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Screening 1960s Moscow: Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate*

Moscow has a long history of Phoenix-like resurrections after fire, architectural destruction and reconstruction. Dynamic flux and transformation thus define the Moscow text, and film is the most suitable mode for capturing and projecting this city in motion. In the early Soviet era, filmmakers as disparate as Lev Kuleshov (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, 1924), Dziga Vertov (*The Man With the Movie Camera*, 1929), Grigori Alexandrov (*Circus*, 1936), and Alexander Medvedkin (*New Moscow*, 1938) all projected Moscow in flux, exploiting spatial and temporal shifts on celluloid to underscore how viewing the transformative nature of Moscow leads to an understanding (or undermining) of the city's progressive Soviet (or even Stalinist) centrality.

In the Thaw era, however, we find a more personal, intimate and lyrical Moscow in flux, and the cinematographer-poet of this city is Marlen Khutsiev. Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate* (*Застава Ильича*, 1962/1988), also known as *I Am Twenty* (*Мне двадцать лет*, 1965), revolves around and focuses on the urban experience of the late Thaw generation, functioning as a kind of cinematic response to the representation of Moscow as the Stalinist sacred center (Clark 2000: 121). What is more, Khutsiev's film reinforces the idea of Moscow as a transformative, cinematic space. Rather than film a grand narrative of socialist realist Moscow, Khutsiev trains his camera on the minutiae of a more intimate, though expressly urban, Moscow space, which centers around the film's protagonist, Sergei, his two friends Kolya and Slava, and his girlfriend Anya. This new perspective of Moscow—in dialogue with the French New Wave and Italian neorealism—thus programmatically engages the theatrical Moscow of Stalin-era cinema, in which large-scale demonstrations were played out on the 'demountable space' (Paperny 2002: 216–217) of not only Red Square, but all Moscow.

At first, the Gorky Film Studio welcomed Khutsiev's project extremely positively.[1] The First Creative Association, responsible for overseeing the film's production, held a meeting on December 16, 1960 to discuss Khutsiev's and co-writer Gennadi Shpalikov's literary script,[2] and responded with overwhelming enthusiasm. A. Demenok published material from the Gorky Studio archives in a 1988 issue of the journal *Искусство кино* (*Film Art*), including the shorthand report of this meeting. According to screenwriter V. Solovyev 'this is the only screenplay I know that speaks openly, earnestly about our time, about what's really important, what excites us [---] This is a wonderfully rare thing, and really needed today.' (Quoted in Demenok 1988: 97.) Others at the meeting agreed. V. Ezhov expressed the need to approach the Minister of Culture, if necessary: 'If we have to, we'll go to Ekaterina Alekseyevna Furtseva, and she'll understand it. We'll tell her it's the first profound, real, exploration of the question of contemporary life.' (Quoted in Demenok 1988: 97.) Y. Yegorov, a director, perhaps anticipated the fate of *Ilich's Gate*: 'I have a feeling we're on the threshold of a great event....' (Quoted in Demenok 1988: 97.) Indeed they were, but not in the way he had hoped.

After the screenplay's publication, the Ministry of Culture wrote to the director of the Gorky studio, G. I. Britikov, that 'The screenplay's serious fault is its impassive, contemplative tone, not an active, civic one.' (Quoted in Demenok 1988: 97.) Ultimately, the initial release of *Ilich's Gate* was stopped after Premier Nikita Khrushchev viewed the film in the spring of 1963; it is important to recall that Khrushchev had attacked many artists for corrupting the principles of Soviet art at the Manège exhibition in December 1962. In one key scene, Sergei, the film's hero, asks the ghost of his dead father for advice on how to live one's life. The father answers:

> Father: How old are you?
> Sergei: Twenty-three.
> Father: And I'm twenty-one. How could I advise you?[3]

1 The Gorky Film Studio (Киностудия имени Горького) typically produced films for children and youth.

2 During the Soviet era, the literary script was the first publishable draft of a script, and preceded the director's script, which was used during shooting, often with numerous changes and additions.

