned white walls gleam in the sunlight. Andrei is cheerfully reciting a Bible passage to the Grand Prince’s daughter; poplar fluff fills the air; the little princess squirts milk at Rublev, who laughingly scolds her. The scene is almost idyllic, save the brewing problem that there is a cathedral to be finished, a Prince to be glorified, a Last Judgment to be painted. The Grand Prince asks Andrei how he likes the cathedral. Rublev looks at the blank walls, turns to the Grand Prince, and answers: “It couldn’t be better.” The sensory harmony of the sunlit images reveals the deep emotional disharmony of the narrative situation. What on earth does this laughing little girl need with a smoke-blowing devil? How does one envision upon that sunlit wall a fresco of boiling men? How, surrounded by the poplar fluff of a perfect summer’s day, does one preach the gospel of eternal judgment?

Embedded in the images of this very scene, there is a world worthy of Rublev's talents, worthy of his longing, a world replete with the potential for brotherhood. It is a world still inaccessible to him, though, a perspective yet to be opened.

5. Nostalgia and Materiality

Tarkovsky's bleak social history, with its strong implied critique of hegemonic glorification, hovers above a deeper history, a history of matter, which contains glories of a wholly different kind, the glories not of political centralization but of the existence we share (even if we most often fail in the sharing) with one another and with nature on an infinitely rich spiritual-material plane. The intense materiality of the images in *Andrei Rublev* was not a simple side effect of effective camerawork in shooting the script: From the start, Tarkovsky's goal was to reach beyond the *story* of life to behold the mysteries of the *stuff* of life. This goal caused Tarkovsky's co-writer Andrei Konchalovsky considerable frustration. In a 1987 essay, Konchalovsky writes,

Working on the *Andrei Rublev* script, we went to Georgia together. I can recall that while on a walk at night, [Tarkovsky] kept repeating: "I would like these buds, these leaves, the sticky ones, you know... And these geese are flying..." "What does he want?" I asked myself. "Let's be more specific. Let's get down to the script." But he kept driveling on about [the] buds and leaves among which his soul was wandering" (Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, 1990).

In his reasonable professional desire for an efficient scriptwriting process, Konchalovsky failed to realize that it was precisely through such "buds and leaves," through sensory images that at first glance seem incidental to the narrative, that Tarkovsky would bring his peculiar brand of hope to the bleak medieval world.

For most of *Andrei Rublev*, man cannot penetrate nature's beauty. On the eve of the Tatar raid, for instance, the river hovers upon the brown land, silvery and inviting to the dreamy eye. But no eyes are dreaming here but our own. On one side of the river, in the foreground, are the Tatar warriors; on the other, in the background, the white tents of the camp of the Grand Prince's jealous younger brother. We absorb the beauty of the shot in direct opposition to the narrative purpose of the shot. In a strictly narrative sense, the river "exists" in the shot strictly so that the Tatar chieftain can ask across it where the ford is, and obtain an answer from the Russian forces on the far side, forces who have no compunction about joining the "occupier" to savage their own people. The chieftain meets the young prince at the ford, greets him with a broad smile, and remarks with biting sarcasm, "You sure do love your brother!" Meanwhile, the sheer beauty of the river, of the horses, of the spectacle of riding, of the Tatar's smile, more full of apparent joy than any other facial expression in the film, impacts on a level beyond narrative. We are seized with the fatal disjuncture between the stuff of life and the story of life. It is a dialectic with no synthesis, no easy answers—at least none that Tarkovsky will provide. It is left to us to contemplate the simultaneous beauty and ugliness of existence.

In his 1896 masterpiece *Matter and Memory*, the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1991) offers an extraordinarily rich model of human perception that aids our understanding of how Tarkovsky, even as he depicts in his narrative the essential bleakness of Rublev's time, continually draws from those times discordant and oddly inspiring images of a world worth longing for: the glowing river; the poplar fluff; the impassive face of the Prince's white horse; the flow of paint downriver; the mason who,

even in his free time, carves stone for pleasure. Each of these images collides with contiguous images of shocking brutality. The painful images, for the moment, even overwhelm the pleasurable ones. But Tarkovsky has perceived in Rublev's world the rawest materials of worldly hope, the very materials that sustain the integrity of the artist through his darkest days.

Bergson, as we have seen, begins by asserting the existence of matter and its centrality to lived experience. Everything we perceive is derived from matter, and we call perceivable matter *images*. Each image is infinite in its content; there is more in an image than we can ever perceive. In order to make life livable—that is, in order to *act*—we must *subtract* from these images when we perceive them. We always see less than the full image. This does not mean that what we see is not *real* or not *matter*; it simply means that our perception is inevitably, infinitesimally fractional. This fractional perception is the result of the *determinacy* of our perception—the unavoidable fact that we perceive in a more or less goal-oriented way. We take what we need from infinite matter.

The degree of determinacy of our perception is conditioned by our memories of previous perceptions. In this way we recognize matter, we see in it particular significance or meaning. Some memories are clearly, directly, *usefully* related to the object we perceive—a narrow, functional plane of memory that helps us recognize our world and act upon it. However, lingering at the flanks of these useful memories are vast networks of associations, seemingly useless and related vaguely at best to the image at hand—a broad plane of memories, which facilitates contemplation of the depth and multiplicity of the world of images we perceive. Thus, the narrower—that is, the more narrowly goal-

oriented—the plane of memory we invoke in perceiving matter, the more *determinate* our perception. The broader—the less directly goal oriented—the plane of memory we bring to the act of perception, the more *indeterminate* the perception. Indeterminate perception is perception that *subtracts less* from an image and *sees more*.

In cinema, there are two stages of perception. First, the filmmaker perceives the world, and then we perceive the film. A filmmaker who perceives and processes the world in an indeterminate way will present us with open and ambiguous images, which in turn invite our own indeterminate perceptions. The degree of determinacy at these stages, in turn, informs the nature of nostalgic longing for the filmmaker and the viewer. Looking through the Bergsonian lens, restorative nostalgia is a determinate perception of historical imagery—of buildings, books, costumes, festivals, and borrowed practices. It places the bric-a-brac of history in a totalizing contextual mold by subtracting the ambiguity. Perception is filtered by hegemonic convention, a memory scrim built from social symbols, rituals, snippets of shared verbiage, remembered examples of discipline and punishment. This memory scrim facilitates highly determinate perception; seeing according to convention permits us to move more easily through life, to function without constant discord between private consciousness on the one hand and public space and time on the other. If we train our eyes to see only the most “useful” colors in the spectrum, we don’t have to worry about the internal discord created by seeing and appreciating “useless” colors. We don’t have to feel as though we are lying to ourselves when we do what it takes to survive, because we are not lying to ourselves; we are living by the truth as we see it. Of course, this self-training, aided by social discipline, is

always incomplete, and we never do completely lose the capacity to see the useless colors. However, *seeing*, and then privately and publicly acknowledging what we have seen, requires effort, reflection, and courage.

In the Soviet context, perception through the hegemonic scrim was a matter of survival, relative freedom, employment, advancement. Tarkovsky could have made his life much easier, for instance, had he brought to bear on his perception of medieval Russian history only the hegemonic plane of memory—that is, the well-trained social memory that has learned to read the age of Muscovite centralization as one of unity and glory, and Rublev specifically as a herald and embodiment of that glory. Such determinate perception of history could have created a tidy and forceful restorative nostalgic narrative equally useful to cynical Communist Party nationalists and sincere Great Russian chauvinists.

For Tarkovsky, though, the cinematic image is the residue of reflective nostalgia. His perception, processing, and presentation of the image is shaped by a vast and indeterminate plane of memory, by a longing for the sundered spiritual materiality of the stuff of life, for the integrity of Creation (in the sense both of the act of creation and the thing created). His memory extends well beyond the political and social; it draws (as we see in his 1974 film, *The Mirror*) on highly personal, idiosyncratic childhood images of capricious nature and conflicted parents and wartime tension, memories that merge and collide in the mind and fill one's dreams and offer access to the uncanny. In *Rublev*, Tarkovsky does not perceive a river as simply a thing to be crossed, but as an infinitely meaningful, infinitely ambiguous material flow that is supremely indifferent to human

action. On a spiritual timeline extending back beyond human history, Creation precedes man and his willful abstraction of and alienation from the images of the world. It extends across all of history, hidden in clear sight, obscured by our determinate need to see only what is useful in our movement from here to there; it is the *stuff* of life, buried by the *story* of life.

The film's final episode, "The Bell," offers a striking illustration of the infinite spiritual-creative possibilities embedded in worldly material. Boriska, the young bell-caster, has promised the Grand Prince's men, and all of his assistants, that he knows the "secret" of bellcasting, that he has inherited it from his father. The truth is, his father told him nothing before dying, and if Boriska knows a secret, it is a secret that remains secret even to him. He believes, though, with fierce and uninformed intensity. He consistently rejects the "wrong" clay, even as more experienced men tell him it is the clay they always use.

The men have hollowed out a deep pit. Boriska is at its bottom, among the others, digging for clay. He hits a root, bends down, grabs it, and pulls. He keeps pulling, follows the root across the pit, up its steep side, clear out of the pit, and stops. He looks up in awe at a towering poplar. Tarkovsky has not shown us the poplar before; he does not work in the simple grammar of establishing shots. The tree is new to us, and, it seems, to Boriska: until we see the root, we are unready to appreciate the tree. Boriska lets go of the root, lies down in the mud at the pit's edge. Below him, the diggers go on digging. We look down at him from above as he gazes upward in awe at the bare but living branches, at the ancient and enduring promise of nature.

In the next shot, Boriska descends to the pit, grabs a handful of clay, rubs it between his fingers, smells it, listens to it, looks for what is hidden, embedded in matter, the secret of bellcasting that his dying father never told him. This is perhaps the most optimistic moment in the film. With utter confidence, he says, No, it's not the right clay. The optimism here is the happy stubbornness of faith, even the faith that this is NOT it—and that thus the obverse must be true; the total confidence that this is NOT it bears within it utter faith that IT is somewhere; IT exists, surely down there, in the eternal and infinite soil. The sight of the tree has been pivotal for Boriska, at once humbling and emboldening: The answer must lie in the creativity of nature, in nature's infinitude. Nature is the ultimate art. Man can only aspire to emulate in some small ways its infinite creativity. Boriska has tapped into the stream of nature and allowed himself to be caught by its current. It is not a moment of permanent inspiration; Tarkovsky well knows that in the artistic process every inspiration is followed by frustration and desperation that such moments will ever occur again; but Boriska has made his connection with the world, and has readied himself to make it again: He has “remembered” a thing he never even knew, a connection with the kind of secrets that preceded him and his father and his father's father, a never-truly-lost thing from a never-truly-lost time, the time of the image.

Soon we see him walking moodily alongside the riverbank. He turns to face the water, kicks out his foot; his bast sandal flies down the embankment. Boriska rushes down to retrieve it but falls and slides along muck and through brambles and, scratched and bruised, comes to a stop in the mud. He puts his hand to the soil. Once more, he rubs his fingers together, sniffs them, listens to them. This time he exclaims: *“I FOUND IT!”*

Here Boriska has made contact with the immeasurably ancient time of Creation, but this time does not exist as a discrete “period” separate from the present and the future. It coexists with the present, inextricably interwoven with it. Time, for both Bergson and Tarkovsky, is indivisible; the duration of matter is infinite and the whole of the past is accessible in that matter. Tarkovsky does not have an “archaic” ideological program; his focus is precisely on the integrity of Creation that runs throughout time, underlying everything we do and say, and thus providing the inspiration and working material for new acts of creation. There is no contradiction in Tarkovsky’s intense focus on the stuff of nature and his use of a technological apparatus, the camera, to perceive and process that nature.³⁹ As a reflective nostalgic, Tarkovsky does not reject technology and modernity outright; what he rejects is the positivist *replacement* of humanity with science, materiality with materialism, and questions asked with questions answered. The spirituality of Tarkovsky’s images resides at the nexus of humanity, materiality, and reflection, and the past has no exclusive claim on this nexus.

Tarkovsky does not argue that any pure state can be restored to man—the “noise” that separates us from Creation is an inescapable element of our existence. Cultural producers, thus, wind up with a choice: they can simply add to the noise, perceiving the world in a determinate way and passing on conventional visions. Or they can see the noise as a creative challenge, a set of limitations to work around and beyond. Tarkovsky

³⁹ Indeed, to a degree unusual among directors, Tarkovsky acknowledges his dependence upon the camera itself to organize his vision of the world. In working on Tarkovsky’s final film, *Sacrifice* (1986), the great Swedish cameraman Sven Nykvist, who had worked with Ingmar Bergman, was at first shocked when Tarkovsky moved him aside and looked through *his* camera prior to shooting each scene. Soon, however, Nykvist understood that Tarkovsky was not usurping the photographer’s duty, but rather that he needed the camera to truly *see* matter, to choreograph its flow within and across the frame (Nykvist, 1990).

chooses the latter path; his images contain the tantalizing possibility to see both the noise and what lies beyond it: Life has given us history and power and culture and chaos and the capacity for determinate, instrumental use of the material image. But it has also given us the allied capacities to *see* the world—to stop and reflect and perceive and remember a “time before” that is unknowable to history but readily available in the existence of things if only we take the time to apprehend them. Man’s great gift is the capacity to build upon this apprehension, the ability, in our awe of creation, to *create*. For Tarkovsky, our great hope in life lies in our understanding that beneath the historical determinate layer of our perception lie these deeper capacities, the ability to remember matter, in its infinite meaningfulness, to see beyond the noise and create based upon what one has seen.

Both Boriska’s non-discovery of the “right” clay beneath the poplar and his subsequent discovery by the riverbed point the way past our mere consideration of 15th-century bellcasting techniques and Boriska’s role—in some ways easier to argue for than Rublev’s—as an expression of Russian national self-consciousness. The soil Boriska tumbles into is supranational and transhistorical; it is the stuff of the world rather than the story of the world, an almost tactile visual image unburdened by dramatic hints at the “Russianness” of the soil and the secret. If there is a certain patriotism in the film, it lies precisely in its willingness to grant Russian nature its place on the universal stage as simply Nature, and Russian genius its place as plain Genius, without the forced limitations of a national modifier. As Robert Bird (2004) argues, the materiality of Tarkovsky’s images “neutralizes historical clichés”. The materiality of the image clears the field of blunt symbolism.

Tarkovsky himself has left a considerable record of his preference for the self-contained image to the symbol, which attains significance only through imposed meanings. “Everything is real,” Tarkovsky told Hervé Guibert of *Le Monde*. An image, he continued, “possesses the same distinguishing characteristics as the world it represents. An image—as opposed to a symbol—is indefinite in meaning. One cannot speak of the infinite world by applying tools that are definite and finite” (Bielawski; Gianvito, 2006, p. 86). The Tarkovskian image—sometimes a long take with an immobile camera, at other times an extensive tracking shot along a terrain of enigmatic details and varied textures—is ambiguous, but not in the postmodern sense that it has no independent meaning until an arbitrary meaning is imposed. Instead, the image’s ambiguity lies in its patient awaiting of the viewer’s choices from among its many inherent meanings. In Tarkovsky, a bell is a bell, not a fixed symbol of some abstract notion. At the same time, a bell contains within it the capacity to evoke an infinite number of associations in the viewer.⁴⁰

After the horrific scene of the blinding of the masons, Tarkovsky cuts to a blotch of dark paint splattered on the white wall of the Vladimir Cathedral of the Assumption. There is a handprint in the center of the blotch. The print at the center of the blotch resembles the earliest cave paintings; it is a wordless, codeless statement that says, simply, “I am.” What it says beyond that is a matter for reflection. The blotch, left by Rublev himself, may be seen by some viewers as a visual cry of abject despair; others,

⁴⁰ We find here an affinity not only with Bergson’s theory of the material image, but also with the ideas of the Russian philosopher Aleksei Losev, who wrote brilliantly about the material thing that contains *within itself* the entire idea-thing dialectic, upon which no meaning needs be imposed from outside, and within which reside an infinite number of diverse meanings (Lossky, 1952, pp. 292-295).

such as Robert Bird (2004, 2008), may see it as a breakthrough in Rublev's blocked efforts to envision the Last Judgment. The blotch is at once despair and breakthrough and declaration of being; it is the simultaneous rejection of and embrace of art. It is, in short, many things, and while it may be a bit pat to compare Rublev's blotch to a Rorschach Test for the movie-going public, the reference is not entirely inapt.

Tarkovsky often spoke of his films as "co-creations" with the viewer; this was not an admission that images were arbitrary, but that they were ambiguous: the director's fabled long take emerged from a desire to let the image speak to the viewer and await the associations it would evoke. The viewer is rewarded for his close observation of the film, and the film is enriched by the associative pathways the viewer has discovered (Tarkovsky, 1986). The work of grasping the tensions between the story of life and the stuff of life is left to the viewer. Paint on a river, a blotch on a wall, and the gaze of a horse—these are not readily decodable conventional images. Nor is their meaning yoked to the unfolding plot. Rather, they are evocations of the infinite, and, we, like Tarkovsky himself, must carve from them a perception of our own. In this way, Tarkovsky's images ask us to take responsibility for what we have seen.

* * *

Andrei Rublev is legendary for its visual images, for the kinetic energy of the raid, the stillness of Rublev's gaze, and the deep-focus shots of the great brown Russian land. But the film's richness also flows from its dialogue and monologues—what we might call its "sound images". Here, as in his visual images, Tarkovsky explores the differences between expression that is rooted in the deep experience of time and matter, and that

which is subordinated to or rendered meaningless by the instrumental task at hand. We can, for instance, compare the nature of unreservedness in some of the film's most verbal characters. The words of the princes, the Tatar chieftain, and the monk Kirill are by turns self-serving and empty. Meanwhile, Boriska, Theophanes, and the jester speak, in their different ways, with deep commitment; insistently, stubbornly, they speak words that make their own lives more challenging; something beyond instrumental determinacy, some grasp of the meaning of soil or paint or rough-hewn humanity, calls upon them to follow their voices down difficult paths.

Boriska, by turns desperately affirmative and painfully anxious, pronounces and pouts and rages for his chance to make the bell, for his vision of the right clay, for the early firing of the clay cast despite the warnings of his elders that it will break. With each sentence he throws himself still harder against the gates of convention. Theophanes, meanwhile, speaks wisely and patiently with Andrei of his own internal struggle with convention: he appears to condemn man in his work, but he is full of love. Indeed, his condemnation springs from his love; he cannot bear to see the torture on Red Square, yet he believes in the torments of the Last Judgment. His warmth is conveyed in the tones in which he speaks to Andrei, the joy he takes in the act of human communication.

Theophanes cannot share Andrei's iconoclastic propositions on the nature of Christ, and yet he delights in Andrei's presence, his mind, his soul, his passion to find his way. The contradictions in Theophanes are partly resolved when his ghost appears in the ruined cathedral after the Vladimir raid and announces to Andrei, who has now lost hope in mankind: "I was wrong then, and you are wrong now." Man is redeemable, says

Theophanes' shade, and one must look upon him with charity and hope for his soul. And yet when Andrei, the detritus of the raid piled around him, asks Theophanes, "How long will this go on?" Theophanes answers, "Probably forever." Even after death, Theophanes is torn between a longing for the good and a saddened belief in the inevitability of evil. The jester, meanwhile, speaks to a different tradition, one that also sharply grasps man's hypocrisy and punishes it not with brimstone, but with wit. His words are at once impromptu and rooted in centuries-old tradition. His performance is a riot of disciplined indiscipline. He puts his life at risk, flagrantly belittling his betters, because *his* truth lies with neither church nor state but with a tradition of buffoonery that long preceded the Grand Prince and will long survive him. The jester's brand of spontaneity is far from unthinking: It is hard-earned and well-learned, an art that gives people access to a corner of the soul where misery cannot reach.

