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Representations of Urban Spaces and Their Transformations in Soviet Cinema of the 1920s and 1960s

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Representations of Urban Spaces and Their Transformations in Soviet Cinema of the 1920s and 1960s

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SEMINARS, CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS STUDY

2012 *Spaces of (Dis)location* (University of Glasgow, May 24-25th)

2012 invited speaker at *RUSSGRAD* seminar (University of Cambridge, November, 29th)

2013 BASEES/ICCEES European Congress 2013: *Europe: Crisis and Renewal* (University of Cambridge, April 5 – 8th, 2013)

2013 *Literary Form and Visual Culture* (University of Durham, June, 24th)

2014 invited speaker at *Postgraduate Work-in-Progress Papers* seminar (University of Nottingham Russian and Slavonic Studies, March, 17th)

Hurina, Anna (forthcoming 2015) Dialektyka tekhniky: vid Lenina do Lenina [Dialectics of Technology: from Lenin to Lenin] in Olga Briukhovetska (ed.) *Visual Culture of Post-Stalinism* (Kyiv: Krytyka).

Hurina, Anna (2014) Review of *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*, by Katerina Clark. *Slavonica* 20:(1) 60-1.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the correlations between planned/constructed urban environments and the depiction of the city in films. The research focuses on the changing image of the socialist city in two broadly conceived modernist periods: the 1920s and the 1960s. Adhering to the methodologies of visual, film and urban studies after the 'spatial turn' in the humanities, my thesis charts the interdependency of two fields – urbanism and cinema – in the production of Soviet urban space. The theoretical contributions of my study include: (1) revisiting the theory of *dispositif* and the subject it produces with regard to the Soviet context; (2) identifying the category of the socialist city symphony as a cinematic sub-genre in the 1920s; (3) re-affirming the productivity of the concept of the 'thing' in relation to the cinematography of the 1920s; (4) reconceptualizing utopian impulses and the inherent dialectical movement of the Soviet understanding of technology. This dissertation mirrors the theory of the 'linear city' proposed by Nikolai Miliutin in 1930: a scheme for the parallel disposition of industrial and living spaces, which are divided by a green zone along the lines of transport infrastructure. The three parts that form this thesis are accordingly structured around the following conceptual entities: *dispositif* (philosophical and film theory concepts; its application towards the railway, city and the cinema); living spaces of the socialist city (architectural and screen *byt* [way of life]); working spaces of the socialist city and the dialectics of technology on the cinema screen. The main findings of my work are: the explication of the affinities between the New Soviet Subject and the production strategies of urbanism and cinema; establishing the stylistic, ideological and rhetorical similarities between the modernisms of the 1920s and 1960s; and analyzing the panoply of utopian impulses embodied in urban and film material which are easily missed if the Soviet experience is only viewed as the cultural production of totalitarianism.

OUTLINE

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example of the workers' dwellings (Shass 1951: Table 21&25; cited in Meerovich 'Tipologiia massovogo zhilishcha sotsgorodov-novostroek pervykh piatiletok [Typology of the Mass Housing in the Newly Constructed Socialist Cities of the First Five-Year Plan]' 2010)

political jabber’

- Я, скажімо, часто згадую уроки німецької. Це взагалі якась така дивна штука була в радянській педагогіці – вивчати німецьку. Був у цьому якийсь нездоровий антифашистський пафос. І ось десь у четвертому-п'ятому класах у нас були такі завдання: нам роздавали поштові картки з видами різних міст, такі, пам'ятаєш, вони тоді продавались у всіх поштових відділеннях, цілими наборами?

- Не пам'ятаю, - відповіла Ольга.

- Продавались. Скажімо, картки з видами міста Ворошиловграда. Тепер уже й міста такого немає, а я кілька років розповідав про нього німецькою мовою. Цікаво, правда?

- Дуже.

- На цих картинках, як правило, були зображені які-небудь адміністративні будівлі або пам'ятники які-небудь. Ну, які могли бути пам'ятники у Ворошиловграді? Мабуть, Ворошилову. Я вже не пам'ятаю, якщо чесно. І ось потрібно було розповісти про те, що ти бачиш. А що ти бачиш на такій картці? Сам пам'ятник, коло нього клумба, поруч хто-небудь обов'язково проходить, позаду може їхати тролейбус. А може, до речі, і не їхати. Тоді гірше – немає про що розповідати. Може світити сонце. Може лежати сніг. Ворошилов міг бути на коні, а міг бути й без коня. Що знову ж таки гірше, оскільки про коня можна було розповісти окремо. І ось ти починаєш розповідати. А що можна розповісти про те, чого ти насправді не бачив? І починаєш викручуватись. Можна було спочатку розповідати про сам пам'ятник, себто про того, хто на ньому був зображений. Потім доводилось братися за випадкових перехожих, що потрапили в кадр. Причому що ти міг про них розповісти? Ось, мовляв, жінка, на ній жовтий светр і чорна сукня. А в руках у неї, скажімо, торба. Скажімо, з хлібом. Потім, коли й про перехожих переповідалось, можна було сказати ще кілька слів про погоду. Але головне, що я хочу сказати – все це було настільки не по-справжньому, розумієш – усі ці картинки, всі ці розповіді, вся ця мова, набір із кількох десятків слів, акцент, намагання якось наїбати нещасну вчительку. Я з того часу німецьку мову терпіти не можу. І у Ворошиловграді жодного разу не був. Та й немає тепер ніякого Ворошиловграда.

- І для чого ти мені це розповів? – запитала Ольга.

Сергій Жадан (2010) «Ворошиловград»

- For instance me, I often remember our lessons in German. Actually, it was quite a strange thing for Soviet pedagogy – to learn German. There was an unhealthy anti-fascist sentiment in it. So probably in the fourth or fifth form we would be given a task: postcards with views of different cities were handed out to us; do you remember, they were for sale in all post offices, as whole sets?

- I don't remember, - Olga said.

- They were. For instance, they were the postcards with views of the city of Voroshylovgrad. This city doesn't even exist anymore, yet I was telling stories about it in German for few years. It's interesting, isn't it?

- Very.

- In these pictures, as a rule, there were some administrative buildings or some monuments. Well, what kind of monuments could there be in Voroshylovgrad? Probably, there were monuments to Voroshylov. I don't remember, to be honest. So you had to tell a story about what you saw. But what do you see on such a postcard? You see the monument itself, a flowerbed nearby, somebody is always walking close by; there might be a trolleybus behind it. Or there might not be one, by the way. In that case, it's worse – there is no story to tell. The sun might be shining. The snow might be lying on the ground. Voroshylov could be sitting on a horse, or be without one; which is, again, worse because you could tell a story about the horse separately. So you begin your story. But what can you really say about something that you've never seen? So you start making stuff up. At first you could be telling a story about the monument itself, that is, about the person who was represented in the monument. Then you had to start with the accidental passers-by that were shown in the picture. Besides, what could you say about them? There you have something like a woman who wears a yellow sweater and a black dress. There is something like a bag in her hands, say, with bread. Then when you've finished saying things about the passers-by, you could say a few things about the weather. But the most important thing I'd like to say – all of this was so fake, you see – all those pictures, all those stories, all that language, a selection of several dozen words, the accent, your efforts to somehow screw the poor teacher over. Since then I can't stand German. And not even once have I ever been to Voroshylovgrad. Nor is there Voroshylovgrad now.

- So why did you tell me all of this? – Olga asked.

Serhiy Zhadan (2010) *Voroshylovgrad*

INTRODUCTION

The affinities and similarities between cinema and urban environment have been at the centre of critics' attention since the emergence of cinema itself. The point of convergence has always been the influence of both of these forms on human perception. In 1922 Ezra Pound compared village life to a narrative, while 'in the city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are cinematic' (Donald 1999: 74). Montage film aesthetics was considered most suitable for the representation of the new urban experience, and the recent emergence of the fields of urban cinematics (Penz and Lu 2011) or cinematic urbanism (AlSayyad 2006) seem to agree upon film's inherent ability to 'capture the essence of modern urban experience which presented the metropolis itself as one big intersection of 'moving images' (Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2003: 24).[1] Yet when thinking the city on screen it is important to keep in mind the various forms it might take: from the narrative-driven feature film which uses the city as a backdrop ('village'-sque in Pound's terms), to montage-driven documentaries treating urban spaces as material for the construction of a film about the city. My thesis will analyse various manifestations of urban spaces on screen, not limiting itself to any specific genre, but hopes to reveal the potential of letting urban and optical unconscious talk and say more about the supposedly foreground narrative than the narrative itself.

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[1] The array of inter-disciplinary publications putting film studies, history, geography, architecture, media studies and literary studies in dialogue about conceptualizing the relation between film and architecture/city/space was initiated at the end of 1980s (Minden 1985; Albrecht [1986] 2000; Weihsmann 1988), kept on expanding in the 1990s (Aitken and Zonn 1994; Weihsmann 1995; Clarke 1997; Penz and Thomas 1997) and reached the zenith in 2000s (Konstantarakos 2000; Lamster 2000; Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2001; Vogt 2001; Barber 2002; Bruno 2002; Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2003; Everett and Goodbody 2005; Lefebvre 2006; Conley 2006; Marcus and Neumann 2007; Webber and Wilson 2008; Mennel 2008; Harper and Rayner 2010; Koeck and Roberts 2010; Koeck 2013).

Space could generally be called a neglected category in the studies of Soviet cinema. With the exception of Emma Widdis's (2003) and Urussowa's volumes (2004), numerous, but interspersed contributions by Oksana Bulgakowa (1996; 2000; 2003; 2010) and the occasional articles touching upon the topic as a part of the specific film analysis, it is still highly overshadowed by the studies of temporality. However, this situation correlates with tendencies in the humanities in general where, as Mazierska summarizes, '[…] Until the 1970s or so historical studies were widely regarded as more sophisticated than geographical studies' (2014: 9). She quotes Michel Foucault who, interviewed in 1976 by the editors of *Hérodote*, said:

> A critique could be carried out of this devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations. Did it start with Bergson, or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.
>
> For all those who confuse history with the old schemes of evolution, living continuity, organic development, the progress of consciousness or the project of existence, the use of spatial terms seems to have the air of anti-history. If one started to talk in terms of space that meant one was hostile to time. It meant, as the fools say, that one 'denied history', that one was a 'technocrat' (Foucault 2007: 177-8 (quoted in Mazierska 2014 9)).

But the rise of geographical and urban studies, or as Jameson calls it a 'spatial turn' in the western humanities, has yet to be felt in Soviet studies.[2] My dissertation aims to contribute to the development of this field, but rather than using the increasingly popular terms of Deleuzian and Foucauldian deterritorialization or heterotopias, I shall use the concept of *dispositif* to

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[2] Jameson argues about the 'new spatiality implicit in the postmodern'(1991: 418) and that 'spatialization of the temporal' is the main characteristic of the new paradigm: 'A certain spatial turn has often seemed to offer one or more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper' (1991: 154). For more on 'spatial turn', see (Soja 1989; Falkheimer and Jansson 2006; Warf and Arias 2009).

hopefully reveal its theoretical potential for the humanities in general and film studies in particular (see Chapters 1 and 2).

After the 1917 revolution, the Soviet Union was seen as *tabula rasa* for the urban experimentation of modernist architects and authorities alike. However, that trend changed dramatically in the Stalinist era with its return to the classical style in elite architecture and dugouts instead of modern housing for the rest of the population. Though it might be an over-simplification to argue that '[In the 1930s] space in Soviet cultural discourses became static, even dead' (Lovell 2002: 105), it had certainly lost its utopian impulses towards improving living conditions. Attention to space in the 1920s and during the second modernism of the 1960s will be the object of this analysis. Even though the historical and architectural context of both eras will always be given, it should be noted that my film investigations lie in what is called a 'narrative space', i.e. the camera constructed cinematic space in which the film's narrative unfolds. As Mazierska points out: 'This is not 'real' space but one constructed by specific cinematic techniques such as camera positions and movements. However, on this basis they attempt to tell something about the external realities, to which these films pertain or, more precisely, the dominant discourses about them' (2014: 13). The study of cinematic space might therefore allow us to see aspects of film which elude other types of research, for example analysis of characters and narratives.

Another aspect I would like to touch upon in this work is the radical otherness of the Soviet context and the appropriateness of applying to Soviet film material European critical theory and the film studies of the 1970s, both of which aim at demystifying the ideology of the ruling class and revealing its presence behind 'neutral' classic Hollywood films. It is a legitimate question to ask since

every viewer of Soviet films knows that they do not hide their ideology. If anything, it had to be exposed as bluntly as possible in the film's narrative, protagonist and her/his motivation and the film space itself. The usual practice is to read Soviet films in a dissident mode, trying to find the hidden, allegorical meaning, reading if not between the lines (after all, the literary scripts were first and foremost censored), then at least between the shots. Yet at the same time, ideology in the Soviet Union was a rigid Party line defined by the needs of a particular period. It does actually constitute a perfect opposition – ideology hidden and naturalized (capitalist) vs ideology that is over-exposed and striving to be just as naturalized (socialism). But it has to be noted that in Marxist theory ideology would not have to be naturalized or hidden since there would be no exploitation of the population by profit-gaining individuals (the Party apparatus in the Soviet Union; top-management and the government apparatus in the capitalist world). Thus the ideology of the Soviet context entailed using repressive as well as ideological state apparatuses to convince people that back-breaking labour, mass concentration camps, poverty, the absence of the most basic everyday necessities and the myriad other sacrifices made by them were undertaken in the name of the communist future to come. All in all, though superficially different, in its essence Soviet state ideology concealed its repressive apparatus just as much as its capitalist counterpart. Watching Soviet films against the grain does not mean reading them in an explicitly dissident mode (though in certain periods it is also needed), but concentrating on the unconscious, often unmotivated details of heroes' daily lives, on the 'taken for granted', on the 'neutral', on the mundane *byt* [way of life], uncalled-for by narrative motivation, but yet creating narrative space. Comparing narrative space with the so-called 'real' architectural and urban

themes of the eras in question will provide the basic vocabulary of the time, and help to recreate the mundane of the 1920s and 1960s in order to deconstruct its meanings and suggest contemporary viewers' unexpected perspectives.

With a view to analysing the representations/constructions of the city in films it is necessary to point out the basic difference between the two closely correlated and often hard to distinguish fields of architecture and urbanism. It is particularly difficult to separate these fields in the context of the Soviet 1920s, when it is impossible to speak of practically any successful urbanisation up until Stalinist industrialization in the 1930s. Urbanism is understood here as the rational planning of the city and its infrastructure as opposed to the individualistic architectural objects which, although they may take into account their immediate environment, rarely (if ever) correlate with the city as a whole. Whenever they do, they rather aim to manifest themselves as an individual symbolic structure that forms the city's skyline. Architectural landmarks are not usually created to provide the minimum dwelling conditions and infrastructural facilities for thousands, if not millions of people. Architectural genius is strongly contrasted to the requirements of mass living; whereas for the urban planner it is the dialectical relation of the utilitarian function and experience shaping master plan that define her/his work. The city space produced by urbanism is best described in the categories of Henri Lefebvre, who claims that space is neither an object nor a subject, but rather 'a social reality… a set of relations and forms', and is 'historically produced' (Lefebvre [1974] 1991: 116). The city's spatial structures do not just represent or materialize social practices, but first and foremost condition them. From this perspective, the urban (a condition rather than a thing, according to Lefebvre), is a spatial unit in which the 'logic of form' is directly

correlated with the 'dialectic of content'; it is a kind of concrete abstraction, associated with practice (Lefebvre [1970] 2003: 118-9). This conception of urbanism lets us treat the urban practice itself both as a project and a projection.

With these differences in mind, it is important, however, not to adhere dogmatically to such definitions since architecture and urbanism are often interconnected, especially in the early stages of their differentiation and attempts towards further professionalization at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the context of the Soviet 1920s, an architect was often an urban planner and vice versa, with the individual architectural objects planned as models for mass production as well as various concepts for urbanism and desurbanism. Yet the majority of them remained the so called 'paper architecture/urbanism'. Thus in relation to the 1920s the terms architecture and urbanism could be used with a forward slash: architecture/urbanism. In the 1930s and 1940s the problem of urbanism took the form of newly constructed socialist cities on the one hand, and the return to classical-style 'one-off' architectural buildings for the Party apparatchik on the other. Urbanization relied on industrialization as its main justification, yet while debates over the concept of a socialist city were under way until the mid-1930s, the forced industrialization and then militarization of the country overshadowed the need for workers' housing. Stalin's grandiose plans for the urban reconstruction of Moscow were not fully achieved until after the economy emerged from the Second World War. The switch to defence construction and armaments production, together with the disarray resulting from the sweeping arrests and frequent executions of major and minor industrial officials, prevented the expansion of the building industry. Moreover, aesthetic

considerations frequently won out over the existing social structure and mundane functioning of the city.

Notwithstanding, the urban situation was quite different in the 1960s. The term 'hyper-standardization' used by Ruble (1993) offers the most precise characterization of the processes in place. All of the construction techniques used in the new mass-produced housing were dependent upon western building methods, technologies and experience, and therefore contributed to the internationalization of Khrushchev's policies in the field of construction. Yet, to quote Mëhilli, 'Socialism was more than the sum of standardization in technology and ideological and aesthetic formulas' (2012: 655). Prefabricated concrete buildings in the USA and Europe were inherently tied to commercial production companies (Bergdoll 2008), but in the Soviet Union only the Party line defined the needs and quantities of material productions. Moreover, the possibility of not exclusively constructing the buildings defined by type design [*tipizirovannyi*] slowly presented itself since the degree of freedom was much higher at the periphery, further away from the centre. However, critics are still debating the precise mechanism at work which allowed those buildings to come into existence: versions vary from the 'good connections' needed for those 'special commissions' (e.g. showcase cultural centres, palaces of congresses, and other landmark projects) to stating that around 10% of all construction in the USSR were non-*tipizirovannyi* (Mëhilli 2012: 651). Further research would clarify these issues but, in the meantime, an extensive and impressive visual bibliography has kept on stirring up interest in the matter since the publication of *CCCP: Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* by Chaubin in 2011, Novikov's book, and the start of the *Sweet Sixties* project by tranzit.at, which was subsequently

exhibited and published by Architekturzentrum Wien (Chaubin 2011; Novikov and Belogovsky 2010; Schöllhammer and Arevshatyan 2013).

As Smith notes, 'Three motives were encoded into the ideology of Soviet urban housing: "sacrifice", "beneficence", and "paradise", which contingent circumstances would in turn make the drivers of policy making' (2010: 5). As catchy as these markers might be, the Christian connotations imposed on the atheist state in question bring little to the understanding of the era's ideological message which my thesis aims to facilitate. As the author elaborates:

> The dogma of sacrifice, according to which living conditions were ruthlessly subordinated to the fulfilment of industrial, military, or prestige priorities, was the force that made crash urbanization and industrialization possible. It produces a housing profile in the 1930s that was dominated by barracks and hostels, with pockets of luxury for the elite. The dogma of beneficence was manifested by the ruling order's self-conscious determination to improve living conditions immediately and for their own sake. It generated some of the revolutionary housing reforms that immediately followed 1917, and also made possible the very high level of housing construction under Khrushchev. The dogma of paradise – using housing to create a way of life appropriate to communist ideas – gave rise to the promises to abolish private property from 1917, the isolated experiments in model communal living of the 1920s, and the consciousness-changing aspects of the mass housing program at high-water mark of the Khrushchev era, when housing was a mechanism for pushing society from socialism to communism. (Smith 2010: 6)

Balancing between the 'neo-totalitarian' and 'social historian' analytical framework, Smith constructs his argument on the basis that a citizen's autonomous activities were one of the driving forces behind the mass urban housing campaign. Yet I shall argue that it is the return to the utopic impulses of the 1920s ('Lenin's testament') and the availability of a technological base that could follow and actually implement the principles of constructivists' projects that allowed Khrushchev's mass housing to redefine Soviet urban landscape. The

peculiarity of Soviet urbanism in both the 1920s and 1960s could be roughly summed up as the following: like in the West, its aim was to manage the population, yet not simply to manage, but to transform it through architecture, to create a New Soviet Subject.

The at times achronological scope of my thesis is defined by two Cultural Revolutions – the 1920s and 1960s. Stalinism, therefore, is not so much avoided, as placed in brackets. It always remains a background against which other concepts of Sovietness are tested. The Cold War perspective that the Soviet Union equalled Stalinism has long been challenged by the efforts of revisionist historians; my contribution will supplement the endeavour by a film-based line of enquiry. Emphasizing other periods, as it were the 'before' and 'after' of Stalinism, this thesis will explore many possible iterations of the Soviet Union in order to remind us of the panoply of historical possibilities and utopian impulses which were 'real' at each particular point in time. Thus the two periods which I will contrast and compare are: 1920s and the First Five Year plan; and the Thaw, keeping in mind the conventionality of strict chronological definitions and stepping now and then outside them if the logic of the film material requires.

Taken as a whole, the structure of my PhD project could be characterized as an application of the theory of *dispositif* and the subject it produces in Soviet urban spaces and its representations. The outline is divided into three parts: part I constructs a theoretical framework for using the concept of *dispositif* and its application to the representations of railways and the city. Parts II and III – following the theory of the 'linear city' proposed by Nikolai Miliutin in 1930: a scheme for the parallel disposition of industrial and living spaces divided by the green leisure zone along transport communications – focus on the living and

working spaces of a socialist city which will be analyzed using film material from the 1920s and 1960s (Fig. 0).
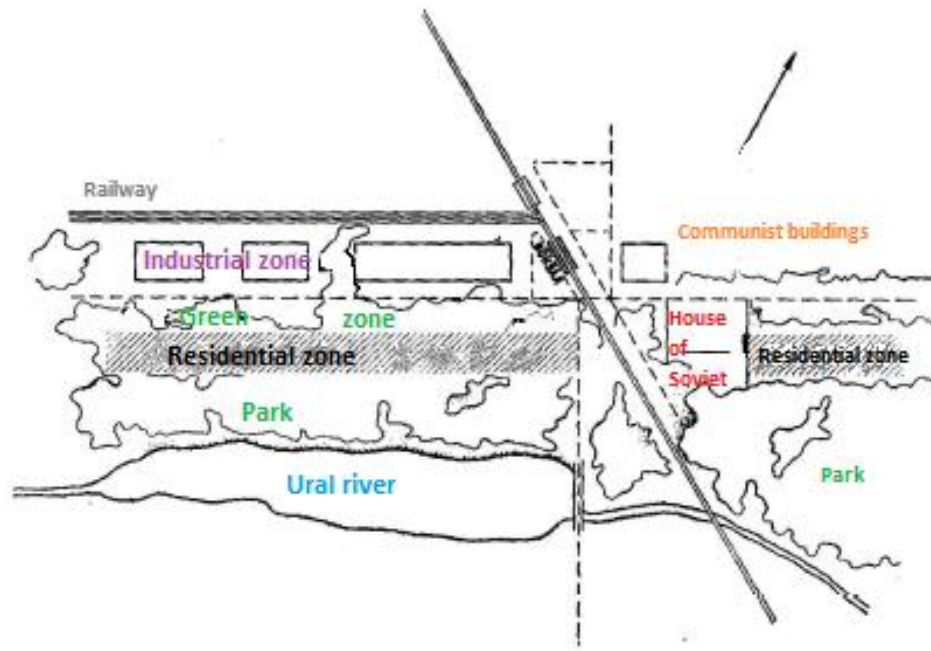
Fig. 0 Plan of the 'linear city' by Nikolai Miliutin: Industrial and Residential zones separated by Green area

In the Soviet version of building socialism the drive towards collective living was enormous. We will not touch upon the debate over the fate of individuality under Soviet socialism. This debate can only realize its creative potential once the dialectical relationship between collective community and the individual has been adequately addressed. Nevertheless, those manifestations of private life and *byt* which pertain to living space are analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4. These chapters will follow the transformations of living spaces and their representations from the house-commune of the 1920s to the house-warming [*novosel'e*] in *khrushchevki* of the 1960s. Both photographic and film material will be used to trace not only spatial changes, but also the modes of

subjectification they produce. Chapter 3 will analyse the apparent tension and inconsistency between the living space represented in the medium of architecture and that represented in the medium of film. The former could be expressed in the idea of house-communes as 'social condensers of the epoch' (Moisei Ginzburg), with the majority of mainly 'utopian' projects represented as plans, maps and schemes in the architectural journals of the time. Yet a common theme for the films of the 1920s would be an almost 'dystopian' representation and 'condemnation' of the philistine *byt* of the NEP (New Economic Policy), with no or little effort made to offer an alternative. Through adopting the analytical framework of the theory of the 'object as comrade', this analysis problematizes the status of things in the 'mass' cinematography of the 1920s and juxtaposes them to Dziga Vertov's 'cine-thing'. As a result, the status of the thing emerges as indefinite, amorphous and vague; and it is these attributes of the 'object as comrade' which enables Vertov to construct his vision of the 'new way of life'. In Chapter 4, Thaw era films will be analysed to show how the modifications of *byt* in the concrete building blocks of the Khrushchev period, its transition from public to private and the introduction of Soviet design (known at the time as 'technical aesthetics') were the means of forming modern Soviet subjectivity in the interior of the home.