3 Отец: *А тебе сколько лет?* Сергей: *Двадцать три.* Отец: *А мне двадцать один. Как я могу тебе посоветовать?*

Such a dialogue would have been provocative in the Soviet Union, not only because it implicates the fathers of the Communist Party, but also the generation that fought in the war and experienced the terror committed under Stalin. The film puts the Moscow text of the Thaw era into direct dialogue with the Stalinist past. Indeed, Khrushchev was outraged, exclaiming that in the Soviet Union, all fathers can advise their sons, and that it was a natural law that even animals tend to their offspring (see Demenok 1988: 100). But Demenok also cites V. Nekrasov's piece on the screenplay, 'On both sides of the ocean', written for the December 1962 issue of the journal *Новый Мир* (*New World*). Nekrasov's reaction diametrically opposes Khrushchev's:

> all aspects of the film ... lead to: what do I do next? And there is one answer, just as there is now, in the tireless search for an answer, the search for the right path, the search for truth. As long as you search, as long as you pose the question—to yourself, your friends, your father, on Red Square—you are alive. When the questions end, you end. A sated, satisfied, serene existence is not life. (Demenok 1988: 99.)

Debate about the film continued at the Gorky Film Studio, but the film was finally released in 1965, after being substantially cut, its title changed to *I Am Twenty*. As Josephine Woll aptly notes, the audience of 1965 was very different from the audience of 1961–1963 (Woll 2000: 150). Lev Anninsky writes that 'When the film *I Am Twenty* was finally released in 1965 and was screened 'on the side', 'on the q.t.', the situation was different. Both in film and in reality.' (Anninsky 1991: 124.) Only 8.8 million viewers watched the film in 1965 (Zemlyanukhin, Segida 1996: 251).[4]

When considered alongside Georgi Danelia's light and cheerful *I Walk Around Moscow* (*Я шагаю по Москве*, 1963),[5] *Ilich's Gate* proves Woll's and Anninsky's comments. Khutsiev's film defies easy categorization even now: part fiction, part 'documentary', with its polyphonic soundscapes, innovative camera work and cutting, and persistent focus on the city of Moscow itself, *Ilich's Gate* stands up to repeated viewings, and requires the viewer to participate actively in the construction of its many possible messages. In a way, watching the film constitutes an act of gauging the 'rhythm' of a city, as Henri Lefebvre might say, by watching the street action through a frame (Lefebvre 1996). Near the conclusion of his essay, 'Seen from the window', Lefebvre postulates that 'The gaze and meditation follow the main lines that come from the past, the present, the possible, and that join up within the observer, at the same time centre and periphery.' (Lefebvre 1996: 227.) Moreover, to join the object as a subject is impossible without the active participation of the viewer: 'No camera, no image or sequence of images can show these rhythms. One needs equally attentive eyes and ears, a head, a memory, a heart.' (Lefebvre 1996: 227.) The film action ('sequence of images'), Lefebvre suggests, cannot express the 'flux and reflux' (Lefebvre 1996: 226) of city rhythms unless the viewer summons from within himself his own memory:

> A memory? Yes, to grasp this present other than in the immediate, restitute it in its moments, in the movement of various rhythms. The remembrance of other moments and of all the hours is essential, not as a simple reference, but so as not to isolate this present and *live* in its diversity made up of *subjects* and *objects*, of subjective states and objective figures. (Lefebvre 1996: 227.)

The viewer therefore becomes part of the scene s/he sees on her/his screen/outside her/his window by the very act of watching, listening, remembering the film in progress, now, then and next time.

Khutsiev's process and method of exploring Moscow space also evince a similar approach to that of Walter Benjamin's understanding of Moscow space in his 1927 essay 'Moscow'. What is striking about Benjamin's exploration of the Moscow chronotope is how closely both his categories of inquiry and his process of investigation relate to the long-standing myth of Moscow as the 'Big Village',

but also more importantly, how the cinema is the most suitable mode for perceiving Moscow. The paradoxical urban landscape about him is in flux; this flux in turn inspires his imagination to recreate and reorder the chaos of Moscow into his essay, 'Moscow'.

Benjamin sees Moscow as a kind of animate, protean, transformative presence that can alter its appearance at will. This is the Moscow that turns boundaries into centers, much in the way that film montage, in its juxtaposition of images, renders existing topography obsolete; imagination must reassemble the city at night:

> The whole exciting sequence of topographical deceptions to which he falls pray could be shown only by a film: the city is on its guard against him, masks itself, flees, intrigues, lures him to wander its circles to the point of exhaustion [---] But in the end, maps and plans are victorious: in bed at night, imagination juggles with real buildings, parks, and streets. (Benjamin 1999: 24.)