When Rublev takes his vow of silence, the importance of the sound-image is underlined by its absence. The vow is not the act of a man who has given up, but of one who, cornered by life, insists above all on maintaining his integrity. Bewildered by his world and by his own human sinfulness, he will not speak of holy things while he cannot be sure of the meaning of his words. Such total commitment, in which word *is* deed, presents a stark contrast with the empty chatter of the film's authority figures—the Grand Prince, his brother, and the Tatar chieftain—and with the tendentious, self-serving blather of the quotation-mongering monk Kirill. Consumed with jealousy of Rublev, Kirill pretends at commitment, but cannot live it. When he meets Theophanes, he quotes Epiphanius the Wise and Konstantin Kostenecki on holiness and art and uses their words

to criticize the work of Rublev. But when Theophanes invites Kirill to be his assistant, he first refuses and then agrees only on the condition that Theophanes send a messenger to the monastery to announce the summons in the presence of Rublev. The younger prince and the Tatar leader, meanwhile, outdo Kirill in dissonance between word and deed, lobbing pleasantries about as their men lay waste to the people of Vladimir.

Chatterboxes are the sound-embodiment of the unreliability of the world. Sound without meaning is the aural texture of alienation from nature. Some voices arise from the soil, a necessity of the creative unfolding of the universe, and their words, being more than words, return to matter as creative acts, balloons and bells and bricks and little woodcarvings and icons and the momentarily smiling mouths of the jester's audience. Other voices seem to come from nowhere and go nowhere. They seem not to be drawn from nature, and to nature they will not return. They violate the law of conservation of matter and energy. They, like the bloodshed that unfolds around their empty chatter, are acts of waste, of dissipation of the energy of the world. Through these aural images of negation we get a deeper sense of Tarkovsky's longing for that energy which precedes all, gives rise to all, and will outlast all. As in Boym's reflective nostalgia, the emphasis here is not on the return or recapitulation of a bygone epoch, but on the creative act of reuptake and reuse of the energy of loss.

Early in the episode of Boriska the bell-caster, Tarkovsky uses the borders of the frame to capture the emptiness of royal words. The event in the scene is simple: An emissary of the Grand Prince arrives at a village on horseback in search of Boriska's father, Nikola, apparently a renowned caster of bells. Boriska informs the emissary that

his father has died from the plague. The emissary asks for another bell-caster, and then another, and another. Dead, dying, dead, says Boriska. Then Boriska asks the prince's man to take him instead. The prince's man laughs. Boriska says he knows the secret of bellcasting. This begets still more laughter.

The conversation would appear to put the prince's man in a position of power, but Tarkovsky's framing cuts the legs, and pretty much everything else, out from under the emissary: Boriska is on the right side of the frame, leaning on the wall of his log house. To his left is a rooster in the window square, like a picture in a picture, proud, as roosters will be, somehow elevated above the whole miserable human drama. On the left side of the frame all we see is the rear end of the messenger's horse. We hear the messenger's voice, but we do not see him. Just the horse's backside, unbothered by flies and apparently matching the rooster in its supreme indifference to princely power.

* * *

As we have seen, the visual imagery and verbal textures in Tarkovsky's film repeatedly undermine conventional symbols. Yevgeny Margolit has pointed out that one of the innovations of Thaw cinema is the use of the "subjective camera," which "deconventionalizes...traditional, familiar conceptions of the world" (Margolit, 2001, p. 37). This deconventionalization permits a form of longing different from, and opposed to, the hegemonic forms. There are many things from the past one can long for, and many ways to long for them, but conventional symbols of the past are encoded with preferred meanings that attempt to restrict the viewer's reading.

One powerful example of the use of the subjective camera by Tarkovsky and his cameraman, Vadim Yusov, comes near the end of the film, when Boriska's bell is nearly complete. He has won the trust of his assistants, and, it seems, of hundreds of workers. He gives the word, and with a massive communal effort, the townspeople raise the bell from the casting pit. There is jubilation, choral singing, an air of *sobornost*—the ancient Kievan notion of communal unity, or “conjunctivity”. The Grand Prince arrives with foreign ambassadors to hear the first ringing of Boriska's bell. The prince's aide asks if all is ready, and then he swears at Boriska's foreman, “If not, you better f---ing watch out.” The arrival of princely authority breaks the spirit of the moment; the tattered, disjunctive social fabric is revealed. The bell turns slowly to reveal the seal of St. George, Moscow's patron saint, trampling a serpent. But the bell is high in the frame; only the serpent is visible. We do not even see the hooves that are ostensibly trampling it.

Tarkovsky most memorably defamiliarizes the familiar in the film's epilogue, a long, gorgeous meditation upon Rublev's work. We have never seen one of Rublev's icons up until this moment, when the film transitions from a black-and-white shot of embers on a dying fire to glorious color close-ups of the icons. Even here, though, “glory” is not offered up in the restorative-nostalgic sense. Tarkovsky does not restore the walls of the Trinity cathedral for his audience. (Rublev's Old Testament Trinity had been long since transferred from the Holy Trinity Monastery to the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.) He does not give the viewer the opportunity to relish the cultural symbolism of the Great Man's Work. The icons are never presented as complete images, and for the first five minutes of the sequence we never see a segment of an image large enough to

gesture toward the composition of the whole. Instead, Vadim Yusov, Tarkovsky's cameraman, shows us the paintings in extreme close-up, panning slowly across the images, showing us a tiny dove, the graceful arch of an ancient building, the intricate folds of diaphanous cloaks. We see Rublev's brushstrokes, but we are denied access to his grand image, the image that has taken on so many layers of ideological meaning over the centuries. Tarkovsky goes out of his way to demonstrate the sheer beauty and materiality of the images by defamiliarizing them. This defamiliarization is heightened by the mixing of images from different icons. Thus we see parts rather than entirety, collage rather than singularity, textures rather than symbols.

One by one the images reach our eyes and replace themselves before we can jigsaw them into the familiar mental image of a full icon: stripes, squares, arms, hands, cupolas of a churches, fragments of buildings, a hand over a bowl, a pair of rust-brown feet, the branches of tree. Only near the end of the montage do we see the face of Christ from Rublev's "Savior", and even then the image is transformed by sheets of sudden rain and replaced by an extreme close-up detail of chipped paint on wood. As the rain falls, the color shifts from pale, piney tan, the wood grain visible beneath the paint, to a rusty red-brown similar to the color of Christ's skin. Is it his right cheek? The left side of his neck? The icon's time-damaged edge? The image dissolves to a grassy riverbank, where horses graze as the rain pours down. We have seen brushstrokes through raindrops, culture through nature, the ancient work of man through the even more ancient matter from which it emerged. Tarkovsky has presented us with the tactile work of a man rather than the cultural artifact of a national hero. He has displaced the restorative-nostalgic

discourse of Rublev as a symbol and offered instead a reflective-nostalgic meditation on the polysemic images of a half-lost culture.

The icons do not pull us away from the image of Rublev as a man, but move us still closer. They mark Rublev's emergence from silence and invite reflection upon the meaning of that silence. What becomes evident is that Rublev has never really lost faith. Through 15 years of silence he remains watchful, taking in the matter of his world, hunting the bitter landscape for icons of hope, guarding his integrity, waiting, yearning. Rublev's ability to long for something more creates an ineffable hopefulness that resonates through the film's most brutal moments. He himself is the image at the heart of Tarkovsky's counter-history.

6. Conclusion

Andrei Tarkovsky's 1966 film *Andrei Rublev* presents a strikingly independent vision of Russian history and Rublev's place in it. In the 1950s and '60s, Soviet commentators presented Rublev as a symbol of resistance to foreigners, national self-consciousness, and unification under the gathering hand of Moscow. This type of appropriation of the past, calling for a single dominant interpretation, is strongly indicative of what Boym has called "restorative nostalgia." Tarkovsky's vision of Rublev, on the other hand, proceeds in the open-ended register of "reflective nostalgia." For Tarkovsky, Rublev's work evokes "a nostalgia for brotherhood," but Tarkovsky is unwilling to pin upon that nostalgia the full weight of Russia's unification process and successive authoritarian ideologies. Instead, he poses to himself, and to the audience, a

trio of questions—*What is this longing for brotherhood? Where does it come from? And what does it mean for us?*—and has the restraint not to offer monolithic answers.

Tarkovsky did not work in the language of symbols, but of images. The image, for him, was a captured reflection of reality itself, with all the ambiguities of reality embedded in it. Symbols attempt to sell a fixed encoded message to the viewer. Images await the viewer's choice among infinite embedded meanings. Tarkovsky's shots are patient; they allow the viewer to absorb and contemplate the materiality of each image. The gaze of Tarkovsky's camera embodies a heightened attention to life, an indeterminate longing for the world that slips through our fingers while we busily make our way through history. Tarkovsky pits the yearning to remember the damp chill of the soil against the desire to recapitulate a world described in fixed narratives *about* the soil. He challenges the narratives and plunges his hand ever deeper into the cool mud.

Tarkovsky was able to simultaneously embrace Rublev and reject the tendentious historical symbolism that had grown up around him. Instead of a mythical giant, he presents us with an enigmatic, spiritually troubled man trying his best to live with integrity through a brutal age. Tarkovsky invites our co-rumination on history's rough treatment of the creative spirit, and on what might be gained through the reintegration of that lost spirit into our lives. He rejects the hegemonic, restorative-nostalgic encoding of Rublev's life and, through reflective-nostalgic encoding, opens up a rich terrain upon which viewers can reexamine their national and human heritage. Tarkovsky's labors were not without resonance in Russian culture: Years after the opening of the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art in Moscow, a statue was placed before the building. It was

sculpted in the image of Anatoly Solonitsyn, the actor who portrayed Tarkovsky's Rublev (Bird, 2004, p. 8).

CHAPTER VI
REENTERING THE PRESENT:
NOSTALGIA FOR THE PASSING MOMENT IN
MARLEN KHUTSIEV'S *ILICH'S GATE*

1. Introduction

On March 8, 1963, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev hosted the leading lights of the Soviet artistic intelligentsia at the Kremlin. It wasn't the sort of soiree one would find in the pages of Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. There would be no rough-and-tumble blending of voices, changing of upper hands, and forming and reforming of conclusions once thought conclusive. Only one speaker would really matter here, and the job of the other speakers was to tell him what he wanted to hear. It couldn't be called a particularly good day for the artists, but it could have been worse. The mass meeting offered certain comforts that had been lacking in the Stalin era's late-night official visitations—no chilling knocks on the door, no sudden disappearances. At a conference the previous November, the filmmaker and revered liberal teacher Mikhail Romm had summed up the emboldened mood of the artists in the seven years since Khrushchev had launched his de-Stalinization campaign: "They're not going to throw anyone in prison, they won't take away their right to work, they won't run them out of Moscow, and they won't take away their salary. And

in general, great unpleasantness—the kind we saw in ‘those’ years—won’t be back” (Fomin, 1998).

Romm had followed up on these comments with a warning: The artists should not assume that their post-Stalin advances were irreversible. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the nation’s self-imposed agricultural fiasco, Khrushchev’s dominance within the Politburo was ebbing, and conservative forces led by Mikhail Suslov and Leonid Ilichev, had an increasing influence on cultural policy. Articles severely critical of liberal filmmakers—most notably Romm himself—had begun to appear in the journal *Oktiabr*, edited by the conservative ideologue Vsevolod Kochetov. The articles, Romm had said, “dump rubbish on everything innovative that Soviet cinema has created. [They] put the strongest artists of both the older and the younger generations of Soviet filmmakers under political suspicion. These articles were inspired by the same people who directed the campaigns to unmask ‘rootless cosmopolitans’ [in the late Stalin era]. It seems that we shouldn’t forget everything that has happened” (Fomin, 1998, p. 320).

Now, at the Kremlin, it seemed that the day Romm had warned of might be at hand. The stylish young poets Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko, supremely confident at the height of their rock-star popularity, had been summoned. Romm himself had been invited, and took in the proceedings with his customary fierce bemusement from behind his thick, black-rimmed glasses. The greatest Russian neorealist filmmaker, Marlen Khutsiev, was on hand, along with his young screenwriter, the boyish and Byronic Gennady Shpalikov. There were hundreds of others, some of

whom had arrived with trepidation and others whose reasonable plan was simply to applaud where appropriate, keep their mouths shut, and leave with careers unscathed.

Khrushchev was generous with his ire that day, but he reserved special rage for Khutsiev and Shpalikov, who had recently completed their film, *Ilich's Gate*, about the everyday lives of young adults in contemporary Moscow. For one thing, he was not pleased with the three protagonists. "Society cannot count on such people," thundered Khrushchev. "They are not fighters. They are not creators of the world. They are morally feeble people, old before their time, who have lost their ideals and their calling in life" (Demenok, 1988, p. 100). He also did not care for the ambiguous generational hierarchy hinted at in the film's final scene, in which the hero, Sergei, asks the ghost of his father, who had died young in the war, for advice on how to live:

"How old are you?" replies the ghost.

"Twenty-three," says Sergei.

"And I'm 21. How can I give you advice?"

A studio worker had previously complained about the scene in a screening at Gorky Studios. Now Khrushchev repeated the worker's words almost verbatim: "Even a dog won't abandon her young!" The statement was a reference to a passionate debate that had been brewing in Soviet society (and an echo of the similar debate a century earlier that had been immortalized by Ivan Turgenev): What can the fathers teach the sons? Khrushchev read the scene as implying that fathers have nothing to teach the sons, that the sons are and should be prepared to do their own thing. The questioning of the authority of elders seemed to be everywhere in postwar, post-Stalin Moscow. Even

Romm—a legend of the fatherly generation, no less—was known to tell his students that he could teach them technique, but he couldn't teach them to be good directors; they had to find their own original voices. The liberal writer Viktor Nekrasov had perhaps put Khutsiev's film in the authorities' crosshairs when he praised it after an advance screening specifically for its refusal to trot out some elder statesman who says how everything should be and sets everyone straight (Demenok, 1988).⁴¹

In the middle of Khrushchev's attack, the 25-year-old Shpalikov asked to speak.

"Who are you?" asked Khrushchev.

Shpalikov informed the First Secretary that he had written the film currently under discussion.

"Instead of sitting there smiling," said Khrushchev, "you ought to explain how you lowered yourself to such idiocy as to write such a thing."

"You know, I don't want to talk about the idiocy I've lowered myself to," said Shpalikov. "I want to ask you, Nikita Sergeevich, and everyone sitting in the hall: Be so kind as to applaud me, please, and congratulate me. My daughter's just been born—Dasha. And you're sitting here and busying yourselves with God knows what."

Khrushchev applauded Shpalikov. And the audience joined him (V'iugina, 2007).

* * *

⁴¹ The early reception of the film by insiders had been largely ecstatic. Nekrasov also wrote that the film was "a big event in our arts, very big. [The already-legendary Polish filmmaker] Andrzej Wajda was watching the film with me . . . after the screening he said that he had never seen a film like it. And I think Wajda has seen a thing or two in his time." Upon reading the screenplay in 1960, director Yurii Yegorov said that with *Ilich's Gate* Soviet cinema had found its answer to Federico Fellini's *The Sweet Life*. Vasily Solovev, a screenwriter, wrote that it was "the only screenplay I know that speaks openly, directly, and fully about what's most important, what concerns us all today" (Demenok, 1988). Mikhail Romm, meanwhile, upon seeing Khutsiev after an early screening, took a long draw on his cigarette and said, "Marlen, you've justified your life" (Musskii, 2005).

Applause notwithstanding, *Ilich's Gate* was shelved, and Shpalikov and Khutsiev were told to make substantial changes. Khutsiev and Shpalikov, though, were fiercely protective of their creation. Khutsiev decided to use the opportunity not to simply snip away at the film's supposedly ideologically inappropriate sequences, but rather to re-shoot entire scenes, to work on what he saw as defects in the original (Khutsiev, 1996, p. 194). The result was released as *I Am Twenty* (*Mne dvadtsadt' let*) in January 1965.

Many years later, encountering difficulties completing a different film in a different political-economic system, Khutsiev would declare, "I am a stubborn person... And if I start work, I'm going to finish it" (Basinskii, 2009). This stubbornness was one of Khutsiev's most enduring and endearing traits, and it was a key reason that both versions of *Ilich's Gate* remain challenging and bracing to this day. Khutsiev had not so much bowed to the censors as called their bluff. After *Ilich's Gate* was released in its original form in 1988, a viewer wrote to Khutsiev that his stubborn "compromise" had wound up letting him complete not one film, but two. "It's wrong for you to think that *I Am Twenty* was ruined," wrote the well-wisher. "It's just a different film" (Maliukova, 2005). This is an exaggeration; what is closer to the truth is that Khutsiev had found two slightly different paths to the same final result: a film that was troublesome to Soviet authorities not for any overt challenge to communism—look hard at either version and you'll find no such thing—but for its complex view of the relationship between people, time, and space. In both *Ilich's Gate* and *I Am Twenty*, we find a layering of time in which citizenship in the present could mean different things, inspired by different pasts, a world in which the Moscow of the 1960s was haunted by ghosts, none of whom had the

answer, but all of whom, if you listened closely enough, would hint at one part of one of many answers.⁴²

In these pages I investigate how Khutsiev achieves his unique collision of useable pasts, and what that collision tells us about how useable any single past can be. His camera drinks in the stuff of the world, imbibing and revealing the temporal flows and counter-flows that form the manifold essence of seemingly solid and unitary spaces and matter. He refuses to let the world pass unobserved; his indeterminate gaze draws on rich associative memory, both personal and social, and engages the viewer's memories as well. The circuit of the image begins with Khutsiev's longing to glimpse the fullness of time within matter, and continues with our own indeterminate perception of the images he creates.

Khutsiev shoots *Ilich's Gate* in a tense one might call the "remembered present". The images of space are gathered up with a loving voraciousness that borders on physical need: *By the time we perceive these things, the film seems to say, they will already be gone. But when they are gone, we will still need them.* Even as Khutsiev critiques the Thaw, he stores it up, so to speak, for future use. These images of the remembered present are complicated by the extraordinary weight of generational and social memory,

⁴² Khutsiev has said that while he was able to improve several scenes from a cinematic perspective, the script had suffered in revisions. Scenes where the heroes come face-to-face with Soviet cynicism had been strongly criticized; as a result, Sergei and Anya's encounter with Anya's father and Kolya's dispute with his boss, Chernousov, wound up losing something of their original bite (Khutsiev, 1996). Nevertheless, Lev Anninsky, an admired critic and a contemporary of Khutsiev, wrote in 1991 that "*I Am Twenty* contained practically all of *Ilich's Gate*, everything that Marlen Khutsiev felt in those years, everything his heroes suffered through, everything they wanted to say to one another and to us, the audience. In other words, it turned out that the living organism of the film, even deprived of some vitally important, materially necessary organs, left bleeding traces of episodes, plot lines, dialogues, monologues and phrases. And even today it makes a surprisingly harmonious and complete impression" (Anninskii, 1991, p. 152).

which offers continuous reminders that life is a deadly serious business. The image of the present is further destabilized by the palpable awareness that the Thaw (like spring and youth, Khutsiev's great metaphors for the human condition) is a passing moment on the way to something else—that on the other side of the abyss people grow up, rivers freeze, and private consciousness and public spirit must somehow merge in the actions of adult life.