In contrast to contemporary society, where physical labour has become an obscene and taboo theme,[3] the working process, i.e. production, was the

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[3] 'For in the ideological sensibility of the West today, is it not work itself - manual labour as opposed to 'symbolic' activity - rather than sex, that has become the site of obscene indecency to be concealed from the public eye? The tradition, which goes back to Wagner's *Rheingold* and Lang's *Metropolis*, in which the working process takes place in dark caves underground, now culminates in the millions of anonymous workers sweating in Third World factories, from Chinese gulags to Indonesian or Brazilian assembly lines. Due to the invisibility of all these, the West can afford to babble about the "disappearance of the working class". Crucial to this tradition is a tacit

hegemonic object of representation in Soviet cinema up to the 1960s (with the exception of war films). Since the beginning of the Soviet state technology never stopped its dialectical movement between the base and the superstructure. Chapters 5 and 6 will analyse the representation of technology in 'the most important of all arts' at the moments of transition from the 1920s to the 1930s and from the 1950s to the 1960s. The marginalized status of work in post-Stalinist cinema might be explicated as the shift from 'heroic labour' to 'labour as a routine', yet the slogan of 'return to Lenin's testament' and work with the trauma of industrialization bring the topic of labour and technology back on the screen in films of the historical-revolutionary genre in a much more elaborated way.

All in all, through the construction of new socialist cities and re-structuring the existing ones; through providing new mass housing or breaking up the existing ones into smaller units; through designing interiors or redefining the old *byt*; through re-drawing the balances between working and leisure spaces as well as, or even primarily through, representations of all of these processes on screen, the Soviet state aimed at producing the New Soviet Subject. The utopian impulse behind this subject production was based on the gradual transfer of leadership and power from the Party to the democratic multitude, from the centre to the periphery, from the privileged apparatchiks to workers, but this was never realized in any socialist country. As Parvulescu states, 'The Eastern European experience must not be simply put aside as a historical mishap, viewed only as totalitarianism, and referred to in a similar way as one refers to fascism' (2015: 9). The utopian impulses embodied in the urban design (or projects) of the cities and

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equation of labour with crime: the idea that hard work is a felonious activity to be hidden from public view' (Žižek 2000: 40-1).

visualized in the Soviet films of the two explicitly modernist periods in Soviet

history (1920s and 1960s) are what really constitute the rationale of this thesis.

PART I WHAT IS *DISPOSITIF*?

Chapter 1: In search of *Dispositif*

1.1 The philosophical notion of *dispositif* (Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben)

Questions of terminology are of crucial importance for any research, as they immediately reveal the author's position, attitude or belonging to one or another 'school', as well as the level of self-reflection concerning the coordinates by which the research is orientated. However, the term *dispositif* does not yet have an established referential system, and could be seen as a floating signifier, the *point de capiton* of which is still to be determined. The ambiguity of the function of *point de capiton* is obvious: from one side, it defines the 'terminological clarity', but from another, the price paid is its fixation, 'quilting' in an ideology when the multitude of the interpretation is substituted by the reference to some specific discourse (Žižek 1994: 103). So it might be useful to examine the fight for re-articulation of the term *dispositif* as a dissensus about it manifests itself from time to time in the names of articles such as 'So what is *dispositif*?'. The difficulties with the term are partially the result of the incompleteness and openness Michel Foucault left in its definition, and partially the inaccuracy of its translation from French to English which sometimes led to its rejection in film theory since it was lost in the critique of the so-called apparatus theory. It might be useful to indicate here the two traditions of understanding of the term *dispositif* which could be provisionally labelled a 'philosophical' (Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben) and a 'film theoretical' (Jean-Louis Baudry).

As a theoretical concept, *dispositif* appears in the 1970s in France almost simultaneously in both of the above mentioned traditions and without any

reference to one another. In particular, it is to be found in Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge* [1976] (Foucault 1998) in the chapter entitled 'Le dispositif de Sexualité'. However, a definition of *dispositif* is given one year later in his interview 'The Confessions of the Flesh' to the psychoanalytical journal *Ornicar?* as the answer to a question about methodological function of the term:

> What I try to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly *heterogeneous ensemble* consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus (*dispositif*). The apparatus (*dispositif*) itself is *the system of relations* that can be established between these elements. [...] The apparatus (*dispositif*) thus has a dominant *strategic function* (Foucault 1980: 194-5). [my italics][4]

What is important for us in this respect is Foucault's constant reference to the 'heterogeneity' of the elements which is by no means limited to discursivity (as it was with the Foucault's concept of *episteme*), but includes a 'material basis'. On the other hand, it must be recognized that they seem to be *interchangeable* to some extent as Foucault gives the example of Gabriel's architectural plan for the Military School where the plan and the school built in accordance to the plan are the same, both belonging to the discursive and to the institutional (Foucault 1980: 198). Foucault also emphasizes the importance of the genesis of the term, pointing out two aspects in particular: the dominant influence of the strategic objective and

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[4] As we reference here an English version of the interview, the question of the translation has to be raised. The French term *dispositif* is usually translated into English as 'apparatus' and unfortunately loses its meaning. The translator of the interview did point out the French original, but only once, making it hard for the reader to keep that in mind. The difference being important for our research, *dispositif* was added in brackets.

the enabling of *dispositif* as the site of a double process – a functional over-determination and a strategic elaboration.

As though following the advice of Foucault to consider the genealogy of *dispositif*, Agamben presents us with his own version of the historic and 'strategic objective' of the term.[5] To put it briefly, Agamben refers to the theological genealogy of economics as the etymology of the Latin term *dispositio.* He describes vividly how in the first centuries of our era the Church appropriated the Greek term *oikonomia* which became thereafter 'an apparatus (*dispositif*) through which the Trinitarian dogma and the idea of a divine providential governance of the world were introduced into the Christian faith' (Agamben 2009: 10). *Oikonomia* is translated into Latin as *dispositio,* so it could be stated that the main function of *dispositif* always is the *production of the subjects* in order to easily control and manage them. Agamben's definition of *dispositif* is as follows: 'I shall call an apparatus (*dispositif*) literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions or discourses of living beings' (Agamben 2009: 14). However, it is clear that this definition is too wide to be productive and ends up in a technological determinism where the 'dark sides' of capitalism are equated to the new media as such (Enzensberger 1999: 182-3). It might prove useful to make a distinction between the terms apparatus and *dispositif* similar to the one that Baudry makes in film theory. But before we proceed to do this, it is necessary to refer to Gilles Deleuze's contrasting definition of *dispositif.*

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[5] Another inaccuracy must be recognized here as a result of translation, this time from Italian into English, the name of the chapter 'O que é um *dispositivo*?' becomes 'What Is an *Apparatus*?' (Agamben 2009).

In his article 'What is a Dispositif?' Deleuze tries to 'visualize' the term, although his literature-centrism makes it less successful:[6]

> But what is a *dispositif*? In the first instance it is a tangle, a multilinear ensemble. It is composed of lines, each having a different nature. And the lines in the apparatus (*dispositif*) do not outline or surround systems which are each homogeneous in their own right, object, subject, language, and so on, but follow directions, trace balances which are always off balance, now drawing together and then distancing themselves from one another. Each line is broken and subject to *changes in directions*, bifurcating and forked, and subject to *drifting*. [...] Untangling these lines within a social apparatus (*dispositif*) is, in each case, like drawing up a map, doing cartography, surveying unknown landscapes, and this is what he [Foucault] calls 'working on the ground'(Deleuze 1992: 159).

So the 'untangling' in Deleuze's terms, or 'analytics of power' in Foucault's, is very important for understanding *dispositif* not only because it emphasizes the *topography* of this concept, but because it also includes the power relations and subjectification. According to Deleuze, the following spatial elements constitute *dispositif*: curves of visibility and curves of enunciation; lines of force (power) which pass through them – to use his words 'it is closely knitted in with the others, yet separable'; and lines of subjectifications. The latter are the most problematic ones as Deleuze characterizes them exceedingly ambiguously. From one side, lines of subjectification 'is a process, a production of subjectivity in social apparatus [*dispositif*]: it has to be made, inasmuch as the apparatus allows it to come into being or makes it possible' (Deleuze 1992: 161). From another, they are lines of escape, splitting, breakage, and fracture. However, for him a *dispositif* is broken just to turn into a new one, for instance to transfer from the disciplinary society into the society of control. So although Deleuze's position is very valuable in emphasizing the topographical level of *dispositif*, the

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[6] In the English version of the article the translator does draw the reader's attention to the difference in meaning and warns us that there is no equivalent to the French term *dispositif* in English, so he will use 'social apparatus' or 'apparatus' as the closest available equivalents.

Foucauldian important strategic non-subjective aim of it is lost, as well as any conscious fight against it. The Deleuzian interpretation is free from belief in a 'better world' and to some extent coincides with the mistrust of Jacques Lacan towards the student revolts of May 1968, whom one could rephrase as saying: 'You want a new *dispositif*. You will get one'.[7]

Having given the 'philosophical' vision of *dispositif*, it is crucial to explore its meaning in film theory and to show why it might be useful to differentiate the terms *apparatus* and *dispositif* and to re-edify the difference that was lost in translation.

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[7] The phrase 'You want a new master. You will get one' ('Ce que vous voulez c'est un maître. Vous l'aurez') was pronounced in the university of Vincennes in December 1969 in the context of the introduction of the four discourses of psychoanalysis (Parker and Pavón-Cuéllar 2014: 133).

1.2. *Dispositif* in film theory (Jean-Louis Baudry)

The notion of *dispositif* was introduced to film theory by Jean-Louis Baudry earlier than and independently from Foucault, in two articles, 'Effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base' and 'Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité', which were translated into English as 'The ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus' (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75) and 'The apparatus: metapsychological approaches to the impression of reality in cinema' correspondingly (Baudry [1975] 2009). The misleading translation, as mentioned above, is determined by the lack of equivalent for the French word *dispositif* in the English language, which is therefore usually translated as *apparatus*, *arrangement* or *situation.* However, this terminological confusion had some far-reaching consequences in film studies.

Jean-Louis Baudry was one of the representatives of the film theoretical project which emerged in post-1968 France and – which through the translations of its major theoretical texts into English by the journal *Screen* – also became part of the English critical discourse of the 1970s. There is no single term for this theoretical school and it was given a wide variety of names by its critics: 'apparatus theory' (the most common), 'cine-psychoanalysis', 'subject-position theory', 'spectatorship theory', 'screen theory', 'grand theory' or just 'Theory' (Briukhovetska 2009: 17). Besides Baudry, the authors usually associated with it include among others Christian Metz, Stephen Heath, Jean-Louis Comolli, Colin MacCabe, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. Similarly to the 'so-called Formalists' in post-1917 Russia, these authors often adopted different positions, and although in dialogue and discussion with one another, they never produced any joint

manifestos. What is often crudely framed as one group for the convenience of the contemporary film studies introductory readings (e.g. Allen and Smith 1997; Stam 2000) surely benefits from a more nuanced contextual understanding:

> […] There is no singular 'theory' of political modernism whose system or structure can be reconstructed, critiqued, and transcended. Despite its myriad contradictions and internal debates, political modernism is better characterized as, again in Foucault's terms, a common enunciative modality. More simply put, despite the variety of their ideas and positions, the writers and filmmakers I examine share a mode of expression complexly derived from linked institutional contexts, ways of formulating concepts and questions and kinds of rhetorical strategies. This does not mean that there was, or is, some larger unity or consensus that writers and filmmakers are striving to reach in this period (Rodowick 1994: xii).

The parallels with the early Soviet project continue if one takes into account the common platform these authors stood on, which, to generalize, could be called the development of the idea of materialist cinema which would oppose the bourgeois ideology of the contemporaneous Western societies. The left inspirations of that period were as much determined by the romanticized vision of the Maoist revolution as by the student revolts in France of 1968, with the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt school, Antonio Gramsci and particularly Louis Althusser being of major influence. Yet what became the distinguishing mark of this film theoretical thought was the use of psychoanalysis in analysing the work of the film and its construction of the subject. Deep engagement with and extensive quotation of Freud and Lacan made their texts challenging to understand and left them vulnerable not only to the allegations of 'obscurity' and 'elitism', but also as a general challenge to the value of psychoanalysis for the field of film studies (Buscombe *et al.* 1975).

Such, briefly speaking, was the historical context in which Baudry published the first of his flagship articles 'The ideological effects of the basic

cinematographic apparatus' which introduces the concept of *dispositif* (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75). The article begins by tracing the parallel origin in the Renaissance of an optical apparatus, *camera obscura*, which has as its consequence the de-centring of the human eye and, consequently, human subject, and, paradoxically, a perspective [*perspectiva artificialis*] which in a sense is a re-centring and 'setting up of the subject as the active centre and origin of meaning' (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 40). The 'normativity' of Renaissance perspective, which is inherited by cinema from Western easel painting through photography, is re-affirmed by a film camera which by the agency of its movement separates the 'eye of the subject' from the body and determines the perception of the world as one of being constructed only and solely for the transcendental subject. Thus for Baudry ideology is inherent in perspective and although, admittedly, film differs from easel painting and photography as an art of *moving* images, which might be ruining the immobility of the eye-centred perspective, it is precisely this movement which restores it. Projection and screen reinstates the illusion of continuity of the discontinuous 'reality' filmed by the camera and worked over by montage thus encouraging the viewer to 'forget' the technical apparatus, her/his own body, identify with the camera's point of view based on the perspective of the transcendental subject and submerge oneself into the narrative; or in short, to be interpellated by ideology.

The second and main point which constructs the ideologically determined transcendental subject of the mainstream cinematography is the technical base or 'the basic cinematographic apparatus' in Baudry's terminology. One of the achievements of 1970s film theory (which, after its decline, became the object of severe criticism) was the shift of film critics' enquiry from the representational

content/form of film products to the technical conditions of their production. To

quote Baudry again:

> It is strange (but is it so strange?) that emphasis has been placed
> almost exclusively on their [optical instruments' – *A.H.*] influence, on
> the effects they have as finished products, their content, the field of
> what is signified, if you like; the technical bases on which these
> effects depend and the specific characteristics of these bases have
> been ignored, however (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 40).

For the theorist of the 1970s, film technology is not 'neutral'; it makes the filmic

experience possible through an incredible amount of work (filming, developing,

editing, projection etc), which not by coincidence is the most economically

demanding of all arts, yet this work is concealed from the viewer, leaving her/him

only the film product to consume.[8] In a way, materialist film theory strived to do

what Marx did in the first three chapters of *Capital* (Vol.1): to bring back the

deleted traces of commodity origin by restoring the conditions of its production

and depriving the commodity of its fetishistic appeal. Neutrality of technology is

assumed because of its 'scientific origin', the questioning of which is one of

Baudry's main arguments:

> Does the technical nature of optical instruments, directly attached to
> scientific practice, serve to conceal not only their use in ideological
> products but also the ideological effects which they may provoke
> themselves? Their scientific base assures them a sort of neutrality and
> avoids their being questioned. […] Do the instruments (the technical
> base) produce specific ideological effects, and are these effects
> themselves determined by the dominant ideology? In which case,
> concealment of the technical base will also bring about a specific
> ideological effect. Its inscription, its manifestation as such, on the
> other hand, would produce a knowledge effect, as actualization of the
> work process, as denunciation of ideology, and as critique of idealism
> (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 40-41).

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[8] This emphasis on the ideological determination of technology led to some interesting critical
contributions to the field of history of film technology; for instance, see the myriad of papers at the
conference on cinematic apparatus held at the Center for Twentieth Century Studies at the
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1978 (Laurentis and Heath 1980).

In the same year as Baudry's article, Althusser's famous essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' [*Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État*] was published. Using the correlative categories of ideology, subject and apparatus [*appareil*] it is useful to bring Althusser's understanding to the table, especially taking into account the pivotal role it played in film theory of the 1970s.

Making his goal the analysis of 'the reproduction of the conditions of production', Althusser states that:

> [...] The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words' (Althusser [1970] 2001: 89).

For the neo-Marxist post-1968 intellectuals, Althusser including, the dominant ideology is obviously that of the bourgeoisie which is there in order to preserve control over the material conditions of production. Midway through the essay, he makes this statement:

> [...] There is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, by the category of the subject and its functioning [...] Ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects (Althusser [1970] 2001: 115-6).

The operation which makes this 'constitution' possible, according to Althusser, is called 'interpellation':

> I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or

hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' (Althusser [1970] 2001: 118).

We should note here that individuals are always/already interpellated; it is not possible to be outside ideology and the fact that the subject is never aware of it just illustrates the power of ideology. In a sense, ideology could be compared to the discovery of the Unconscious by Freud: it made the autonomous Cartesian self an illusion, revealing that Ego is only one of the three parts of the psychic apparatus mediating psychological drives between a more powerful Id and Superego. To use Althusser's words:

> [...] Those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological' (Althusser [1970] 2001: 118).

The dominant ideology of society is enforced by repressive mechanisms which Althusser divides into two groups: Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) (the state and its government, courts, army, police etc.), which act predominantly by violence; and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) (e.g. religion, education, family, culture etc.), which are mostly multiple institutionalized practices acting through reproducing the ideology of those in power (Althusser [1970] 2001: 96). ISA is precisely the category to which the mainstream cinema criticized by film theorists of the 1970s belongs. All in all, although the subject is always-already interpellated by ideology, the theorists set themselves the task of deconstructing the basic cinematographic apparatus in order to suggest the mechanism of the subject's construction in the darkness of the cinema hall and Baudry was the first to do just that.

Towards the end of Baudry's article the concept of *dispositif* is finally

introduced (although the reader of the English translation would not know it):

> The arrangement [*la disposition*] of the different elements – projector,
> darkened hall, screen – in addition to reproducing in a striking way the
> *mise-en-scène* of Plato's cave (prototypical set for all transcendence
> and the topological model of idealism) reconstructs the situation [*le
> dispositif*] necessary to the release of the 'mirror stage' discovered by
> Lacan.

Even from this brief mention (as is often the case with this concept) one important

feature could be singled out: that the viewer's positioning in the cinema hall re-

enacts the 'mirror stage' principle.

'Mirror stage' [*stade du miroir*] is the concept introduced by Lacan which

suggests that the infant's recognition of her/his image in the mirror at the age of

between 6 to 18 months leads to her/his identification with the unified imago, with

the total form anticipating the future control of her/his bodily wholeness, thus

inscribing the infant into the Imaginary order.[9] That is how, briefly speaking, the

Self is constituted by the process of *identification* and at the same time *alienation*

(the image in the mirror is the never-attainable Ideal-I; the Self at the same time

becomes the Other) and the illusion of the unified subject is taking place

(Laplanche *et al.* 1972: 192-3). Another crucial moment of the mirror stage is the

presence of an adult who can testify or ratify the image: after the infant has

appropriated the reflection in the mirror as her/his own, s/he turns her/his head to

the adult in the search of approval/confirmation. The adult here acts as the big

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[9] Imaginary [*Imaginaire*] in Jacque Lacan's use of the term mostly as a noun: 'one of the three
essential registers (the real, the symbolic, the imaginary) of the psychoanalytic field. This register
is marked by the prevalence of a relation to the image of a similar being' (Laplanche *et al.* 1972:
191).

Other, launching the process of secondary identification and adding the Symbolic dimension to supplement the Imaginary.[10]

> Similar mechanisms are at stake in the darkness of the cinema hall:

>> But for this imaginary constitution of the self to be possible, there must be – Lacan strongly emphasizes this point – two complementary conditions: immature powers of mobility and a precocious maturation of visual organization (apparent in the first few days of life). If one considers that these two conditions are repeated during cinematographic projection - suspension of mobility and predominance of visual function – perhaps one could suppose that this is more than a simple analogy (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 45)

Indeed for Baudry the reality which is reproduced in cinema is not the reality of 'objective world', but that of the 'self'. The duality of intersubjective relations manifests itself in the two levels of identification happening during a film viewing process:

>> The first, attached to the image itself, derives from the character portrayed as a centre of secondary identifications, carrying an identity which constantly must be seized and re-established. The second level permits the appearance of the first and places it 'in action' – this is the transcendental subject whose place is taken by the camera which constitutes and rules the objects in this 'world'. […] Just as the mirror assembles the fragmented body in a sort of imaginary integration of the self, the transcendental self unites the discontinuous fragments of phenomena, of lived experience, into unifying meaning (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 46).

To sum up, the identification of the camera with the subject in cinema reproduces the dominant ideological mechanism and as long as it remains unchallenged, according to Baudry, the 'contents' of the particular films are not important. By assuming this mechanism uncritically, the subject remains interpellated, which can only be overcome by discovering the film-work which would lead to the

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[10] Symbolic [*Symbolique*] is another register of Lacan's theory which 'designates the order of phenomena with which psychoanalysis deals in so far as they are structured as language' (Laplanche *et al.* 1972: 200).

collapse of the illusion of the unified identity and the fragmented subject would have to be acknowledged. Interestingly enough, even though Baudry works on a theoretical level without mentioning any examples, an exception for a Soviet film is made at the end of his article:

> Thus disturbing cinematic elements – similar, precisely, to those elements indicating the return of the repressed – signify without fail the arrival of the instrument 'in flesh and blood', as in Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (Baudry and Williams [1970] 1974-75: 46).

It is no accident that Vertov's best-known classic is mentioned here. 'Disturbing cinematic elements' of the bourgeois film was the keystone of his artistic and political manifestos; moreover, *Man with a Movie Camera* explicitly revealed the work of the filming and editing process and made a cameraman the main protagonist. However, it could be also argued that by including a 'film about film' in the film's structure, Vertov at the same time just inscribed the film-work into the diegesis making a continuous narrative still possible. Yet speculative guesses as to why Vertov appears in Baudry's article, as curious an object of interpretation as it is, are not our main concern.[11]

The translation of Baudry's second article 'The apparatus: metapsychological approaches to the impression of reality in cinema', the title of which in French is '*Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité*', may puzzle an attentive reader. The concept of *dispositif*, which is being developed throughout the article, is absolutely absent from the translation leading to the blend of two interconnected, but essentially different concepts: *basic cinematographic apparatus* [*l'appareil de base*] and *dispositif*. In order to

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[11] For an interesting interpretation of which see Briukhovetska (2007).

restore the original relations of these two concepts, I will use the term *dispositif* in Baudry's quotations whenever he did.

Joan Copjec was among the first to pay attention to the fact that:

> Our one word in English, apparatus, corresponds in French to two, *appareil* (apparatus, machine, device, camera) and *dispositif* (also apparatus or device, but primarily arrangement). The English titles of two of Baudry's essays […] disguise the fact that *appareil* is replaced in the second by *dispositif*. There is strategy in this. *Appareil* is usually used in a mechanical or anatomical sense, attached to an organ of reproduction. *Dispositif* can be used to signal an adherence to a philosophical tradition which includes, among others, Bachelard, Canguilhem, Foucault, which sets itself against the empiricist position that facts exist outside the science that discovers them. According to this theory – of the apparatus, or phenomeno-technics, or veridical discourses – truths are internal to the signifying practices that construct them (Copjec 1982: 57).

So the concept of *dispositif* signals the non-deterministic approach to structuring a subject and, by extension, film reality. For Copjec its qualities also allow for an alternative feminist reading: 'What the theory of *dispositif* allows for feminists is a grounds for the critique of the concept of patriarchy. It allows us to question the anthropomorphic power it assumes, the functionalism it exhibits' (Copjec 1982: 58).[12] Her understanding of the difference between two terms could be supplemented by a further excavation of the slightly cross-contaminated conceptual strata of Baudry's article.

Baudry starts by asking the question: why are there so many striking resemblances between the description of Plato's cave and cinematic experience? The prisoners in the cave are immobilized, chained to the walls,

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[12] Copjec's article is essentially a review of the volume published after the conference on the cinematic apparatus mentioned above and her feminist reading of *dispositif* is in line with the strong feminist contributions by Mary Ann Doane, Jacqueline Rose and Teresa de Laurentis (Laurentis and Heath 1980).

and all they can do is watch the projected shadows moving in front of them. They have never been outside or seen the 'real world', but would refuse to do so if given a chance. Of course, for Plato's idealism the 'reality' of the world outside is the reality of Ideas or *Eidos*, which have to be as distanced from the human senses as possible and which can only be accessed by the intellect. Yet what is of particular interest to us is the highly-detailed description of the prisoner's experience in the cave, an experience which can be even called proto-cinematic. The shadows on the wall are two-dimensional, but they move, superimpose and get displaced, which allows us to make the assumption that they are moving along different planes. There are hidden 'operators' or 'machinists' behind the 'parapet, like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top' (Baudry [1975] 2009: 175). There is a kind of projector involved as well: 'the fire burning behind them "at some distance higher up" […] since placed otherwise the fire would transmit the reflections of the prisoners themselves most prominently on the screen' (Baudry [1975] 2009: 175). The shadows the prisoners see are not random, they are actually specially constructed for the purpose: 'figures of men and animals in wood or stone or other materials' resembling the film set decoration (Baudry [1975] 2009: 176). Even the sound is something Plato has considered: 'In the scene taking place in the cave, voices, words "[these echoes which] they could only suppose that the sound came from the shadow passing before their eyes," do not have a discursive or conceptual role' (Baudry [1975] 2009: 177). It is quite remarkable to be reminded of these little details of Plato's myth, which, if put together, resemble the basic cinematographic apparatus invented some two

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thousand years later. Yet it should be kept in mind that all of these technical

elaborations on Plato's behalf are needed in order to invent for the prisoners a

dispositif which would produce an 'impression of reality', a simulacrum of

the world of Ideas, access to which the prisoners do not have.