Benjamin understands that such a dynamic urban space can best be envisioned and expressed by an aesthetics of cinema. The newcomer must first record Moscow in motion, like Dziga Vertov's kino-eye, and then re-project the city via a montage of memory and imagination; the newcomer must visually participate actively in the present to be able to recall past images at any point in the future.

Later in his essay, Benjamin uses the Russian term *ремонт* ('renovation', 'reconstruction', 'remaking') to evoke Moscow in spatial transformation: 'Regulations are changed from day to day, but streetcar stops migrate, too. Shops turn into restaurants and a few weeks later into offices. This astonishing experimentation – it is here called *remonte* – affects not only Moscow; it is Russian.' (Benjamin 1999: 29.)[6] As for temporal transformation, Benjamin uses the term *сейчас* ('now', 'right away', 'at once') to express immediate time as a kind of non-time: 'The real unit of time is the *seichas*. [---] Time catastrophes, time collisions are therefore as much the order of the day as *remonte*. They make each hour superabundant, each day exhausting, each life a moment.' (Benjamin 1999: 32.) Because of the indeterminacy of *сейчас*, collisions of time, of past, present and future, echo the juxtapositions of architectural style and function from both the past and present in the Moscow streets. Benjamin's *ремонт* and *сейчас* are thus useful terms for exploring the transformative nature of Moscow space and time.

Khutsiev's film actively demonstrates a kind of *ремонт* of *сейчас*, or a constant reworking of the urban present via memory and experience. This collision further brings to mind Henri Lefebvre's notion of the rhythms of the city, which are both cyclical and linear, or both eternally repetitive and immediate. The viewer therefore becomes part of the scene he sees on his screen/outside his window by the very act of watching, listening, remembering the film in progress, now, the time before and the next time to come.

A consistent *ремонт* (remaking) of *сейчас* (the present) contributes to constructing images of Moscow in an almost constant re-contextualizing of the eternal present of textual Moscow's time and space. In *Ilich's Gate* we find a heightened emphasis on how memory informs the creative narrative of the Moscow text that we engage. As Benjamin reminds us, Moscow perhaps never is any one space, as it forever redefines itself by destroying itself and

4 For comparison, 58 million viewers saw *War and Peace. Part 1. Andrei Bolkonsky* (*Война и мир. Фильм 1. Андрей Болконский*, 1965) (Zemlyanukhin, Segida 1996: 72).

5 The poet Gennadi Shpalikov wrote the screenplay for both films, and a number of establishing shots and panoramas of the city in *Moscow* echo those of its banned predecessor. Shpalikov tragically committed suicide in 1974, after completing a single feature film of his own, *A Long Happy Life* (*Долгая счастливая жизнь*, 1966).

6 Lev Kuleshov also deliberately played with Moscow space in his editing experiments. Kuleshov conducted similar experiments in 'geography in the process of being created' (*творимая география*) in the early 1920s. In his book *Art of the Cinema* (*Искусство кино*, 1929), Kuleshov used distant and diverse Moscow locations and made them seem like one unified space in order to underscore how the technical possibilities of montage 'alter the fundamental image of the material [---] with montage it becomes possible both to destroy and to repair, and *ultimately to remake the material*.' (Kuleshov 1987: 171; my emphasis—*B. T. C.*) Cinema, then, has the ability to alter and remake the viewer's perception, as well.

rebuilding itself, disappearing and reappearing. And the act of making a cinematic text of Moscow conscious of both itself and other cinematic texts is as vital as constructing the physical text of Moscow.

This blurring of temporal boundaries and the theme of the persistence of memory dominate much of the film. In the opening sequence, a long tracking shot follows a trio of soldiers walking the streets, moving the viewer along various layers of Moscow time: their uniforms change from those of the Civil War to the contemporary clothing of Moscow youth in a single cut, a reverse shot from the past to the present. The diegetic space remains the same, but time has been transformed, both in Moscow and in the diegesis of the film. This device functions in the soundtrack, as well. Eventually the soundscape resounds with jazz in place of *The Internationale* and the sound of boots marching on the pavement. What is interesting about this sequence, mostly medium- and long-shots of the trio and other groups of people, is how it evokes history and memory on the same 'everyday' Moscow streets.[7] These are the familiar sights of a Moscow neighborhood, not the coded public spaces of Stalinist cinema. As they march, the guards implicate the viewer by gazing directly into the camera, a device Khutsiev will use again in his next film *July Rain* (*Июльский дождь*, 1967).