The young protagonists of *Ilich's Gate* struggle to find the social synapse, so to speak, where private consciousness can fruitfully interface with public space and time. As with all synaptic gaps, there is an abyss to be crossed, and it is in this abyss that Khutsiev's heroes reside. How do Khutsiev's images mediate this anxious transitional space? How do his visions of Thaw-era Moscow streets, public festivals, and apartment parties simultaneously comment on, facilitate, and confound the progress of his pilgrim-heroes toward full Soviet adulthood? What alternatives do these images offer to the traditional socialist-realist ideal of absorption of private conscience into public duty? Simultaneously, what alternatives do they propose to cynicism, alienation, or philosophical retreat from an untenable public realm? And how does the collision of different temporalities, and the longing for shards of different times, shape Khutsiev's creation?

The essay's first section discusses the contending and complementary layers of individual pleasure and social celebration in the film's famous May Day scene. The second section addresses the intercession of ghosts of the public into the personal lives of the film's protagonists. In the third section I use Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* as a helpful

guide to the use of chronotope (the time-space in which the characters must live their lives) and polyphony (the deployment of multiple contending voices within that time-space) in *Ilich's Gate*. Finally, I will discuss the fraught balance between individuality and social harmony in the film, and the way it shapes the characters' relationships with one another, with society, and with time. My references, unless otherwise noted, will be to *Ilich's Gate*, but many of the scenes discussed here can be found in similar form in both versions of the film. (In the appendix, I provide a detailed summary of *Ilich's Gate*, noting along the way substantial divergences between the two films; the summary also includes descriptions of scenes in *I Am Twenty* that were absent in the original.)⁴³

2. At Play on May Day

On May 1, 1961, Marlen Khutsiev filmed the May Day celebration in central Moscow. He injected his heroes into the flow of the parade and filmed their movement within, across, and against that flow. The river of celebrating humanity has a general

⁴³I should note two particularly substantial changes here. In *Ilich's Gate*, the scene of the poetry reading at the Polytechnic Museum, where Khutsiev had filmed his heroes Sergei and Anya listening to Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesensky, Bulat Akudzhava, Bella Akhmadulina and other leading lights of Thaw youth culture, intercuts shots of the actors and the audience with images of the poets themselves reciting and singing their verses; in *I Am Twenty*, we still hear the poets, but the camera remains on Sergei, Anya and the audience throughout. The result of this distancing is quite powerful, though the original version of the scene has taken on the weight of a documentary about the era, an extremely important artifact of the period of mass poetry readings before passionate young audiences. The second major change has deeper ideological implications. In *I Am Twenty*, the father-ghost's words "How can I give you advice?" are omitted. Instead, the line "And I'm 21" is followed by the father asking that Sergei always keep his purity and never forget how fortunate he is to live in Moscow, one of the world's great cities. Equally important, the father was recast in *I Am Twenty*, with the handsome and heroic-looking actor Lev Prigunov taking over for the lanky non-professional Yevgeny Maiorov. Maiorov speaks with a slight case of mush-mouth; for all his suffering at the front he is very much a young man, almost a boy, and when Sergei asks him, "What were you like?" and he answers "We were just like you" we believe him. Prigunov, on the other hand, speaks in a deep, resonant base; his chiselled features transform him in into a cinematic symbol of heroism and make Sergei look soft and callow by comparison. This is one of the ideologically significant changes in a corrected version in which Khutsiev managed, for the most part, to retain the productive, thought-provoking, and controversial ambiguity of his point of view.

direction, but Khutsiev shows us the eddies and cross currents and reversals along the way. His handheld cameras seem to be everywhere: There is no establishing shot, no grand view to tell us what May Day means, but rather multiple views of multiple May Days. One camera captures the crossing paths of the film's 23-year-old protagonist, Sergei, and the charming young woman he has just met, Anya. Another catches scores of Muscovites resting and chatting and taking in the parade from the embankment of the Moscow River. Yet another glimpses a delegation of young Cubans striding confidently through the Soviet capital.⁴⁴

Khutsiev captures public space and public interaction from multiple eye-levels rather than depending on a single master shot from on high. He avoids both the authoritatively "public" crane shot that loses individuals in the mass *and* the demonstratively private "feature film" shot that loses sight of public space in its stubborn focus on actors' faces. By filming public space from multiple private perspectives, he captures the mutual dependence of individual motion and social flow. In this way, the scene goes beyond "the stunning harmony between individuals and society" that Josephine Woll (2000) noted as its distinguishing characteristic. Instead, the scene suggests a more sophisticated model of social polyphony in which social harmony is paradoxically enriched by private notes out of sync with the conventional public score.

Without sacrificing its role as a site of communal exuberance, the celebratory public space becomes a facilitating terrain for the exchange of private dreams.

⁴⁴While Khutsiev filmed most of the mass action on May Day itself, he had not yet cast Marianna Vertinskaya as Anya. For that day's filming, he used a double for Anya, and then filmed the close-ups and medium shots at the August 1961 celebration to welcome cosmonaut German Titov back from orbit. Dialogue for the entire scene, as was customary in Soviet cinema, was recorded and dubbed in post-production (Muskkii, 2005).

Surrounded by workers' slogans and portraits of Lenin and Gagarin and young Pioneers shouting *Viva! Cuba!*—by all the symbols with which the regime seeks to make public space into public time and public thought—Sergei is instead at public-private play, entertaining his own private thoughts and designs, enjoying the public celebration but also co-opting it. That is, May Day remains public for Sergei—exuberantly, radically public—but Sergei's public moment is not the public moment presupposed by the organizers of this event. He is no doubt well disposed to worker solidarity and more than willing to smile upon the notion along with his fellow celebrants. But what he is really celebrating is himself, young and alive and well befriended and enjoying it all here, in the public square. From the moment Sergei sees Anya in the crowd, his aim on this most festive of May Day celebrations—a May Day celebration filmed less than three weeks after Yuri Gagarin became the first man in orbit—is simple and direct, cosmically social (what could be more social?) and ideologically asocial: He wants to meet that girl.

The girl is unconventional, and Sergei is precisely taken with her unconventionality—the way she fails utterly to fade into a crowd. Khutsiev makes this quite clear in the scene when Sergei first sees Anya, months before the May Day celebration. He has invited his neighbor, a little boy named Kuzmich, out for a steam. Aboard the trolley, little Kuzmich looks out the window and reads the signs aloud: “Drink tomato juice. Beer and soft drinks. Collect metal recyclables—we collect them....” Meanwhile, a pretty girl in a cutting-edge plastic polka-dotted rainslicker sits across from Sergei reading. She is smiling, laughing, burying her face in the book in quiet mirth. As for Sergei, well, he's reading *her*. What better way to know a person than to

read her while she's reading? During the Thaw, words had begun to appear in unexpected combinations and to mean unexpected things. The next word in the liberal journal *Novy Mir* (*New World*) or the well-illustrated pages of *Yunost* (*Youth*) might always hold something surprising; some tale might show you something you always knew was there but had never been able to acknowledge. Words could even exist for pleasure alone. That in itself was a novelty. Reading was the signal self-declaring act of the *shestidesiatnik*—the Sixties Person—and here was Anya, laughing, biting her nail, following the lines of type with thoroughly engrossed eyes, declaring herself in public. The way that Anya reads, as much as the way she dresses, plants her in Sergei's dreams as an unrepeatable personality. When she leaves the bus, he rushes after her, leaving poor Kuzmich behind. He follows her all through the city that day, and into the evening, but never finds the courage to approach her or the words to address her. He regrets his timidity for months, and when he sees her on May Day, he is determined to correct it.

To this end, Sergei is willing to separate himself from the flow of the masses at the great celebration and to create his very own counterflow. He's also willing to lose track of his little neighbor Kuzmich yet again. He enlists his pals Kolya and Slavka in a dubious plot to separate Anya from the young men with whom she is marching (one of whom has his arm possessively around her shoulders, and, who, for all Sergei knows, could be her boyfriend or husband). Kolya and Slavka take hold of a hand-carried papier-mâché float—a globe proclaiming the Soviet Union's devotion to peaceful coexistence—usher it through the crowd to Anya's friends, and unceremoniously hand it off to them, leaving their hands full and their arms no longer available to drape over Anya's

shoulders. The *symbol* of the public event—the globe with its slogans and cooked-up image of grand-scale togetherness—has been cheerfully put at the cause of the *reality* of the event: one man’s private, playful drama, one such drama among the thousands that give public space its true meaning. And now, with Anya on her own, Sergei moves in, a man from the crowd, drawing on its joyful energy but propelled on a trajectory all his own. The two of them are standing face to face directly in front of a giant marching ear of corn—a tribute to Khrushchev’s latest agricultural scheme—and Anya laughingly says that Sergei really shouldn’t pursue girls so aggressively. “I’ll have to scream,” she says. “Here you can only scream ‘Hurrah!’” says Sergei. And so she does, and the crowd joins in with a thunderous echo, unwitting supporters of Sergei’s success, in a puckish tribute to the mystical union of private and public life.⁴⁵

The overlapping of public and private in Khutsiev’s film brings to mind Robert Bird’s trenchant observation about the uncanny sequence in Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1983 film *Nostalgia* in which the hero, Gorchakov, discovers a wardrobe parked in the street. Here, in this public place, Gorchakov looks into the wardrobe mirror and sees another man’s reflection: it is Domenico, the holy fool. The scene, writes Bird, “is a manifestation of the way private epiphanies undermine public spaces” (Bird, 2008, p. 179). I would go so far as to say that, while private epiphanies such as Gorchakov’s (finding his alternative reflection) or Sergei’s (finding the girl who will challenge the

⁴⁵ It is notable that a good deal of the action in this scene—in particular the playful scheming of Khutsiev’s most spontaneous character, Kolya—unfolds against the background of LeCorbusier’s modernist masterpiece, the Tsentrosoyuz building, the national headquarters for Soviet trade unions. Commissioned in 1928, the building was completed by Soviet Architect Nikolai Kolli in 1936, when Stalinist neo-classicism was already ascendant. Tsentrosoyuz was one of the final architectural artifacts of 1920s modernist spontaneity, and Kovalev (2008) numbers its public areas as among the “good spaces” in *Ilich’s Gate*, spaces that exert a positive influence on the characters.

customary boundaries of his life) do indeed undermine the conventional notion of the uses to which public space should be put, they are, in reality, the very thing that gives public space meaning.

3. A Triangle in Time

(a) *Lenin as father*

Ilich's Gate is structured as a love triangle between Sergei, Anya, and Vladimir Ilich Lenin. The image of Lenin hovers over Sergei's attempts to grow up, to respond to his passions, to survive his mistakes, to maintain his friendships, to retain and develop his ideals. This is not the Lenin of *The Collected Works*; it is not a Lenin who denounces left and right deviations and "economism" and "infantile leftism"; this is not a Lenin who spends his life in pitched rhetorical battle with Kautsky and Luxemburg. It is a shape-shifting, imaginary Lenin, now kind, now loving, now joyful, now ascetic and demanding of purity. It is hard to keep track of this Lenin's demands, but he never stops making them. How is one to even know which demands one must obey and which to take with a grain of salt?

Of course, the Khrushchev-era ideal of "socialism with a human face" was precisely about realizing that at least a portion of the socialist inheritance could be taken with a grain of salt. The believers in this ideal told themselves that the part they could take with a grain of salt was Stalinism. They were able to tell themselves this because Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev had given them permission to do so. This was Khrushchev's way of setting himself up as the heir to Lenin (which the people had somewhat more trouble swallowing). The only way, however, for young people to bring

any real “enthusiasm” or “lyricism” in their lives under these new rules was to stretch the boundaries of the possible by mentally transforming the historical Lenin into a fairy tale one, from man into God, from politician into father. For a fatherless generation, this was easy enough to do. For Anya it is somewhat more difficult to inflate Lenin-father-God into an ideal because she already has a father, and she knows the flaws that fathers can have. Her father, for instance, is “always saying one thing and doing another”—a cardinal sin during the Thaw, when the virtue of sincerity was seen as having mystical social healing powers. Sergei, however, has an idealized, imaginary Lenin as the practical embodiment of his fallen father.

(b) Papas and poets

The three most prominent objects in Sergei’s house-museum are a wartime photo of his father, a large bust of Lenin, and a small modernist portrait of the dashing 1920s revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Lenin and the father radiate the ideal of remaining faithful to the pure ideals of a radiant past, when men knew what to do, why to do it, and how. Mayakovsky, meanwhile, speaks of youth, risk, and adventure—the will to break convention in pursuit of an ideal.

These images of Lenin and Sergei’s father are also counterbalanced by the fat volume of lyrical poetry sitting right next to the Lenin bust.⁴⁶ The presence of *Lyrika* on Sergei’s bookshelf suggests the crucial presence of poetry—in particular, supra-rational, economically “useless” lyricism—in his family’s life. In everyday Soviet life, high culture and lofty concerns were not the exclusive outpost of the intelligentsia or of those

⁴⁶ The early 1960s had brought not only heated discussions of the “fathers and sons” theme, but also somewhat less heated debates over the relative importance of “physicists and lyricists.”

blessed by the Party with cultural capital. Sergei's mother is a doctor—not a position of economic privilege in the Soviet Union—and his father was a worker. Sergei resides at the margins of the intelligentsia, far from the rarified air of Anya—the daughter of a prosperous functionary—and her privileged friends. He is, though, no less receptive to the power of art, as we see in later in the film when readings by Voznesensky, Yevtushenko and others at the Polytechnic Museum impact him so deeply that his physiognomy seems to go through a sort of metamorphic change with each passing poem.

Another book, though not present in the apartment itself, also enters into this dialogue of objects and eras. Early in the film, when Sergei is wandering Moscow in Anya's wake, he pauses in front of a bookstore window in which we see a stack that includes two 1962 almanacs; two copies of *In the Snows of Antarctica*, by the mountaineer-war-hero-polar-explorer Alexander Gusov; and, prominently, three volumes of Cervantes. *Don Quixote* was one of the signal literary-cinematic images of the Thaw; one of the greatest films of the era had been the 1956 adaptation by Grigorii Kozintsev, the great eccentric filmmaker of the 1920s cinematic golden age. Cervantes' story of a man who did what he did because he had fallen into the grips of a beautiful illusion seems to play off of both the book of lyrics (the verbal capture of beautiful illusions) and the portrait of Mayakovsky (another man who did what he did in the grips of a beautiful illusion⁴⁷).

⁴⁷ The same Mayakovsky portrait turns up on the apartment wall of the character played by a young Nikita Mikhalkov in Georgii Danelia's *I Walk Around Moscow (Ja shagaiu po Moskve, 1964)*, which was written by Gennadii Shpalikov, Khutsiev's co-writer on *Ilich's Gate/I Am Twenty*.

How do these images mediate Lenin/Father? Certainly not to poke fun at him: In the liberal-idealist discourse of the early Thaw, both Quixote and Mayakovsky were key figures precisely because of their ability to selflessly and enthusiastically give themselves to an ideal.⁴⁸ But their giving was absolutely sincere; their belief was a vanguard emotion, offered not as obedience to dogma but as a transformation of public religion into private, idiosyncratic faith. They did not simply and obediently “go with the flow” (*plyt' s techeniem*)—a sin definitively renounced by Sergei at the conclusion of *Ilich's Gate*—but instead were willing to make themselves ridiculous for their particular ideals of love, to become secular variants of the old Russian *yurodivy*, the fool-for-Christ.

But as both Quixote and Mayakovsky found out, there are substantial social and psychological costs to creating one's own vision of the public religion. The public vision of acceptable chivalry, as it turns out for Quixote, does not include actual acts of mad heroism, because the disenchanted world is no longer designed to accept such acts: It has long since eradicated un-nuanced dragons from its dreams and has replaced them with windmills, which, after all, have their advantages. And Mayakovsky learned that when one sets out to praise an imaginary Lenin, one winds up in the service of a still more imaginary Stalin, the real version of whom has no further need of men who invent their own brand of faith.

⁴⁸ Khutsiev's interest in Mayakovsky and the spontaneous revolutionary idealism he represented could even be seen in his breakthrough film, *Spring on Zarechaia Street* (*Vesna na Zarechnoi Ulitse*, 1956, directed by Khutsiev and Felix Mironer). This tale of a schoolteacher-intellectual who falls in love with a rough-hewn provincial worker was, as Neia Zorkaia has pointed out, reminiscent of the 1918 film *The Lady and the Hooligan* (*Baryshnia i khuligan*, directed by E. Slavinskii), which starred a dashing young Mayakovsky (Zorkaia, n.d.).

Mayakovsky committed suicide in 1930 and was for the Thaw generation a sort of martyr-hero. Put in the language of a central debate of the Soviet 1920s, Mayakovsky and Quixote represent *spontaneity* and the Lenin bust and the ascetic black and white portrait of the father represent *consciousness*. Both concepts fit under the big tent of 1920s communism: it was under this tent that the cinematic works of Vertov, Eisenstein, Dovzhenko and Pudovkin were created, each proposing a spontaneous demonstration of idiosyncratically reformulated socialist faith. But the historical Lenin let it be well known that his preference was for consciousness, and Stalin brought this preference brutally to bear on Soviet society.

The Thaw-era questioning of Stalin, in its embrace of the Mayakovskys and Quixotes of the world, should have represented a striking victory for spontaneity, but it did not and could not because *consciousness* had in the meantime been sacralized by a force much greater even than Stalin: the Great Patriotic War. Archaic, monk-like visions of ideological, national, even sexual purity had attached themselves to the soldiers of the war, the idea that they had fought precisely for this purity—not for survival, not for the continuation of a vast and nuanced national history, not against the absolute extinguishment of their right to freedom (which had already been substantially extinguished) and life—but for the continuation of the line of development begun by Lenin and defined and continued by Stalin. How could a young man of 1961, in longing to honor the spiritual legacy of a father he never knew, fail to honor the general line for which the father fought? How can such a young man feel the freedom to make of his life

a *personal* freestyle riff on the *public* religion? Who is Sergei to play the role of Mayakovsky?

(c) *Words and the city*

The film plays at the idea of licensing its protagonists as poets, but a sort of haunting authority—the unquiet ghost of Leninist-Stalinist social consciousness—seems always to arrest their attempts at self-creation. The internal monologues of Sergei, Kolya, and Slavka as they walk around Chistye Prudy at summer’s end intermingle in a sort of free verse; the boys are unwittingly engaging their own capacity as creators; later we hear such a thought-poem from Slavka at work as he demolishes a Moscow tenement—the perfect Mayakovskian conflation of creation and destruction. But the license, like the promise of the Thaw itself, is never fully realized, and the boys’ verses remain in their heads, leaving the art of the public utterance to the Voznesenkys and Yevtushenkos of the world. Aboard a trolley, the young ladykiller Kolya and the conductress Katya confess to having written silly high school verse, both public (Kolya recites a few couplets about Paul Robeson) and private (about love), but they do so blushing, as if such childish things must be put away and replaced with citation of those who have the right to create. (Katya, in particular, underrates herself. She is an extraordinary empath; she knows exactly how Kolya feels, and moves him so deeply that in his darkest hour he inadvertently calls her Nadia—“hope”. She is a sort of embodied lyricism, and her sudden replacement by a mechanized ticket-taker aboard Trolley 777 tantalizingly cuts off an intriguing narrative path.)