'Impression of reality' is something which has been associated with

the experience of the cinema even before it was invented, as Baudry puts it:

'It is very possible that there was never any first invention of cinema'

(Baudry [1975] 2009: 178). For him the invention of cinema is the

technological embodiment of an eternal human desire to which the

'impression of reality' is the key. The fulfilment of this desire has become

impossible in 'real life', but it is so strong that even the illusion of its

satisfaction is better than nothing. In order to understand the nature of this

desire another analogy has to be added to the interrelation of *dispositif*

constructed by Plato for the prisoners of the cave and the *dispositif* of the

basic cinematic apparatus: the film as a dream.

The resemblance between a dream and a film has long been noticed

even by an unsophisticated dreamer/cinema-goer. What Baudry tries to do is

to analyse the work of cinema through the theoretical apparatus of

psychoanalysis and the process of dreaming is a relatively well-studied

phenomenon to use for this purpose. Going back to the basics of Freud's *The*

Interpretations of Dreams (1900) and *A Metapsychological Supplement to the*

Theory of Dreams (1917), Baudry tries to determine 'the conditions of dream

formation and the reasons that give dream a specific qualitative nature in the

whole of the psychical life' beyond the basic functions of wish fulfilment and

the protector of sleep (Baudry [1975] 2009: 179). The two qualities of a

sleeping process which allow the dream to pass off for reality to a dreamer are a temporal regression ('which follows two paths – regression of the libido back to a previous period of hallucinatory satisfaction of desire') and topical regression ('by deactivating equally the Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious systems, that is by allowing the easier communication between them, sleep leaves open the regressive path which the cathetic representations will follow as far as perception') (Baudry [1975] 2009: 180). It is interesting to note that the Unconscious operates through images, not words and it is the topical regression which makes the 'translation' possible:

> 'Thoughts are transposed into images – mostly visual ones – thus the representations of words are reduced to representations of objects corresponding to them as if, throughout the whole system, considerations of representability overwhelmed the whole process.' So much so that a dream wish can be turned into a dream fantasy. […] 'The completion of the dream process is also marked by the fact that the content of thought, transformed by regression and reshaped into fantasy of desire, comes into consciousness as a sensory perception and then undergoes the secondary elaboration which affects any perceptual content. We are saying that the dream wish is hallucinated and finds, in the guise of hallucination, a belief in the reality of its fulfilment.' Dream is 'an hallucinatory psychosis of desire' – that is, a state in which mental perceptions are taken for perceptions of reality (Baudry [1975] 2009: 180).

What follows from this loss of differentiation between perception and representation during sleep is the need for a motoricity reality test which by doing away with perception separates again the 'external reality' and the inner perception. Reality, in this case, is something which does not allow the satisfaction of desires to happen. Unlike the 'impression of reality' which is always marked by the *partial* submergence into desire because it takes place during the state of consciousness, full submergence is, to use Baudry's

expression, '*more-than-real*' due to the immediate satisfaction of the desire during the sleep which is perceived as real.

Another important feature of a dream is that of projection:

> […] Projection evokes at once the *analytic use* of the defence mechanism which consists in referring and attributing to the exterior representations and affects which the subject refuses to acknowledge as his own, and it also evokes a distinctly *cinematographic use* since it involves images which, once projected, come back to the subject as a reality perceived from outside reality (Baudry [1975] 2009: 181) [my italics].

This idea of dream as a projection was also supported by Bertram David Lewin's discovery of the *dream screen*, otherwise known as the 'background object of primary identification' in 1946 (Lewin). Just as a screen of cinematographic apparatus, dream screen is a blank white surface which serves as a site of a dream's projection. It is not part of the diegesis of a dream and so is rarely noticed by the dreamer since the content of the dream taking place on it gets all the attention. Lewin's hypothesis was that the dream screen is:

> Dream's hallucinatory representation of the mother's breast on which the child used to fall asleep after nursing. In this way it expresses a state of complete satisfaction while repeating the original condition of the oral phase in which the body did not have the limits of its own, but was extended undifferentiated from the breast (Baudry [1975] 2009: 182).

Once again the conditions of merging exterior and interior supplemented by an immediate satisfaction of desire are manifesting themselves. Yet, as the oral phase precedes the mirror stage, it could be said that the fusion of external and internal body limits is what is surpassed only during the formation of the Self. All of these considerations lead Baudry to conclude that:

> *Impression of reality* and that which we have defined as *the desire of cinema*, as cinema in its general *dispositif* would recall, would mime a form of archaic *satisfaction experienced by the subject by reproducing the scene of it* (Baudry [1975] 2009: 183) [my italics].

The eternal desire to go back to the undifferentiated state of satisfaction – this is the primary drive behind the cinema and all of the conditions needed for its realization are also available to the cinema-goer: the dim space of the cinema hall, the limited body mobility – passivity – of the viewer, as well as overinvested visual perception. As Baudry states:

> […] In order to explain the cinema effect, it is necessary to consider it from the viewpoint of the *dispositif* that it constitutes, *dispositif* which in its totality includes the subject. And first of all, the subject of the unconscious […] One must therefore start to analyze the impression of reality by differentiating between perception and representation. The cinematographic *dispositif* is unique in that *it offers the subject perceptions 'of a reality' whose status seems similar to that of representations experienced as perception* (Baudry [1975] 2009: 184-5).

The cinematographic *dispositif* manages to pause everything to do with reality testing without eliminating the reality principle completely. The famous formulation of this paradoxical situation of a cinema-goer by Christian Metz is: 'I know very well' that the image projected on screen is not real, 'but just the same, I believe it, I love it'(cited in Corrigan *et al.* 2011: 3). Baudry, drawing on the parallels between Plato's cave, film and dream structures, manages to demonstrate convincingly that it is *dispositif* which lies at the heart of activation of ancient desire, a desire which can be satisfied only through illusion, whether perceived as such (cinema) or perceived as real (Plato's cave or during a dream).

> The entire cinematographic *dispositif* is activated in order to provoke this simulation: it is indeed a simulation of a condition of the subject,

a position of the subject, a subject and not reality (Baudry [1975] 2009: 187).

With the help of the basic cinematic apparatus and *dispositif* it becomes clear once again that the reality which is reproduced in cinema is not the reality of the 'objective world', but that of the 'self'. To make clear the importance of *dispositif* in this process, it might be useful to quote Baudry's differentiation of them:

> In a general way, we distinguish the basic cinematographic apparatus [*l'appareil de base*], which concerns the ensemble of the equipment and operations necessary to the production of a film *and* its projection, from the *dispositif* discussed in this article, which solely concerns projection and which includes the subject to whom the projection is addressed. Thus the 'basic cinematographic apparatus' involves the film stock, the camera, developing, montage considered in its technical aspects, etc., *as well as dispositif* of projection (Baudry [1975] 2009: 174) [my italics].

We can conclude, therefore, that the notion of *dispositif* concerns the situation of a spectator and not the basic cinematographic apparatus. The main function of *dispositif* is the *production of the subject* and it coincides with the main function of ideology (as Louis Althusser sees it), but by evoking different mechanisms.

The conceptual mistake of *not italicizing dispositif*, of leaving it bundled up with the notion of the basic cinematographic apparatus, of keeping them undifferentiated, is just like returning back to the oral phase of childhood development: blending the exterior (basic cinematographic apparatus) and interior (*dispositif*) together. The time of the mirror stage in film theory is long past and the formation of a more conceptually mature apparatus, the 'self' of film theory, must follow.

All in all, film theory of the 1970s as a product of the specific political, intellectual and cultural context naturally had its weak spots. One of them was a naïve binary concept of avant-garde vs mainstream films which did not stand the test of time and further theoretical scrutiny by the post-modernists. All undialectical oppositions were put under question, just like the romanticized visions of Maoism. The decline of film theory by the beginning of the 1980s, with its place taken by cultural studies, happened partially because of the incorporation of the representation of the film-work by mainstream films themselves (after all, bourgeois ideology has an extraordinary ability to incorporate its own critique in order to undermine all negativity) and partially because of the newly-found potential for fragmentation and non-dominant code reading by the audience (in terms of gender, race, ethnicity etc). The questions it asked, the psychoanalytical methodology it deployed, the interpretations it suggested might be now out of fashion, but are not in any way resolved. Perhaps it is time to re-visit its classical texts, spot the problematic, paradoxical or simply misunderstood or mistranslated notions, as I have tried to do with *dispositif*, in order to discover its unexplored potential. Now I shall attempt to bring the understandings of *dispositif* from different academic fields (philosophy and film theory) together in order to test their effectiveness in relation to representations of railway and urban spaces in Soviet films.

Chapter 2: *Dispositifs* of the railway and city in Soviet cinema of the 1920-1930s

2.1 Railway *dispositif*

In order to bring the 'philosophical' and the 'film theory' visions together, it must be recognized that they both backtrack the autonomy of the subject and provide us with a tool to examine the mechanisms of its production. We suggest considering a railway *dispositif* as one of the most suitable for differentiation of apparatus and *dispositif*. Tracking representations of railway in the early European and American films and in the early Soviet film might provide us with the needed example of the event where the apparatus stays the same, but the *dispositifs* created by it are different. The concept of *dispositif* could enable us to better understand the mechanisms of the subject's production under different social and economic systems.

A deep correlation between railway and cinema has fascinated both producers and spectators from the very birth of cinema. One of the first films ever made, *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (Lumiére brothers, 1896), and the mythologized 'initial terror' reaction of the spectators to it could be conceived as the primal scene of the cinema's Unconscious evoking the traumatic desire of revenge in the contemporary researcher.[13] However, the enacting of the 'revenge' of understanding and rationalizing the mysterious railway-cinema relations did not come until the end of 1980s and 1990s when the topic gained the attention of cinema studies. Yet there are two methodological aspects that must be recognized in this respect. First, the researchers dealing with the subject mostly come from early cinema studies. Although it is logical that a study of this phenomenon might

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[13] As opposed both to the interpretation of the primal scene by Christian Metz as the always-already internalized feature of the 'naive viewer' and the historical perspective Tom Gunning gives to it (Gunning 2004).

be more successful when focusing at the very earliest stages of cinema appearance[14] before it gets institutionalized and 'codified' by later practices, it should not turn into a dogma for those wishing to explore later periods. Second, it is American and European films that constitute the core objects of analysis. As a result, Soviet film practices are undeservedly double-excluded. So the aim of this work is to try to apply already developed methodological approaches to Soviet films of the late 1920s and 1930s, being cautiously aware of the striking contextual differences.

One does not need to be a researcher to notice the basic similarities of the railway and cinematic experiences: the still position of the body accompanied by the high mobility of the framed image. However, an experience of 'pure' visual pleasure is 'contaminated' by the actual moving of the train for utilitarian purposes and mostly monotonous sequence of images (though experimental cinema lovers might disagree). The proto-cinematic experience of the railway was important to teach spectators *how* to watch films and to make them familiar with the new kind of psychological shock which formed the modern hysteric urban subject as characterized by Susan Buck-Morss's concept of anaesthetics (Buck-Morss 1992: 18). Yet taking into consideration the critique of Baudry, it is essential to abandon the tendency to leave out the material technology, the apparatus, so let us sketch the main parallels between the technical development of railway and cinema.

The interest of cinema in railway can be traced as far back as Thomas Edison's experiments with electrical locomotive power in the 1880s (Kirby 1997: 20). From the middle of the 19th century, railway owners patronized fine arts,

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[14] See Kirby 1997; Tsivian 1987.

especially photography, and with the invention of the cinema it became the privileged mode of the representations of trains. The peak of popularity of the American railway was in 1916 and roughly paralleled the Russian system dating back to the 1830s. After the 1920s the automobile replaced the railway as the mass means of transport in almost all 'Western' countries. In contrast, the Soviet railway remained not only one of the key strategic objects to be renewed after the Revolution (reconstruction was completed only after the Second World War), but also the only affordable travel solution for people. Outside the Western countries railway was always the embodiment of the imperialistic will to power. The Soviet system was not an exception to this logic, although in the inverted terms of inner colonization. In particular the Stalinist culture endeavoured to re-signify the railway, which obviously emerged during the Russian Empire and needed to shake off its imperialistic connotations. An interesting example of the re-signification was the translation of the book by Hanns Günther on the railway from German into Russian, *Railway. Its origins and life* [*Zheleznaia doroga. Ee vozniknovenie i zhizn'*] [*Das Buch von der Eisenbahn – Ihr Werden und Wesen, 1927*] (Günther 1930) with the annotation stating:

> While preparing Giunter's book, which is immensely popular in Germany, for publication the editorial does not consider it possible to limit itself to the original. The book has been reworked to comply with the conditions of the railway of the Soviet Union which led to the partial *replacement of some illustrations* in order to achieve a better presentation of the work of our railway. Moreover, *the text was also considerably supplemented* by descriptions of the development and achievements of the railway of the USSR.

> При издании книги Гюнтера, пользующейся большой популярностью в Германии, издательство не считает возможным ограничиться лишь переводом немецкого оргинала. Книга переработана в соответствии с условиями железных дорог Союза, при чем *часть иллюстраций заменена* с целью значительно полнее осветить работу наших дорог. Кроме того *в текст*

внесены значительные дополнения, рисующие развитие и достижения дорог СССР [my italics].

Indeed, the illustrations constituting no less than 50% of the book would represent a quite 'bourgeois' vision of the railway, which was not appropriate in the Soviet Union. As a result, a radical visual division is manifest: on one side, the *original photographs* and *illustrations* of the 'Western' (mainly British and German) locomotives, types of carriages, train stations as well as under- and above-ground trains; on the other, *visualized statistics* and some *maps* of the Soviet railway (Fig. 1). This 'smart' solution reduced the problem of the ruined railway to a problem of a lack of photographic material. Moreover, the catastrophic situation with the railway network is admitted and the promises of the five-year plan are made:

> In the USSR the situation is different, since, as mentioned above, a considerable railway deficiency is felt. That is why 14561 km of railway will be constructed in the next five years from 1928/29 to 1932/33, so that the total length of the railway network in 1932/33 will be 87310 km.

> Иначе обстоит дело в СССР, где, как уже отмечалось выше, ощущается значительный недостаток железных дорог. Поэтому на ближайшее пятилетие, с 1928/29 по 1932/33 г., намечается к постройке 14561 *км*, так что общая длина сети в 1932/33 г. составит 87310 *км* (Günther 1930: 34).
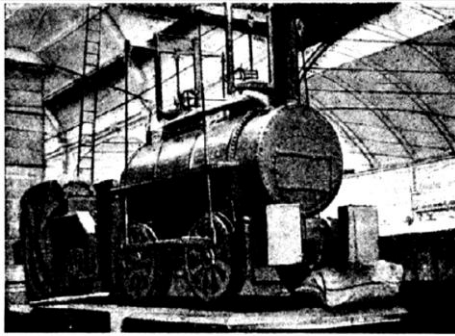
Фиг. 19. Один из первых паровозов линии Стоктон — Дарлингтон. В настоящее время в виде памятника находится на вокзале в Нью-Кестле.

350.070
Тяга

325.016
Путь

215.720
Движение

44.663
Связь

22.865
Матер. Снабж.

57.205
Прочие
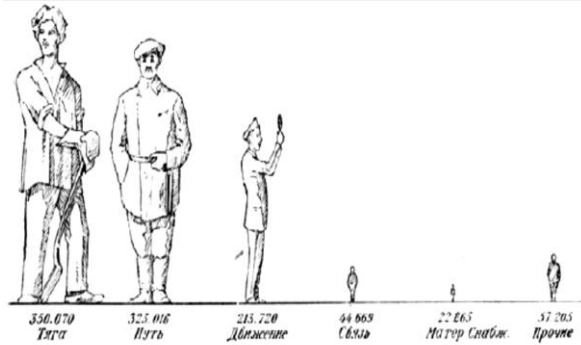
Фиг. 29 Летом 1929 г. на железных дорогах СССР, без новостроящихся, всего было занято 1 014 945 человек. Распределение их по отделам показано на рисунке.
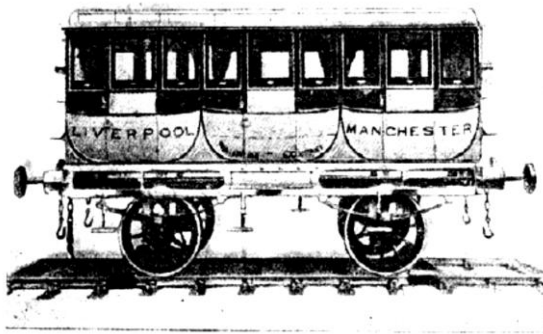
Фиг. 23. Пассажирский вагон I класса с рессорами и буферами. Начал курсировать по линии Ливерпуль—Манчестер через несколько лет после открытия дороги.

Фиг. 31. Ежедневный пробег поездов в СССР в 1927/28 г. составил кругло 0,9 млн. км. Длина экватора равна 40000 км, следовательно, ежедневный пробег поездов СССР превышает длину экватора в 22½ раза.
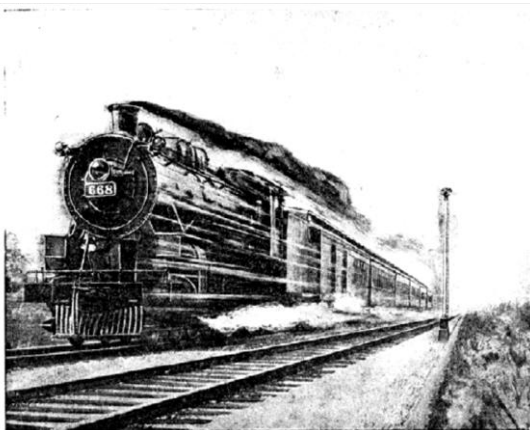
Фиг. 27. Курьерский поезд между Сент-Луисом и Чикаго (Сев.-Амер. Соед. Штаты).

54 %
Пригородный

46 %
Дальний

Фиг. 32. В 1927/28 г. на дорогах СССР в среднем в сутки было отправлено пассажиров: в пригородном сообщении — 0,41 млн., в дальнем — 0,35 млн.
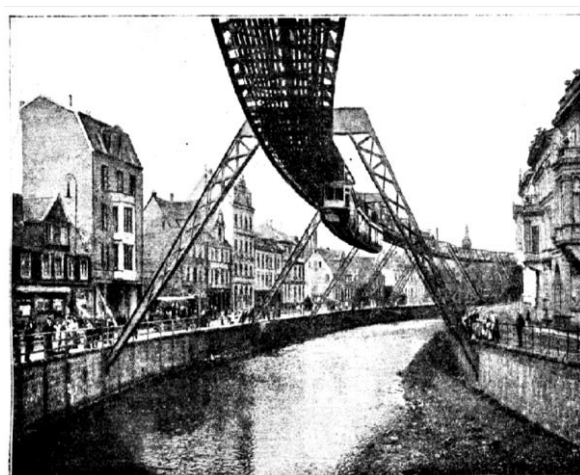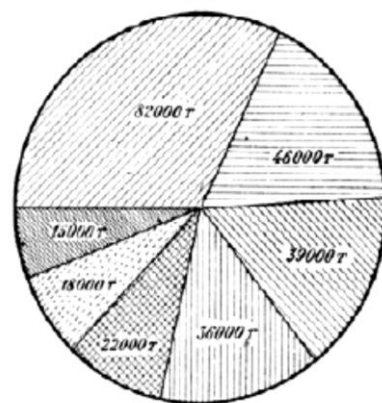
Fig. 1 Differences in the uses of visual materials: photographic images of Western railways from the original book (on the left) and added visualized statistics of the Soviet railway (on the right)

However, in order to understand the importance of railway for the first five-year plan we will analyse two types of Soviet documentary industrial films that provide us with the alternative representations of trains: *The Steel Road (Turksib)* [*Stal'noi put'* (*Turksib*)] (Turin, 1929) and a series of newsreels, *Cine-train* [*Kinopoezd*] (Medvedkin *et al*, 1932-34). A further challenge of both examples of documentary industrial films is the theoretical lens they could be analysed through. It is problematic to situate these films on the ideological scale and define what kind of subject is constructed through their *dispositif*. On the one hand, they do use many techniques of the early American and European films; on the other, their aim is different from the touristic consumption which constituted 'Western' actualities, travelogues and phantom rides on trains and subways. They are industrial films. But are these industrial films equivalent to the Western

definition of those 'made in and on industrial organizations', 'lacking artistic distinction' and 'which more often than not are supposed to directly translate discourse into social practice' (Hediger and Vonderau 2009: 10-11)? Furthermore, the Soviet industry film is definitely not 'an orphan genre of twentieth-century cinema composed of government-produced and industrially sponsored movies that sought to achieve the goals of their sponsors, rather than the creative artists involved', as the annotation to the above mentioned book states. We must be aware of the different *dispositif* the films constitute and perhaps our starting point this time could be the one Dobrenko suggests:

> The fetishization of production in the USSR is equivalent to the fetishization of consumption in the West. Whereas 'production relations' in a 'consumer society' are squeezed out to the periphery of public discourse, in the USSR they overshadow everything. Whereas in a 'consumer society' the product conceals the labour invested in it, in the USSR labour conceals the product that it produces. […] Central to this non-production are 'socialist production relations' and the 'new man' that they beget, and by far not the product that only accompanies the basic task – the production of socialism (Dobrenko 2007a: 256).

What follows is an attempt to apply the *Auftrag, Anlass, Adressat* – occasion, purpose, addressee – methodology to analyse Soviet industrial films without quite abandoning auteur theory (Hediger and Vonderau 2009: 23).

The Steel Road (*Turksib*) (Turin, 1929) is considered to be a classic of 'socialist construction'. It portrays the construction of the railway that connects Siberia and Turkmenistan – bread and cotton. Both Viktor Turin (director) and Evgenii Slavinsky (cameraman) came from the genre of feature film, inviting Viktor Shklovsky to write the script (Payne 2001: 45). A 'dramatized portrayal of reality' or 'creative treatment of actuality', as Grierson's definition of documentary states, is fully applicable to the film. Divided into five parts which create tension, conflict and its resolution, *Turksib* caused Turin to claim that the

picture was 'only partially documentary' [*chut'- chut' neigrovaia*] (Roberts 1999: 110). Roberts defines it as 'travelogue with an economic message', and indeed the Soviet classic imperialist argument is obviously structuring the film around the benefits Turksib would bring to the country: 'down with centuries of the primitive!' [*voina vekovomu primitivu*] (as one of the intertitles goes). One does not even have to apply 'vulgar' psychoanalysis to read the easily recognizable rhetoric about the 'Land' being penetrated by one of the most 'phallic' symbols – the train – 'And defeated she opens up her resources' [*I pobezhdennaia otkryvaet svoi bogatstva*].[15] The film became exceedingly popular with the public, but failed to gain the Party's approval and as a result Turin was forbidden to film for ten years (Payne 2001: 37-8). This was most probably because *Turksib* is based on the traditional opposition of 'Nature-Man', modernizing, industrialising and even enlightening the 'savage' – 'To master Chokpar, to master the word. The weapon' [*Ovladet' Chokparom, ovladet' slovom. Oruzhiem*], but all of these without a direct appeal to Stalin, the Party or at least the five-year plan (Payne 2001: 42). Now let us consider the rhetorical strategies of this 'monument to men's labour' and its mapping of *dispositif*.

Engineering and construction of space in *Turksib* uses the figures of opposition, perspective, narration and synecdoche (encapsulation) borrowed from the early cinema genre of phantom train rides (Verhoeff and Warth 2002: 246). However, if in the early cinema of the West they are used to create the ideal product of the tourist's consumption, in *Turksib* the beautiful mountains, fields of cotton and endless deserts are filmed not to be enjoyed, but to be re-worked, re-

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[15] The same metaphor is used by Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera*, though it might not be so obvious to correlate the intimate episode of the 'woman awakening' in her bourgeois flat and cameramen filming the train coming upon him.

built, mapped and re-shaped. The process of mapping is of great interest here as it correlates with the above mentioned Deleuzian topography and might even be a more suitable visualization of *dispositif.*

In the filmic context the maps in Fig. 2 are presented as a 'pure' visual education. If we remember the *topography* of *dispositif* by Deleuze supplemented with Baudry's characteristic –

> For we are dealing here with a *dispositif*, with a *metaphorical relationship between places* or a *relationship between metaphorical places*, with *topography*, the knowledge of which defines for both philosopher and analyst the degree of relationship to truth or to description, or to illusion, and the need for an ethical point of view' (Baudry [1975] 2009: 172) [my italics]

we can suggest that the map of the Turksib which is being drawn and unveiled in front of us embodies:

- the power of the state through the *line of force (power)* – the *railway itself*, which in the animated map is shown as the moving arrow connecting different points and binding them together;
- the mobility of the line and the rhetoric of numbers which emphasizes its intentionality;
- the cities of Semipalatinsk and Alma-Aty marked as the start and end points and forming the *line of visibility* making the existence of the railway apparent for the local population before the construction itself is actually finished (Payne 2001: 41).