What is more, during the studio meeting to discuss Khutsiev's and Shpalikov's literary script in December 1960, Khutsiev remarked that these stones of Moscow's streets[8] remember the generations that have walked them, and that he intended to portray the conversation between Sergei and his father 'as completely

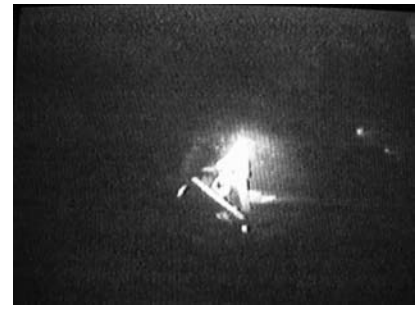
real' without resorting to the 'recollections' of a cinematic flashback.[9] This is the very sort of transformation (*ремонт*) of the present (*сейчас*) that defines the Moscow text. The past and present merge and blend fluidly without resorting to overused cinematic devices. As Irina Izvolova writes:

> If it's possible to understand the appearance of the father as a dream, as the protagonist's imagination, then the film's following sequence denies that assumption. Tired soldiers from 1941 walk the streets of Moscow. The protagonist can no longer see them, only we, the audience, can see them, just as we saw the poets in the Polytechnic Museum. The soldiers' passage through Moscow is just as real as the changing of the guard at Lenin's Mausoleum, as the ringing of the Kremlin bells, as Moscow itself, a panorama of which closes the film. (Izvolova 1996: 90.)

The film, then, destabilizes fixed diegetic notions of time and space, concentrating instead on using the visual image to render an urban space that encompasses both past and present simultaneously: 'All the layers of the film are placed atop one another, they coexist simultaneously,

in the same way that not only contemporary poets take part at the evening of poetry reading at the Polytechnic Museum, but also poets from the 1930s, killed at the front.' (Izvolova 1996: 90.) Moreover, the sequence above is invoked a number of times in the film, though never explicitly repeated. In one sequence, Sergei wanders the streets at early dawn, arriving at Red Square; in another, the 'ghosts' of the war dead, including Sergei's father, also wander the streets, as an automobile from the present passes them. In a way, this motif asks the viewer to remember the sequence, which again blurs the limits of time in the film.

Above, I have examined the conversation between Sergei and his father that so enraged Khrushchev. This sequence, which occurs near the end of the film, begins in Sergei's room of the family's communal flat, after Sergei has returned from a party. Sergei lights a candle, which invokes the lighting of a set upon which action will be filmed. We later realize that we are watching a set, as more and more soldiers, ghosts, appear and the room takes on the attributes of a bunker, or even morgue, with the dead stacked on top of each other. These figures 'come to life' as a result of Sergei's act of resurrecting them via light. As Sergei's gaze passes from soldier to solider, the camera examines their youthful faces in medium close-up, much in the same way that the photo of Veronika's grandparents informs Boris's death vision in Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying*. In fact, a portrait of Sergei's father hangs in his room; the camera, which has passed the portrait a number of times in long shot zooms in to a tight close-up before dissolving to the paraffin candle, also burning in close-up, from which Sergei tries to light his cigarette.



These ghosts then take to the present-day streets of Moscow, and the 'present-time' of the film in progress: we see the soldiers emerging from a tunnel onto the Sadovoe Koltso, the large ring road in central Moscow. Before them looms the Kotelnicheskoe building in the background of the shot, a building not completed until the early 1950s, thereby reminding the viewer of this temporal discontinuity. They act, in a sense, as a link to another 'ghost' on Red Square, the mummified body of Lenin, who 'lived, lives and will live'. For it is here that the film effectively ends, aside from the panorama of Moscow that Izvolova mentions. After watching

7 Moreover, Mark Zak notes that this sequence evokes film history as well. He finds the sequence of some of the youth running up the stairs adjacent to a bridge evocative of the opening sequence of Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Летят журавли*, 1957), in which the two lovers, Boris and Veronika, run along the embankment of the Moscow river, next to Red Square, and pause at the foot of the bridge to look up at the cranes (Zak 2003: 354). Zak also writes that 'thanks to the dialogic manner of the film' (Zak 2003: 354), an everyday interaction is turned into a significant event.