Late in the film, Kolya struggles with the shock of a request from his boss—the picturesquely named villain Chernousov (“black whiskers”)—that he inform on a coworker. The episode shatters Kolya’s breezy naiveté; he has already refused the request and threatened to punch Chernousov in the face, but he’d like to shout the injustice to the world. As he walks through nighttime Moscow, though, his poetic internal monologue about the situation is invaded and replaced by one of Mayakovsky’s panegyrics to Lenin. Mayakovsky, the self-creator, the crafter of new words and worlds, becomes a device to save Kolya from crafting new words of his own.

Indeed, when Kolya speaks to his friends about the situation, his ability to express himself is strangely impaired, as if he has no words of his own at all. Sergei is left to lean across the table and ask him what on earth he is grousing about: *Blizhe k delu*—let’s cut to the chase, what’s up? Kolya’s response to this is not to cut to the chase, but rather to toss a tendentious insult at his friends: “You two sure are businesslike.” To which the young father, husband, and demolition man Slavka responds, in the film’s finest act of self-defense and self-definition: “I’m not businesslike; I’m preoccupied.”

As the friends walk from Nikolai Ladovsky’s exuberantly modernist 1934 Krasnye Vorota metro pavilion and ultimately descend to the underground platform of the Stalinist-neoclassical Kursk metro station, their moods further sour. When the usually sensitive Sergei misreads the depths of Kolya’s ethical disenchantment and tells him just to accept the inevitable existence of the Chernousovs of the world and ignore them, the two nearly come to blows. Until this moment, Sergei has always been the one wrestling with his own conscience and Kolya has been the reassuring friend who is

almost theatrical in his simple enjoyment of life—the one who raises playful, ironic toasts to disarmament and peaceful coexistence while calculating how to get his next girl.

Oleg Kovalev (2008) ascribes the upside-down nature of the metro scene to the setting. The friends' walk from the revolutionary spontaneity of Ladovsky's funnel-shaped pavilion to the stifling late-Stalinist underworld is for Kovalev an enchanted journey into disorienting darkness. Khutsiev does indeed allow the city to whisper in his characters' ears, to alternately delight them or to bewitch them like Bulgakov's Satanic Voland in *Master and Margarita*. (Anya's apartment, like Voland's "Bad Apartment" is able to shape-shift—in one scene it is a wasteland of newspaper-covered walls trapped in an endless refurbishing process, and in the next it is the elegantly appointed apartment of a well-placed functionary. The apartment also seems uniquely capable of generating negative feelings.) The spell on the three friends, though, does not correspond entirely to their architectural tour; it runs deeper and has more troubling implications: Kolya, always quick with a witty word, at last has something serious to say, something with important social and ethical implications, and he cannot manage to express himself clearly to his closest friends. Kovalev understandably focuses on the tone-deafness of Sergei's breezy response to Kolya at Kursk Station and arrives at his theory of architectural haunting. But the more formidable shade here is the ghost of muteness and inarticulacy inherited from the days of the Terror.

The entire film is haunted in this way, with the past reaching toward the present, sometimes magnanimously, sometimes with the clear intent to seize control. Lenin, while a more congenial ghost than Stalin or Voland, is the ever-present embodiment of

consciousness, constantly shifting shape. He is not only Sergei's looming and silent father, but, for a moment Anya's, too, preaching, "For you, the people are a concept; for me, it's my life. The people are those who, unlike you, work, while you're trying to figure out what's good and what's bad."⁴⁹ After the Chernousov incident, even Kolya assumes the form of Leninist consciousness, chiding Sergei for rushing off to see Anya when there are serious social issues to discuss.

Perhaps the film's most endearing avatar of Leninist consciousness is Sergei's mother as she tells the story of how she fed the family during the war by digging up potatoes at Moscow's edge as the Fascists advanced. As she tells the story, Sergei is preparing for Anya's birthday party, a gathering of Moscow's privileged sons and daughters at the newly remodeled apartment of her apparatchik father. The story settles into his soul as a sort of standing rebuke to himself, his girl, and her whole world. It is notable that at the time Sergei's mother is telling her tale, the family is culling its book collection; the volumes are all down from the shelf, and there is no fat volume of lyrical poetry to counterbalance the still-looming bust of Lenin.

Against all this, Anya, attempting to hold her own with nothing more than a polka-dotted plastic raincoat and wistful longing for eternal love, is desperately overmatched.

4. The Many Minds of Moscow

Khutsiev does not so much reject the socialist-realist model of the positive hero as simply ignore it. The positive hero is politically conscious—he understands the demands

⁴⁹ This is a reference to Mayakovsky's 1925 children's poem, "What is good, what is bad."

of history, of communist construction, and of the leadership that guides the construction. Led by this consciousness, he actively serves and leads the community in the production of history's next stage. Khutsiev's heroes, on the other hand, mostly tread water while examining the water, thinking about what the water means to them, and trying to determine what their proper place in the water might be. They are not so much conscious as striving toward consciousness. They are incomplete, and will always be incomplete. The nature of their progress is that with each subtle epiphany they will become incomplete in a different way. In this they resemble Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin, the hero of *The Idiot*, who at first appears to be an utterly harmonious character, in tune with his times, but progressively reveals himself to be incomplete, deeply wounded by life, and uncertain of his place and his course of action.

The very structure of *Ilich's Gate* reflects the uncertainty and indeterminacy of the characters. They have no fixed trajectory, and neither does their story. They seem to write their tale in the act of living it. Like *The Idiot*, Khutsiev's film is what one might call a "baggy masterpiece," a jangling assemblage of parts that somehow manages to make music. Each of the film's images retains a lyrical and ethical wholeness. The impact of each episode is not determined by or subordinated to its role in the overall narrative economy.⁵⁰ Filmmakers and screenwriters made an important shift toward episodocity during the Thaw, disturbing the over-determined Aristotelian socialist-realist plot (with the aid of elders, a worker discovers Party consciousness and successfully

⁵⁰ The film is often remembered in episodes. The poetry reading at the Polytechnic Institute, the May Day celebration, and the party at Anya's house, all became known as independent set pieces. Ironically, this very patient, thoughtful film seems ideally suited for YouTube repackaging.

plays his role in socialist construction) while continuing to emphasize the virtues of public-spiritedness.⁵¹

The new episodic-lyrical approach allowed images to communicate in unexpected intonations, to pull one way while the surface story seemed to be pulling the other. In other words, film began to reflect the ambiguities of life. The 1960s wave of lyrical episodicity brought a kind of “dedramatization” to Soviet cinematic storytelling; some critics, such as Lev Anninsky, received the dedramatized films as a new kind of phenomenological truth-telling; others, such as Sasha Aronov, greeted them as a new form of boredom (Anninskii, 1991). Khutsiev had been a pioneer of the approach in his early films, *Spring on Zarechnaia Street* (1956) and *The Two Fyodors* (1958). (The lead actor in the latter film, Vasily Shukshin, would soon become a celebrated writer-director of episodic narrative with his 1964 film, *There Lives This Lad*.) In the dedramatized episodic film, one does not sense authorial string-pulling, but rather characters who try to somehow write their own scripts, but then abruptly change their minds about what the script should be and anxiously begin anew. If there is a finalizing consciousness implicit in such films, it is consciousness of the ultimate vanity of scripting amid the spontaneous flow of life. The loosening of traditional plot structure gives each image “voice” within the film as a whole. Images coexist with one another rather than build upon one another as bricks in an intricately constructed story arc. As in *The Idiot*, we have the impression of many images sharing a locus in space and time, rather than following upon one another in time, one moment logically causing the next (Morris, 1994, p. 90).

⁵¹ These films also continued to reflect certain socialist-realist tropes. Prokhorov (2002) has demonstrated the persistence of Stalinist tropes of war and family in Thaw cinema.

Among the characters in *Ilich's Gate* is the camera itself, entering its own priorities into the fray with those of film's flesh-and-blood figures, creating parallel narratives, mini-narratives, and counterpoints. Early in the film, Sergei, having just returned from the army, is walking through the city, delighting in the life of the street. He and the camera take in a billboard for Georgii Danelia's film *Seriozha*. The name is the diminutive form of Sergei: It seems as though the city is speaking to our hero, that on this day it belongs to him. A pretty girl rushes toward him, reaches out...and keeps going right past him. The camera, too, forsakes Sergei and stays with the girl, who meets her boyfriend with breathless apologies for being late ("Oh, my heart almost jumped out of my chest! I was so afraid you would leave!") and takes in his warm forgiveness ("I'm used to it") as they wander off, arm in arm, down the city street and past Sergei's billboard. ("Let's walk," she says. "Where to?" he asked. "Straight ahead. Let's just walk like this.") We will never see either of them again.

Khutsiev's taste for the episodic and his openness to chance does not imply a purposeful embrace of *illogic*; his aesthetic is realist, not absurdist. But the world he captures is based on the logic of contiguity rather than continuity. The reflective-nostalgic savoring of the passing moment creates a deep-focus discursive field in which many times and places and memories are collapsed into *this* shared space in *this* moment. The enthusiasts of the twenties, the compromised careerists of the late-forties, and the just-hatching cynics of the seventies share the same time-space with 1960s Muscovites. The integrity of the image in Khutsiev is analogous both to the polyphony in Dostoevsky's masterpiece and to its flattening out of space-time, where the archaism of

Myshkin could coexist with the modern political concerns of Ippolit and the capitalist careerism of Ganya.

Indeed, it is the flattening of time into space that enables polyphony in both *The Idiot* and *Ilich's Gate*, allowing discourses that might ordinarily be assigned to different eras to naturally collide and contest. Ideas and aesthetics do not have fixed expiration dates; in the worlds of Dostoevsky and Khutsiev there always remains a place for the old within the new. Indeed, the categories of “old” and “new” become effaced as we find that sometimes the supposed past is quite at home in the present, and perhaps more modern: Is the portrait of Mayakovsky on Sergei's wall part of the past, the present, or the future? Within Soviet culture, Mayakovsky is a historic figure who lives forever in the future, an impossible figure in his own time, a phantom of enthusiasm for an undefined tomorrow, and, most of all, a perennial wake-up call for the present. And in what Sarah Young (2004) calls Myshkin's “saintly scripting,” is Dostoevsky's Christlike prince a laughable archaic, a foreshadowing of the millennium, or—like Mayakovsky during the Thaw—a challenge for the present?

Our own chronotope, too—associations and perspectives from the time and space of our own lives—wind up layered upon the narrative moments of the books we read and the films we watch. These associations are particularly active when engaged by narrative strategies that purposefully leave room for them. In *The Idiot*, the collision of consciousnesses is undisciplined by the central authority of either an unquestioned narrator or of the kind of tight plot discipline that would make the meaning of each moment clear within the narrative economy. Thus we have bewildering, contradictory

moments such as Ippolit's reading of his "Necessary Explanation." The sneering reaction of Ippolit's audience suggest that he is behaving like a maudlin fool and writing like a graphomaniacal dunce. But our own experience of his text is rich and wrenching. His tale touches us with its drama, desperation, deep feeling, and occasional wisdom. If we don't know quite what to make of Ippolit's speech, it is because, as in life, we are getting simultaneous mixed signals about the passing moment. We have to decide for ourselves—or not decide at all, but bask in the ambiguous reality that a single image can look so different to different eyes.

A similar tension between potential interpretations takes place in the famous scene of Anya's birthday party in *Ilich's Gate*. Just after hearing his mother's moving tale of braving Moscow's wartime outskirts to unearth the potatoes that saved the family, Sergei enters a room full of educated, apparently well-off, and demonstrably complacent young adults. This is Anya's social circle, and as the evening goes on, the crowd (with the exception of a fetching model who also lost her father in the war) becomes increasingly repulsive to Sergei. The young people complain about their parents, they joke about their children, they exchange nonsensical remarks about the immanent arrival at the party of Yuri Dolgorukii, the 12th century founder of Moscow. Nothing at all seems to matter to them, and while Sergei's circle, too, demonstrates similar faults—Slavka complains about family life, Kolya is constantly chirping clever non sequiturs, and Sergei himself whines about his excessively exemplary behavior—he has apparently, on this night, resolved to be done with meaninglessness.

A young man played by Andrei Konchalovsky (a writer-director who was at the time co-writing *Andrei Rublev* with Tarkovsky) arrives with a steaming pot of baked potatoes straight from the kitchen of the exclusive Metropol Hotel. The revelers spin the potatoes, peel them, play with them, drop them, dance upon them. Sergei looks aghast at the scene like Moses glimpsing the orgy around the Golden Calf. He reaches down and rescues a handful of spuds. The young people, gleeful at their ironic appropriation of patriotic symbols, put on traditional bast sandals and dance to jazz, absentmindedly grinding a ruined potato into the parquet. One of them puts on a record of the folk ballad “The Ducks Are Flying”. At first the partygoers greet it in the same ironic spirit as they received the potatoes and sandals, but then the model, played by the stunning Svetlana Svetlichnaya, begins to sing in a beautiful, wounded, soul-scorching voice. The partygoers seem momentarily touched—and annoyed that they are capable of being touched in this way. She sings with utter conviction, and they can hardly stand it. A character played by Andrei Tarkovsky springs from his chair. “Maybe that’s enough,” he says. He calls for a drink and a toast.

Sergei proposes a toast to the potato.

“Why not the turnip?” Tarkovsky says.

“No,” says Sergei, slapping the table. “The potato.” This worries Anya. She asks Sergei what he means.

“I know what he means,” says another young man. “It’s *kvas* patriotism”—the false, blind patriotism of hockey crowds who will follow anything so long as it is

“theirs.”⁵² This is an assault not only on Sergei’s patriotism, but on his intellect. Sergei asks the young man if there is anything he is willing to take seriously, and the young man throws the question back at him.

Sergei is ready for precisely this question.

“I take the Revolution seriously,” he says, “the song ‘The Internationale’. The year 1937. The war and the soldiers and the fact that practically none of us have our fathers anymore”—here he pauses—“and the potato, which saved us during the hungry times.”

Tarkovsky’s character, sudden as the Cheshire cat, appears alongside Sergei: “And the turnip?” he says, pleased with his own sarcasm. “You didn’t tell me. What do you think of the turnip?”

A sad-eyed young woman, offended for Sergei, slaps Tarkovsky across the face.

* * *

Looked at from the point of view of strict plot logic, Sergei’s statement of faith suggests that Anya’s friends are the very “young scoundrels” who, as Sergei earlier tells Anya’s father, are even worse than old scoundrels. If our moral scorekeeping were rooted in an absolute alliance with the protagonist, our sutured presence within his very skin, we might be able to pass unambiguous, even aggressive, judgment on Anya’s friends; we might conclude that the waffling Sergei has at last taken the “right” side in the generational/cultural battle by rejecting Anya and her band of cosmopolitans. But Sergei’s voice is not authoritative for us. He has already flip-flopped in the Kursk metro;

⁵² *Kvas*, a beverage made from fermented bread, is a traditional Russian thirst-quencher.

he himself knows how to play the breezy ironist. More importantly, he knows from hard experience with Anya's father that the older generation is indeed compromised and that statist symbols are indeed debased—this cynical father figure, who so clearly despises everyone and everything while declaring his closeness to “the worker” delivers his whole bitter diatribe against the younger generation while keeping the television set tuned to a children's choir singing patriotic songs. We know that Sergei—though Kovalev calls him “a man of faith”—is not so immune to the doubts that haunt Anya's self-defensively ironic friends. Sergei's very voice is the voice of doubt. It is, perhaps, his doubt, his perennial search, that we sympathize with, and we are not prepared to believe that Sergei's search has ended simply because Anya's friend mocked the sacred potato by asking about a turnip.

In any case, the problem with Tarkovsky's character is not specifically that he makes fun of the potato; the need to hold the previous generation's symbols forever sacred winds up debasing the symbols and alienating the young. No, the problem is not in the specifics of his mockery, but in his *tone*, in the mockery itself, in his inability to empathize with Sergei's elevated, even sacred *mood*. The key to unity-in-diversity lies in the capacity not to share the Other's faith, but his *faithfulness*. It is faithfulness as a quality of the soul that counts. Unity-in-diversity—*sobornost*—hinges on two elements of togetherness that coexist in productive tension: respect for the other's selfhood, and the willingness to share co-feeling. The reason this odd combination can function is precisely that *co-feeling* is expected, not necessarily *co-believing*. While “Orthodoxy” means “correct doctrine”, the Russian *pravoslavie* means “correct praise”—Russian belief shifts

the focus from *believing in the same things* to *believing together* through the same external forms of worship. Respect for form is the central issue, not doctrinal purity. And the Tarkovsky character's interruption of both the folk song and of Sergei's declaration of faith is nothing if not bad form. Virtue resides in mutual respect for selfhood and in the kenotic ideal of self-emptying in service to the other. What is called for is not just Western "tolerance," but a kind of Christian awe before the simple, even naïve, faith of the other. This is the central emotion behind the Russian tradition of the Holy Fool, and it is precisely the emotion that wins Myshkin so many admirers in part one of *The Idiot*.

Nevertheless, Tarkovsky's character is not demonic within the logic of the film, as Kovalev suggests.⁵³ On the contrary, he is haunted. He cannot stand still, cannot utter more than a sentence at a time, cannot utter a serious syllable until he has been slapped. At a party filled with his own people, he is oddly friendless and spiritually homeless, flitting from place to place, unable to find even a conversation he can believe in. He is as much of a searcher as Sergei, though perhaps less able to settle for unsatisfactory answers. Tarkovsky's character is specifically rubbed the wrong way by restorative nostalgia. But he doesn't understand that Sergei's nostalgia is not restorative but reflective; it is borne not of social-ideological abstractions but personal and familial memory. This is why the inclusion of "The Internationale" in Sergei's list of things worth believing in sounds false and why the inclusion of the humble potato sounds so very true.

⁵³ Kovalev (2008) raises the possibility that Tarkovsky's character knows that the turnip was the original primary source of Russian nutrition, before potatoes were brought from America, and that his irony is not unpatriotic, but rather a critique of an uninformed "herd patriotism."

We do not take Sergei's statement of faith to be a wholesale rejection of his generation because we know he is still grasping at the meaning of his place within that generation. (Earlier in the film, he tells Anya's father that society is not divided horizontally into generations, but vertically between the cynical and the sincere within each generation.) Sergei is not denouncing the world of Anya's friends like some prematurely aged functionary choosing "the fathers" over "the children", but desperately reaching *beyond* their world, engaging the past to spark his own capacity to feel. The enemy is not these jokey twentysomethings, or their disrespect for tradition, but the numbness that seems to be setting in on them. Sergei, unfinalized and full of longing, does not have the answers, and as we learn in the following scene, neither does the shade of his 21-year-old fallen father.