Finally, the representation of the whole process in the film could be seen as the *curves of enunciation* which legitimizes the new socialist government in place, its politics of Soviet Orientalism embodied by the new film studio Vostok-Kino strategically planned to '"enlighten" the "backward" East' and

'propagandize its nationalities' policy in minority areas' (Payne 2001: 38 &

42).
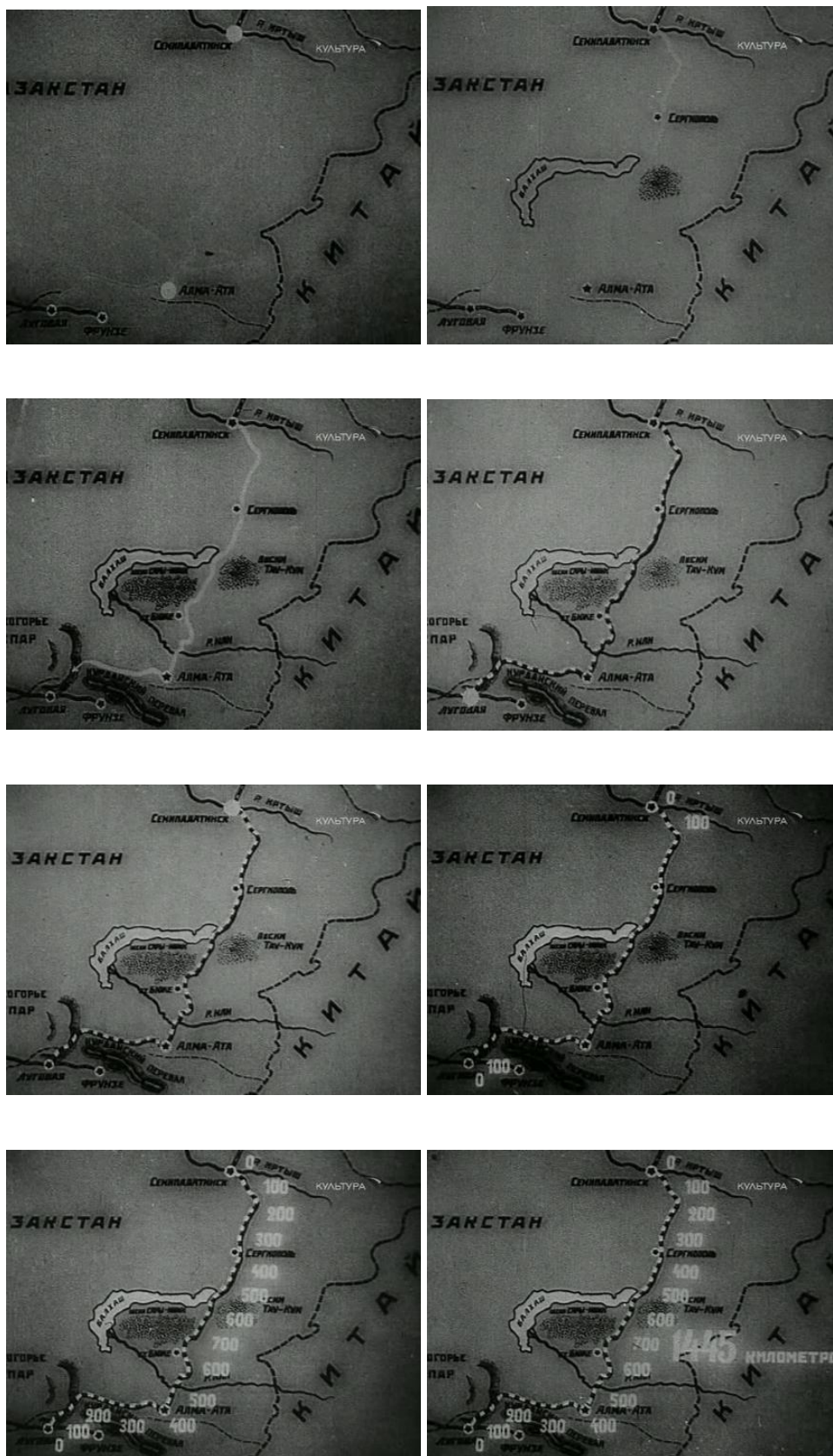
Fig. 2 The mapping of Turksib – *visualized dispositif*?

The most problematic lines of subjectification might be seen in the ideas of the transferability of the technical and administrative knowledge constituting the 'clarity' and 'transparency' of the given schemes. To use the film's metaphor, the subject recognizes itself in the intertitles: *'…The mountains and plains saw the levelling instrument… The levelling instrument saw the mountains and plains'* [*I uvideli gory i stepi nivelir… I uvidel nivelir gory i stepi…*]. To sum up, it is the complex interrelationship of visuality, power and organization and the medium of the film which 'glues', formulates and re-broadcasts the specific forms of social production of the subject. What could be considered an *apparatus* in our particular case? They are the camera and the train, however used in a different context they do form another *dispositif* which could possibly be found in the *Cine-train* of Medvedkin.

A series of newsreel, *Cine-train* [*Kinopoezd*] (Medvedkin *et al*, 1932-34) is another example of industrial film which is hard to define. It does 'document social practice and creates feedback for social and industrial organizations' (Hediger and Vonderau 2009: 12), but does it 'from below', undermining not only the whole concept of 'industry films', but also the one of 'production of socialism'.

Becoming much more than just another agit-prop campaign in support of the first five-year plan, permission was given to Medvedkin by a government order at the end of 1931:

> In order to implement the decision at the October meeting of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party on the improvement of rail transport and the development of technical propaganda through visual acquaintance with the basic activities of rail transport, it is necessary to employ new methods and forms of mass work in technical propaganda, using the cinema to mobilise the

working masses around the renovation of rail transport (Roberts 1999: 118).

The cine-train was made from three adapted carriages where a laboratory, a montage room, a printing room, a cartoon-making room, garage and other production sites were fitted, as well as 'sleeping places' (one square metre per person) for 32 members of the team. The first trip was made on the 19th of January 1932 with Alexandr Medvedkin being in charge of the first six trips, later passing on his responsibilities to Yakov Bliokh. On the 3rd of July 1933 the cine-train was named after Kliment Voroshylov. So far it has been discovered that 12 trips were made, with no less than 116 films produced; however, only 28 have survived into the present day. The date on which the train returned to the depot is still not agreed on (Deriabin 2000).

As is known, the object is defined by the methodology and questions asked, so it should be noted that *Cine-train*'s popularity grew immensely at the end of the 1960s when the problem of 'direct cinema' was revived again by Chris Marker and the Medvedkine Group. However, what we would like to concentrate on now is the other *subjectification* manifested in those films, when the apparatus of the train and the camera, as well as some other elements of *dispositif*, stays the same:

− the line of enunciation understood as another documentary made for the celebration of the five-year plan does not differ from *Turksib*;

− nor do lines of force (power) and visibility 'rectifying' and structuring all of the *Cine-train*'s films, whether with the rhetoric of consumption of the 'facts of growth' or the satire of the worker producing faulty parts, or of the bureaucratic

committees not caring about the conditions the comrades live and work in, as well as glorification of labour and quality so much needed to implement the plan;

– yet the lines of subjectification are different.

The subject of the *Cine-train*'s *dispositif* was formed through the mechanism of de-familiarization. The uncanny effect of misrecognition of Ideal-I was produced by the technique of filming the workers and later showing the film about them to them as an audience. However, we consider that the potential of this de-familiarizing effect was not fully exploited and was soon abandoned as the later films of *Cine-train* (from #5 onwards) started using more and more professional acting and staging, and thereby turned into a more common propaganda. As most of the films were 'filmed today – shown tomorrow' the method of work was innovative for those times and this 'immediacy' served the aim of avoiding censorship. This resulted in the silence of the official press about it, the loss of trust of the Party and failure to perform the responsible task given to them.

All in all it could be said that the railroad was a contested figure in various struggles to establish film as an instrument of power versus an arena of experimentation and freedom. I have included the early Soviet industrial documentary films into the sphere of legitimized research on the effect and representations of the railway. Furthermore, the methodology of differentiating the *apparatus* and *dispositif* was used to analyse the underlying ideology of the subject construction in the Soviet context. It might now be productive to apply the concept of *dispositif* to the Soviet city.

2.2 City *dispositif*

2.2.1 Symphonies of a socialist city

Our review of the city-film panorama of the 1920s and 1930s should start with discussion of the film which helped to define the genre of city symphony as such and which deals explicitly with cinematic urbanism. The documentary *Man with a Movie Camera* by Dziga Vertov [*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*] (1929) treats urban life as material for the film, as opposed to using the city as a backdrop for the film's narrative. However, before contributing one more reading to the numerous interpretations of the film, it is necessary to touch upon the genre of city symphony and analyze other little studied examples of the genre made by *kinoki* in order to situate Vertov's film in dialogue with them. This line of enquiry seeks to avoid any anachronistic discussion of the film as a unique 'masterpiece', and is intended to inscribe Vertov's film in the broader contexts of his own *oeuvre* and the epoch's artistic and political environments.[16]

City symphony was identified as a genre of the avant-garde cinema of the 1920s after two films *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* [*Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*] by Walter Ruttmann (Germany, 1927) [hereinafter, *Berlin*] and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) [hereinafter, *MWMC*]. Yet as catchy as the name sounds (other possible names are 'city-film' (Weihsmann 1997; Strathausen 2003; Werth 2013) and 'city documentary' (Crofts and Rose 1977: 15)), the precise origins of the genre and critical consensus regarding the body of films which are

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[16] The key examples of research establishing the correlation of the film and its era include, but are not limited to, Petrić 1987, MacKay 2012 and Tsivian 2007 (with regard to Constructivism), Hicks 2007 (with regard to journalism and documentary), and MacKay 2013 (with regard to the film's production history), Kirby 1985 and Mayne 1989 (with regard to representation of women) as well as the volume edited by Tsivian's 2004 which deals with all of the above and much more.

exemplary of it have yet to be established.[17] Frequently mentioned examples of the genre include *Manhatta* by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler (1921, USA), *Rien que les heures* [*Nothing but the hours*/*Nothing but time*/*Only the Hours*] by Alberto Cavalcanti (1926, France), *À propos de Nice* [About Nice] by Jean Vigo (1930, France) and *Moscow* by Mikhail Kaufman and Il'ia Kopalin (1927, USSR). My analysis here adds *In Spring* ([*Navesni* (Ukrainian) or *Vesnoi* (Russian)] by Mikhail Kaufman (1929) to this list, and places Kaufman's film in dialogue with Vertov's more well-known example of the genre.

In terms of defining the above films as city symphonies, P.Adams Sitney argued that this genre is 'specifically avant-garde'(Sitney 1978: ix cited in Graf 2007: 77). It could be summarized that in order for a film to be regarded as belonging to this genre, it should be at the intersection of the following attributes:

- a unity of place and time – the action takes place from dawn to dusk (Penz 2003: 144; Alifragkis and Penz 2009: 3); or be 'a day in the life' of a city (Crofts and Rose 1977: 15; Donald 1999: 77; Roberts 2000: 1);

- rhythmic or associative editing (Graf 2007: 78).

To quote Graf: 'It is within this area of tension, somewhere between photographic mimesis and pure motion energy, that city symphonies are located' (2007: 89). He also points out the formal devices city symphonies have in common: the aim of

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[17] Penz lists only *Rien que les heures, Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* and *Man with a Movie Camera* (2003: 144); Crofts and Rose adds to this list *Moscow* by Mikhail Kaufman (USSR, 1927), *Regen* by Joris Ivens (Netherlands, 1929) and *À propos de Nice* by Jean Vigo (France, 1930) (1977: 15); Graff supplements the list further with *Sao Paolo – Sinfonia do Metropole* by Adalberto Kemeny and Rudolf Lustig (Brazil, 1929), *City Symphony* by Hermann Weinberg (USA, 1930) and *Douro, Faina Fluvial* by Manoel de Oliveira (Portugal, 1931) (2007: 78-9); furthermore, Weihsmann also mentions *Velocità* by Pippo Oriani and Corrado D'Errico (Italy, 1930), *Stramilano* by Corrado D'Errico (Italy, 1929), and *La Tour* by René Clair (France, 1928) (2011: 26); Werth also adds: *Paris* by René Hervil (France, 1924), *Ménilmontant* Dmitri Kirsanoff (France, 1926), *Les halles centrales* by Boris Kaufman (France, 1927), *Études sur Paris* by André Sauvage (France, 1928), and *La Zone* by Georges Lacombe (France, 1928).

developing a new film language and resorting to music rather than art as the source of possible functioning principles (Graf 2007: 80). However, critical literature on the genre itself, its formal characteristics and set of stylistic criteria is so scarce and dispersed that some commentators state that 'Montage-based films without human leads where the city is the subject' is most likely a 'safe' definition of city symphonies, an approach which has been described as 'a non-controversial lowest common denominator' (Penz and Lu 2011: 10). This 'safe' assumption would exclude many films, notably those which are a mixture of fiction and documentary (e.g. *Rien que les heures* by Alberto Cavalcanti) or even Vertov's classic itself since the Cameraman could be considered a legitimate 'human lead'. However, the subsequent discussion is consistent with Penz and Lu in their suggestion that '[…] Every new city symphony is having to reinvent the genre' (2011: 11), perhaps more so because of the modernist stance of those attempting it and the looseness of the genre's definitions. Taking the problems with the genre into account, it must also be remembered that the productivity of the categorization depends on the dialectics of generalizations and specificities, theory and historical context which, while they might not offer absolute conclusions, do at least help us ask the right questions. Thus before proceeding to a more formal discussion of the three Soviet city-symphonies I plan to address – *Moscow* (1927) by Mikhail Kaufman and Ilia Kopalin, *MWMC* and *In Spring* by Mikhail Kaufman (1930) – a brief characteristic of the predecessors will be made against the foil of John Grierson's complaint in 'First Principles of Documentary' (1932) that '[…] *Berlin* still excites the mind of the young, and the symphony form is still their most popular persuasion. In fifty scenarios presented by the

tyros, forty-five are symphonies of Edinburgh or of Ecclefechan or of Paris or of Prague (Grierson 1966: 150).

The very first films which placed the everyday life of a city as their main subject were made in the genre of *actualités* – 'visual newspapers' – and travelogues as a form of visual tourism. Although they could be considered as supplying the foundation for city symphonies, they influenced the latter to the same degree as European avant-garde art (Cubism, Surrealism, and Expressionism) (Penz 2003; Strathausen 2003). In fact, the first city symphony film *Manhatta* (1921, USA) was more literature-centred, with the film serving as a 10-minute illustration of Walt Whitman's poem *Mannahatta* (1880) where the lines of the poem are present as intertitles. The close-ups of architectural details of Manhattan take place of the rhythmic montage and camera movement of later city symphonies. The photographer of the film, Charles Sheeler, soon joined the Precisionists, whose visual characteristics included the abstract presentation of functionalist architecture and details of machinery. This film was the first to portray the everyday life of a city from dawn to dusk, but it lacked the polyphonic qualities and associative montage of the films to come.[18]

Rien que les heures by Alberto Cavalcanti (1926, France) is a 45-minute semi-documentary cross-section of Paris with an engaging mix of the aesthetical and the social. The title is presented in a constructivist style, with strict geometrical lines and a globe made dynamic with the help of flickering lightning (Fig. 3).

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[18] For a close reading of the film see (Suárez 2002).

Fig. 3 *Rien que les heures* constructivist title

The film's opening intertitle provides a radical, though cunning, renunciation of narrative in the *Zeitgeist* discourse of the avant-garde: 'This film contains no story. It is just a sequence of impressions on the passage of time'. The statement is actually misleading since the story of a prostitute and her pimp killing a female newspaper vendor is the main story-line which motivates many of the camera angles in the film. Yet both the disruptive and associative montage as well as the non-linearity of the narrative contribute to a hindered understanding of the story which can be easily missed on the first viewing. The film has a prologue and an epilogue which are interrelated and reveal the author's strong views on international urban modernism, fragmentation and the commercialization of cities as the objects for touristic consumption. The opening intertitle states: 'All cities would look the same were it not for the monuments that distinguish them', and the subsequent images include – in a manner of Eisenstein's intellectual montage in *October* (1928) – an Eifel tower thermometer and a snow dome with a Madeleine in it framed by two schematic maps of Paris for tourists (Fig. 4).
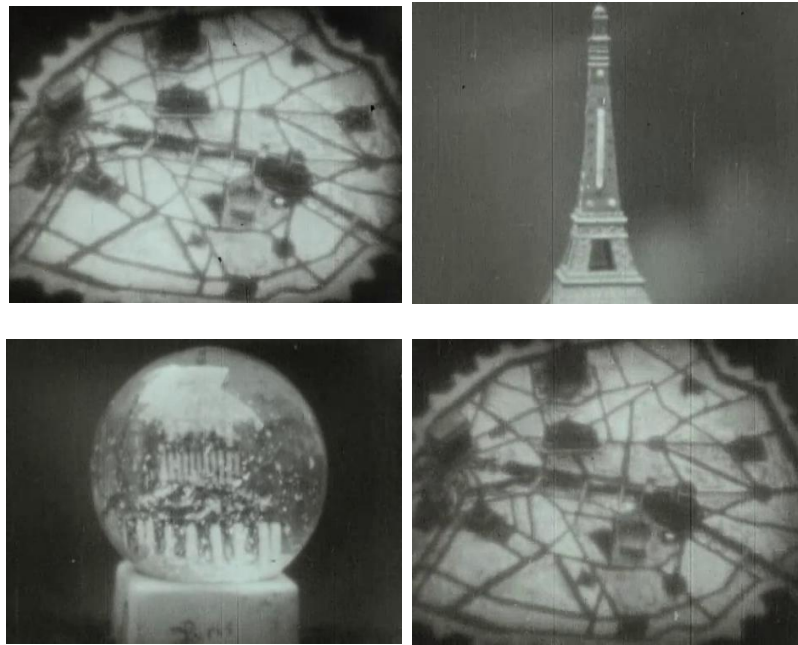
Fig. 4 Fragmented and commercialized Paris

The epilogue's intertitle says: 'We can fix a moment in space to freeze a moment in time but space and time both elude our grasp', and is followed by a globe and a map of the world with only Paris and Beijing marked on it. Paris is represented by an aerial view of the Arc de Triomphe and the boulevards radiating from it, while the image of Beijing is constructed within one collage shot of oriental postcard views (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Paris-Beijing: totalizing and immobilizing view from above and touristic gaze

After the prologue the film keeps positioning itself within the cinematic, artistic and political contexts of the era. It starts with what looks like typical *actualities* footage of Paris that had been produced in abundance since the invention of cinema, only for such *clichés* to be wiped away by hand immediately, thus separating the film from other products for touristic consumption (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Anti-actualities stance of *Rien que les heures*

Rien que les heures proceeds by showing some well-dressed women of the bourgeoisie and an intertitle denying that they are going to be the central characters of the film ('This is not a depiction of the fashionable and elegant life, but of the everyday life of the humble, the downtrodden'), and the freeze-frame-turned-film-still of the women is torn to pieces (Fig. 7).
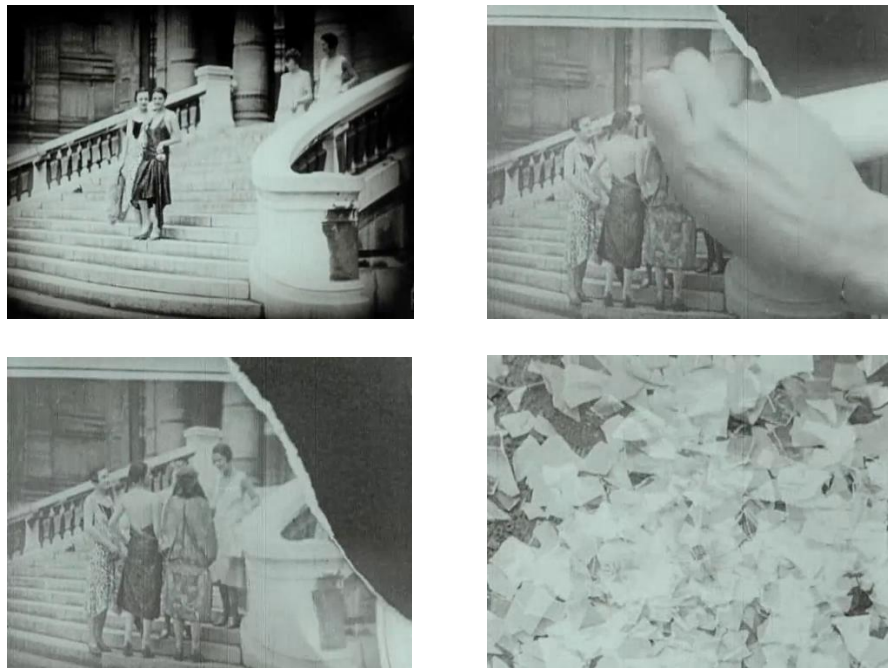
Fig. 7 Political declaration of *Rien que les heures*

The film's manifesto is concluded by proclaiming the superiority of film as a medium over painterly art. The intertitle states: 'Painters of every nationality depict the city'; it is followed by a close up of an eye and a gallery of urban landscape paintings before an intertitle asserts 'But only a succession of images can bring it to life' (Fig. 8).[19]

Fig. 8 'Painters of every nationality depict the city'

When the main part of the film begins, it indeed concentrates on the representation of a 'typical day of the city from morning till night' – early morning hours with the last revellers and a prostitute, empty streets, the appearance of the first workers, working hours, lunch, afternoon swimming, and

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[19] For the possible reason behind the choice of artists and a close-text analysis of the film touching upon the aspects which are beyond our interest see (Werth 2013).

leisure in the evening. Some of the fragments exhibit quite interesting Vertovian influences: for instance, in the noontime sequence when the 'rich' enjoy their lunch at a restaurant, Cavalcanti comments on the provenance of the steak on the plate by showing the butchery (Fig. 9). It is highly evocative of the bull/time turned backwards sequence in Vertov's *Cine-Eye* (1924), but with a very different ideological connotations (discussed in Chapter 3.2).
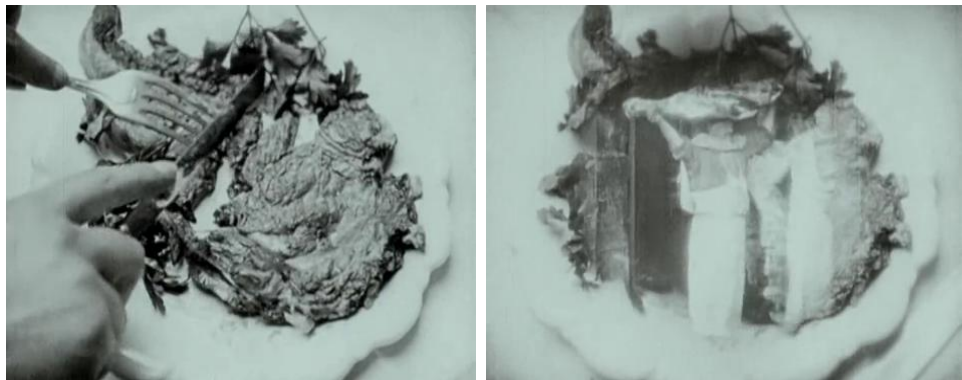
Fig. 9 The provenance of the steak

In addition, the typical visual figures of the city symphony such as sleeping homeless people and swimming at leisure (including diving) could also be traced back to Vertov (Fig. 10).[20]

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[20] It could be suggested that Cavalcanti (who moved to Paris in 1920) had seen *Cine-Eye* since it was shown at *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925 and received a diploma there (Hicks 2007: 140n).
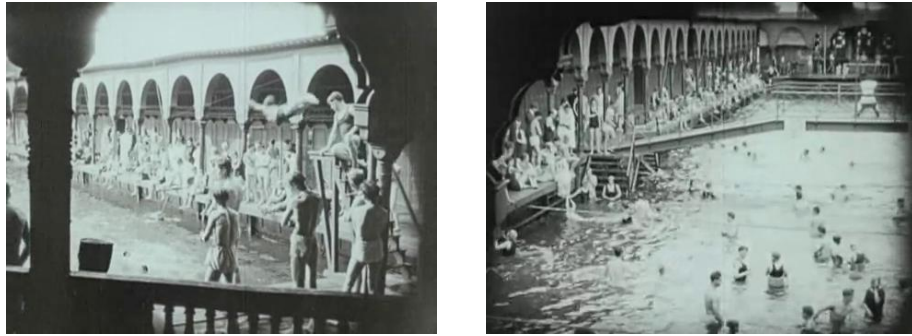
Fig. 10 Possible Vertovian influences: shots of the homeless and leisure activity. But Cavalcanti's 'cine-eye' is not showing how to dive correctly

However, in between these documentary fragments three staged narrative stories are inserted and intersected. The theme of all three are women and time: an old destitute woman who stumbles through the city to the river and embodies everything modernity is not supposed to be: slow, decelerating, inefficient movement, decay and death (she might be drunk or sick, as the intertitle proclaims she is 'Indifferent to time'); a female newspaper vendor whose job is structured by the time of modernity (newspaper's early publishing hours, quick selling pace and short-lived sensations) and who wants to know her future, as she visits a fortune teller who foresees her death; and a prostitute whose job is also structured around time, but in a reversed way (she is shown trying to get her last customer in the early hours of the morning and the elements of her flat indicate the passage of the day: a puffed out candle, the view of the city from her window with blinds drawn etc.). The strong presence of the staged narrative caused Harry Alan to call the film 'subjective' and a 'romance' (as opposed to the 'objective' and 'document'- like *Berlin*), nonetheless, the film effectively pioneers the city symphony genre (Alan [1930] 2009: 373).