8 This is already a coded word, considering one of the city's older appellations, 'White-stoned Moscow' (*белокаменная Москва*).

9 Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Российский государственный архив литературы и искусства), fond 2468.278.35.

the three young heroes depart for work, we see three others on their way to their work as mausoleum guards. The cutting between these two scenes effectively links the two sets of young men, and Lenin's body, invoked in the title and the neighborhood, here lies enshrined in stone before the viewer. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian philosopher Pyotr Chaadaev termed Moscow the 'necropolis' in his *Philosophical Letters*; in the Soviet context of the twentieth century, this association lingers. Writing on the social and figurative function of monuments in Moscow, Mikhail Yampolsky states:

> The central grave of the necropolis that unexpectedly arises here is, of course, Lenin's mausoleum. But a genuine cemetery soon springs up around it. The penetration of graves into the very heart of the symbolic social sphere is less surprising than it seems to some observers. In the Middle Ages, the cemetery was usually the site of basic social manifestations, including commerce, carnivalistic celebrations, and so on... The 'return' of corpses to the central square merely marks, in its own archaic manner, the special sacralization of space, here a transformation of the world from profane to 'other-worldly'. (Yampolsky 1995: 104.)

This 'other-worldly' association persists throughout the film, which prompts one to wonder if it too contributed to Khrushchev's unease:

> It must be said that there are troubling moments in this material [i.e., the film—*B. T. C.*]. But at the heart of the matter, they function as a screen for the true idea of the film, which consists in the reinforcement of unacceptable ideas that are alien to the Soviet people and the norms of public and private life. (Demenok 1988: 100.)

Yet one key function of Moscow is to preserve the past alongside its present: 'The radial-circular structure of Moscow is not only a memorial to the city founders, but also the greatest sacred memorial of the Russian land.' (Pirogov 1996: 104.) What may have enraged Khrushchev is the aesthetic manner in which Khutsiev accomplished his celluloid memorial to the dead in his paean to the city.

Khutsiev also transforms Moscow space by merging this notion of sacred space with the quotidian. In the collective intimacy in a Moscow courtyard, young people dance and converse, and the international soundtrack orients us in time and space. As if to imitate the dancers, Margarita Pilikhina moves her camera choreographically among them; aural jump-cuts also reinforce the flux of this crowded space. If here, the personal and intimate belong to the periphery, now it also belongs in the center. Sergei meets Anya in the streets of predawn Moscow, where recent graduates dance

in Red Square. The two spaces—courtyard and square—thus metonymically merge and place us in a Moscow in which the meaning of center and periphery is temporarily deconstructed, transformed from official to personal, even in spite of the fact that three guards cross this space to take their places at Lenin's tomb. As Sergei and Anya make their way across Red Square, the camera takes in newly-graduated high school students dancing near the mausoleum, effectively echoing the sequence of public dancing in the courtyard near Sergei's apartment building. Here, the trio of guards who eventually re-emerge at the finale diligently make their way through the frolicking crowd, but we do not see them reach their destination. The camera pans to St. Basil's Cathedral, following the crowd down to the river, and offering a reverse-shot of how the young May Day revelers leave Red Square in an earlier sequence.

To return to Lefebvre's notion of perceiving urban flux from a window, I want to examine this motif specifically, which occurs quite often in the film, and suggests a kind of 'animate' Moscow, a Moscow that literally speaks to the characters (and by implication, to the viewers). This aspect of Thaw-era Moscow brings together Sergei and Anya in intimate Moscow space while invoking cinematic features of Stalinist cinema. In many films of the 1920s and 1930s—*Bed and Sofa* (*Третья Мещанская*, 1927), *Circus*, *Radiant Path* (*Светлый путь*, 1940)—the streets of Moscow are first shown in aerial or overhead establishing shots; depending on the ideological context, Moscow is the city of modernity; or of the masses; or of Stalinist hegemony. Khutsiev and Pilikhina also use aerial shots a number of times in the film, and the effect is somewhat different; often these shots function as an interlude

between episodes, showing the three heroes on their way to or from work. Other times, they cite paintings, giving us an aerial shot of a snow-covered park that recalls Pieter Bruegel the Elder's winter scenes, with human figures rendered in miniature. It is hardly surprising that Khutsiev, who studied architecture and painting,[10] should frame such shots in his film, just as he quotes from French New Wave films by having his heroes meet at and pass by their local cinema (showing *Seryozha* (*Серёжа*, 1960), a contemporary film about a young boy, and thereby invoking the youthful tendencies of the Thaw) a number of times.