In the political-artistic discussions that followed Khutsiev's completion of the film, his critics were angry that Sergei had not reacted more aggressively to Anya's cosmopolitan friends. Instead, he just picks up his coat and leaves. And Khutsiev's camera does not follow him to show him "decisively" or "resolutely" leaving all this behind, but instead lingers on the partygoers. After receiving his slap in the face, Tarkovsky looks down in shame, clearly *not* numb, not the irredeemable smartass Sergei might have taken him for. The young man who started the scandal with his accusation of "*kvas* patriotism" suddenly feels ashamed as well, and projects his shame on Tarkovsky's character: "Why did you say that crap?" Tarkovsky rubs his head in shameful agitation: "It comes automatically," he says.

Just when we think Khutsiev has declared his loyalties and denounced the young punks, his camera stays behind to show us the kids are alright. They've just learned too well how to defend themselves with wit against a world that makes them feel powerless. Anya runs out the door after Sergei. The image, like the earlier images of her in her "asocial" devotion to Sergei alone, contests the rival, narrative-ideological image of her as a spoiled, individualistic rich girl who distracts Sergei from his idealistic absorption into the social whole. What we see is a young woman in love and full of doubt, a daughter who has witnessed her father's social hypocrisy and who, like the fatherless Sergei, has not found a way to engage her formidable individuality in the life of society. We see what one longs for years after letting it slip through one's hands: Another human being, doubtful, fearful, imperfect, even unknowable—but loving. And somehow, in spite of everything, we believe that Anya could enliven and energize Sergei's life, if only she could catch him.

5. Tempering the Steel

In his brilliant essay on *Ilich's Gate*, Oleg Kovalev (2008) argues that there are "right spaces" and "wrong spaces" in *Ilich's Gate*, and that these spaces exercise influence on the characters. There are places where "the demon of faithlessness" reigns and others where faith—quasi-religious faith in the Thaw-era "social mythology" that sees sincerity and Soviet patriotism as utterly compatible—is ascendant. The demon rules in Anya's apartment and in the depths of the Kursk metro station. Faith reigns in Sergei's apartment. Most of all, though, faith is empowered in the wide streets and warm courtyards of Moscow.

Vladimir Paperny (2002) writes that these intimate courtyards were a contribution of Stalinist architecture in response to modernist architectural values that called for maximum street exposure. “Intimacy, in the 1920s, was practically a swear word,” writes Paperny, who then quotes the leftist architect Kornelii Zelinsky: “‘Intimacy’ is a typical frame of mind for extremely bourgeois epochs.” By the early 1930s, when Khutsiev was growing up in Moscow, wandering its Garden Ring and stopping at the cinema to watch early Stalinist classics such as *Peter I*, the idea of intimacy had made a comeback as part of Stalin’s general campaign against leftist egalitarianism and in favor of hierarchy and traditional culture. Khutsiev, of course, does not associate these courtyards with the Stalinist search for order and the disciplining of excessively spontaneous leftists with their ever-shifting *isms* and performative Jacobinism. Rather, he cherishes the courtyards for their actual architectural function as a semi-public space—a space of mediated intimacy, a gentle bridge between the world of family and the world of public life.

In short, the courtyard is for Khutsiev a space of friendship. The friendship of Sergei, Kolya, and Slavka is not a private realm isolated from public world of, for instance, the May Day celebration. Instead, friendship is the crucial unit of public life. The deep personal friendship is the indispensable connecting tissue between private and public. The centrality of friendship to public life was an article of faith for the entire Thaw intelligentsia, where nothing was as bracingly, fulfillingly “public” as the private kitchen conversation between friends—these were the moments when aesthetic, political,

and spiritual dreams of the public world were constructed and exchanged. But even these “right spaces” could be challenging ones.⁵⁴

Early in the film, Sergei and Kolya stand in the playground and whistle in harmony up to the balcony of their old friend Slavka. The two boys down below and their friend up above form a triangle—a triangle not of competition, but of cooperation. They are the three that is not a crowd. The notes are harmonious, rather than identical, but there are no awkward collisions of notes—it is (to invoke Konstantin Aksakov's take on the Slavophilic ideal of *sobornost*⁵⁵) the choir at its finest, when each musician plays his own notes and manages to support rather than detract from the notes of his neighbor. The notes travel equal distances up the sides of an isosceles triangle and meet at the figure of Slavka. Because he is married, Slavka is more distant from Kolya and Sergei than they are from one another, but the relationship has a stability; its only inequality is rooted in

⁵⁴ It is peculiar that Anya's apartment turns out, in Kovalev's phrasing, a “wrong” space while Sergei's courtyard is a “right space”; functionally, the two spaces play an almost identical role as middle ground between private and public. When Ludmila Alexeyeva (1990) reflects lovingly upon the apartment gatherings she and her group—her *kompaniya*—had during the late 1950s and early 1960s, she may be talking about a different crowd than Sergei's (and perhaps a crowd more like Anya's clever guests), but the notion of the *kompaniya* was not restricted to dissident, or even educated groups. Form workers to academics, young Russians in the Thaw era embraced the old Russian tradition of gathering for food and drink and guitar and long conversations by turns humorous and searchingly earnest. The *kompaniya*, like the courtyard, occupied a space between the private realm of self and family and the public realm of work, school, and street life.

⁵⁵ To better grasp the concept of *sobornost*, let us examine Aksakov's description of the Russian peasant commune: “A commune is a union of the people, who have renounced their egoism, their individuality, and who express their common accord; this is an act of love, a noble Christian act, which expresses itself more or less clearly in its various other manifestations. A commune thus represents a moral choir, and just as in a choir a voice is not lost, but follows the general pattern and is heard in the harmony of all voices: so in the commune the individual is not lost, but renounces his exclusiveness in favor of the general accord—and there arises the noble phenomenon of harmonious, joint existence of rational beings (consciousness); there arises a brotherhood, a commune—a triumph of human spirit” (Riazanovsky, 1965, p. 135).

the tradition of marriage—in this case, a reasonable marriage to an old classmate, a longtime resident of the friends' small world.

One of the key narratives of the movie is the challenge to these lines of friendship as the young men's separate lives intrude upon the triangle, deforming it, now stretching one line, now shrinking another, the members of the choir moving further from one another at one moment, then regrouping in different formations. The final scene of part one begins with Slava alone in the playground before dawn, disconsolate at his bride's jealousy of his time with friends. It is the morning after May Day. Sergei arrives after his night-long wanderings with Anya, her phone-number freshly memorized. He is whistling. Slavka is not. The musical harmony of the earlier triangle is missing. This time, it is Kolya who is up on his balcony; he lives and sleeps there. The reasons for this are never fully explained in the film, but it is clear that there is some kind of disharmony at the very center of his life, in the world of his family; we never do get access to his home (and we wonder if he ever does). Sergei and Slavka call up to Kolya, not with music this time, but with a shout that cuts through the morning silence. They ask for food, and a groggy Kolya, not thrilled to be woken, comes down to them bleary-eyed with a pot of “sailor's pasta”—macaroni and meat.

Did this fellow, exiled to the balcony of his own home, make the macaroni himself? Is there anyone who cares about him? Or is his performatively hale and hearty good humor an adaptation to a life that is out of joint at its very center? The three young men sit in the playground of their youth in the early morning hours as the city still sleeps around them. This is not the joyous meeting that followed the previous playground-

balcony triangle. Their thoughts are not united on their friendship with one another, as they were in the earlier scene. Now Slavka is thinking of his marital problems; Sergei and Kolka are doing their best to think about Slavka's marital problems, too, but their efforts at empathy are inescapably tempered by the presence of their own minds, their own thoughts. Sergei is no doubt still whistling a tune in his head, repeating to himself the phone number he has yet to write down. And Kolya goes so far as to wonder aloud what Slavka is so despondent about; he's got a wife and a child and a home, while all Kolya has is a cot on a damp balcony. The lines of the triangle have shifted; the music that travels along those lines has become more contentious. And yet the friendship survives—it is if anything more real here than in the euphoric harmony of the first triangle.

In an earlier scene, when Sergei is battling the flu and whining at what he considers his too-exemplary life, Kolya sarcastically quotes him a line from Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*. These three young men have no revolution to wage, as their grandfathers did, and no Great Patriotic War to fight, as their fathers did. What they have is their friendship, their curiosity about the world, and the nagging question about how to pursue that curiosity—how to be young in their own lives—while living honorably in the community their fathers died for. The lines of their friendship are tested throughout the film, exposed to the ultimate question within the *sobornost* paradox: Is internal liberation—is *freedom*—compatible with community? Can friendship survive the peripeteia of the young and questing self? The external elements that invade this triangle—Slavka's wife; Kolka's ideological duel with Chernousov; and, most importantly, Sergei's affair with Anya—are not foreign elements that threaten to destroy

Eden and must be cast out. They are life. They are the contentious voices that any community must be able to not only endure, but include. They are a test of the community/friendship, but they need not be a threat to it. They are the life-force that tempers the steel of community. And the community that cannot withstand contentious polyphony is not suited to existence in the real world. Without the external unifying forces of revolution and war to forge community, individuals who wish for the Whole to survive the challenge of individuality have as the weapons of community-building not force or necessity or ideology, but the seemingly opposed virtues of conscience and tolerance.

The opposition between these virtues is resolved not by declaring the victory of conscience *over* tolerance, as Sergei unconvincingly attempts to do at the conclusion of the film, but through the deployment of empathy—Prince Myshkin's powerful (if ultimately unsuccessful) tool. The triangle of friends (and, by extension, the grand triangle, of self, other, and community) cannot long survive if every intersecting line is considered a sundering of the sacred. People grow and change and if their links with community are to survive, they must be supple and *tolerant* enough—like steel with a high tolerance for heat and force and rain and rust—to accommodate this change.

In a 2004 interview with Savva Yamshchikov, Khutsiev said that he had wanted Sergei's voice-over at the end of the film to say, “Of course, we’ll go our separate ways in life. We’ll grow. New things will concern us. Life may scatter us, but one way or another we’ll never forget the time in which we live” (Yamshchikov, 2004). Such a conditional prognosis would have been in keeping with Khutsiev and Shpalikov’s strategy of

allowing life to write the script, their prodigious Dostoevskian talent for avoiding the finalization of the supple stuff of life. These lines would also place proper emphasis on reflective memory rather than rigid preservation. (It is worth noting that one of the early candidates for the film's title was *Do You Remember, Comrade?*) Instead, Khutsiev wound up with a finalizing declaration at film's end: "I'm glad we live here, and couldn't live anywhere else. This is all ours, the only possible way. And I'll be true to that to the end." These lines fail to confront a central issue in the film—that if friendship/community is to endure, it must be capable of accomodating change. An organic community of individuals survives only if it can welcome the organic growth of those individuals. A frozen unity is sooner or later shattered.

Khutsiev's preferred lines (excluded, he says, not by official censorship but because he couldn't quite get the words right) would have underscored the stern challenge at the heart of the dream of *sobornost*—social harmony is impossible without unity-in-diversity, yet diversity seems to threaten unity, and unity seems to threaten diversity. In practice, the vision of a harmonious choir can be taken only as an unachievable ideal that is, all the same, worth pursuing. The impossibility of total harmony, and the extreme difficulty of the pursuit of harmony, must be acknowledged. The steel is tempered not through the conquest of difficulty, but the embrace of it, the understanding that it will be permanent, irritating, and worthwhile.

* * *

Khutsiev engages both hard realities and lyrical dreams through a dual setting of his films: On one hand, they take place in the indelibly real bricks-and-mortar Moscow of

the 1960s; on the other, they take place in the developing memories of his protagonists, who drink in the image-moments of their lives, reflect upon them in interior monologues and recited poems, wordlessly walk the streets of their cities, engaging the richness of all they see and hear. The independence and integrity of the episodes creates a lyrical nostalgia for the passing moment without suggesting that the passing moment is in some way a model for the way things should always be. The moments are not embedded in what Boym (2001) calls a restorative nostalgic plot (such nostalgia, she says, knows only two plots—the return to origins and the conspiracy to prevent such a return); Khutsiev's love of the captured moment does not imply a resistance to the movement of time, but a respect for the moment in time.

In her monograph on *The Idiot*, Sarah Young argues that Bakhtin overstates the ease with which polyphony leads to harmony. In *The Idiot*, the overall harmony of the composition exists only from the bird's eye-view of the reader at novel's conclusion, when we close the book, almost shivering at the odd and troubling and gorgeous symphony that emerges from the book's cacaphony of competing voices. Along the way, though, the contending voices and images often create a bewildering tableau, a lovely, demented chaos. The real story of both *The Idiot* and *Ilich's Gate* is that life forever challenges the abstract harmonious vision. Whenever the camera moves closer to the most cherished elements of life, it questions the viability of any dream of harmonized interests. We see contention, jockeying desires, misunderstandings, small harmonious subsets that (allegedly) distract from the harmony of all (marriage, in an example from Dostoevsky's diaries; the Sergei-Anya union, in Kolya's ill-tempered hints). The question becomes less

whether this mass of contentions can be resolved, but whether, when considered together, they add up to a sort of beauty, a music of the city, a music of humanity. At certain moments, we, like Sergei, doubt. But when Khutsiev pulls his camera back to take in the teeming Moscow streets, it is hard to argue that the sum of a million contentious notes forms an urban chorus very much worth hearing.

6. Conclusion

Each moment in *Ilich's Gate* opens up not simply on the next moment or even on the whole of the film, but on the entire world of the viewer, who, after all, spends his or her life taking in, remembering, and processing images. Khutsiev takes us beyond Deleuze's movement image (where rational spatial-temporal connections orient us within the world of a film, with one moment in one space leading us to a logically responsive next moment in a sensibly related next space) toward his time image (where the image bears within it an entire world of potential, and even contradictory, associations). In the movement image, our consciousness becomes temporarily embedded in the world of the film. In the time image, cinematic images become embedded in *us*. Their self-contradictory, polyphonic, time-collapsing nature short-circuits the causal and sequential world of the story, and the images are set free to relate directly to *our* experience of living in time and space. The game here is much bigger than plot resolution or heroic decision-making: When we read *The Idiot* or watch *Ilich's Gate*, the central question is not, *What will happen next?* or *Will the hero succeed?* (though those questions are, of course, present on a lower level), but, *Given all you've seen and heard, what do you make of this world?*

This is a fundamentally creative question, in which “to make” has a double meaning—on one hand, we can read it as the colloquial “What’s your understanding of it all?” and on the other we have a literal challenge: “Can you *make* something of all this?” The fortuitously cast Tarkovsky would later become emblematic of this ethos, going on record as wanting to enlist his audience in the creative completion of his elliptical films. Khutsiev, too, creates in such a way that the viewer leaves the screen with lingering images to be reimagined from different perspectives and challenging interactions to think through. While watching Khutsiev’s films, one finds oneself taking sides and then changing one’s mind about the sides one has taken. And the creative act does not stop with the viewers’ completion of the film, but spills over into their creation and recreation of their own lives.

Khutsiev’s films become, as Bazin said of De Sica’s work, “an asymptote of reality” (Bazin, 2004, p. 82). They do not simply resemble the real; they become a part of our reality. This is not simply the sort of memory sleight-of-hand in which, years later, one looks back at a period film and says “Yep, that’s just what it was like,” allowing the film to replace (and usually varnish) memory. No doubt this happens with Khutsiev’s films, but there is something more profound at work—the way in which the films become part of our internal make-up, one of many voices of our personal polyphonic choir, giving us subtle hints on how to see. They become part of the body of real-world memory that makes us who we are in the present. And this profound effect stops neither at Russia’s borders nor at the generational borders of those who actually lived through the Thaw. The “asymptote”—in mathematics a line that stretches toward an object but never quite

reaches it—can approach anyone who watches the film with a willingness not only to see it, but to be seen by it. One leaves Khutsiev's films with the eerie and elated sense that one has been understood.

CHAPTER VII

CODA AND CONCLUSION

1. Suspended Spirituality

In 1967, Marlen Khutsiev completed *July Rain*, a tale of young, educated Muscovites nearing the age of 30. The film was a fitting follow-up to *Ilich's Gate*; one could see it as a glimpse into the future lives of the clever guests at Anya's birthday party—and into the life of the city itself. In his 1991 book, *The Sixties Generation and Us*, the critic Lev Anninsky writes memorably about the delight and awe with which he watched *July Rain* as a young film critic in the mid-1960s. Where he saw an embodiment of spiritual longing in the film's patient gaze—its drinking-in of everyday Moscow and its subtle portrayal of everyday anxiety—his colleague Sasha Aronov saw not an imprint of time but a messenger of boredom. Aronov's cinematic hero was Akira Kurosawa, and he saw cinema as a terrain for action, suspense, suffering. Where had Khutsiev put all this stuff, the movement, narrative drive, and physical explosiveness that were the traditional essence of movie magic? In Aronov's longing for action and drama was the seed of the ascendance of genre cinema in the Soviet 1970s (Anninskii, 1991).

Earlier still, in 1965, another Kurosawa admirer, Andrei Konchalovsky, had decided not to film Gennady Shpalikov's script, *Happiness*, for his first feature film, choosing instead to adapt Chinghiz Aitmatov's novel *The First Teacher*, a tale of culture

clash in revolutionary Kirghizia. As Yevgeny Margolit writes, Konchalovsky was in search of a dramatic core, and, for Shpalikov, there was no such thing: Life as he saw it—and this was true for other players as well in the “dedramatized” cinema of the Soviet 1960s—did not unfold in well-formed dramaturgical conflicts, so cinema should not either (Troianovskii, 2002, p. 93). The 1960s conflict between traditional dramaturgy and Khutsievan dedramatization in many ways anticipates Deleuze’s theories of the movement image and the time image, and it intensified by the 1970s, when Konchalovsky wrote several prominent articles calling for the professionalization of screenwriting and filmmaking along American studio lines, with traditional dramaturgy and precise directorial adherence to the shooting script (Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, 1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1975).

Such adherence had been required during the 1930s and ’40s, when state cinema chief Boris Shumiatsky, who, like Konchalovsky, was inspired by Hollywood competence, had instituted the “cast-iron scenario” that directors were not to depart from. Shumiatsky’s approach had been a response to the wildly spontaneous approach of 1920s avant-garde filmmakers who often determined the ultimate structure of their film with the scissors rather than the script. Konchalovsky’s approach seems to have grown in part from his frustrations working with Tarkovsky on *Andrei Rublev*, when the script seemed to be composed of an infinitely stretchable and re-moldable substance, and the set was often a place for creating on the fly, with all the anxiety and inefficiency that implies. Konchalovsky was not fond of Tarkovsky’s later work, but he understood his old friend’s genius and his right to make films in his own peculiar way. Nevertheless, he believed

that, in less skilled hands, spontaneity and dedramatization—the storytelling approaches that had made the personal and episodic cinema of Tarkovsky and Khutsiev so memorable—resulted in unprofessional, unwatchable cinema.

The competitive discourse over dedramatization and traditional dramaturgy might have, in different circumstances, been a friendly intellectual argument. But in Soviet cultural politics it was deeply intertwined with the old Leninist tug-of-war between spontaneity and consciousness, with the regime, as always, decisively taking the side of consciousness. Thus the artistic divide between Konchalovsky and Tarkovsky, for instance, grew into a personal quarrel, and the personal conflict, at least in Tarkovsky's mind, became political: Konchalovsky had been writing in favor of methods utterly opposed to his own, methods favored by the authorities, the very authorities who constantly criticized his work for being incomprehensible and alien. In 1983, Konchalovsky met with Tarkovsky at the Cannes Film Festival and tried to convince his old friend it was safe for him to come home. Tarkovsky, according to Konchalovsky's recollections, responded by implying that Konchalovsky was a spy, dispatched to lure him back to a homeland that would never let him film again (Konchalovskii, 1991). What had begun as an aesthetic divide between two ambitious visionaries had metastasized into the stuff of Cold War paperbacks.