Cavalcanti's film does not envisage a revolutionary solution as the answer to the social inequalities presented. The director prioritizes the formal

experimentation with montage which offers spatial and chronological displacements (such as its disjointed and non-linear temporality). He also does not use fast montage rhythm to emphasize the machine-like qualities of the contemporary city until the very final shot of the film, which uses multiple exposures to articulate its vision of modernity's fast-paced city. In fact, the film could be said to exhibit a more 'human' rhythm, that is, a rhythm that is structured around a 'natural' progression through a day, albeit disrupted by the narrative of the story. The only instance one sees cars and trams together– quintessential markers of modernity – is in another collaged shot in the epilogue of the film which corresponds to the constructivist structure of the opening title, and serves to summarize the main topics of the film itself (time, modernity, universal values) (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11 Film's epilogue shot reminiscent of the title shot and visualizing the key themes

All in all, the film might be a '[…] clumsy social document' (as Cavalcanti once described his film) (cited in Graf 2007: 78), but it is certainly a successful city symphony.

À propos de Nice [About Nice] by Jean Vigo (1930, France) is a 25-minute film whose cinematographer could be said to be the second 'man with a movie

camera', Dziga Vertov's and Mikhail Kaufman's youngest brother, Boris Kaufman. In his manifesto 'Towards a Social Cinema', which was delivered to the *Groupement des Spectateurs d'Avant-Garde* at *Paris's Le Vieux-Colombier*, Vigo stated his intention of directing a film with a strong social statement before the film's second public screening (Vigo [1930] 1993):

> In fact, no sooner is the atmosphere of Nice and the kind of life one leads there – an elsewhere, alas – sketched out, than the film moves to generalize the gross festivities situating them under the sign of grotesque, of the flesh and death, which are the last spasms of a society so little conscious of itself that it is enough to sicken you and to make you into an accomplice of a revolutionary solution (Vigo [1930] 1993: 63).

The film focuses on the 'capital' of the Côte d'Azur – Nice – representing its preparation for the carnival which, in the film, stands for the culmination of human perversion. Surrealistic and sarcastic imagery is what makes this film stand out among other city symphonies (after all, during his above-mentioned speech Vigo expressed his fascination with Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (France, 1929) and, in a fashionable avant-garde gesture of self-denial, proclaimed that he would prefer to show the audience their film, but had not obtained permission to do so). Playful, satirical, yet largely unoriginal juxtapositions abound in the film: a well-off woman proudly strolling the promenade is inter-cut with an ostrich; bourgeois men sunbathing on the beach in their clothes (contrasting the workers playing with a ball in the water) are compared to alligators basking in the sun; a woman's outfits are interchanged and then made to vanish completely using the stop frame technique; the medals and crosses of victory on a general's uniform are paralleled with graveyard crosses etc. (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 Examples of Vigo's satirical juxtapositions

The Vertovian method of the cine-eye is clearly identifiable here too: the estranging Rodchenko-style shooting from a low angle, the filming of the carnival preparation and bored bourgeoisie scattered along the Promenade des Anglais in the 'life caught off-guard' [*zhizn' vrasplokh*] manner.[21] According to Kaufman, it was his decision to use a Kinamo (one of the first hand-held 35mm cameras, which Dziga Vertov had brought to him in 1927) 'to get rid of the tripod, to be

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[21] As Boris Kaufman recalled: 'The focal point of Nice is of course the Promenade des Anglais, where you can be pushed along to take tea. When I used the chair for invalids—the wheelchair—to hold the movie camera as Jean was pushing me, while I was shooting cracks in the ground, [those around us] were talking about Russia. It was very amusing [. . .] Many inspirations were dictated by what we actually found. We didn't set up anything, you know. We took the life as it was' (Polito 2011).

more flexible, and to avoid being noticed by the people we were filming' (*Boris Kaufman* [online]) (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13 Kaufman's 'life caught off-guard' filming of Promenade des Anglais
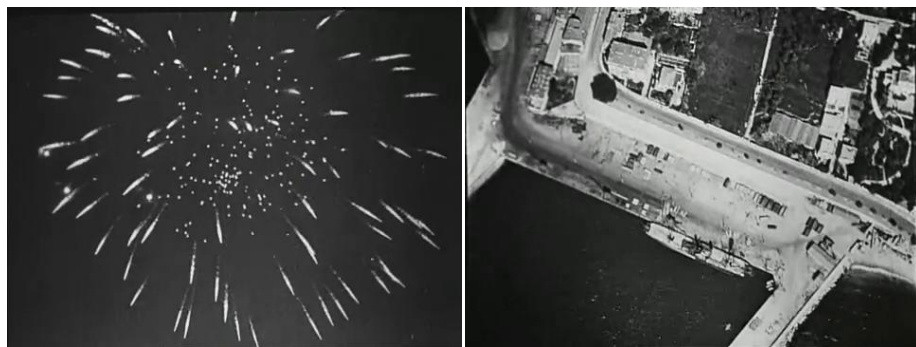
Fig. 14 Two opening shots of *À propos de Nice*

The film opens with two oppositional shots: one is taken from the ground, the other from the sky. A long shot of fireworks and the subsequent aerial one of Nice (Fig. 14) contradict the vast majority of the film's imagery, which maintains the grounded perspective of a city-dweller. Later it becomes clear whose perspective those shots represent: tourists' stereotypical image of Nice as the city of carnival and leisure (fireworks) and the view from private sea planes (aerial shot). Vigo uses the same 'guessing game' principle later when we are shown the confusing tracking shot of a cracked pavement, which later turns out to be the perspective of a newspaper vendor's vehicle (Fig. 15).

Fig. 15 Tracking shots of the newspaper vendor's vehicle

Carnival is the most important period for the city, in which it gets transformed into a space of excess. However, Vigo avoids travelogues, and focuses on the abyss between the boredom of the bourgeoisie and the hard work of the common people in the backyards of the city. The absurdity of the city's preparation for the carnival is constructed in the sequences depicting wiping sand from palm trees and chopping off their 'unaesthetic' leaves, re-painting the heads of gigantic carnival sculptures, using puppets to represent tourists being trapped in casinos straight after their arrival, and Nice's hotels filmed lying on their side etc (Fig. 16).[22] All of this is intercut with footage of the workers' quarters of the city and the work that services the city's touristic needs: women picking the flowers which are thrown away a few hours later in the carnival's Battle of Flowers; the cooks and food transporters involved in catering for the event; and street musicians playing for a sleeping audience.

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[22] Apparently, Vigo was not given permission to shoot on the train station or in the casinos, which he mentioned in his speech: 'The gentleman making a social documentary is the fellow who is small enough to slip into the high priest's throne at Monte Carlo, in other words the croupier's chair, which is no easy matter, believe me' (Polito 2011).

Fig. 16 Tourists as puppets and the displaced hotels of Nice

Vigo's city symphony reveals Nice to be a space marked by the production of social injustice. Although it finishes with images of workers, chimneys and furnaces (almost identical to Vertov's) and overthrown carnival heads, they remain only hopeful hints towards a revolution (Fig. 17).

Fig. 17 Vigo's hopeful hints towards a revolutionary solution

This brief history of the city symphony genre serves a dual purpose: on the one hand to characterize examples which precede and follow *MWMC*;[23] while, on the other hand, to reinforce the statement that 'every new city symphony is having to reinvent the genre'. This statement could not be truer for Mikhail Kaufman, someone who is still inscribed into the history of Soviet cinema as Dziga Vertov's 'younger brother', the material man with a movie camera, but not so much the 'director of the experiment' [*rukovoditel' eksperimenta*]. In keeping with our stated preference for contextualizing *MWMC* against its historical and artistic environment, the following analysis includes a discussion of *In spring* (1930). Despite its many similarities with *MWMC*, this lesser-known work explicitly

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[23] The above analyzed city symphonies are usually mentioned *in passim* in the literature devoted to the genre. A much more common, though not necessarily more productive, comparison of *Berlin* and *MWMC* will be cautiously avoided in this chapter in favour of another comparative direction. The extensive literature on the topic includes (Alan [1930] 2009; Barreiro; Beattie 2006; Briukhovetska 2005; Feldman [1928] 2004; Feldman [1929] 2004; Hall [1929] 2004; Khersonsky [1928] 2004; Khersonsky [1929] 2004; Lenobl [1929] 2004; Malevich [1929] 2004; Marcus 2010; Natter 1994; Strathausen 2003; Vertov [1929] 1984; Vertov [1929] 2004; Weihsmann 1997).

challenged Vertov's ideas whilst adhering to the *kinoki* cinematic method. However, before undertaking this comparative reading of *MWMC*, Mikhail Kaufman's and Il'ia Kopalin's *Moscow* (1927) will be considered first not so much as an 'origin' of the former, but in relation to the city symphony genre *per se*.

Moscow: A Race of the Cine-Eye (*Moskva: Probeg Kino-Glaza*) could arguably be labelled the first symphony of the socialist city. It was Mikhail Kaufman's and Il'ia Kopalin's first full-length feature-documentary.[24] The film was favourably perceived at the time by the majority of film critics and directors mostly because it complied with their ideas of what documentary should be: it dated and signed 'facts' (as opposed to using the material in a 'creative' way as Vertov did), thus indirectly answering Osip Brik's and Viktor Shklovsky's complaints (Brik [1927] 2004; Shklovsky [1926] 2004); it was relatively 'objective', thus adhering to Kuleshov's (and indeed many others') ideal that 'The non-fiction film should not show the subjective impression the artist has of events, however correct the artist's convictions may be' (Kuleshov [1927] 2004); even Vertov considered his 'pupils'' work as a 'model of newsreel cine-things', albeit 'the most simple' (Vertov [1927] 2004); and last, but definitely not least, in the austere 1920s the film was praised for being not only well made but also for being made 'cheaply and quickly' (Sokolov [1927] 2004: 243). Even Eisenstein, well-known for his fierce debates against *kinoki*, emphasized the film's merits:

> Without any lofty emotional claims, beautifully shot, well edited, [Moscow], naturally, resolves the task that it has set itself — showing Moscow — by means of location shooting…. Moscow shows

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[24] Mikhail Kaufman was Vertov's cameraman since 1922 (*The Trial of the Right S.R.s/The Trial of the S.R.s* [*Protsess pravykh eserov/Protsess eserov*]) and acted as a director only of the animated film *Today* [*Segodnia*] (1923) and a short-film *Novorossiisk* (1927). Il'ia Kopalin was a *kinoc* from 1925 and made an educational film *Flax* [*Len*] (1927).

> *kinoculism* the healthy path and the area — newsreel — which it should occupy in the construction of Soviet cinema (Eisenstein [1927] 2004: 145).

Indeed the film is finely tuned between logically structured intertitles which identify all the locations being filmed and rapid montage sequences which convey the affective experiences of the city dweller in urban space. Three-quarters of the film follow a 'day in the life of a city' structure, starting with the early morning sequence of cleaning the city and finishing with the sequence providing clumsy, but essential attempts of filming at night.[25] The final third is dedicated to the resignified spaces of the new Soviet state. Beginning with chronicle footage of all the foreign embassies and their ambassadors in Moscow as the capital of the world proletariat and finishing with the new uses of old buildings reclaimed by the Bolsheviks (Fig. 18). Clark summarizes the film thus:

> Kaufman, then, was presenting a Moscow which was little changed in externals (its architecture) but where the function of its buildings had, in his account, been transformed. This emphasis on 'transformation', on the 'before' and 'after' of a new, socialist Moscow, was to become a central organizing principle in film and literary representations of Moscow in the thirties, but by then the transformation was an external, material one that stood for the social and psychological (2006: 185).

The importance of this 'before' and 'after' ideological message for Kaufman and Kopalin was one of the reasons why they had to resort to using intertitles. The changes were not visual enough; the majority of them could not be grasped by filming the exterior; while filming the interior was not always possible. Whenever a political persona appears on screen, he is identified by intertitles, thus bringing the new governing bodies 'closer' to the people (this chronicle approach was first used by *kinoki* in Cine-Pravda newsreels).

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[25] Kuleshov enjoyed the night sequences, but complained that the quality was very low and that Sovkino should have given them more funding (Kuleshov [1927] 2004: 273-4).

(a) All-Russian *Proletkult* in Morozov's house (on the left); Administrative Section of Moscow Council in duke Shcherbatov's house (on the right)

(b) Moscow Council of Trade Unions now occupies the Hall of the Nobility (on the left); Moscow Council took up the Governor's house (on the right)

Fig. 18 New public institutions in the previously private buildings of the nobility

Now let us consider the city symphony part of the film in more detail. As mentioned above, the film has a predictable chronological structure, but very shortly after the beginning (after the traditional sequences of cleaning the city and people starting to work) it is intersected with a rigid spatial narrative (Fig. 19).
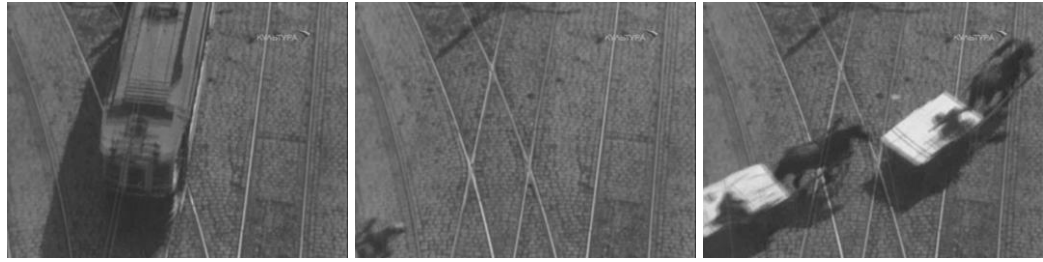
Fig. 19 Opening sequence of Moscow 'waking up'

The film traces, almost street by street, the main routes to Red Square from the

train stations (Fig. 20).
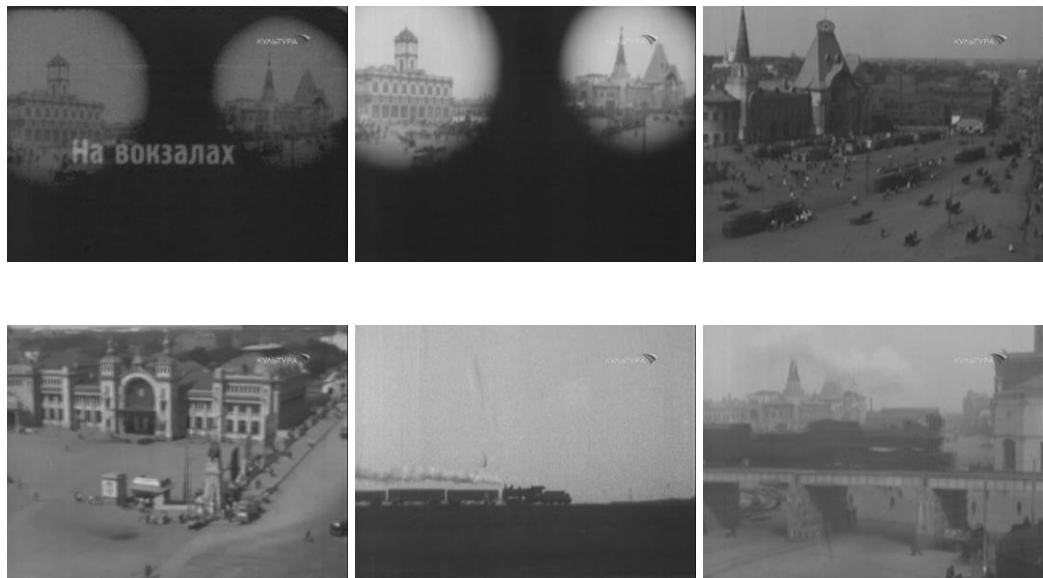
Fig. 20 Train stations as the nodes of connectivity in Moscow

It is this loyalty to the *actual* urban topography of Moscow which made

Bulgakowa pinpoint the difference between the imaginary spaces of *Cine-Eye* and

Moscow. Even though they both adhere to representations of the topoi of

modernity, but:

> The choice and representation of these topoi [train station, market, fire
> station, hospitals (Sklifosovsky, Kashchenkova dacha, a syphilis
> clinic), bakery, the slaughter-house in Vertov's *Cine-Eye*] were a little
> archaic. The topography of a nineteenth century city with its
> juxtaposition of dark stinky cesspools and healthy *life au naturel* was

no longer up to date. The 1920s emphasized other aspects in a city: rationality (*tselesoobraznost'*), efficiency of communication and transportation, the possibility of control over heat and light independent of the sun. The documentary by Vertov's brother Mikhail Kaufman *Moscow* (1927) followed this new mythology and represented Moscow as a rational structure, explained to the viewers the functions of the new city's governing bodies, watched the adaptation of old buildings to new needs and functions. […]
If the topographic map of the city suggested by *Cine-Eye* could not be used, *Moscow* was following the real route of the visitor, moving from the square of the three train stations to the centre of the capital (Bulgakowa 2010: 114-5). (Fig. 21)
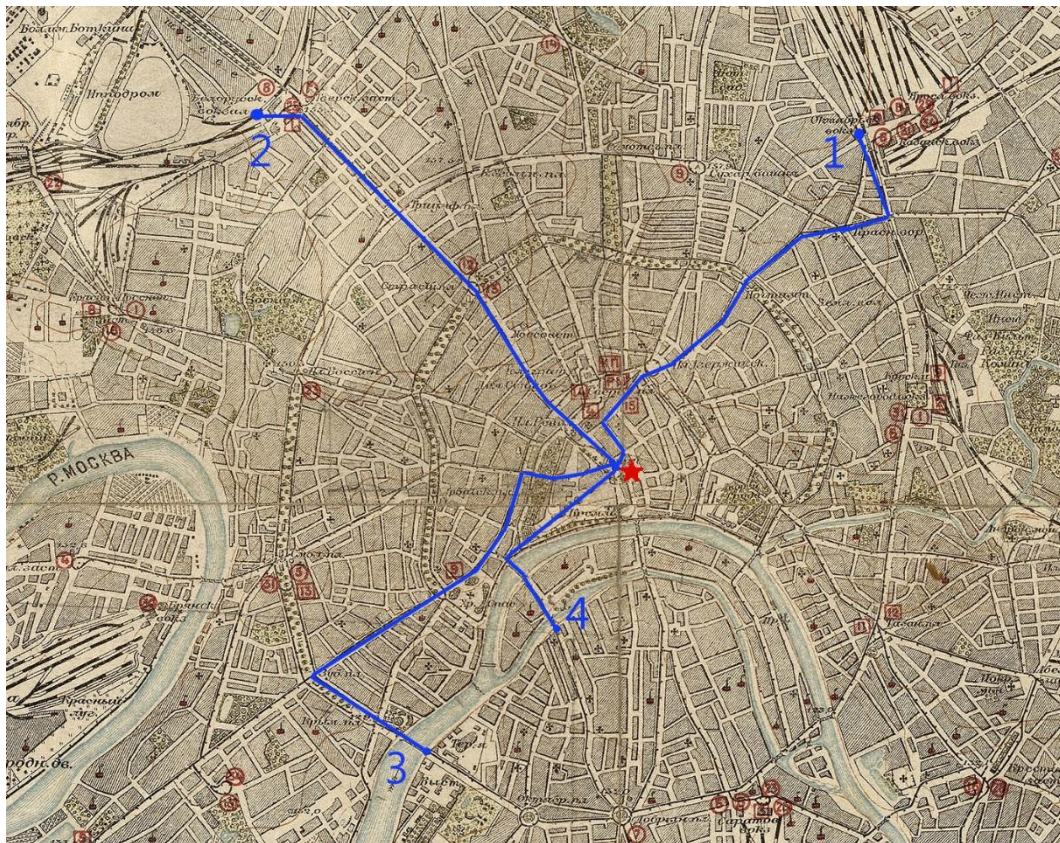
Fig. 21 Four routes leading to Red Square visualized by Kaufman[26]

After describing how to get to Red Square, the film becomes a catalogue of

factories and institutions that are located in Moscow. The 'working hours'

sequence of the film exploits the images of the main post office with its pneumatic

post, Mostorg shop, Petrovka, Moskvoshvei, telegraph, light and heavy industries

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[26] The map used in this image is from 1927. I would like to thank Olenka Dmytryk for her assistance in creating this infographic.

(*Iava*, *Mossukno*, *Triokhgornaia* manufacture, the *Serp i Molot* plant, *AMO*, *Elekrolampa, Provodnik*) and the first Soviet electromotive which takes the viewer to the outskirts where new workers' housing is in the process of construction (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22 New worker's housing on the outskirts of Moscow

The 'Moscow at leisure' part continues the tour and finishes the day with the art museum, zoo, Petrovky park, hippodrome, Sokol'niki, Moskva-river, the stadiums, Neskuchnyi garden, and Leninskie gorki. The night-time sequence, mentioned above, is represented by *Mosselprom* and the abundance of luxurious food in the cooperative *Kommunar* intercut with the orphanage and homeless children (repeating the first *Cine-Pravda*'s message that money could be spent better). It is followed by the representations of 'old' ideas about leisure (operetta and restaurant) and 'new' ones set in a workers' club (Fig. 23).

(a) Mosselprom and the abundance of Cooperative *Kommunar*

(b) Children in an orphanage

(c) Homeless children

(d) 'Old' leisure practices

(e) At the workers' club

Fig. 23 NEP Moscow by night

The film finishes with an open statement declaring its abandonment of the travelogue-style representation of Moscow.[27] The intertitle argues that 'It *appears* to be the same Moscow' [*S vidu ta zhe Moskva*], but in fact the Central Executive Committee of the USSR is now in the Kremlin. 'The same' Moscow's symbols – The Tsar Bell and Cannon – are subverted by filming a boy with a dog from *inside* the bell and imposing the cannon over its muzzle (Fig. 24)

Fig. 24 The mockery of the 'old' travelogues about Moscow and subversion of its symbols

The final sequence of the film proudly demonstrates the Shukhov Radio Tower – one of the city's most important and most visually striking post-Revolutionary landmarks from a number of *mobile* perspectives: an extreme close-up from *outside* following the tower from the bottom up; camera rotation shot from *outside* the tower; camera rotation shot from *inside* the tower; an extreme bottom-up shot with the tower immobile, but the clouds in the sky passing by (Fig. 25). Constructed from 1919-1922 by engineer Vladimir Shukhov, this 150-meter

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[27] One of the first travelogues about Moscow was actually produced for the foreign market by Pathé Frères in 1908. *Moscou sous la neige* [*Moscow Clad in Snow*] by Georges Meyer consists of four parts: a panorama shot of the Kremlin and Moskva-river followed by postcard shots of the Tsar Bell and Tsar Cannon; mushrooms and fish trading at Okhotnyi riad; winter fun in Petrovsky park; and another panorama shot of Moscow from above the Cathedral of Dormition.

conical 'hyperboloid turned steel' broadcasted the Moscow city and Comintern
radio stations and 'symbolized the revolutionary future' (Ruble 1990: 126). Thus
the choice of this structure to make a powerful closing statement is hardly
surprising.
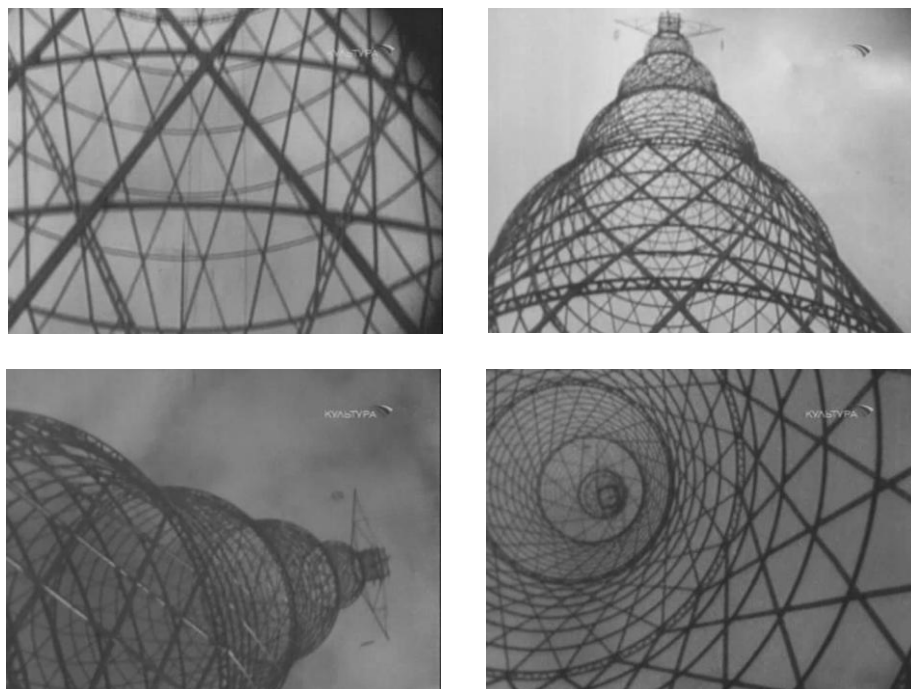
Fig. 25 Closing sequence of *Moscow*: Shukhov's Tower

The achievement of the intertitles and the film's montage should not be
underestimated. It is true that it is possible to isolate particular elements in order
to argue that the film's didactic intention is simplistic and leaves little room for
doubting the dominant (desired) interpretation, but Kaufman's subtle
cinematography, his first attempts to construct a cine-thing using the elements of
his analytical investigation theory (which will be discussed in detail below), as
well as offering the first city symphony of the socialist city make *Moscow* more
than a non-controversial, 'correct' newsreel by the 'good' brother of Dziga Vertov
(Tsivian 2004: 24). It is worth noting that *MWMC* did not necessarily succeed in

inventing a new cinematic language without intertitles, and *Moscow* shares many

of the qualities which have repeatedly lead critics to analyse (and canonise)

Vertov's complex cine-thing. Even though Lev Kuleshov had every right to

wonder why this film was made so late (after all, he was the first to incorporate

the resignification device of Moscow 'before' and 'after' in his film *The*

Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks

[*Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane Bol'shevikov*] (1924) – see

my Chapter 3.2 for a detailed analysis), he admired the film nonetheless:

> It is amazing to see this film about Moscow in 1927. It should have
> been filmed considerably earlier. […] If we had filmed earlier, we
> would have been able to see Soviet Moscow being gradually
> constructed, which would be far more interesting than just seeing it in
> its present state. The cityscape part of the film is the best. […] The
> film is shot better than it is edited. But its sequences, along with the
> notable simplicity of its montage construction, are a big step forward
> for Soviet newsreel (Kuleshov [1927] 2004: 273-4).