10 Khutsiev's diploma film was entitled *City Builders* (*Градостроители*, 1950, also given as 1952), and Lev Anninsky writes that in his written defense, Khutsiev expressed his desire to portray the 'pathos of fact' (Anninsky 1991: 29).

Yet there is one shot in particular that occurs three distinct times in the film. It is a long overhead shot of the Moscow River, just south of the Kremlin, as if seen from the east, possibly from the Kotelnicheskoe building, but it is certainly a view of the center from the region of the neighborhood of Ilich's Gate. Steam is rising from a factory, traffic crosses the bridges. It is the final shot of the film, which gives this view a certain terminal significance. The first encounter with this view of Moscow occurs on the morning of June 22, the night the graduates dance in Red Square. The date of this sequence not only reminds the viewer of the Great Patriotic War, but also echoes the opening of *The Cranes Are Flying*, where Veronika and Boris, too, dance on Red Square. Yet there is a foreshadowing of it after Sergei has fallen asleep. It is a kind of dream shot, a view of the neighborhood from Sergei's window, perhaps, which is framed by his falling asleep and waking. We see the neighborhood and the Moscow River in long shot, and hear the tolling of two bells accompanied by Anya's off-screen voice, saying 'Seryozha' twice. It is as if animate Moscow acts as a courier between the two lovers. Sergei awakes, gets dressed, and leaves, echoing his entrance into the film as he returned home from the army in the film's opening sequence. Though ultimately shot differently, the script itself in fact underscores this almost uncanny aspect of the two lovers meeting in the middle of Moscow:

> Eight million people are sleeping.
>
> Sergei sleeps, restlessly tosses and turns.
>
> And there, where the roofs of night lead, past the buildings, streets and blocks, somewhere in another part of the big city, sleeps his girlfriend.
>
> Two people sleep restlessly in their rooms far away from one another, they toss and turn, they mutter something indecipherable in their sleep.
>
> Suddenly Sergei clearly pronounces:
>
> 'Right away.' And opens his eyes.
>
> (Khutsiev, Shpalikov 1961: 66–67.)

What follows is a remarkable sequence of early morning Moscow as Sergei, in place of the three soldiers perhaps, wanders the streets. In an off-screen voiceover, he recites Vladimir Mayakovsky's 'It's past one' ('Уже второй') which evokes the time and perhaps the love he feels.[11] After Anya and Sergei meet, they stroll towards the Kremlin, an episode that echoes their meeting during a march to Red Square for a May Day demonstration. It is a chance meeting that suggests that Moscow is more like a Big Village, where people can run into each other almost anywhere. Moreover, the film underscores this association: Sergei's friend Kolya often chats with a female conductor on a tramway, until she is replaced by a machine.[12]

What follows is the sequence of young people spontaneously congregating and dancing on Red Square after finishing high school. Thus Sergei's and Anya's reunion here asks us to return to the May Day parade sequence, where documentary-like camera work captures similar spontaneity, both in the crowd and from overhead establishing shots. En route to the square, people run and jostle in a metacinematic display: the camera references itself numerous times by showing cameramen on pedestals filming the crowd, as well as individuals shooting their own footage. There are no shots of military or other party officials. And Sergei and Kolya have success meeting girls, sending off their rivals by making them either carry, or go away from, floats. There is a multi-ethnic composition of the crowd as well. Like the pro-multiplicity sentiments found in *Circus*, Moscow is thus a kind of global big village, which welcomes all into her fold. Moreover, Moscow has changed since the days of Stalin, when Red Square was a stage for choreographed events, physical-culture (*физкультура*) parades, official funeral processions and so on. These events, of course, did not stop taking place, but in *Ilich's Gate*, Khutsiev emphasizes a different aspect, a new profile, of the face of Moscow.