The critical response to Khutsiev's *July Rain* further illustrates the politicization of aesthetic argument. It was one thing for Aronov to tell a colleague in all sincerity that he found the film boring. But when the accusation of boredom was taken up by the official press, it became political, cynical, anti-intellectual, and even vicious. On August

29, 1967, the newspaper *Soviet Culture* printed conservative critic Rostislav Yurenev's "Open Letter to Film Director Marlen Khutsiev, If We May Speak Openly." *July Rain*, Yurenev wrote to Khutsiev, "could have been substantive and interesting, if your thoughts could have been realized . . . in an ideologically accountable form. But your film, drawn out and boring, did not take on such a form" (Chernenko, 1998).

Of course, it was precisely the film's lack of "ideologically accountable form" that captured the imagination of many of Khutsiev's contemporaries. Lev Anninsky remembers the film's opening scene in loving detail for its seeming absence of purpose. The soundtrack alternates between Bizet's *Carmen* and radio static and snippets of a soccer game featuring the Mozambican superstar Eusebio.

Bizet's march isn't reflected in the faces in the crowd. The music is doing its own thing, and so are the people. They're hurrying. They meet and separate in the crowd. The rain makes them momentary partners beneath the entryway awning. "Where are you going, Miss? You'll get soaked. Take my jacket, it's waterproof." "Thanks. But how will I return it to you?" "I'll call you. What's your number?" He writes the number on a matchbox (Anninskii, 1991).

When he first saw the film, Anninsky saw a kind of humanity in this scene, a sense of civility that indicated not only gentlemanly manners, but a kind of spirituality. Anninsky saw this "suspended spirituality" as the animating force of the entire film. Each frame had this spirituality of atmosphere, of waiting, of the anxious appreciation—the love—of time. Filtered through Khutsiev's camera and the consciousness of his heroine, Lena, even the rush of sidewalk crowds and the histrionic babble of Lena's acquaintances took on the impossible-to-measure weight of beauty, poetry, the edgy pregnancy of possibility.

Khutsiev's creative biographer, Miron Chernenko, would later take Anninsky to task for his romantic take on *July Rain*. Chernenko saw in the film not spirituality, suspended or otherwise, but an epitaph for 1960s hopefulness and a premonition of the cynicism of the '70s. But from a distance of four decades, Anninsky's coinage of "suspended spirituality" seems entirely apt. Of course we recognize the social strains and dashed hopes implicit—and sometimes explicit—in both *July Rain* and *Ilich's Gate*. But *July Rain's* air of rusting romanticism, I would argue, owes less to the historical moment—to some kind of mid-60s "turn"—and more to the fact that the protagonists are nearing 30. Even at the age of 23 in *Ilich's Gate*, the heroes had taken on the wizened sense that it was time to put childish things away. Transition, both on the grand historical stage and at the level of personal development, begets longing. And longing engages memory-images of times past and passing, dreams embraced and not quite fulfilled, imaginative visions that rose and fell like ancient temples or yesterday's sandcastle. Longing seems to summon visions of rubble, but in the rubble is the raw stuff of tomorrow's reconfigured creation.

It is precisely *because* of the embedded historical and personal strains, the residue of transition and loss and longing, that the spirituality in the films of Khutsiev and Tarkovsky and Kalatozov is real but not over-realized—in other words, it does not smother the film with the finalized weight of Utopia, but hovers in the suspension fluid of time. However much Soviet film-industry managers might have hoped otherwise,

spirituality in art generally does not reside in the portrayal of shadeless joy.⁵⁶ It is in the half-shadow of anxiety that we most sharply experience the longing-in-time central to spiritual apprehension. This is why a viewer can take a deep joy in even in the most freighted moments of *Ilich's Gate*, *Andrei Rublev*, and *I Am Cuba*. The filmmakers never isolate pain and anxiety from the sensory experience of time and place, and this sensory experience rejuvenates the spirit without interrupting its mourning.

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If we consider the notion of suspended spirituality in light of Boym's reflective nostalgia and Bergson's theories of memory, it opens up a rich perspective not only on the culture of the 1960s Russia, but, more broadly, on the links between memory, matter, spirituality, and the cinematic image. One could go so far as to say that suspended spirituality *is* reflective nostalgia. Anninsky, appropriately enough, leaves his term open and undefined, but if we look upon *July Rain* as the document that gave birth to the idea—a document suffused in watchfulness, waiting, ethical anxiety, and rapt attention to the placement and movement of matter in time—we can make a case that suspended spirituality is asymptotic longing and striving for connection across boundaries of time, space and convention. It does not become fully embodied or realized in any symbolic act, object, or mental state. The longing itself becomes a creative act. The drama is not in narrative overcoming, but in the pathos of the gap between longing and realization.

⁵⁶ When Yuri Klepikov, the writer of Konchalovsky's *The Story of Asya Klyachina, Who Loved But Did Not Marry*, turned in the script for his diploma work at VGIIK, he was told to put his film in a drawer and instead write something "bright and life-affirming" (Klepikov, 2009).

This gap is apparent in each of the films I have discussed in these pages. Even in *I Am Cuba*, the most conventionally dramatic of the three films, the gap exists—a gulf created more by the wandering cameras of Urusevsky and Kalatozov than by the story they are ostensibly filming: The gap lies between the young revolutionary Enrique’s naïve hopes (and the filmmakers’ memories of their own lost hopes) and the dream that those hopes can be realized in Cuba. In *Andrei Rublev*, the gap lies between Rublev’s (and Tarkovsky’s) longing for the absolute and the implied acknowledgment that historical embodiment of the absolute can exist only in art. In *Ilich’s Gate*, the gap lies between Sergei’s longing to participate joyfully and sincerely in his time and his nascent understanding that harmony of word and deed, as Anya tells him, disappeared with the ancient Greeks. In all three films, social harmony remains on the horizon, mirage-like, as the heroes (and, through them, the filmmakers) struggle toward an often equally elusive personal, ethical harmony.

Russian culture, inspired and tormented by the fundamentally asymptotic principle of *sobornost*—the dream that the social choir can have absolute harmony while each voice retains its individuality—is a particularly fruitful teacher of suspended spirituality. In its millenarian-imperial guise, Russian history teaches us the perils of illusory myths of embodiment and realization—symbolic thinking. In its countless examples of creative whimsy, diversity, and ingenuity, it teaches us the charm of the ambiguous dream—image thinking. The Soviet Thaw was a time when the symbol-myths of realization were in open conflict with the open-ended images of inchoate longing.

In the dedramatized cinema of the Thaw—the cinema of suspended spirituality, the cinema of the time image—the cause-effect linkages of determinate temporal perception cease to apply: The coexistence of past, present, and future is implicit, and empathy across time, space, and convention becomes uncommonly possible. Freed from the prescriptive perceptual guidance of the conventional dramatic arc, the mind (of the director, the character, the viewer) is able to perceive something closer to the totality of the image of the moment, though this perception remains unavoidably—and admittedly—fractional. The apprehension of the integral image of the moment comes with its own pathos, the old awareness that the more one knows, the more one knows one doesn't know. The progress of striver toward spirit, of empath toward object, remains always asymptotic.

2. Tarkovsky and Khutsiev, Time and Space

Both Tarkovsky and Khutsiev bring a sense of the uncanny to the relations of people, time, and space. In a 2004 interview with the art historian Savva Yamshchikov for the nationalist Russian newspaper *Zavtra*, Khutsiev attempted to explain the differences between the filmmakers' approaches: In Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* (1983) and *Sacrifice* (1986) Khutsiev said,

there are beautiful parts, like the scene with the candle in *Nostalghia*. But along with them, there is ambiguity. This approach doesn't resonate with me, because I'm always trying to imprint concrete time. If you take any film of mine—take *July Rain*—the plot is fairly local, a chamber drama, but the film opens beyond the relations of two people, him and her. Because these two live in that particular environment, in a defined historical time. And I always look for these ties between the personal and the general (Iamshchikov, 2004).

Here Khutsiev has expertly diagnosed the magic of his own films, but missed the fact that the very opening to time he describes is inherently ambiguous. By inviting time into his films rather than merely story, he makes the films multifaceted and indeterminate. The Moscow of *Ilich's Gate* and *July Rain* is in its way no less ambiguous than Tarkovsky's Italian spa (in *Nostalghia*) and Swedish peninsula (in *the Sacrifice*). Indeed, Khutsiev is celebrated precisely for what Sergei Dobrotvorsky (1993) calls “the color of air”—the conditionality and haze of the actual experience of time, when what one undergoes is not a “defined historical time”, but a continuum of images impacting on the senses, emotions, and memories.

At the heart of Khutsiev's approach to cinema is the uncanny layering of times, his faith, shared with screenwriters Shpalikov and Grebnev (his co-writer on *July Rain*), that no era is unitary, but exists as a passageway through which pass ghosts of a past that has not truly passed, and phantoms of a future that is now. In *Ilich's Gate*, as we have seen, Sergei tells Anya's father that people are divided not by a horizontal line separating generations, but by a vertical one that unites eras and generations and divides only good people from bastards. And of course the famous final scene, in which Sergei's father appears not in a flashback or a clearly defined dream sequence but in a densely layered present-past, has as much temporal and spatial ambiguity as the time-gates erected by Tarkovsky in *Andrei Rublev* or in his autobiographical cine-poem *The Mirror*, which navigates from Tarkovsky's 1930s childhood to the 1970s and back.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Khutsiev's blending of eras is beautifully on display in the final frames of *July Rain*, where the modern young woman Lena—embracing her freedom, decisiveness, and uncertainty after turning down her

If we look for a particular difference in the time sensibilities of the two filmmakers, it is not that Khutsiev's time is more "concrete" than Tarkovsky's, but that Tarkovsky focuses on the micro and macro implications of the chronotope—the inner worlds of his protagonists and the enormous word-historical-spiritual impact of every infinitesimal palpitation of those inner worlds—while Khutsiev focuses on the micro and *mid-range* implications. Tarkovsky's time and space are home to a sort of spiritual butterfly effect, in which sacrifice—in *this concrete time*—can, by spiritual means, save the world. Khutsiev's chronotope, meanwhile, tracks interpersonal interactions and the ways in which time, place, and history insert themselves into those interactions in bewildering ways. It is Tarkovsky, not Khutsiev, who pulls the concrete times, in their world-historical sense, into his work. Khutsiev pulls the life of the city and its inhabitants, who are haunted by history but for whom history never becomes historical—it is too alive in the present emotional moment, too obfuscated by the uncertainty and longing of young protagonists, to ever become part of a millenarian spiritual design.

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Tarkovsky soars above Russia's traditional "accursed questions"—*What is to be done? Who is to blame? How shall we live?*—reaching toward a sense of life that transcends geography and history. *Andrei Rublev* is set in a concrete time and place, but the very ambiguity of its images and structure initiates a vaster, spiritual time that

longtime boyfriend's perfunctory marriage proposal—comes upon a crowd of elderly war veterans on the steps of the historical museum on Red Square. They are singing, embracing, celebrating survival. The camera leaves Lena for good. Then it leaves the veterans as well and follows the gazes—now amused, now solemn—of the children looking on from the margins of the celebration. Neither the veterans nor the children have anything to do with the story we have been watching for the previous two hours. And yet they have everything to do with it. For the film is not only a longitudinal imprint of Moscow in the mid-1960s, but a core sample of Muscovite being.

connects all eras and renders the historical moment at once infinitesimally small and infinitely large, a fractal vision of the human condition. The searing pain in Tarkovsky's films arises from the flashing will-o'-the-wisp sense that perhaps the human condition can be transcended, and the understanding that transcendence comes only in small doses, with the fraught decisions of the suffering individual. Tarkovsky invites us to consider the unseen bonds between matter and spirit, and he envisions the transformation of matter into spirit by means of experience, sacrifice, trial, fire.

Khutsiev, on the other hand, confronts the problems of being in the world, and makes no move to transcend them. He plants his eye—and his “I”—firmly in the social milieu and stubbornly remains there. Here, too, the spirit is central. It is not a corrective to a debased time, though, but a living ether to be drawn from the time itself. However debased the time may seem, it is made sacred by its own currents, by the riddles of interrelations and unsaid words and longings that challenge our complacency.

Khutsiev's camera is forever discovering harmonies forged from discordant notes. His focus is on the small and ever-evolving motifs within the social symphony, the riffs that alter the symphony on the fly but never destroy its integrity. The “now” never becomes so irredeemable that it must be abandoned for the eternal; the “here” never becomes so irrelevant that it can be replaced by what Deleuze calls “any space whatever.” And yet in his fidelity to—and hope for—the here and now, Khutsiev ends up, like Tarkovsky, discovering the eternal within matter. By refusing to judge and finalize his characters or his city, he gives them life beyond the frame and beyond the era of the film's production.

The Tarkovskian individual's struggle with self—the intensive effort to identify spirit and transcend the limitations of time and space—leads ultimately to an ethical rejection of positivist materialism. Man saves the world through creation and sacrifice. Creation, in fact, becomes a kind of self-sacrifice, and self-sacrifice becomes a mode of creation. In the creative-sacrificial act, the hero empties himself out; he frees himself from time and place and enters into the hovering world, ever-present but little noted, of the spirit. Khutsiev's heroes, too, struggle with themselves. They are not trying to transcend their time and place, though, but to find a harmonious place within it by *becoming who they are*. This is a crucial point; the maturation process of Khutsiev's young protagonist is not the rejection of individual personality (*lichnost*), but the discovery of it. The arc of his heroes, as they try to sort out their relationship with the public world, does not run from defined individual to blended, harmonized being, but rather from foggy, searching individual to somewhat less foggy, still-searching individual.

It is not the emptying of self that gives Khutsiev's heroes access to spirit, but the often painfully reflective participation in the moment, in the dialogue of life among friends and colleagues and urban spaces. Like Tarkovsky's heroes, they stumble toward transcendent awareness of time within matter—of time as an art form never to be taken lightly and never to be forgotten. But they do not ache for a spiritual realm where the here-and-now loses—or must lose—its specific features. The Khutsievan hero remains within history, but the filmmaker makes time and space sacred *as they are* by his insistence on seeing and remembering and rejecting the hero's separation from what is

seen and remembered. Khutsiev's method for locating his characters *within* history, though, is not unlike Tarkovsky's for sending his characters *beyond* history: He refuses to neatly quarantine his characters within a plot, and leaves them ever exposed to the indeterminacy of vision and remembrance.

For Khutsiev, to make a moment meaningful rather than merely useful means to experience time with a sense of personal ethics. The indispensable ethical approach to life is to remain engaged in reflective interaction with time and place. We honor one another neither by simply *being ourselves* nor, on the other hand, by *emptying ourselves*, but by *being ourselves with and for others*. Tarkovsky captures the kenotic roots of *sobornost* by identifying love with sacrifice; Khutsiev captures the social ideal of *sobornost* by meditating upon the creative tension between the formation of a unique personality and the impossibility of that personality's self-realization without community.

Tarkovsky and Khutsiev, then, share an interest in the relationship between history, spirit, community, and the individual. Both filmmakers dramatize the path of a hero toward greater consciousness not of an ideological truth about history, but rather a spiritual and ethical understanding of the individual's relationship with time. Tarkovsky asks how the individual accesses spirit in order to transcend history; Khutsiev asks how the individual accesses spirit to gain higher awareness of one's place within history. The Tarkovskian hero accesses spirit through contemplation of the image, extracting spirit from matter to discover a portal to eternity. The Khutsievan hero accesses spirit through reflection on the web of relationships that bind him or her with a moment in time. The depth of this reflection makes the moment indelible, irreplaceable in memory. Like the

Tarkovskian spirit-image, the Khutsievan relation-image opens up to the eternal and universal.

Both filmmakers seek alternatives to unreflective grand-historical scripting that reduces the individual to a powerless bit player within the plot of time; both assign the individual responsibility to reflect on his or her place in both the moment and the universe. For Tarkovsky, this reflection is a portal beyond worldly time; for Khutsiev it is a gateway *into* it—a way to penetrate its slick, “waterproof” surface (to use a key metaphor from *July Rain*) and sense the million alternative flows.

For Khutsiev, the image of the living moment is cut like a gem, enduring and real but approachable from multiple angles. His films confirm the rich presence of a specific time and space, but they do so by alternating and overlapping many temporalities—from the amber-coated mythological time of Soviet patriotism (which denies the legitimacy of other temporalities), to the staccato temporality of the young and deceived (who choose forgetfulness over deception). Khutsiev embeds this multiplicity of the historical moment in the nuanced relations of his characters with one another, with their city, and with their own consciences. Meanwhile, surrounding it all is Khutsiev’s polyphonic Moscow, offering up the paradoxical ideal of a harmonious whole that is composed of contending, often mutually misunderstanding parts. The urban visions of *I Am Twenty* (and *July Rain* as well) give access not to a dream of mythological unity, but to the ultimately reassuring truth that unity must remain always mythological.

3. Imaginary Leninism as Nostalgic Inspiration

Khutsiev's heroes strive for the ideal, but the definition of the ideal is never quite clear, its admixture of personal and public never quite quantified. In *Ilich's Gate*, Sergei tries to make a clear-cut statement of his ideals: the things he believes in are (as he tells Anya's circle of anxiously jocular partygoers, who take pride in their belief in nothing) the Revolution, *The Internationale*, the year 1937, the soldiers, the war, the fact that most of the young people of his generation have lost their fathers, and the humble potato, which saved the children of Moscow during the privations of wartime. The list is ideologically contradictory, at war with itself. For all Sergei's admiration of the Bolshevik takeover and the grand old workers' hymn, in the end the savior in his story is not a party or a politician or even his own fallen father, but the potato. When the system broke down, when a mother who had lost her ration card was faced with watching her child starve, she went outside the system, dug up potatoes by night, in fear. The Revolution did not save Sergei as wartime toddler; a resourceful mother and a wonderfully available starch did.

Sergei elevates the Revolution, but the Revolution is the proximate cause of another item on his list, "the year 1937", when the Revolution voraciously ate its own (including Khutsiev's father, a devoted old Bolshevik murdered in the purges). Sergei's list is the product of a young mind wise enough to know that cynicism inevitably destroys our interpersonal integrity, and naïve enough to believe that the opposite of cynicism is faith in social mythology. His ambivalence, however, saves him from the fate to which Kovalev (2008), writing in *Iskusstvo Kino*, consigns him: He does not go over once and

for all to the self-deceiving side of social mythology; he is far too confused for that. For three cinematic hours and 18 diegetic months Sergei searches, dreams, and agonizes. At the end of the film he pleads with his father for answers and receives none. His searching, dreaming, and agonizing will go on.