Moscow initiated the chain of possibilities for imagining the new socialist

city with cinema, where utopian impulses intersect with a firm grounding in

material reality. In the case of *Moscow*, Kaufman and Kopalin saw this dynamic

intersection in the radical redefinition of the long-established functions of the

buildings, the reconstruction of public space with the help of new monuments

(Lenin's plan of monumental propaganda) and new constructivist structures

(Shukhov Tower); and in its firm grounding in Moscow's material provinciality,

under-urbanization and its long, difficult to erase (at least, until Stalin's dynamite-

induced 1935 General Plan for the reconstruction of Moscow) religious and

imperial history.

The director who would next create his own version of the symphony of a

socialist city was Dziga Vertov. The problem was that Mikhail Kaufman was

working with him too, but not as a co-director, just as a cameraman and actor.[28] The brothers did not finish the film together. As reluctant as I am to let their biographical and personal interrelations channel my research, I believe that a brief reconstruction of the situation should be given here in order to step away from it and offer the film-material based interpretation.

The first traceable hint of tension between the brothers is recorded after Brik's review of *The Eleventh Year*. As stated above, critics commented favourably on Kaufman's first serious attempt at directing and the absence of the polarized 'love-it-or-hate-it' reviews which had accompanied all of Vertov's films were at first interpreted as an inherent quality of 'the most simple work' of newsreel cine-thing. At the same time, the idea that Vertov should somehow 'learn' from Kaufman was already present in Eisenstein's review. As Tsivian notes, 'After 1926 […], critics developed a tendency of pointing to Kaufman as the "good" brother, as it were – more modest, less loud, etc., than that intolerable Vertov' (Tsivian 2004a: 24). Brik's review just aggravated the symptoms when he wrote:

> Of course the absence of a thematic plan also influences the work of the cameraman. For all the brilliant qualities of Kaufman's footage, it never goes beyond the demonstration of spectacle. It is shot only because of its interest as pure spectacle. *It could have been included in any other film*. It completely lacks the element of reportage and polemical journalism. They are excellent location shots, non-fiction sequences for a fiction film. This happens because Kaufman did not know what theme he was producing his footage for, or from what semantic position he should be doing his location filming. He shot things in the way that seemed most interesting to him as a cameraman, and from this point of view, the point of view of the taste and mastery of the cameraman, they are superb, but they are shot with an eye to aesthetics and not newsreel (Brik [1928] 2004) [my italics].

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[28] It is not the place to speculate how Mikhail felt about it. In his interview, he actually said that when they left for Kiev they felt 'quite confident about the future'(Kaufman 1979: 76).

After such an attack, Vertov wrote an ultimatum to Kaufman asking him to repudiate all the charges that Brik made (Vertov [1928] 2004a). The Council of Three did issue such a letter, stating that:

> With the present letter the workers of the Kiev Kino-Eye group (and in particular the group's cameraman) decisively condemn the article by Comrade Brik […]. Brik's wild supposition (served up as fact) that the cameraman on *The Eleventh Year*, who was not shooting the film beyond the Arctic Circle, but under the direct supervision of the author of the film, did not know what he was filming, and for what purpose. This meaningless 'assertion', directed personally against the leader of the Kino-Eye group, alongside the praise poured upon the film's cameraman, can only be interpreted as an attempt to set the members of the group against each other, with the aim of causing the group to disband (Vertov et al. [1928] 2004).

But with the benefit of hindsight, Brik was right. The literal realization of his statement was an anti-religious sequence from *In Spring*, when a model of a church is cleaned by hand. It was fiercely debated between the brothers since Vertov claimed it was shot for *MWMC* and thus belonged to him, but Mikhail argued that it was in fact he who had shot it autonomously from his brother. Hence it was not included in *MWMC* and Mikhail was free to do whatever he wanted with the footage (Tsimbal 2002) (Fig. 26). However, if read in a broader sense, Brik's critique demonstrates a slight misunderstanding of not only the dynamics at work between Vertov and Kaufman (which, according to Kaufman, was based on a very strong collaboration and the division of labour up until *MWMC* ([1967] 1994; [1976] 1979)), but also Vertov's interval theory, which actually emphasized montage as the basic principle of his work:

> *Kinochestvo* is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object. *Intervals* (the transitions from one movement to another) are the *material*, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves ([1922]: 12).

Fig. 26 The contested anti-religious sequence in *In Spring*

The brothers' collaboration ended after the shooting for *MWMC* was done. Mikhail explained his view of what happened in an interview with the journal *October* in January 1976 (with Naum Kleiman acting as an interpreter). The *ur*text of *MWMC* deserves to be cited at length here:

> **Kaufman:** The idea for *The Man with a Movie Camera* had already arisen in 1924. How did this idea take shape? Strictly speaking, we needed a Kino-theory and a Kino-program in cinematic form. I suggested such an idea to Vertov, but it could not be realized at that time. […] After *A Sixth of the World*, we set off for the Ukraine, where there was a prospect of actually making *The Man with a Movie Camera*. […] We accumulated an enormous number of devices of all sorts which were supposed to be revealed in *The Man with a Movie Camera*. Not exactly revealed, but shown as a means to an end. Briefly, the man with a movie camera lands in the middle of life's turmoil. First we see him as someone in the midst of this whirl, unable to make sense of his situation. He rushes towards one thing, then towards another, and towards a third, and so on. Chaotically. And that explains the accumulation of a tremendous number of phenomena. But gradually, because he is *homo sapiens*, he starts to find connections between these. And the moment he finds the connections – even one single connection – he's no longer attracted to just any impression, but to the next associated impression. And that is how we get the thinking man with the movie camera, comprehending the world. Do you see? […] That's why I shot ... why I actually jumped from one side to the other, and to a third. I shot freely. Everything was interesting. Montage as spectacle. But the material allowed it. It's true that some things weren't shot because we were so carried away by Odessa. Material was supposed to be shot which would then lead to the search for other material, so as to comprehend all shooting processes, to interpret them. We were filming in a particular environment in our country, where particular sorts of processes take place. Finally we had

to hand in the picture, the second half of the picture – perfecting, comprehending this life which we ...

October: And frames from the first half were supposed to be used?

Kaufman: Absolutely. New connections. That was my dream. Vertov knew; Dziga knew perfectly well. I knew after all what the result would be. He had an irresistible urge; he wanted to compromise the feature cinema at any cost. I found this childish. It was envy. Actually, it was spite. […] Nevertheless, we had a plan and we went off to Odessa. But then the time came to finish the film. I was summoned: 'Listen, are you going to be shooting this film indefinitely? We're already running out of film stock. What are you actually doing here?' […] Well, it came when we had to break off shooting, and Vertov started editing. I was very disappointed then. Instead of a film which had been thought out, what came out was actually only its first part. And it's terribly overloaded with events which are, from my point of view, very intrusive. I'm being perfectly open with you. […] Do you remember that interminable number of trams? Those repetitions? Even when reusing the same material, one should never have so many repetitions. Things have to move forward in some direction (1979).[29]

Thus the mixture of time constraints, their fascination with the material, as well as Vertov's later choice of the sequences to edit left Kaufman unhappy and he did not stay to see the finished cine-thing. Meanwhile, VUFKU [*Vseukraiinske fotokinoupravlinnia* (Ukrainian)*,* All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Directorate] had granted Mikhail permission to shoot his own second feature *In Spring* and he embraced the opportunity straight away (Kaufman 1979: 71). These autobiographical notes may shed some light on personal relations between the brothers, but I argue that it is more productive to establish their different approaches towards urban film material in order to extrapolate their contrasting perspectives onto possible visions of the socialist city symphonies of the 1920s. What follows is my reading of *MWMC* as a film which encompasses as many contradictions as the existence of the Soviet state itself: it defined the city

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[29] Kaufman's comments could be substantiated by four documents published by Deriabin in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* which include the script plan [*stsenarnyi plan*] for the possible film *Goskino's productions between 1924 and 1925* [*Proizvodstvo Goskino na grani 1924 i 1925 goda*], notes on the meeting of the Council of Cine-Eye (probably 1925-6) and Vertov's note to Glavrepertkom (Deriabin 2000; Vertov 2000).

symphony genre despite not striving to be one; it was criticized both for being too propagandistic (Kracauer [1929] 2004; Roberts 2000) and not propagandistic enough (see Chapter 24 of Tsivian 2004b); and finally, it used urban material to demythologize film production, and film production to re-mythologize urban material.

The first attempts to inscribe *MWMC* into the city symphony genre appeared immediately after the film's release abroad, especially in Germany and the USA. Since Vertov's film appeared two years after *Berlin*, it was forgivable for the German public, who were not familiar with Vertov's earlier works and had only seen Blum's compilations, to assume that Vertov, like indeed so many others across Europe from the end of the 1920s to the beginning of 1930s (see Grierson's comment above), was captivated by Ruttmann's film and tried to imitate it.[30] In fact, Vertov's reply to this was the following:

> One should stress particularly that the majority of Kino-Eye films were constructed either as a symphony of labour, or as a symphony of the whole Soviet country, or as a symphony of a particular town, and so forth. Moreover, in these films the action often unfurled from early morning to evening. This is the way the town wakes up and begins to live in the first reel of *Kino-Eye* (which won a prize at the international exhibition in Paris). This is the way day gradually moves into evening and ends at midnight in the film *Stride, Soviet!* The action in the Kino-Eye films *Nursery* and *Moscow* unfurls in the same way, from morning to the depth of night. […] The recent experiment by Ruttmann, along with the most recent experiments of certain members of the avant-garde, should therefore be interpreted as the result of the prolonged pressure of the works and statements of Kino-Eye on the workers of abstract film (and absolutely not the reverse, which is chronologically absurd, and absurd in essence) (Vertov [1929] 2004: 379).

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[30] See Chapters 26-29 in Tsivian's volume (2004b) for details of Blum's and Ruttmann's errors and the sincere attempts of Soviet critics, Kracauer and Vertov himself to restore the 'historical truth'.

Thus it is clear that Vertov is not ascribing any special status to his film with regard to it being a city symphony. In fact, the chronology of the day is followed very roughly in the film's division into three parts: the waking up of the city; work; and leisure. Moreover, this basic structure is constantly interrupted by the film's self-reflexivity towards its construction, whereby the play with time on screen becomes one of its main themes. This non-adherence to strict chronological order has become a starting point for many a reading of the film. Mayne's analysis of movement in the film proceeds from the film's disjointed temporality;[31] Hicks points out that Vertov had abandoned chronology as early as *Cine-Pravda* in order to experiment with other more productive film-thing constructive principles;[32] furthermore, Roberts in his introduction to the film emphasizes the broken temporal continuity as one of the crucial principles for the imaginary first-time viewer to keep in mind.[33] Whilst these evaluations of chronology and temporality have proved productive for many critics, it is once again important to state here that it is no less productive to conceptualize the cinematic medium in spatial terms; particularly given this analysis's interest in Vertov's construction of urban space. As opposed to *Manhatta, Rien que les heures*, *À propos de Nice*, *Moscow* and *Berlin*, *MWMC* does not represent a specific city. It aims at constructing a *universal socialist urban space*, and even though the majority of the interpretations of this film do mention that the city in *MWMC* is a synthesized image, they do not put this fact at the primary focus of their analysis.

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[31] 'Similarly, while there certainly is a narrative chronology in the film ("a day in the life of a Soviet city"), it is a chronology that seems to function more as a vehicle for the analysis of movement than as a center of narrative interest in its own right' (Mayne 1989: 163).

[32] 'Increasingly, he structures his films not solely according to their strict chronological order, but ultimately according to associations and logical, causal links between the various constituent elements' (Hicks 2007: 11).

[33] 'Not only is there a lack of geographical continuity but temporal continuity is also broken deliberately and ostentatiously. Sequences, or more usually fragments of sequences, are repeated and utilized in different juxtapositions' (Roberts 2000: 1).

The success of Vertov's strategy to construct a universal socialist urban space is manifested by the fact that even leading scholars of urban and cinema studies have been confused as to what city(ies) is/are actually shown in *MWMC*. Their iterations include, but are not limited to: 'unseen, even visionary "New Moscow"' (Weihsmann 2011: 26); 'five different Russian cities: Moscow, Kiev, Donbas, Yalta and Odessa' (Alifragkis and Penz 2009: 2-3);[34] 'Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and even the industrial sites of Donbass and Dneproges' (Clark 2006: 185); 'the combination of footage of Moscow and of a number of locations in the Ukraine' (Donald 1999: 79). The discussion was resolved by John MacKay who, after consulting Vertov's files in RGALI's archive, identified the specific cities filmed as: Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and Khar'kov (MacKay 2013: 16).[35] I would argue that *MWMC* works with urban cinematic material along two axes: first, to undermine and resignify the sites and landmarks of the pre-Revolutionary city; second, to *intentionally* abstract, detach and dissociate the urban space of different cities in a gesture of radical egalitarianism in order to use it as material for the cinematic construction of a universal socialist city.

By extrapolating my analysis of *Moscow* above, it could be suggested that such major urban centres as Kiev, Odessa and Khar'kov (which was the capital of Ukrainian SSR until 1934) also had their touristic images constructed in *actualities*, travelogues, guidebooks and postcards at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus when Vertov was faced with the problem of resignifying the

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[34] Hopefully, after the start of recent military actions in Donbass, the region – the name of which is formed from two words 'Donets Basin' [*Donets'kii bassein*] (Donets being a river) and is broadly defined by the boundaries of two *oblast'* Donetskaia and Luganskaia – and the city of Donetsk (administrative centre of Donetskaia oblast'), will be less confused now.

[35] As important as such information is for the history of film production, it also helps to restore the context of cinematic references in Vertov's film for contemporary researchers who, as opposed to the contemporary audience of the film, do not always have the knowledge of Soviet urban centres of the 1920s.

exteriors and interiors of a bourgeois city, he, unlike Kaufman's and Kopalin's

heavy reliance on intertitles, chose to proceed with strictly cinematic devices.[36]

With the help of Kaufman's constructivist cinematography *MWMC* resignified a

major Kiev landmark built in the Art Nouveau style: Ginzburg's house (aka

Ginzburg's skyscraper (1910-2)[37] (Fig. 27). Another iconic bourgeois building,

the imploding of which is one of the most memorable episodes in the film, is the

Bol'shoi Theatre (Fig. 30). The imploding sequence was Vertov's answer to then

contemporary debates about the fate of the theatre and academic heritage in

general (Tsivian 2004a: 18-22). Shklovsky's words could be paraphrased here:

revolution was forced to nurse the Bol'shoi Theatre, with which it did not know

what to do, and only Vertov turned its destruction into a manifesto.[38] Other

resignification examples include:

- a former bourgeois cinema which demonstrates the proletarian film *MWMC*. The

'film within a film' sequence at the beginning and at the end of the movie was

shot in *1-e Goskino* – the main cinema of Kiev (Fig. 28) – and it is later

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[36] As we remember, the opening intertitles of *MWMC* declare: 'The film represents an experiment in the cinematic transmission of visual phenomena *without the help of intertitles* (a film without intertitles) without the help of a script (a film without a script) without the help of the theatre (a film without actors, without sets, etc.) This new experimental work by Kino-Eye is directed towards the creation of an authentically international absolute language of cinema – absolute kinography – on the basis of its complete separation from the language of theatre and literature' (Vertov [1928] 2004b: 318) [my italics].

[37] Ginzburg's house/skyscraper was built in 1910-2 on Instituts'ka Street, 16-18 and was the highest building in the Russian empire at the time (around 70 m high including the tower). It dominated the Kiev skyline up until 1941 when it was blown up by NKVD during the fascist occupation. The construction plan was developed in 1910 by two architects from Odessa – A.B.Minkus and F.A.Troupianskii –while the contractor and the landlord was Lev Ginzburg, a millionaire merchant and the owner of the building firm which was responsible for the Art Nouveau look of Kiev at the turn of the century.

[38] 'Revoliutsiia ostavila na svoem popechenii muzei i dvortsy, s kotorymi neizvestno chto delat'. Kartina Eizenshteina – pervoe razumnoe ispol'zovanie Zimnego dvortsa. On unichtozhil ego' (Shklovsky 1927: 32).

juxtaposed to the *Proletarian* cinema (most probably in Odessa) which screens the feature entertainment film *Green Manuela* (Fig. 29).[39]

- the emphasis on architectural objects that showcase the construction's engineering principle (Fig. 31).

- the juxtaposition of a genuine constructivist building (the multi-storeyed building constructed by Georgii Barkhin in 1925-27 to house the *Izvestiia* newspaper) with the Strastnoi monastery (demolished in 1938) in Moscow (Fig. 32).

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[39] Opened in 1912, the biggest cinema in Kiev (situated on Kreshchatik street) belonged to the business man Anton Shvantser and was called *Kino-teatr A.Shvantsera* [*A.Shvantser's cinema*].
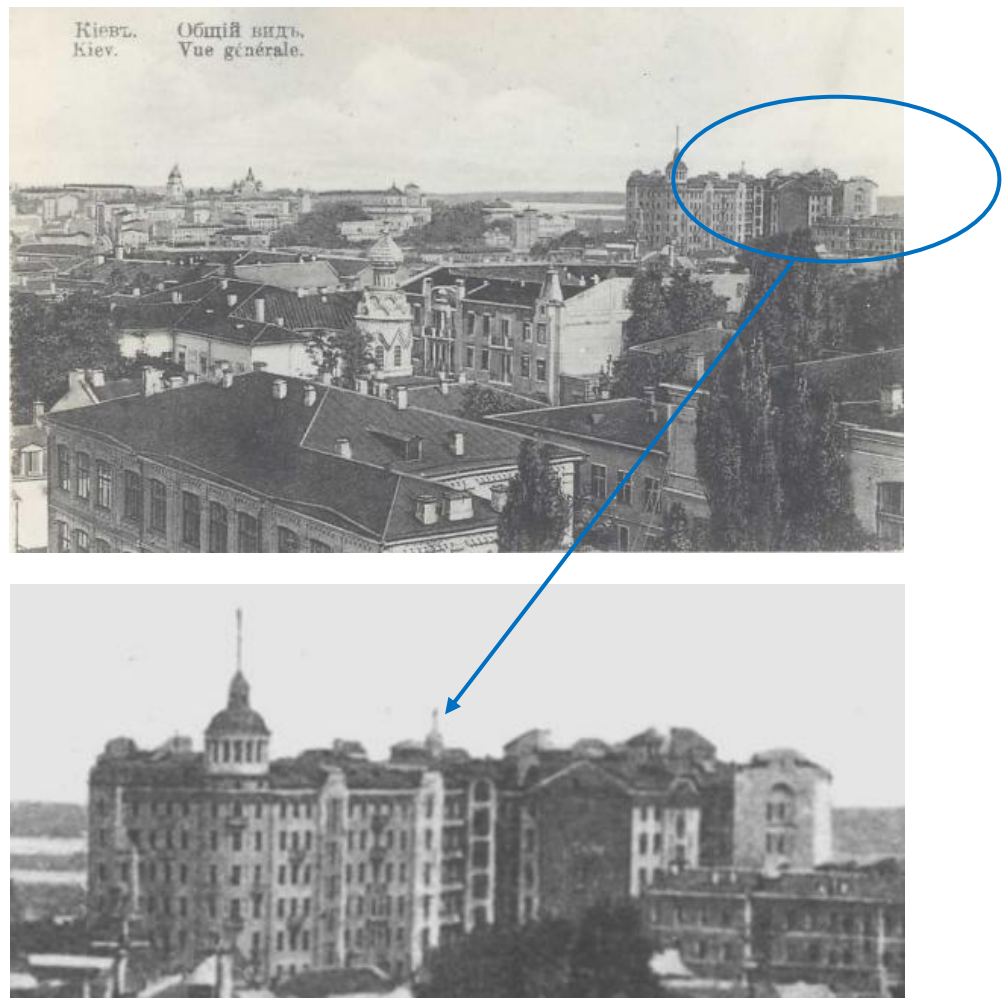
(a) Panoramic view of Ginzburg's skyscraper (photo modified from
http://nnm.me/blogs/Racing19/dom-ginzburga/)

(b) Constructivist resignification by Kaufman

Fig. 27 Ginzburg's house/skyscraper in Kiev: from Art Nouveau to Constructivism
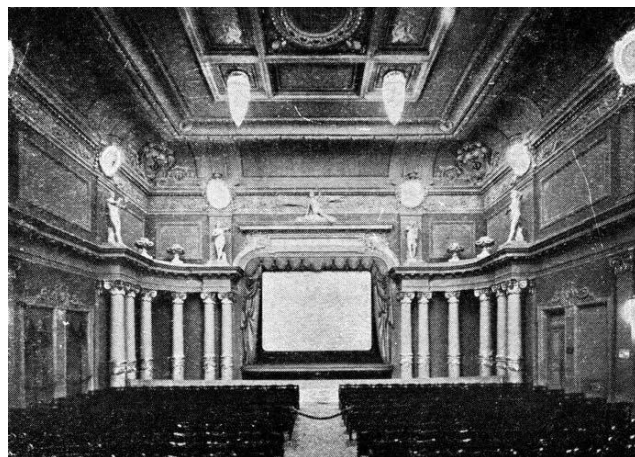
(a) Anton Shvantser's cinema (opened in 1912), after 1919 – *1-e Goskino*
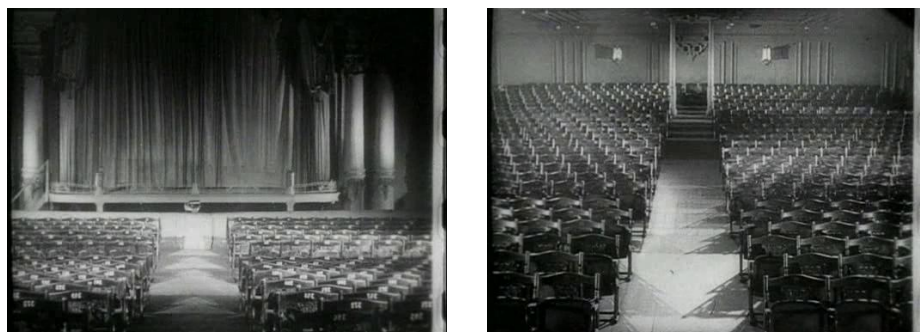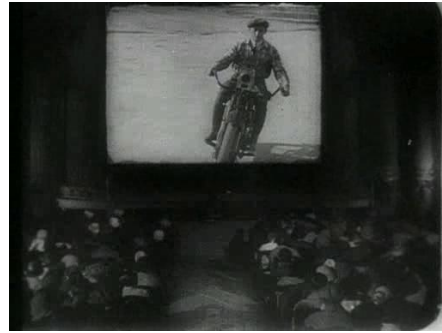
(b) *MWMC* demonstration in *1-e Goskino*

Fig. 28 Proletarian film in a former bourgeois cinema

Fig. 29 Bourgeois films in a current cinema 'Proletarian'

Fig. 30 Implosion of the Bol'shoi Theatre – Vertov's stance in the debates of the 1920s
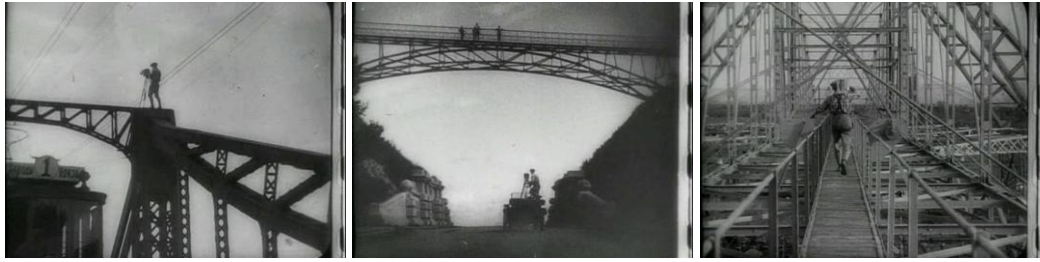
Fig. 31 Construction-revealing architectural objects

Fig. 32 Juxtaposition of the constructivist *Izvestiia* building and Strastnoi monastery in Moscow

Apart from the resignification of touristic and bourgeois architectural heritage, *MWMC* aims to construct a universal socialist city by means of abstracting urban everyday life and recontextualizing its material according to a particular idea of a cine-thing. The method Vertov used in his film has been defined as creative geography which relies on uninterrupted or continuous action for the construction of meaningful cinematic spaces (Alifragkis and Penz 2009). The protagonist who ensures such an uninterrupted event-motivation is the Man with a Movie Camera himself, whose filmic diary we are supposedly watching. As early as 1923, the Council of Three issued a manifesto stating that the Cine-Eye is: '[…] free of the limits of time and space, I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them' (Vertov 1984: 18). This montage principle, of course, concerned all phenomena, not just space *per se*, but it is imaginary urban

construction which will be the focus of our interest here. Kuleshov's early

experiments in montage are usually recalled as the origins of creative geography:

> Kuleshov, who has also been acknowledged as the father of the Soviet
> School of montage, maintained a laboratory where he rigorously
> experimented with various aspects of film. These experiments
> constitute some of the earliest attempts towards a consistent theory of
> montage. Pudovkin provides a brief description of one of these
> creative cinematic renegotiations of the landscape:
> 'L.V. Kuleshov assembled in the year 1920 the following scenes as an
> experiment:
> 1. A young man walks from left to right.
> 2. A woman walks from right to left.
> 3. They meet and shake hands. The young woman points.
> 4. A large white building is shown, with a broad flight of steps.
> 5. The two ascend the steps.
> The pieces, separately shot, were assembled in the order given and
> projected upon the screen. The spectator was presented with the pieces
> thus joined as one clear, uninterrupted action: a meeting of two young
> people, an invitation to a nearby house, and an entry into it. Every
> single piece, however, had been shot in a different place; for example,
> the young man near the G.U.M. building, the woman near Gogol's
> monument, the handshake near the Bolshoi Teatr, the white house
> came out of an American picture (it was, in fact, *the* White House),
> and the ascent of the steps was made at St. Saviour's Cathedral. What
> happened as a result? Though the shooting had been done in varied
> locations, the spectator perceived the scene as a whole (Pudovkin
> 1929: 85-6 cited in Alifragkis and Penz 2009: 10).