Now to return to the window-view of Moscow. After walking again to the river, Sergei and Anya embrace at an outdoor café; we move in to a close-up of Anya, who asks, 'What time is it?' Moscow, not Sergei, answers, as four bells chime from the Spassky Tower in the Kremlin across the river. The time has intimate significance for Sergei and Anya, and social significance as well, recalling the hour of the Nazi invasion twenty years earlier. Kalatozov employs a freeze-frame of the Tower chiming four times at the beginning of the title sequence of *The Cranes Are Flying*. In this way, Khutsiev multiplies the temporal meaning of present-day Moscow, not only historically, but cinematically. The director thus subtly anticipates Sergei's meeting with his father—who perished in the war—towards the end of the film. Indeed, this is a maternal, caring Moscow, but is also a Moscow that remembers and commemorates, privately as much as publicly. The first words heard in the film are from a radio: 'This is Moscow calling.' Sergei's first word in the film is 'Mama'; his father, in his last letter to Sergei's mother, writes that he believes Moscow will remain standing, even if he should die. It is this view of Moscow that closes the film as well, emphasizing these associations. This is the circular Moscow, the maternal womb or heart, the Moscow of the Garden and Boulevard Rings that shape Moscow geography as much as they ring the center.

This perspective perhaps belongs to the film itself. It is as if the neighborhood of Ilich's

11 Mayakovsky committed suicide in 1930, leaving this love poem incomplete.

12 This kind of mechanization presciently anticipates the end of the Thaw-era experimentation in the arts and the more intimate urban space of Moscow.

Gate gazes on the center from its own perspective. In this way, the film reasserts the primacy of the intimate periphery, or familiar courtyard, over the codified center, Red Square. Yet it is the center of a 'city of contrasts', to echo a Soviet cliché. For here, the principal images come into abrupt juxtaposition. We see the triangular shape of the Kremlin and its familiar towers and across the river the MOGES energy station pours smoke into the air. The Moscow River flows between the two sides of the city, suggesting not only that these are images of power and industry, but that a modest neighborhood surrounds them. Neya Zorkaya writes that 'even in the frozen fog, the view of the narrow Moscow River, with its modest bridges, the chimneys of the MOGES factory in the Zamoskvorechy District, the heart of the non-picturesque, but melancholy Moscow distance—this is the illuminated motif of the film.' (Zorkaya 1965: 310.) Perhaps Zorkaya has punned here, conflating both the title, *застава* ('gate'), with *заставка* ('decorative illumination in a manuscript'), but her metaphor is apt. The shot's placement in the film functions as dual decorative frames to the action between.

This high-angle gaze at the city below has a long history in Moscow film. Many films of the Stalinist period give aerial views of the city, focusing on the then-standing Cathedral of Christ the Savior, one of the most visible monuments in the Moscow skyline at the time. Khutsiev, then, joins this tradition, but has perhaps more in common with his contemporary, the Italian Michelangelo Antonioni, another architect turned filmmaker, who views an alienated Rome from many of the same kinds of high-angle, overhead shots at the end of his *The Eclipse* (*L'eclisse*, 1962). We may even speculate that this view originates in the Kotelnicheskoe building, one of the 'Stalin skyscrapers', the silhouette of which towers frequently over the crowds of Moscow in this film. This building in particular housed the elite of the period, and its location, perhaps ironically, practically mirrors that of the Cathedral, which also stood on the river on the opposite side of the city.

Yet the fact is that this final unmotivated shot evokes the previous two as if prompted by an unknown force in what Benjamin terms a 'time collision' in his essay. The shot is unexpected, and yet familiar. The camera moves our perspective to this overhead shot of Moscow from a sequence at Lenin's mausoleum and the changing of the guard. Reconsidering the idea of Moscow as a 'necropolis', I wonder if this view is, as in Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire*

(*Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987)—another film about the city, memory, and film itself) from an unworldly other's point of view, or perhaps the point of view of Moscow itself. Warren Buckland has written on levels of narration in Wenders's film, and suggests that the angel protagonists 'possess qualities of characters and narrators at the same time, and inhabit both the level of the narrative and of narration, or, more accurately, exist between the two levels.' (Buckland 2001: 31.) This interval of time and space certainly evokes the transformative Moscow text by moving us from a diegetic present of the narrative, to a non-time whose perspective belongs thus to the present of the viewer, on the one hand, and the moment of actual filming, on the other.