Sergei's real wisdom comes through in the limitations that his private anxieties impose on his public faith: He wants a more just world, and he wants a life that is in some small way meaningful to the creation of such a world, but cherishing the ends and endorsing the means are for him, like so many in his generation, two different things. It was possible to believe in an imaginary Leninism as a sort of inspirational talisman to keep one pushing forward with the dream of a mutually supportive society—just so long as the Leninism remained imaginary. (The prominent dissident Liudmila Alexeyeva (1990) began her path to dissent as a devotee of imaginary Leninism. First she noted the rot of Stalinism when it was held up to the light of the Leninist ideal; then she noted the rot of Leninism when held up to the same light.)

The beauty of mutuality—of a secular *sobornost*—that was embodied in the imaginary-Leninist ideal gave the Thaw its jump-start. But what gave the Thaw its deeper meaning was the instinctive awareness of people like Sergei (“the year 1937”) that the ideal was best left personal, ambiguous, and aspirational rather than public, programmatic, and determinate. For those with a post-Secret Speech awareness of the weight of those fateful digits—1-9-3-7—socialist ends had decidedly failed to justify Stalinist means. Better to frankly acknowledge that one never quite reaches the “ends”, and that ideals cannot be reached by fiat, but only reached *toward* through personal

ethical quest. It was a vision well suited to recovering utopians who were not quite prepared to resort to irony and cynicism.

The notion of nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism leads us back to Mikhail Kalatozov, whose 1957 masterwork *The Cranes Are Flying* had blown an irreparable hole in the Stalinist grand style and accelerated the progress of the cinematic Thaw. The grand style, with its solemnity, its love of symbols, and its positioning of man as a demigod who can bend the elements to his will, could not countenance the spontaneity of the unconventional character, the ambiguous image and the multifaceted atmosphere. Khutsiev's explorations of "the color of air" imported a kind of poison into the capillaries of the grand style. But those very explorations had been made possible by the creative intelligentsia's longing, in the 1950s, for the perceived vibrancy and hopefulness of the Soviet 1920s. After all, whether or not it was frowned upon by the Party itself, there had been during those years a sort of marketplace of ideas, especially aesthetic ideas, among supporters of the Revolution. There had been the sense that one could make a contribution to Revolutionary development not only with obedience, but with innovative thinking. It would not have done to jettison consciousness entirely for spontaneity, but at least spontaneity could enter into the 1920s conversation.

On a thematic level, *I Am Cuba* is the most conventional of Kalatozov's Thaw and post-Thaw works. *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) had introduced ambiguity into conventional notions of good wartime citizenship, and had granted individual uncertainty its long-lost place in the story of public life. *The Unsent Letter* (1959) had allowed nature to devour man and his dreams of mastering the world, leaving him with nothing *but*

memory for sustenance. Kalatozov's last film, *The Red Tent* (1971), the reimagined story of Italian explorer Umberto Nobile's doomed airship expedition to the North Pole, presented a collision between multifaceted private memory and a hardened public historical narrative.

But the longing that historically paved the way for Kalatozov's tales of memory and redemption was nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism, the almost desperate sense that the country could recapitulate its lost dreams and the individual could regain his sequestered spontaneity if only it would remember the energy of its founding decade. This nostalgia was not based so much on willful ignorance of the actual Leninist inheritance of political intolerance, secretiveness, and obsessive centralization (which, after all, was also a Russian-imperial inheritance) as upon the need to pick and choose among available, culturally and politically acceptable strands of memory to piece together an inspirational collage that was at once new and rooted in Soviet mythology. Stalin had eclipsed the historical Lenin; now the imaginary Lenin would be willfully made to eclipse Stalin.

Nowhere is that longing made more poignantly clear than in Kalatozov and Urusevsky's attempt to create an imaginary Cuba in which they could reassemble the dreams of their imaginary revolutionary Russia. They use an agitprop shell as an experimental zone and playground for visual spontaneity, challenging the camera itself in ways unseen in Soviet cinema since the 1920s. They refuse to separate revolutionary content from revolutionary form, and, in their spontaneity, they permit the form to enter into transformative dialogue with the content.

Though *I Am Cuba* came relatively late in the Thaw, it dramatizes the animating force of the era, the nostalgia for a lost and half-forgotten nation, whose cultural legacy seemed to whisper from afar of youthful energy, spontaneity, hope, and culturally productive creative disobedience. Enrique's innocence in *I Am Cuba*, the tension between hero-worship and disobedience in his relationships with his revolutionary-movement superiors, his almost bourgeois style and ease on the streets of the gleaming city, his receptiveness to beauty, the human doubt that restrains him from political murder—all of these introduce us to the revolutionary not as a titan whose consciousness has blended with the People, but as a doubting, flawed, but brave thinker, a man capable of ethical heroism because he has grappled with the questions of his time.

I Am Cuba attempts to rediscover the inheritance of Mayakovsky and Eisenstein, to blend sincere revolutionary enthusiasm with joyful aesthetic play. And, as in the works of Mayakovsky and Eisenstein, the marriage of enthusiasm and stylistic exuberance creates unexpected tensions, delights, and ambiguities. One might expect a revolutionary redux to celebrate a fixed and prescriptive vision, a world of precast ideas and forms—in other words, *I Am Cuba* ought to be a restorative-nostalgic document. Instead the film throws out renegade hints of revolutionary multiplicity: The remembered revolution is one animated by many joys and doubts and social slights and individual dreams. In short, Kalatozov injects reflective nostalgia beneath the restorative nostalgic surface of *I Am Cuba*.

4. Conclusion

In the early 1950s, Soviet culture was simultaneously in the grips of the last war and the next: There remained a massive reconstruction job after the devastation of the Nazi invasion, and the job, in Josef Stalin's last years, had been subsumed under the banner of the Cold War and the imposition of harsh new ideological discipline. Like the Angry Young Men of 1950s Britain, Russian intellectuals grew restive with the limitations of postwar culture. During the life of the Great Man, though, they could hardly speak out in any forceful way. Stalin's death in March 1953 initiated for them a slow emergence from years of discipline, public silence and fraught whispering in the semi-private world of friends and family. It was the beginning of a time of sweeping and anxious transition in the Soviet Union.

Over the next 15 years—roughly until the Brezhnev regime's invasion of Czechoslovakia (and its concomitant crackdown on Russians who spoke out against it) signalled the end of the Thaw—intellectuals and artists renovated Soviet culture. In doing so, they did not sweep aside the Soviet inheritance, not even the Stalinist portion of that inheritance, but instead engaged memory in increasingly personal and idiosyncratic ways in order to communicate more sincere and ambiguous visions about themselves, their world, and their place in it. Conventional Soviet thinking, in which publicly-approved memory-scripts replaced the untameable prismatic stuff of actual memory, fell out of fashion for the new vanguard of Soviet artists: The word *shtamp*—literally “stamp,” a ready made mold for thoughts, memories, and images—became one of the signal epithets the artists would hurl at substandard, hackneyed work.

The art of the Thaw was the art of ambiguity; it signaled a longing for lost vibrancy, diversity, and indeterminacy—a longing for the personal. New cinematic visions were cobbled together from shards of personal and public memory. Works were imbued with the reflective nostalgia of their creators. This nostalgia resisted convention and sought no return of a particular era; it engaged bits and pieces from other eras and resisted the importation of mythological historical unities. Mikhail Kalatozov's nostalgia for an imaginary Leninism signaled no longing for Leninist revolutionary discipline, but rather embraced a vision of personal spontaneity. Andrei Tarkovsky's nostalgia for the Russian spiritual tradition did not hint at chauvinist rejection of other traditions, but rather envisioned through Russian art and nature a gateway to eternity. Marlen Khutsiev's longing for ethical engagement was not a call for 1960s youth to embrace the Stalinist ethic of obedience to the general line, but rather an invitation to pause and consider the passing moment—the flow of time, the value of memory, and the interconnectedness of people with one another and the places where they live.

Kalatozov, Tarkovsky, and Khutsiev invite their audiences to remember the joy of seeing—of glimpsing images whose meaning has not been predetermined. With their images, they transform longing into action; their reentry into the domain of idiosyncratic memory creates a paradoxical shock of the new. Their work is a creative intervention into the relation between self and society, past and present, a dream of the generative collision between the longing, remembering, mind and a kinetic present. We can say that the remembering mind imports past into present, but it might also be said that the mind develops a sensitivity that enables it to see the past *within* the present, to envision a

flattened chronotope in which *this* moment is the sum of all moments, and history—both personal and public—resides actively in the *now*. Through reflective nostalgia, we rediscover the ether of time embedded in the tissue of matter. The material world becomes rich, vibrant, almost overgrown with possibility. Awareness of such a world readies us for deeper engagement with the adventures, challenges, riddles and wonders of life. Reflective nostalgia does not merely soothe us, nor does it protect us from the present. On the contrary, it prepares us to create the future.

APPENDIX

ILICH'S GATE: A SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION

1. *Ilich's Gate: Part One*

Opening credits: Three revolutionary-era Red Army soldiers patrol the streets of 1961 Moscow.

*

Summer:

Ilich's Gate begins on an early summer morning at the start of the 1960s. A soldier in his early 20s, Sergei Zhuravlev (played by Valentin Popov), walks down the wet, echoing Moscow streets, returning home from military service. His mother, Olga, returns home from work at the hospital to find him sleeping on the couch. "Are you on leave," she asks. "No," he says. "I'm home for good."

*

In the morning, he calls across the courtyard to his old friend Kolya Fokin (Nikolai Gubenko). They both sprint downstairs, across the courtyard, and embrace. They call out to their friend Slavka Kostikov (Stanislav Liubshin). He joins them. They join a group of kids in an impromptu game of soccer. Sweaty and smiling, they return to Slavka's house to see his wife, their old classmate Liusia. She and Slavka have a five-month-old baby, Volodya. The old friends sit around the table, remembering old times and making half-ironic toasts to contemporary chestnuts: "To disarmament!" "To

peaceful coexistence!”—here Kolya crafts a telling collision of public and private: “To peaceful coexistence, which can make us into family men yet!” Liusia doesn’t let Slavka drink, and Kolya jokes, “Listen, Slavka, I never knew you were against peaceful coexistence.” Slavka, for a moment, doesn’t take it as a joke—“I’m not against it!”

*

Slavka, in any case, is the most literal of the three friends, the one who has come soonest to the complications of adult life, who finds it tempting but difficult to relax into the patterns and textures of his youth. Sergei is the most searching and earnest, consciously seeking out the meaning of his life. Kolya, for most of the film, seems to be the most comfortable in his own skin, spinning off verbal irrelevancies and striking bits of wisdom in equal measure—“I am a multifaceted simple Soviet person”—while doing everything with ease, from arranging a date with a girl he’s never met before to playing the piano to bouncing a ping pong ball upon a paddle. We almost begin to wonder if his lightness is a bit of a performance, a defense mechanism.

*

The next scene shows each of the three friends at work. Sergei is working at the factory where his father had worked before he was killed in the Great Patriotic War. (In *Ilich’s Gate*, Khutsiev shows only the outside of Sergei’s factory; in *I Am Twenty*, he shows Sergei at work.) Kolya works at a technology plant. Slavka works in demolition, swinging the wrecking ball to bring down old Moscow buildings. After work, Sergei and Kolya meet up and head toward their apartment block. Standing in their childhood

playground, they whistle up to Slavka, summoning him down for a walk. He tells Liusia he's going out for cigarettes. She tells him to buy the rest of the groceries while he's at it.

*

The three friends go to an impromptu courtyard dance. On the phonograph, a cartoon-like voice sings an American gimmick tune: *Sugar bush, come dance with me, and we'll let the other see... We're never not gonna go home. We won't go, we won't go...* Sergei's sister, Vera, arrives and dances with him. Liusia arrives, too, angry, in search of Slavka.

Kolya has arranged a double date. "Which of the two do you like?" he asks Sergei.

"The third one," says Sergei. "I'm heading home." He walks the evening streets alone, rediscovering his city, passing a grand movie marquis that bears his name: Georgii Danelia's *Seriozha* is playing in Sergei's neighborhood, as if to welcome the young soldier home.

Autumn:

The friends scoop apples from the street and board a trolley. Kolya gives an apple to the ticket-taker, Katya, who will become a recurring presence in his life.

*

Sergei arrives home with his first paycheck and leaves it on the table for his mother. He calls out to the little neighbor boy, Kuzmich, and they head off for a steam. On the trolley, though, a girl in a polka dot slicker catches Sergei's eye. He follows her

out and trails her late into the evening, but he cannot summon the courage to speak to her. As the episode ends, and he watches her disappear into her apartment building, he is standing in front of a wall-newspaper with the large headline: ODDBALL [*Chudak*].

*

The three friends walk in a city park. We hear a symphony of the boys' voices, sometimes internal, sometimes spoken, sometimes crossing the border between the two, as when Slavka, thinking to himself about his favorite soccer team, suddenly blurts out "That stinks" [*obydno!*] without realizing he's said it.

*

Kolya and Sergei meet up with two girls. In the next shot, Sergei wakes up in the unfamiliar bedroom of a girl named Natasha. The room is filled with her old childhood things. Outside, the first snow has fallen. When he leaves, he walks to the end of the hall, turns the corner, and sprints down the spiral stairs into the morning light. He calls his mother and says he was at a friend's house. "You're a grown man," she says. "I don't care where you were. Just call me so I don't worry."

Winter:

A work montage. The dark towers of Sergei's factory. Slavka's wrecking ball, delivering destruction as we hear a voiceover of his argument with Liusia. Kolya, placid at work, imagining himself receiving an award. Kolya has his second encounter with Katya, the trolley attendant. It is New Year's Eve.

*

Sergei is sick. At his apartment, the three friends watch a hockey game. Kolya is playing the piano. Sergei is complaining that he's turned out to be "a completely appropriate person. I'm working, getting ready to go to college, I'm active in the community, I'm an agitator." "A simple Soviet man!" Kolya jokes. Then he adds this, about himself: "I'm a simple, multifaceted Soviet man." Sergei won't let the mood go. "There's this philosophy: Live your whole life happy that you're not a scumbag and that there are people worse than you." Kolya says, "I left all these conversations about the meaning of life behind in middle school. You have to live, not to worry about living." Sergei's mother arrives from work. "I'm sick of it," Sergei tells his mother. "What are you sick of?" she says. "I'm so sick of winter I can hardly stand it."

Spring:

The three friends go to the May Day celebration. There, Sergei once again spies the girl he'd followed in the autumn. This time he speaks to her. Her name is Anya (Marianna Vertinskaya). They walk together through the night and Moscow celebrates around them.

*

In the morning, Sergei comes home, whistling, to find Slavka in the courtyard, disconsolate over his marriage. They call up to Kolya, who is sleeping on his balcony. He brings food down. Kolya teases Slavka for his gloomy attitude during the spring holidays. "The holidays are over," says Slavka. Sergei, still unable to wipe the smile from his face

after his nighttime wanderings, completes Slavka's thought for him: "The plain, hard workdays have begun."

2. *Ilich's Gate*: Part Two

Summer:

Another work montage. At Kolya's cafeteria we meet his older friend Vladimir Vasilievich and his youthful boss, Chernousov (who cuts in line while the others wait patiently). As they eat, Chernousov chides Vladimir for talking too much. "Less commentary," he says. "Get down to business." "Still," says Vladimir, "there will be questions. People need to ask."

*

It's the end of the school year. Sergei's sister, Vera, gleefully gets rid of old textbooks, then heads off to a graduation party. Sergei half-jokingly suggests that they both attend the Energy Institute. In high little-sister spirits, Vera says "I have my own individual path in life." That night, Sergei cannot sleep. It is June 22, 1961, the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. We see the portrait of Sergei's father. At 2:07 a.m., Sergei hears Anya's voice in his head—*Serioga!* (The voice is only in *Ilich's Gate*; for *I Am Twenty*, Khutsiev removes the voice, and the effect is more uncanny; we simply *see* that Sergei has heard something internally.) Sergei walks across Moscow, gray in the northern summer night. In his mind—Mayakovsky's poem "Past One O'Clock" and the uncanny repetition of its signature phrase, "I've no reason to wake you and trouble you with lightning telegrams." He reaches the center of Moscow. Anya is

walking toward him. They see the graduates celebrating on Red Square. They walk on together through the night. The Kremlin bell towers strike four.

*

Anya and Sergei attend a modern art exhibit at the Pushkin Museum. An interviewer asks a kid what he likes best, and he says “ancient Greek sculpture.” An old man is grumbling that he doesn’t understand the art. A hipster grabs Sergei by the lapels and asks if he likes primitivism. “I like it,” Sergei says, smiling. (The old man and the hipster appear only in *Ilich’s Gate*, not in *I Am Twenty*.) Anya says, “Let me show you my favorite work.” She takes him into a room of old medieval statues. “Well,” says Sergei. “Where is it?” She kisses him. “Right here,” she says. They tell one another they want to wake side by side for 100 years, 1,000, 10,000. “About like that,” says Anya, pointing at a dual sarcophagus with sculptures of husband and wife. “About like that,” says Sergei.

*

As they are leaving the exhibit, Sergei and Anya run into a young man with an affected manner and excessive formality. He and Anya speak briefly. When he leaves, Sergei asks, “Who was that guy?”

“A translator,” says Anya, “and, by the way, my husband.”

Sergei is surprised, saddened, but his reaction is understated: “How?” Anya can’t quite look him in the eye. She tells him that the pair have not yet formalized the divorce, but that the young man is “a complete fool.”

*

Kolya and Sergei stop Slavka's to find that their friend—who had been having marriage troubles and staying with Kolya—is back with Liusia, breezy and happy (“*C’est si bon,*” shouts Slavka from the balcony.) Kolya wants to wander the town with Sergei, maybe go to a movie. But Sergei has to hustle off to Anya. He is going to meet her father.

*

The walls of Anya's large apartment—the apartment of a successful functionary—are covered in wallpaper for a seemingly endless renovation. “When will it all end?” she says. Anya's father is alone and tipsy in the living room, watching a children's choir on a small television. An open bottle sits atop the console. There is immediate tension between Anya and her father. She tells him that she is moving out, and that she and Sergei will move in together. He doesn't see how this is possible; she isn't serious enough about life; she doesn't understand its necessities well enough to take this step. Anya, for her part, says she doesn't trust her father, who is “always saying one thing and doing and thinking another.” (This line is notably missing in *I Am Twenty*, where Anya's father comes off as a somewhat more sympathetic figure—wary and bitter rather than alternately menacing and pathetic, as in *Ilich's Gate*.) Anya takes a phone call, leaving Sergei alone with her father. Over the course of a long conversation (longer in *Ilich's Gate* than in *I Am Twenty*), Anya's father tells Sergei that young people are trying to split the generations; Sergei tells him that he doesn't divide people into generations, just good people and scoundrels, and that he dislikes young scoundrels even more. (These lines, too, are omitted in *I Am Twenty*.) Anya's father tells Sergei that he'll have to look out for himself in life, that no one will help him, that he's on his own. The lines in *Ilich's*

Gate are stark: “You don’t know life. You don’t know people. They’ll smother you. Take care of yourself. Take care of your business.” Perhaps it is the father’s way of trying to temper the steel in Sergei’s soul for the challenges of life, but it also leaves the impression of a successful but bitter middle-aged man who has given up on any virtue in life other than “making it,” surviving and triumphing in a dog-eat-dog world. As he leaves, Sergei thinks to himself, “What kind of man is this?”