But anyone familiar with Vertov's and *kinocs'* theoretical and film works could

only value Kuleshov's experiments as being parallel to Cine-Eye's achievements,

and not pioneering them. The continuity which Kuleshov heavily relies on is the

cinematic illusion of narrative in an artistic feature film and, consequently, the

dispositif it produces. Creative geography as a result of montage and filming on

different locations is a minor byproduct of film making. It does not really matter

where the sequence was filmed as long as it is just the background which

punctuates the protagonists' story. Yet in *MWMC* the process is reversed. The

urban material which was supposed to be the foil for the work of cameraman

(after all, the film was originally conceived as a programmatic statement *as well*

as a practical demonstration of different filming methods) comes to the forefront and becomes the leading actor. The continuity illusion of the film is constantly destroyed by the sequences demonstrating the film's editing process, but the continuity of the utopian universal socialist city is sustained throughout. What is remarkable about *MWMC* and its socialist city, is that, unlike the typical gaze of the modernist architect, its construction does not rely on the usual disembodied gaze from above. In contrast to the prototypical modernist architect, Vertov's film can be viewed as constructing the socialist city from within, a position which conflicts with Strathausen's argument that the disembodied gaze from above is repudiated by cinema through the medium's 'uncanny' capacity to embody the 'anxious view of the immersed city-dweller down below'. Vertov's position orientates the human architect 'down below', but in a manner which is largely free of any such 'anxiety', and which grounds its constructive praxis in its material contrasting with 'Baudelaire's flâneur who aimlessly wanders the streets of Paris enjoying the bombardments of visual impressions he encounters in the labyrinth of the modern city' (Strathausen 2003: 22-3). Despite Mikhail's Kaufman's passion for filming from above, *MWMC* does not have any aerial shots; in the cities, the highest vantage points are used which are usually situated on rooftops, still within the city, as opposed to on an airplane.[40] Even though Kaufman is filming from within the city, Vertov, as an architect on screen, models a modernity which does not yet exist.[41] He pioneers the utopian mode of the

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[40] However, it should be noted that aerial shots open Kaufman's *In Spring* and he actually made a film based primarily on aerial footage *Aviamarsh* [Air March] (1936).
[41] Mikhail Iampolski characterized the famous excess of trams in *MWMC* thus: 'Since modern urban culture did not exist in the USSR, the only way to experience the Simmelian dynamics of impressions was to "speed up" the spectator. The main way of such acceleration was the tram – probably, the only existing mechanical way of transport. Hence the constant "demonization" of the tram and ascribing to this slow means of transport some cosmic imaginary speeds. […] Vertov's *MWMC* […] is a cinematic simulacra of urban experience' (Iampolski 2013).

representation of non-existing cities, so widely used in the 1930s. However, contrary to the feature films of the 1930s (to be analyzed ahead), which either never show a city (*Aerograd*), or just show its construction (*Komsomol'sk*), scale models and studio set designs (*New Moscow*), Vertov constructs his city from documentary material, life caught off-guard, estranged, abstracted and egalitarian. The material is abstracted to such a degree that it becomes merely cinematic construction material, with no date and time of the people or places filmed. Vertov, in a radical futuristic manner, is not interested and does not speak about history; what he is interested in is the socialist future constructed out of elements of contemporary urban material.

What also differentiates the Vertovian city symphony from those previously analyzed is its inability to 'calmly and adventurously go travelling' (to use Benjamin's metaphor).[42] In other city symphonies, the chaos of the new modern city is to be deciphered first and foremost by the individualistic gaze through flâneuring, which in cinematic terms was as much realized in *actualities* and travelogues as in the city symphonies. This individualized epistemology focused on the visual perception structured by the subject-centred camera, which established the continuity of the gaze via shot-reverse-shot ('I see what the camera sees') and in some cases, supplemented by the introduction of fictional characters (as in *Rien que les heures*). The position of the camera is never revealed and the work of filming and editing is always taken for granted. Whereas Vertov constructs the socialist city by not fully submitting to the point of individualized

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[42] 'Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have locked us up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling' (cited in Penz and Lu 2011: 39).

epistemology, the cameraman is not flânering (as in Ruttmann); he works and records the facts which make up the film. The opening sequence openly 'warns' the viewer– do not identify with the view of the protagonist; he will show you his perspective, but the film will also contain sequences which belong to unidentified subjects (other cameramen whose footage was included in the film were Boris Tseitlin, Konstantin Kuliaev and Georgii Nikolaevich Khimchenko (MacKay 2013)). Identification with the subject-constructing camera of the cameraman is a consciously limiting perspective. To understand the new universal socialist city the montage has to include not just one day in one city, but an interrupted chronology (not just from dawn to dusk), interrupted geography (a montage of four cities), and an interrupted human subject (the electrical Adam from the *We* manifesto). Thus *MWMC* aims at constructing not only a cinematic collective 'experience', but a collective socialist subject, that is, a collective space in the eye of the subject. Yet this idea failed to be realized in the eye of one specific subject – Mikhail Kaufman.

Having analyzed two interpretations of the socialist city symphony genre, it could be suggested that Kaufman, who had previously offered his own version grounded in one specific city (Moscow), in monuments and architecture so defined by their location that they were impossible to be abstracted from their context into an idealized utopic space of everyday life, took the 'chaos' (in his own words) of the material personally and could not see the rational construction method behind the film. At this point Kaufman decided to make an antithesis to *MWMC – In Spring –* also without intertitles, but with a firm structure using his 'film analysis' method. Although the film was shot in and around Kiev, this time Kaufman did not inscribe it into history as much as he had done when filming in

Moscow. Using the 'freedom of the periphery', the less known and yet to be

industrialized urban landscape of Kiev, Kaufman shifted the 'a day in a city'

method to a more universal metaphor which was still steeped in natural cycles

(see the abundance of wildlife sequences) and symbolized the youth of the mostly

agrarian Soviet state: spring. Yet such a perspective in the times of the forced

tempo of collectivization and the industrialization of the 1930s, in addition to the

film's formal qualities and the absence of the Party was highly problematic.

Kaufman's use of haptic aesthetics and longer shots, as opposed to constructivism

and the rapid montage sequences of *MWMC*, created an almost direct

counterbalance to Vertov's film, particularly in the episodes which emphasize the

strong dependence of the human on nature as opposed to conquering it. The anti-

modernization opening sequence was thought to last too long. If the 'morning

city' to be cleaned is shown in 2-3 shots which last under a minute (both in

Moscow and *MWMC*), the frozen Kiev streets and the destructiveness of the thaw

that followed allowed too broad a scope for anti-Soviet interpretations. Kaufman

tried too hard to adhere to the Soviet modernization rhetoric on the level of

content, but his cinematography revealed quite a different side of the new state's

anti-modern society. The softer, almost Dovzhenkian style of cinematography is

sometimes interpreted as a 'Ukrainian' factor, a reductive interpretation which

adheres to the colonial logic of the industrialized metropolis vs rural colonies that

are 'steeped-in-nature' (Tsivian 2004b: 305). Yet it has been demonstrated that in

the 1920s the Soviet Union lacked an industrialized metropolis *per se*, thus

requiring cinema to construct and demonstrate – either in the 'before' and 'after'

sequences of *Moscow* or in the abstracted urban spaces of *MWMC* – the

possibility of such a metropolis. *In Spring*, however, despite its structural adherence to a logic of 'progress', does not succeed in this task.

As if starting off where Vertov left the viewer, *In Spring* begins with a rapid montage sequence. A brief winter opening is set outside the city, emphasizing, perhaps, that rapid montage can be used not only to recreate the rhythmic and fragmented perception of the modern city dweller, but also a more 'natural' phenomenon like a blizzard (Fig. 34). Yet the next sequence takes the viewer back to the city, presenting an aerial view of Kiev (St Sophia's Cathedral) from a biplane which also closes the film (Fig. 35). What would usually be a morning sequence in a city symphony film with motionless objects and, with the exception of a few street sweepers, deserted streets is turned into an early spring section. A car's frozen wheel stands for technology paralyzed by nature; icicles and horse carts loaded with snow, the frozen Dnieper and rainpipes, a snowman and a skating rink all present powerful imagery of the yet unawakened city (Fig. 36). An Art Nouveau building is shown here not as a symbol of modernity or an object for constructivist resignification, but as a mundane health hazard from the rooftop of which blocks of ice and snow fall down (Fig. 37). Perhaps not surprisingly, Ginzburg's skyscraper also appears in the film. Yet the constructivist imagery gives way to a medium long shot, a static view that emphasizes the building as whole, as opposed to close-ups of architectural details and unusual angles (only in one shot the building is slightly diagonal) (Fig. 38). Haptic visuality dominates this section of the film with an abundance of fluid, reflective footage (imagery of water, reflections in puddles) (Fig. 39).[43] The 'solid' Kiev

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[43] 'Haptic visuality sees the world as though it were touching it: close, unknowable, appearing to exist on the surface of the image. Haptic images disturb the figure-ground relationship. [...] Haptic images push us out of cinema's illusionary depth and invite our eyes to linger on the surface of the

arcade building (on 18 Velyka-Vasyl'kivs'ka street (Malakov 2012)) loses its monumentality if reflected in water (Fig. 40). The rail tracks of the revolution subside in mud (Fig. 41). Instead of the mechanical traffic controller, Kaufman prefers the weather station with the wind spinner submitting to the forces of nature (Fig. 42). This opening sequence, counter-arguing Vertov's film almost in every shot, testifies that *In Spring* was conceived as a direct and no less programmatic reply to *MWMC*. There is no pretentiousness or idolization in this sequence, just everyday problems. For our argument it is irrelevant that after the sequence the film starts to adhere to the glorifying logic of Soviet films: the rail track gets fixed and the roads are mended. Although this 'progress' could also be interpreted as ironic – the fact that the snow melts away and everything returns to life is not due to the Party's efforts or socialist modernization. Kaufman aimed to show that spring can be destructive, not just lyrical and romantic as it was commonly represented in the poetic tradition,[44] yet he was labelled precisely that – the more lyrical brother (Kaufman [1967] 1994; Tsivian 2004: 305; Deriabin 2002). I would also argue that, in his own way, Kaufman tried too hard to achieve the 'correct' Marxist method for his filming. As is obvious from the fact that he did not leave much theoretical writing, from his restless fascination with the technical aspects of his filming and the pride he rightly took in his technical innovations, Mikhail seemed not to be interested in theoretical justifications for his work. Thus it could be summed up that, whatever personal reasons for the conflict between the brothers, the socialist city symphony sub-genre actually benefited from it. If,

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image. Rather than pull us into idealized space, they help us feel the connectivity between ourselves, the image and its material support, and the world to which the image connects us' (Marks 2004: 80-1). On haptic visuality in Soviet cinema see (Dmytryk 2013; 2014).

[44] Although, the 'biology' sequences of the film (to use the terminology of the time) were indeed impressively shot: the close-up of snails and of the rook's nest, which Kaufman tamed and taught not to be afraid of the camera, could be considered the prototype of BBC's *Springwatch*.

according to Daria Khitrova, Dziga Vertov's self-portrait is this shot from *Cine-Eye*:

Then, Mikhail Kaufman's signature could be the shot from *In Spring*: the upside down cameraman filming the unstable, yet reflective puddle in spring, creating a tactile imagery far removed from the constructivist cinematography of *MWMC* (Fig. 33). If he is indeed an inversion of Vertov, then the logic of the dialectical relation between the brothers gives us a hint that one is defined by another and either is impossible without each other; as are their symphonies of socialist cities.

Fig. 33 Self-portrait of Mikhail Kaufman

Fig. 34 Rapid montage of the countryside
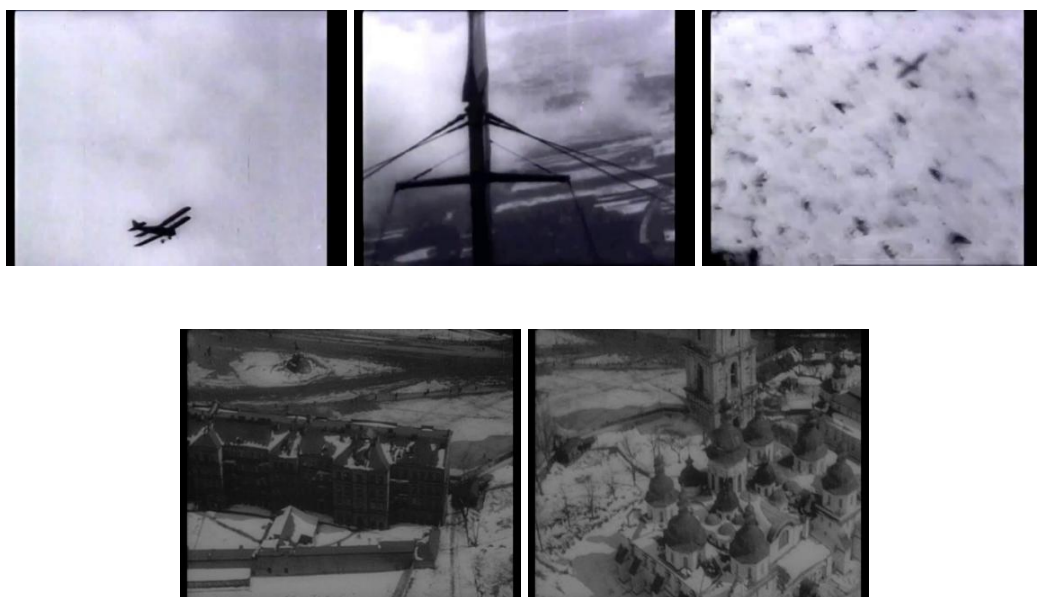
Fig. 35 Aerial view of Kiev from a biplane

Fig. 36 Unawakened/frozen city

Fig. 37 No constructivist resignification, simply a mundane health hazard

Fig. 38 Ginzburg's skyscraper (almost) without constructivist optics

Fig. 39 Haptic visuality

Fig. 40 Haptic representation of the 'solid' arcade building
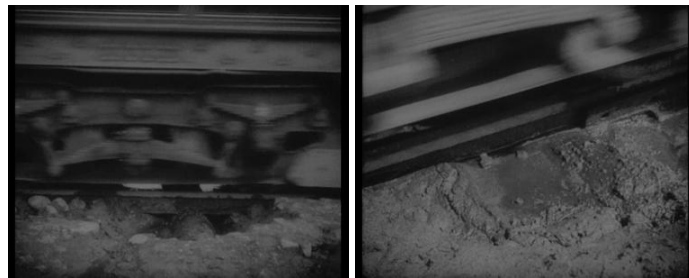
Fig. 41 The rail tracks of the revolution subside in mud
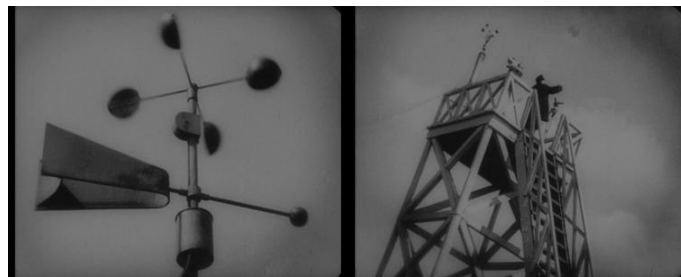
Fig. 42 Weather station instead of a mechanical traffic controller

2.2.2 Screen as construction site

Following the logic of Roland Barthes, who claimed that ideology could be considered to be the "Cinema of a society" (1980), it might be productive to analyse Soviet cinema not just from the point of view of 'reality/representation', but by focusing on the *screen itself* as the primary site for the construction of the imaginary urban space of the new country.

The most basic model which is actively used by almost all researchers, whether to prove once again its crucial undeniable 'archetypal' essence for the analysis of the 'Soviet' or to move away from it and prove its non-universality and variance for specific historical periods, is metropolis/periphery. Emma Widdis, in her chapter 'To Explore or Conquer? Mobile perspectives on the Soviet Cultural Revolution', tries to re-envisage the space of the 1920s as 'decentered and mobile' and to suggest the term 'exploration' as a 'more decentred, nonassimilative investigation of space in which difference is emphasized over sameness and the quest for information is differentiated from control' (Widdis 2003a: 220-1). The panoptic power model by Foucault is chosen to draw parallels with the 'landscape of Stalinism', while neo-Marxist French theorists like Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre are used to analyse the landscape of the 1920s. Another researcher elaborating the metropolis/periphery model is Evgenii Dobrenko, stating that the films of the 1930s work as an ideological compensatory mechanism representing and visualizing periphery rather than the metropolis. In his chapter 'Until the very edges...: Mythology of Periphery in Stalinist cinema' he writes: 'Not only can the space structured in Stalinist cinema be called "Moscow-centred", but it might sometimes even be hard to call it centred. Cinema

of the 1930s was busy creating periphery' (Dobrenko 2007b). This argument is

developed on films of all possible genres: historical-revolutionary films,

mythologizing Leningrad (*The Man with a Gun) [Chelovek s ruzhe]* by Sergei

Iutkevich (1938*), The Baltic Deputy [Deputat Baltiki]* by Aleksandr Zarkhi and

Iosif Kheifitz (1936), *The Great Citizen [Velikii grazhdanin]* by Fridrikh Ermler

(1938), *We are from Kronstadt [My iz Kronstadta]* by Efim Dzigan (1936), as

well as films visualizing ideal stylistic space of *sotsrealizm* by famous directors,

including *Aerograd* by Aleksandr Dovzhenko (1935), *Komsomolsk* by Sergei

Gerasimov (1938) or *Seekers of Happiness [Iskateli Schast'ia]* by Vladimir

Korsh-Sablin (1936). Dobrenko makes a point of crucial importance to us: 'A

hopeless tautology is hidden in the motivation of the heroic behaviour. That is

why the explanation of the motifs is always substituted here by the "history of

growth", and *the visible space – by fantasies*' [my italics] (Dobrenko 2007b).

Socialist realism, defined as the 'portrayal of an idealistic reality in its

revolutionary development', demanded 'neurosis' to be the basic optic regime of

the Soviet viewer (and, possibly, even of the citizen). Anatolii Lunacharsky

further explains the idea that 'the socialist realist... does not accept reality as it

really is. He accepts it as it will be... A Communist who cannot dream is a bad

Communist. The Communist dream is not a flight from the earthly but a flight

into the future' (Lunacharsky 1933 [2005]).

As the classical definition of a neurotic symptom by Freud states: 'We

have long observed that every neurosis has as its result, and therefore as its

purpose, a forcing of the patient out of real life, an alienating of him from reality'

(Freud 2003: 67). Two episodes from *Komsomolsk* by Sergei Gerasimov (1938)

might be considered good illustrations of the above mentioned neurotic optic regime with regard to urban space.

An imaginary first-time viewer of Soviet films might find it hard to understand why the heroes of *Komsomolsk* talk about the city *as if* it is already there. When the main protagonist Natasha comes from Leningrad to Komsomolsk, a local worker shows her around, commenting: 'We are walking on Lenin Prospect. Though there is no asphalt here yet. [...] It would be faster to take Maksim Gor'kii street, but we can't. The roots are being taken out now. However, we'll go along the quay, so you can see our wharf [...]'. The visual picture clearly contradicts the words as they are walking along the 'non-path' with stumps and hills of soil around them. But Natasha enthusiastically takes on the suggested optic and exclaims: "How wonderful it is here!" (Fig. 43).

Fig. 43 Arrival of Natasha in Komsomolsk

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Moreover, the traumatic experience of the break-up with her husband makes her internalize the 'Komsomolsk vision', so she takes a leading role in imposing it on others. This takes us to the second episode where she writes a letter with a call to Soviet women to come to Komsomolsk in the 'newspaper style'. When the letter is read at the organizational committee of Komsomolsk for approval, they cannot understand why she explicitly lies about 'the already existing nursery' and 'a park of culture and recreation in the middle of Taiga, which goes down to Amur river with a water-station'. Finally, the letter is approved for publication, but without such 'lies'. The episode is aimed at criticizing the *individual* 'neurotic vision', which is not determined by the *collective* one as understood by the Party.

What both Widdis (2000; 2003a; 2003b; 2010) and Dobrenko (2007b) state about the visualization of the conquest of the new lands, construction and protection of the borders and internal enemy as a betrayer in the Stalinist cinema is entirely true in the case of *Komsomolsk* as well. However, the shift to the 'border protection' theme is not made clear until towards the end of the film, when Komsomolsk as the 'city of youth' suddenly becomes 'city of defence'. It might be interesting to notice the difference in structures of the films *Aerograd* by Dovzhenko (1935) and *Komsomolsk*. In *Aerograd* the whole film is structured around protection of the territory for the new city to be built, and the enemies are shown in the very beginning (and six out of seven are killed immediately). In *Komsomolsk* the viewer is given just a hint at the opening scene – a robbery occurs; a man steals documents and arrives at the new building site under a false name. The rest of the film is preoccupied with the construction of the city and the personal drama of the main heroes. Only at the end is the viewer reminded: 'We have forgotten about the enemy, but the enemy is among us'. Thus the 'military'

theme is introduced. If we keep on comparing the two films from the point of view of representation of urban spaces, *Aerograd* will not be able to provide us with any, not even the most utopic visualization. Even the final episode showing the establishment of the city Aerograd itself does not give pictures and the viewer might feel a bit disappointed like the *chukcha* for whom it takes 'eighty suns to come here to study' and who exclaims: 'So the city is not here yet?' (Fig. 44)

Fig. 44 Disappointed viewer, disappointed *chukcha*

To put it chronologically, the representation of utopic urban space is not taking place in *Aerograd* yet, it is given as a map under Lenin's gaze (Fig. 45) and through the neurotic optics of the heroine in Komsomolsk, and is fully visualized only in the film *New Moscow* [*Novaia Moskva*] by Aleksandr Medvedkin (1938).

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Fig. 45 Komsomolsk as a map under Lenin's gaze

As if to abandon 'just fantasies', *New Moscow* takes this topos to its logical conclusion and visualizes the General Plan for reconstruction of Moscow. It was banned from screening right after the premiere (Bulgakowa 2010: 151). This fact could be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, it proves the relevance of Dobrenko's thesis about the construction of the periphery: 'Yet the film about Moscow in the 1930s was not made' (Dobrenko 2007b). Secondly, the opposition of sacred/profane used by Bulgakowa could be tested on representation of the urban space. And thirdly, let us suggest that the film 'shows out' (to rephrase the Freudian 'talks out'[45]) that it is the *screen* which is the primary construction site for Stalinist culture.

In her article 'Spatial Figures in Soviet Cinema of the 1930s', Bulgakowa (2010) suggests that in *Three songs about Lenin*, Dziga Vertov (1934) 'carried out the work of a "primary maker of symbols", imparting a sacred character to objects of everyday life (a bench, a lightbulb, a newspaper, the body of the dead Lenin) and to concrete geographical spaces (part of a park in a certain estate near

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[45] To say something non-deliberately which is the key to the interpretation of the Unconscious ('talking cure').