Buckland's idea also invites us to contemplate whether the shot arises from the point of view of the spirit/memory of Sergei's father or of another soldier. The father and two comrades are, after all, marching in the direction of the Kotelnicheskoe building, which stands in the distance as they emerge out of a tunnel, suggesting a kind of birth passage that brings them into the light. This shot dissolves into a shot of a blinking traffic-light (like those that lit the way for Sergei on his nocturnal stroll) against the current of traffic that is already starting to flow. Moreover, Sergei's father emerges from the candlelight, thus further linking the two shots.

Finally, death or dead spirits (embodied in Sergei's father and his comrades), and memorials to the dead (Lenin's mausoleum), frame the final sequences of Sergei, Kolya and Slava on their way to work, to the accompaniment of off-screen narration of their thoughts. The diegetic sound shifts from the protagonists to the city itself. Perhaps it is Moscow that exists as both

character and *narrator* in the film, especially in the light of Benjamin's assessment that Moscow is a kind of animate being in itself: earlier we have looked at how Moscow seemingly responds to Anya's question about the time.

These associations are underscored by the fact that an unknown, disembodied voice-over ends the film. It is as if the voice of the author, or Moscow, though it is a male voice for a city referred to traditionally as female, emerges to immerse us in the everyday life (*быт*) of what we see, but there is more. Robert Bresson has commented that sound plays a unique role in film in its ability to evoke in the viewer's mind an image that he or she does not actually see on screen (Bresson 1986: 50–52). Throughout the film Khutsiev develops a polyphony of sonic overlaps that he balances with silence; we need only recall the dancing sequence in the courtyard (*двор*), in which snippets of song and conversation are intercut to counterpoint the montage. In this sequence the courtyard cinematically anticipates the dancing on Red Square.

Another sequence that evokes silence and the very activity of listening is the one in which Sergei rises to turn off a dripping tap, but it is not a dripping tap: it is the first drops of melting snow that indicate that a thaw and spring have arrived. Khutsiev, then, consciously plays with sound as a provocative device either to disorient or locate the viewer in the film. By doing so, Khutsiev, invites the viewer to become a more careful *listener*, or a real member of the *audience*, in order to perceive what Christian Metz terms 'aural objects', and thus experience the shot more fully by actively dismantling its components (Metz 1980: 28–30).

With *Ilich's Gate* Khutsiev screened a new, dynamic image of the Moscow text to Soviet viewers, only its delayed screening dated it prematurely for the sixties generation. Yet the film continues to speak to viewers over time, as an open work that defies easy reading. Many of its aesthetic features not only may have contributed to its initial withdrawal from distribution, but also produce the film's lasting ability to absorb the viewer into the Moscow of the early 1960s: Khutsiev thus casts Moscow in its contemporary light, refracted through the cinematic light of the memory of the past.

FILMS

Bed and Sofa (*Третья Мещанская*), dir. Abram Room. Russia, 1927

Circus (*Цирк*), dir. Grigori Alexandrov. Russia, 1936

City Builders (*Градостроители*), dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Russia, 1950

The Cranes Are Flying (*Летят журавли*), dir. Mikhail Kalatozov. Russia, 1957

The Eclipse (*L'eclisse*), dir. Michelangelo Antonioni. Italy, 1962

The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks (*Необычайные приключения мистера Веста в стране большевиков*), dir. Lev Kuleshov. Russia, 1924

I Am Twenty (*Мне двадцать лет*), dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Russia, 1965

Ilich's Gate (*Застава Ильича*), dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Russia, 1962/1988

I Walk Around Moscow (*Я шагаю по Москве*), dir. Georgi Danelia. Russia, 1963

July Rain (*Июльский дождь*), dir. Marlen Khutsiev. Russia, 1967

A Long Happy Life (*Долгая счастливая жизнь*), dir. Gennadi Shpalikov. Russia, 1966

The Man with the Movie Camera (*Человек с киноаппаратом*), dir. Dziga Vertov. Ukraine, 1929

New Moscow (*Новая Москва*), dir. Alexander Medvedkin. Russia, 1938

Radiant Path (*Светлый путь*), dir. Grigori Alexandrov. Russia, 1940

Seryozha (*Серёжа*), dir. Georgi Danelia, Igor Talankin. Russia, 1960

War and Peace. Part 1. Andrei Bolkonsky (*Война и мир. Фильм 1. Андрей Болконский*), dir. Sergei Bondarchuk. Russia,1965

Wings of Desire (*Der Himmel über Berlin*), dir. Wim Wenders. West Germany, France, 1987

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