*

The next scene in *Ilich’s Gate* takes Anya and Sergei to a poetry reading at Moscow’s Polytechnic Museum. They listen to the breakthrough poets of the Thaw—Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesenky, Bella Akhmadulina, and Robert Rozhdensvensky—as well as groundbreaking voices of the wartime generation, such as the bard Bulat Akudzhava and the poet Boris Slutsky. (Vladislav Zubak (2009), in his history of the 1960s intelligentsia, writes extensively about Slutsky as one of the godfathers of the Thaw). At the end of the reading, some of the audience members speak, a young man and a young woman are delighted and dazzled by the poets; a soldier would like to see the poets pay more tribute to the Soviet army (though the reading included a stirring war story—a tribute to fallen poets—from Slutsky).

Khutsiev had arranged the reading and advertised it as a poet’s evening; ordinary Muscovites came to the event, and were even irritated by the movie cameras blocking their view. The scene was reduced in both length and import in *I Am Twenty*, and moved to a later point in the film. *I Am Twenty* does not show the poets at all, but follows the faces in the audience—alternating between the guests and Sergei and Anya—as they

listen to the poems. This approach is also quite powerful, and puts greater emphasis on the extraordinary emotional impact of the poems on Sergei, whose appearance and very being seem to change with each poem.

*

Sergei and Anya go to an apartment party. As they dance, they think about the wonder that they've met each other—and the wonder that it was possible for them not to have met each other. In *Ilich's Gate*, a candle spins on the record player, and Sergei and Anya dance with candles in their hands as “Ave Maria” plays. The room goes dark, and we only see the dancing candles receding into the background as the couple's exchange echoes four times—Anya: “Do you love me?” Sergei: “Do you love me?” The candles are missing in *I Am Twenty*, as are the final three repetitions of the exchange. (Khutsiev recalls that Aleksei Romanov, the new head of Goskino, told him to remove the candles because the firemen wouldn't allow it (Maliukova, 2000).)

*

The couple arrive at Anya's building. They have not decided where they are going to live. Anya doesn't want to them to live at her parents' place, as her father had suggested, and she has dismissed the idea of living at Sergei's place. She's suggested, with a laugh, they spend one night at her friends' place and another at his friends' place. Something that began as a serious intention—moving in together—is turning into mere wordplay. At the door, Anya says, “How I don't want to go in there.” “

“Then don't,” Sergei says. “We'll live at my place.”

“In the closet,” says Anya. “Papa, mama, my wife and me.”

“There’s no Papa.”

“Forgive me.”

At the staircase, they argue. Sergei says Anya is throwing words around without following through. She says that she can’t have absolute consistency between her words and actions—leveling the same accusation at herself that she (in *Ilich’s Gate*) had leveled at her father. Her tone remains soft. “I’m not a harmonious person,” she says, and they both at once add the school-kid rejoinder, “Only the ancient Greeks were harmonious.” Throughout the scene, “Ave Maria” continues in the background. Anya warmly kisses Sergei on the stairway as the music fades.

Autumn:

In *I Am Twenty*, the next scene takes us to Sergei’s factory, where he consults with engineers from Ghana. (The scene, which is not in *Ilich’s Gate*, was groundbreaking in Soviet cinema, reflecting the growing presence of African workers, students, and technicians in the country.) Sergei’s co-worker asks what’s bothering him. He says nothing. Then we hear his voice as the next shot shows him in a lecture hall at the Energy Institute. The voice seems like an internal rumination at first, but later is revealed to be a call from a phone booth at Sergei’s institute. “Maybe you’re right, Anya,” he says, “and nothing exists besides us, nothing else matters, and that’s the whole point.”

The phone call is not in *Ilich’s Gate*, and it hits a false note: There has been no hint that Anya is trying to pry him away from life and keep him to herself; the point of tension is precisely that she can’t bring herself to follow through on what she’s said and

move out of her parents' place—and that she is strangely unwilling to move in with Sergei or even familiarize herself with his family. But this is different than the trumped-up tension between romantic love and community engagement, which appears again—in both versions of the film—in Sergei's ruminations near the end of the film before he meets his father's ghost.

*

Ilich's Gate moves straight from the stairway scene to Kolya at work, where he has a disturbing conversation with Chernousov. In *I Am Twenty*, the scene follows Sergei's phone call from the institute. Chernousov and Kolya go to a room full of control panels, switches, dials. Chernousov begins asking prying questions about Vladimir Vasilievich, with whom Kolya is friendly. Chernousov says he wants to talk to Kolya openly, up in that room, "without witnesses." He tells Kolya that Vladimir Vasilievich talks too much. Too much humor. Too much cleverness. "He says what he means," says Kolya. But Chernousov isn't buying it. He says some of the workers have questions about Vladimir Vasilievich, and he'd like Kolya to keep an eye on him and report back anything suspicious he sees. "Do you know what you're asking of me?" says Kolya. Chernousov, sitting smug behind a desk, knows exactly what he's asking. Kolya stands over him.

"If we weren't alone," Kolya says, "I'd punch you in the face."

"What's stopping you?" says Chernousov.

"I don't like to," says Kolya, "without witnesses."

*

The outline and import of the scene is similar in both versions of the film, but Khutsiev, who re-shot the scene in full for *I Am Twenty*, had filmed it much more simply and directly in *Ilich's Gate*. (The scene in *Ilich's Gate* also includes Chernousov's criticism of Vladimir Vasilievich for making the telling comment, "You can't advertise our social system like a refrigerator." The line is dropped in *I Am Twenty*.) In *I Am Twenty*, Kolya and Chernousov are moving about among the control panels for much of the scene, and their talk about Vladimir Vasilievich is complicated with more details and side-chatter. The shooting is elegant, but the effect is watered down. Lighthearted Kolya has come face to face with a scoundrel asking him to inform on a friend and co-worker; it is a shattering moment for him, and the simple staging of *Ilich's Gate* best conveys its power. Khutsiev himself disliked the later version of the scene (Khutsiev, 1996, p. 194).

*

Sergei, Kolya, and Slavka meet at the Krasnye Vorota metro station and go walking. Kolya is troubled by the conversation with Chernousov. He is also irritated with Sergei for being unavailable to talk when he called. Sergei is wearing a short leather jacket, looking like a hipster; he's in the mood to joke, but Kolya's in no mood for laughing. They go to a café; Kolya is petulant, not at all the Kolya the friends have come to know, but he won't tell them what's wrong. Finally, Sergei says, "Tell us concretely. Let's get down to business."

Kolya takes even this as a lack of empathy for his concerns: "How businesslike you are."

With a wife and a child and a demanding job, Slavka's in no mood for this criticism: "I'm not businesslike," he says. "I'm preoccupied."

The three go into the bowels of the Kursk metro station. Finally Kolya describes his problem with Chernousov—and with the broader problem that things and people are not always what they seem: "This young, well-fed guy with honest eyes sits before you and lies," says Kolya. "And he's already scum." The conversation that follows is odd and worth describing at length. The characters seem so emotionally confused that they've lost track of their own identities.

Sergei's response to Kolya is unusually light in tone—Sergei's always been the tortured thinker of the three—but his advice is not at all unsympathetic: Kolya should brush Chernousov off and move on. In an internal monologue, however, Kolya criticizes Sergei for letting bad things simply slide: "Remember in school, you said you'd learned how to turn off your consciousness, to listen and not hear anything?" (This invocation of an interesting childhood thought experiment is replaced in *I Am Twenty* by Kolya's observation that Sergei has been turning into a different person. The comment reflects a general tendency in the second half of *I Am Twenty* to imply that the sophisticated Anya is somehow ruining Sergei. This theme is not as prominent in *Ilich's Gate*.)

Sergei continues, rationalizing the existence of Chernousov: "He's a scumbag. I see that. But what's changed? If you respect yourself, don't even lower yourself to speak with such people. What can you do in the meantime? What can I do? Slavka? You can accept or not accept such people, but they exist. We have to deal with that."

Kolya's thoughts continue: "Does he really think this way? Or is he just playing the fool?"

Sergei tells Kolya that he has to decide the level of his relationship with Chernousov and define the limits.

"Have you decided?" asks Kolya.

"I'm deciding," says Sergei.

"Fine," says Kolya. "Enough. I'm glad we talked. It had to happen sometime. This will make it simple. Let's call things what they are. We're grown up; we look at many things in different ways. I don't blame you."

"Go ahead," Sergei says.

"From your point of view, your position is right. It's probably not the best position, but there are worse."

"Thanks," says Sergei. "I'll see you."

"Yeah, there's a pile of occasions. Birthdays. Holidays. A lot of people do it that way."

"Listen," says Sergei, steaming by now that his friendship is being questioned. "I ought to pop you in the face."

"Oh, you're a tough guy," says Kolya.

Sergei boards the metro, sadly, hesitantly.

Kolya silently watches Sergei's train disappear in the tunnel.

*

(In *I Am Twenty*, the poetry reading at the Polytechnic Museum follows the discussion in the Metro.)

*

Kolya boards the trolley and meets Katya-the-ticket-taker for the third time. She senses at once that he is unhappy, but he doesn't tell her his troubles. They talk about their childhood efforts at poetry. A group of young men board the trolley, singing, and leave at the next stop. Kolya and Katya are alone on the trolley, number 777, riding clear to the end of the line. She says she has the day off tomorrow, that she might go see the film *Girls* (*Devchata*, directed by Yuri Chuliukin, one of the hits of 1961). Kolya doesn't take the hint, though. He says goodbye warmly, tells her she's a good person, and, inadvertently calls her Nadya—short for *nadezhda*, the Russian word for hope.

*

Sergei, Vera, and their mother are culling books from their overstuffed shelves. Vera is trying to get to the “secret” of Sergei's girlfriend—he has yet to introduce Anya to either his family or his friends. She tells their mother that Sergei is trying to find a place to live. Sergei's mother reacts calmly, as she seems to react to all things. “Books are good,” Vera says, “when there's not too many.” She wants to get rid of some old textbooks; her mother tells her not to—the books had belonged to their father. The neighbor boy Kuzmich is helping out, and he drops a book. Documents fall out. Vera shows them to her mother. They are ration cards she had thought lost 20 years earlier.

She tells the story of how she and Sergei—Vera was not yet born—lived nearly a month without bread. As the Nazis advanced on Moscow in 1941, the Russian soldiers

took her to the edge of town so she could dig up potatoes that would keep her and Sergei alive.

Then she tells about the last time their father, Alexander, came home on leave, in 1943.

“Damn!” says Sergei. He is trying to tie his tie. Tonight is Anya’s birthday party.

Sergei says he won’t be late, and he leaves. His mother sits on her bed beside Vera and they read Alexander’s last letter home.

“I don’t know if I’ll live,” Alexander writes. “But I know Moscow will survive. Everything will survive.”

The camera zooms in to Alexander’s portrait on the wall.

*

We see Sergei heading down the street toward Anya’s place. The Kremlin bells are ringing in the background. We cut to Kolya, wandering aimlessly, reciting a Mayakovsky poem addressed to Lenin (“Comrade Lenin, the hellish work will be done, and is being done already”) and then thinking his own thoughts, addressed to Sergei: He is sad that their friendship could end, disconsolate about their strange disconnect. He goes to trolley 777, hoping to see Katya. But when he boards, a mechanical kiosk has taken her place.

*

Anya’s birthday party. The renovations have finally ended at her apartment. It looks like a different place entirely. Anya’s friends are in their twenties. They are intellectual, artistic, ironic, and not a little bit spoiled. They joke about childbearing as the

best way to get one's own apartment, about the inconvenience of parents and the convenience of parents' money. One young woman, however, says she has no parents. "Where are your parents?" asks Sergei. She tells him that they were killed in the war, outside Smolensk. Like Sergei, the young woman, played by the beautiful Svetlana Sveltlichnaia, knows practically nobody at the party.

Khutsiev has cast the students of the All-Union Cinema Institute (VGIK) as Anya's guests—here, among others, are Andrei Tarkovsky, actresses Svetlichnaya and Olga Gobzeva and the writers Pavel Finn and Natalia Riazantseva. The revelers joke with lightness of touch and a taste for absurdity. A young man asks if Dolgorukii will be coming. Riazantseva naively asks, "Who?"

"Yuri Dolgorukii," comes the answer, a reference to the legendary 12th-century founder of Moscow.

"From where?" says the bewildered Riazantseva.

"From There. Straight here."

Sergei and Anya play a sort of melancholy peek-a-boo through an open curio in the center of the room. They are trying to see something in one another, but neither face is giving any information. "I never know what you're thinking when you're this way," says Anya. "It's strange. It feels like tonight something is supposed to—"

She stops and turns back to the party, which has lost its steam. "Hey, guys, lets think of something!"

A young man arrives in high spirits, straight from the Metropol Hotel, with a steaming hot pot of potatoes. The newcomer is played by the young filmmaker Andrei

Konchalovsky, who at the time was co-writing *Andrei Rublev* with Tarkovsky.

Tarkovsky hugs Konchalovsky as he comes in the door.

Slavka calls Sergei at Anya's house. He's concerned about Kolya, who has not come home. Sergei tells him not to worry.

Tarkovsky playfully announces a fashion show. Svetlichnaya's character, a model, is walking on the table.

Next—a renaissance dance, highly mannered and only half ironic. The dancers move from partner to partner. In the end, Sergei is with Svetlichnaya.

Someone passes out traditional Russian bast sandals. Jazz on the phonograph. Tarkovsky dances with Anya. He adorns her with a necklace of strung-together potatoes. There are potatoes on the parquet. Sergei reaches down and rescues them. He has lost his taste for this party. He looks dolefully at the potatoes he's spared. A guest stands up holding up another record. "Hey, here's something special in the spirit of potatoes and bast sandals." He puts on the record—the folk song "The Ducks Are Flying" (*Letiat Utki*). The partiers at first seem annoyed. Svetlichnaya begins to sing. She sings with utter conviction. The guests can hardly stand it.

Tarkovsky, for one, can't. "Enough," he says. He calls for a drink and a toast.

Sergei proposes a toast to the potato. Tarkovsky says, "Why not the turnip?"

"No," says Sergei, slapping the table. "The potato." This worries Anya. She asks him what he means.

"I know what he means," says another young man. "It's *kvas* patriotism"—the false, blind patriotism of hockey crowds who will follow anything so long as it's "theirs."

This is an assault not only on Sergei's patriotism, but on his intellect. Sergei asks the young man if there is anything he is willing to take seriously. "That's a provocative question," the young man says. "I can ask you that, too."

"And I'll answer," says Sergei. "I take the Revolution seriously, the song 'The Internationale'. The year 1937. The war and the soldiers and the fact that practically none of us have our fathers anymore,"—here he pauses—"and the potato, which saved us during the hungry times."

Tarkovsky's character, sudden as the Cheshire cat, appears alongside Sergei: "And the turnip?" he says, pleased with his own sarcasm. "You didn't tell me. What do you think of the turnip?"

A young woman played by Gobzeva slaps Tarkovsky across the face. Sergei quietly picks up his jacket and leaves. Anya follows him out. Meanwhile, Tarkovsky holds his head, ashamed, while Gobzeva nervously paces the room. "Why did you say that crap?" asks the young man who had made the *kvas* patriotism comment in the first place. "It comes automatically," says Tarkovsky.

*

At home, Sergei lights a small bonfire on the kitchen table. He is in spiritual and ethical crisis. The words of Anya's father seem to have worked their way deeply under his skin, so much that he seems to see Anya herself simultaneously as the avatar of her father's take-care-of-yourself-first attitudes and of the ironic devil-may-care attitudes of the golden-youth crowd her father would no doubt despise. "I can't just go with the

flow,” he says. “It’s impossible to live separate. Nothing exists separately. Separate love. Separate life. Separate time in which you live.”

The ghost of Sergei’s father, Second Lieutenant Alexander Zhuravlev, appears. He looks at Sergei. “So that’s what you’re like,” he says.

“I thought you were older,” says Sergei. “Were you all like this?”

“We were just like you guys.”

“I need you to explain something.”

“What do you want me to explain?”

“Everything.”

But Sergei’s father cannot explain everything, or, really, anything. He cannot tell Sergei *how* to live, only that his task is to live. Sergei envies his father. “For you,” he says, “everything was different. You knew what to do.”

“You think that was some small thing?”

“No. But there’s normal life. There’s a moment when you’re one on one with your conscience.”

To this Alexander Zhuravlev says, “Too bad it’s autumn. We could have gone swimming.”

Sergei tries again to express himself. “Quiet,” says Alexander. “You’ll wake the guys.” All around them, soldiers sleep.

“Are they alive?” asks Sergei.

“I only know about the ones who were killed before me,” says his father.

Father and son drink a toast to one another.

“I wish I could have run alongside you,” says Sergei.

“No.”

“Then what?”

“*Live.*”

“How?”

“How old are you?” asks Alexander.

“Twenty-three,” Sergei says.

“And I’m 21,” says the ghost. “How can I give you advice?”

The ghost rises to leave. Sergei stands and calls out—“*Papa!*” But there is no answer, just a final, silent smile, and Alexander Zhuravlev disappears.

*

In *I Am Twenty*, the father-ghost’s words “How can I give you advice?” are omitted. Instead, the line “And I’m 21” is followed by the father asking that Sergei always keep his purity and never forget how fortunate he is to live in Moscow, one of the world’s great cities. Equally important, the father was recast in *I Am Twenty*, with the handsome and heroic-looking actor Lev Prigunov taking over for the lanky non-professional Evgenii Maiorov. Maiorov speaks with a slight case of mush-mouth; for all his suffering at the front he is very much a young man, almost a boy, and when Sergei asks him, “What were you like?” and he answers “We were just like you” we believe him. Prigunov, on the other hand, speaks in a deep, resonant base; his chiselled features transform him in into a cinematic symbol of heroism and make Sergei look soft and

callow by comparison. (Years later, Khutsiev (1996) said that preferred Maierov's performance.)

*

Soldiers of the Great Patriotic War patrol the 1961 streets, echoing the revolutionary soldiers at the film's beginning.

An overhead shot of Moscow on a working morning. Then down to street level: Sergei, Kolya, and Slavka are heading off to work. They come together at a crosswalk. The first snow is falling. The friends eye each other anxiously. Finally, Sergei smiles and takes out a cigarette. "I forgot matches," Kolya says. Sergei lights Kolya's cigarette with his. They all walk across the street together. We hear each of them in voiceover, speaking about the strength of their friendship, the one constant in changing lives. The last voiceover belongs to Sergei: "I'm glad we live here, and couldn't live anywhere else. This is all ours, the only possible way. And we'll be true to that to the end."⁵⁸

The changing of the guards at the Lenin Mausoleum. A final, overhead shot of Moscow. For the first time, the voice of a narrator: "It was Monday, the first day of the working week."

⁵⁸ In *I Am Twenty*, the scene at the crosswalk is omitted. We see the friends walking together on the street and then hear the voiceovers as each of them heads off to work. Interestingly, in both versions of the film, Sergei lights a cigarette for a passerby played by the actor Lev Prigunov, who plays Sergei's father in *I Am Twenty*. Both versions keep the camera on the passerby for a few beats. In *I Am Twenty*, the significance of this is clear. In *Ilich's Gate*, it comes across as spontaneous and strange, another instance of Khutsiev's tendency to turn the camera from his protagonist and follow an interesting face wherever it leads. Prigunov, by the way, also plays one of the revolutionary soldiers at the beginning of both versions of the film.

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