Moscow, Red Square, the power station Dneproges on the Dnieper)' (Bulgakowa 2003: 56). Surely, the fact that the Stalinist culture saw as its important aim the re-articulation of the old symbolic objects and 'cultural heritage' as well as the creation of the new one is not original in itself and was pointed out by other researchers (Groys 2003: 97). However, Bulgakowa believes that through this act of '*sacralisation*' Vertov made the figure of Lenin present even when he is absent. She borrows the religious symbolic figure of presence-in-absence, which was used in a number of other cultures from French absolutism to Islam, and applies it to Stalinism. If we follow her logic and use the same approach, it could be suggested that Moscow in the 'peripheral' films of the 1930s is not shown, but is always implied. If Moscow turns out to be the sacred 'non-representable' centre, then is becomes clear why *New Moscow* was not good enough. But Bulgakowa also uses presence-in-absence in a more 'practical' meaning: she analyses how the city was constructed by Vertov, Kuleshov and Eisenstein in the 1920s, using a documentary, prefilmic reality which was later manipulated by editing, and contrasts it to the move into artificial studio sets by the same directors (excluding Vertov) in the 1930s. Her statement that 'Cinema offered an architectural dream as a simulacrum of reality' (Bulgakowa 2003: 68) should be understood in the context of decorations and sets, which she makes fun of, particularly in relation to *New Moscow*. The substitution, the presence-in-absence towards the urban landscape is seen by Bulgakowa only as the opposition documentary vs. play film, where the fake sets have to 'make for' real cities. On the contrary, it could be suggested that the visualization of the 'architectural dream' of the General Plan for reconstruction of Moscow turned out to be more 'real' than the reality itself – that is why it was banned.

Throughout the history of Russian and Soviet cinema Moscow was a privileged object of representation. Since 1908 when Joseph-Louis Mundwiller filmed the winter landscape of Moscow for the famous French company *Pathé* in *Moscou sous la neige* it did not lack the attention of directors, both in documentaries and played films. However, we argue that *New Moscow* not only embodies the 'nightmare' of the Stalinist reconstruction of Moscow, but also reveals the screen as the primary construction site of the Soviet architecture and the Soviet subject.

The episode when the 'live model of Moscow' is shown to the general public is the key to the film. The 'live model' turns out to be not some kind of fantastic machine, but the *cinematic projector* as it is. By mistake, it starts projecting the images of Moscow backwards, actually 'reconstructing' the old demolished buildings and sites. Analysed from a psychoanalytic point of view, this 'mistake' could be regarded as a 'slip of the tongue', the unintentional talking out of the traumatic event of the city's Unconscious. It is also confirmed structurally: before and after showing a 'rewound Moscow', a perspective of the viewers is shown with a blank white screen in front of them. So to use the classic analogy of Baudry between the filmic screen and the dream screen of Lewin mentioned above, the screen in *New Moscow* which remains blank for several seconds might be interpreted as the primary site of ideological construction. However, the 'mistake' is soon fixed and the projection starts articulating the 'master discourse', i.e. the General Plan of Moscow's reconstruction. The verbalisation and actual comment on the pictures could be compared to the psychoanalytical 'rationalization', the main function of which is to 'hide' and make sound logical, to narrate the unconscious drives behind it. So it could be

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suggested that the episode of the 'technical' mistake in fact revealed the functioning of the master narrative in constructing the imaginary Soviet urban space.

All in all, a close structural and psychoanalytical correlation between the *dispositif* in film theory and critical theory neatly comes together in the Soviet films where the hegemonic objects of representation are the railway or the city. The Soviet subject and Soviet space is similarly constructed through the basic cinematic apparatus and it was the concept of *dispositif* which has led to productive explorations of those analogies on the cinematic material.

PART II LIVING SPACES OF THE SOCIALIST CITY

Chapter 3: *Byt* [way of life] of the 1920-1930s
3.1 Forming the new *byt* in the Soviet architecture of the 1920s

> Революция наша замедлила темп, но не остановилась.
> Углубляясь, она подошла к быту.
> Быт - наш новый фронт. Искусство - наше оружие на этом фронте.
>
> [Our revolution slowed down, but did not stop.
> Deepening, it stepped up to the way of life.
> *Way of life is our new front.*
> *Art is our weapon on this front.*]
> Nikolai Gorlov (1924)

If an attempt were made to create something like a dictionary of the untranslatable terms[46] from Russian, the concept of *byt*, which can loosely be translated as 'everyday life', 'environment' or 'mode/way of life', would have a good chance of being included. The term has long been a focus of philosophical and historical engagement, starting from the 18th century through its inclusion into the asymmetrical opposition *byt-bytie* [being] as something 'material', 'mundane', 'repetitive', 'domestic' and 'carnal' against a 'higher', 'spiritual', 'transcendent' mode of life, often accompanied by a demand to fight the former to attain the latter (Boym 1994: 38). In the times of historical turbulence preceding and following the Russian revolution of 1917, the problem of *byt* was renewed once again, as the epochal moment of rupture demanded new connotations. The same old 'negativity' and 'incompleteness' of the term *byt* was now opposed not to the abstract and idealistic 'being', but to a renewed materiality of New Way of Life [*Novyi Byt*]. In fact, the 1927 edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* [*Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*] redefined 'being' itself to include 'both the

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[46] *European Vocabulary of Philosophies: Dictionary of Untranslatable Terms* (Cassin 2004) is an exemplary case of such an attempt regarding continental philosophical concepts across European languages.

material and the ideal. On the contrary, after the transition to the material and ideal, the concept of pure or abstract being is already surpassed'[47] (Thalheimer 1927). Fortunately or not, the definition of the term *byt* has yet to be peacefully and unproblematically 'surpassed'. Although the definition itself is brief and succinct – '*byt* is a specific pattern and way of life' [*byt – osobyi kharakter i uklad zhizni*] – the sheer volume of the text needed to develop the argumentation, as well as its polemical, militant style, symptomize the importance of the term for the 1920s. Yet it should be noted that the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* was not the only publication to attempt to summarize the definitions of *byt* that year. Not by accident, the highly contested term was also dealt with in two other publications, both written before 1927 and thereby peculiar in their attempts to retain idiosyncratic meanings.

The relative neutrality of the concept of everyday life in the middle of the 1920s is what the 1927 statement of the Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharsky proclaimed: 'We distinguish from all areas of our life the existence of political and economic life; minus those two areas we have *everyday life* [*byt*]' [Мы выделяем из всех областей нашего существования государственную жизнь и хозяйственную жизнь; за вычетом этих двух сфер мы получаем быт] (Lunacharsky 1927). If this 'definition' clarifies anything at all, it is rather what *byt* is presumably *not*, leaving the rest open to discussion, at least for another year or two. Among the spheres that Lunacharsky included in his booklet, which happened to be a revised verbatim record of the report given in Leningrad on December 18th, 1926, were family, communism and 'free love', the liberation of women, hooliganism and the decadence of youth, religion, morality, law and art.

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[47] «Понятие Бытие одинаково охватывает как материальное, так и идеальное. Наоборот, вместе с переходом к различению материального и идельного, понятие чистого или абстрактного быти оказывается уже превзойденным».

His position did not aim at any conceptual sophistication: he asserted the party line and common ground, and tried to keep discussion to a minimum. This is particularly glaring in the brief mention of art as 'creating joyful things' [*sozdaet radostnye veshchi*] and its mission 'to recreate everything around in a joyful manner' [*My dolzhny peresozdat' v radostnom poriadke vse okruzhaiushchee cheloveka*] (Lunacharsky 1927).[48] Almost simultaneously, another book on similar topics was published by a prominent (still-) Soviet party figure in the year prior to his exile. Leon Trotsky, who not only considered the questions of everyday existence to be dialectically related to political and economic issues, but was himself an active contributor to the discussion on the pages of *Pravda*, re-published his speeches and articles (written between 1923–6) in the 21st volume of his collected works *Problems of Culture. The Culture of the Transitional Period* [*Problemy kul'tury. Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*] (Trotsky 1927). In the article 'To reconstruct everyday life, you have to know it' [*Chtoby perestroit' byt, nado poznat' ego*] ([1923] 1927)[49], Trotsky wrote:

> The questions of *byt* reveal most clearly to what extent a single person is a product of the conditions surrounding him or her, not the creator of them. *Byt*, i.e. the conditions and mode of living, is coming into place even more than economics 'behind the backs of people' (Marx's expression).

> На вопросах быта яснее всего видно, в какой мере отдельный человек является продуктом условий, а не творцом их. Быт, т.е. обстановка и обиход жизни, складываетя в еще большей мере, чем экономика, «за спиною людей» (выражение Маркса).

He goes on to say that *byt* is 'extremely conservative' [*strashno konservativen*]; the presumable reasons for this include the lack of a long urban history among

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[48] Compare this definition to his earlier, much more problematic, discussion of the functioning of art as Kulturträger and agitation (Lunacharsky 1921).

[49] This article was translated into English and published the same year under the title 'The Transformation of Morals' (Trotsky 1923); yet, interestingly enough, all of the details relating specifically to Russian *byt* were omitted, which make it of little help to the questions concerned.

Russian proletarians, and their predominant origin from the countryside. Yet, surprisingly enough, what Trotsky demands of contemporary art is not to engage in a radical transformation of *byt*, but the production of works that *describe* and *represent* what is happening:

> *Byt* does not exist for the new artistic schools trying to keep up with the revolution. They, you see, are going to create life, not represent it. But you cannot make a new *byt* out of thin air. You can construct it from the existing elements capable of development. That is why before constructing, one needs to know what is there.

> А для новых художественных школ, пытающихся идти в ногу с революцией, быт вообще не существует. Они, видите ли, собираются созидать жизнь, а не изображать ее. Но из пальца новый быт нельзя высосать. Его можно строить из элементов, имеющихся на лицо и способных к развитию. Поэтому прежде, чем строить, нужно знать, что есть.

The logic of the argument employed here closely follows the idea of 'culture' Trotsky promotes. In the articles 'Proletarian culture and proletarian art' and 'Futurism' not only is any need for a special 'proletarian' culture denied, but also the existing art practices are criticized and labelled 'utopian sectarianism'[50] (Trotsky [1923] 1991a: 108). On the basis that the 'dictatorship' of the proletariat culture is a *temporary* phase (albeit one that might last for decades) for the transition to the world socialism,[51] Trotsky argues for general education and literacy, rather than the creation of any special culture.[52] The position of the

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[50] Despite Trotsky's accusation that the Serapion Brotherhood and other fellow travellers had a 'half-khlystovian perspective on events' (alas, the English translation omits the context again ([1923] 1991b)) (1923 [1991]-b: 68), it is not in the scope of this analysis to track Trotsky's understanding of sectarianism beyond his open anti-religious campaigns, i.e. its connection to religious sects in Russia at the end of the 19th century. See (Etkind 1998).

[51] 'In its essence the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a productive-cultural organization of the new society, but a revolutionary-military formation of struggling for it.' [Но в основе диктатура пролетариата не есть производственно-культурная организация нового общества, а революционно-боевой порядок борьбы за него] (Trotsky [1923] 1991c: 150)

[52] 'The main task of the proletarian intelligentsia in the coming years is not the abstraction of the new culture – since the foundation for it is as yet absent, but a practical culteredness [*kul'turnichestvo*], i.e. systematic, planned and, obviously, critical assimilation by the backward

Soviet government crystallized after Lenin's denial of the militant *Proletkult* idea

of a separatist 'proletarian' culture in 1920.[53] However, such an approach was by

definition expanded upon other art groups such as the Left Front of the Arts [*Levyi*

front iskusstv] (LEF), many members of which were ex-Futurists. In order to

understand Trotsky's demands, it is necessary to situate them in the context of the

theoretical and artistic debates taking place throughout the 1920s in the spheres of

art, architecture, literary studies and film; *byt* offers a cosy interdisciplinary field

for all of these. Yet the privileged objects of our analysis will be film and

architecture, not only because of their *materiality* – which is firmly grounded in

technology and, particularly in the case of the latter, *utility* – but because their

'synthetic' nature often ended up offering an embodied manifestation of the

theoretical discussions in the fields of art and literary studies, no less than in their

own fields.

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masses of the necessary elements of the existing culture. One cannot create a class culture behind that class's back. Yet to construct it together with that class, in the close correlation with its general historical uprising one needs … to have built socialism at least roughly.' [Главной задачей пролетарской интеллигенции в ближайшие годы является, однако, не абстракция новой культуры – при отсутствующем для нее пока еще фундаменте, - а конкретнейшее культурничество, т.е. систематическое, планомерное и, разумеется, критическое усвоение отсталыми массами необходимейших элементов той культуры, которая уже есть. Нельзя создать классовую культуру за спиной классса. А чтобы строить ее совместно с классом, в тесном соотношении с его общим историческим подъемом, нужно...построить социализм, хотя бы вчерне.] (Trotsky [1923] 1991c: 152)

[53] Lenin's project of the resolution 'On the proletarian culture' was announced on the congress of *Proletkult* in October 1920. He criticized the autonomization promoted by the organization and subjected it to the control of People's Commissariat of Enlightenment [*Narkompros*]. On December 1st, the party's official position was announced and theoretical views of the *Proletkult* were condemned in *Pravda*.

3.1.1 *Byt* in the 'social condensers of the epoch': house-communes

Despite the undeniably strong transnational element in the origins of

constructivism in the USSR, the generally accepted version that the entire field of

cultural production was going through the process of Marxification, in an utterly

peculiar early Soviet way, seems to be a starting point safe enough. Parallel to the

European avant-garde, constructivists based their practices on the importance of

the spatiotemporal properties elucidated by abstract art, the modern means of the

industrialized production made possible by the machines, new materials for

construction, and the radical denial of the traditional art of 'academicians' and

their classicist authorities. How non-identical were these principles either to the

party line, or to the later reified version of constructivism, might be noted from

the suggestion that the first and, *post factum,* the most iconic symbol of

architectural constructivism appeared as early as 1919, and was made by a man

who was neither an architect, nor an engineer. As El Lissitsky repeatedly

emphasized: 'Tatlin created his tower ... [though] he had no schooling in

engineering, no knowledge of technical mechanics or of iron constructions' and

again: '[Tatlin] accomplished [the Monument] without having any special

knowledge of construction' ([1925] 1968: 372; [1929] 1984: 29) (Fig. 46).[54]

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[54] The project for the *Monument to the Third International* (1919–20) or *Tatlin's Tower*, as it later
became known in the West in its depoliticized and individualized version, was a project for a
headquarters of the Comintern. It was never built, retaining the utopian potential for future
generations to be tempted by the new possibilities of reconstruction (the latest attempt was made in
2011 for the *Building the Revolution: Soviet art and architecture 1915–35* exhibition at the Royal
Academy of Arts).
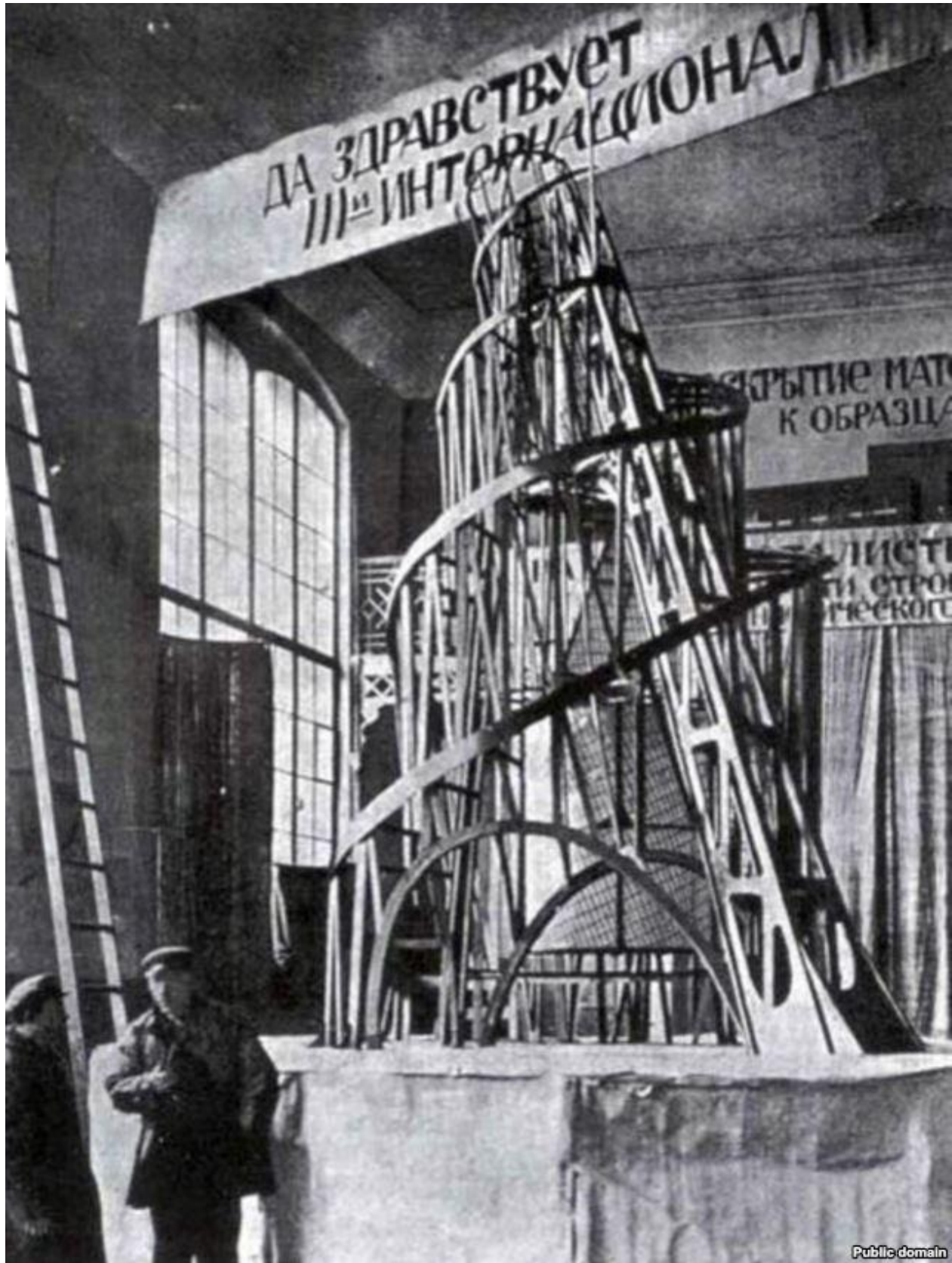
Fig. 46 Vladimir Tatlin and his model of the *Monument to the Third International* (1920)

Moreover, Vladimir Tatlin did not pursue any further interest in architecture, preferring the design of new *things* to paper architecture; the interior to the exterior. However, it would be unfair to dismiss this as an anomaly since it did something comparable to what Shklovsky's article, 'The Resurrection of the Word' [*Voskreshenie slova*], did in 1914 – it laid bare the device. Both were the manifestos of the new formal method to come,[55] both emphasized the material and the utility of their objects ('a word is a *thing'* [*slovo – veshch'*]) and both were not welcomed by the Party representatives. Trotsky considered Tatlin's monument not utilitarian enough, whereas Lunacharsky wrote that the Eifel tower is a 'true beauty in comparison to the crooked construction of Tatlin'.[56] With the benefit of long hindsight, the Marxification of literary theory was undoubtedly more challenging a project, partially determined by the specificity of the media or, to phrase it in the terms of the 1920s, by the nature of a material far more diffuse

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[55] Before settling for the name 'rationalists', the OSA [*Obshchestvo sorvemennykh arkhitektorov*] were apparently known as 'formalists' (see the use of the term by Lissitzky [1929] 1984: 32).

[56] 'Tatlin is undoubtedly right in rejecting national styles and allegorical sculpture in his project and subjecting the whole idea to the material and its constructive usage; but such has been the architecture of bridges, covered markets and cars for a long time already. Whether he is right in what is considered his personal invention - the rotating glass cube etc. – that he will still have to prove.' [Что Татлин в своем проекте отбросил национальные стили, аллегорическую скульптуру, подчинив весь замысел материалу и его конструктивному использованию, - в этом он безусловно прав; но такова архитектура мостов, крытых рынков и машин уже давно. Прав ли, однако, Татлин в том, что является его личной выдумкой: вращаяющийся стеклянный куб и проч., - это ему еще придется доказать] ([1922] 1927). Trotsky's strong-worded condemnation of Formalism is widely known (1923 [1991]-a).
Lunacharskii's comment reveals the gap of understanding not just between the artist and the representative of power, but between the two representatives of power itself: 'Comrade Tatlin created a paradoxical construction that could still be seen in one of the halls of the trade union. I might make a subjective mistake in the evaluation of this piece, but if Guy de Maupassant wrote that he is ready to flee from Paris not to see the metal monster – the Eiffel Tower – then, in my opinion, the Eiffel Tower is a true beauty in comparison to the crooked construction of Tatlin.' [Тов.Татлин создал парадоксальное сооружение, которое сейчас еще можно увидеть в одной из зал помещения профсоюзов. Я, быть может, допускаю субъективную ошибку в оценке этого произведения, но если Ги де Мопассан писал, что говов бежать из Парижа, чтобы не видеть железного чудовища – Эйфелевой башни, - то, на мой взгляд, Эйфелева башня – настоящая красавица по сравнению с кривым сооружением т.Татлина] (cited in Khan-Magomedov 1996).

than metal, glass and revolution.[57] Yet the radically determinist ambition of the form towards the content was a shared basis to be explored.

The Soviet architectural avant-garde of the 1920s crystallized into two rival groups: the Association of New Architects [*Assotsiatsiia Novykh Arkhitektorov*] (ASNOVA) (1923), or so-called rationalists, and the Union of Contemporary Architects [*Obshchestvo sorvemennykh arkhitektorov*] (OSA) (1925), or constructivists.[58] OSA managed to firmly establish its own periodical – the journal *Sovremennaia Arkhitektura* (1926–31) [*Contemporary Architecture* (*CA*)] – thanks to which the group's theoretical position was more clearly articulated and is better preserved.[59] ASNOVA, on the other hand, published only one issue of the journal *Izvestiia ASNOVA* [*ASNOVA News*] (1926) (Fig. 47), a so-called 'non-periodical', which was designed by El Lissitsky and is an artistic artefact in itself.

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[57] Shklovsky famously characterized the Monument [to the Third International] as 'made of iron, glass and revolution' [Памятник сделан из железа, стекла и революции] (Shklovsky [1921] 1990).

[58] The purpose of this short historical background is to set a very general context; any specialist monograph on the subject gives much more detailed information as to when, why and how these two groups appeared, and who their members were from year to year (Brumfield 1990; Hudson 1995; Ikonnikov 2001; Kopp 1970; Khan-Magomedov 1996; Paperny 2002).

[59] When Moisei Ginzburg became editor of *CA* in 1926, he invited the rationalists to publish there as well. Aleksei Gan even developed a special model of the journal that would allow only the right-hand pages to be read, so one would read the publications of OSA on one side, then turn the journal upside down and familiarize oneself with the articles and projects by ASNOVA. But the rationalists declined his invitation.

Fig. 47 Manifesto of ASNOVA (the title page of their only issue of 'ASNOVA News')

Nonetheless, their programme was just as well-known since the members published regularly in such journals as *Stroitel'stvo Moskvy* and *CA,* and their projects took part in all major architectural competitions of the time. Moreover, ASNOVA had a strong institutional representation after the appointment of the architects Nikolai Ladovskii, Nikolai Dokuchaev, and the sculptor Boris Efimov to the faculty of VKhUTEMAS, the well-known Moscow technical school often compared to the Bauhaus in Germany (Chepkunova 2011). Though divergent in terms of their fundamental principles, both OSA and ASNOVA were united in their opposition to eclectic architecture and their mutual commitment to modernity, as can be discerned in the manifesto-like statements of both groups [my italics] (Figs. 47 and 48):

OSA

- **Aims of Contemporary Architecture**: Invention, typification and advancement of the *social condensers of our epoch* – of the new types of architecture that correspond to the *social interrelations* of today and tomorrow.
- **Methods of construction**: a new social condenser can only be constructed with the help of *progressive methods*.
- **New methods of decoration**: a new *form* is *ahead of us*. It is *unknown* and it is to be found as the result of the goal-oriented work upon a new social thing, a new social organism. Decoration is a consequence and a result of the life-building of the new architect (1928b).

ASNOVA

- ASNOVA believes its basis to be the material *implementation of the principle of the USSR in architecture*.
- ASNOVA believes architecture must be equipped urgently with the *tools and methods of modern science*.
- ASNOVA believes that in order to promote contemporary architecture the strategic moment of today demands a mutual creative labour of architects-producers from one side, and working-consumer masses from another. *Today's practical work will be finished in tomorrow's theoretical system.*
- Since the tempo of today's inventions makes an architect face the new technical organisms every day, ASNOVA believes it to be most important *to set general principles* in architecture and to *release* it

from *obsolete forms*.

➢ ASNOVA is working on the invention of *strict and scientific terms* in contemporary architecture as it considers them to be important tools for its advancement (1926b).
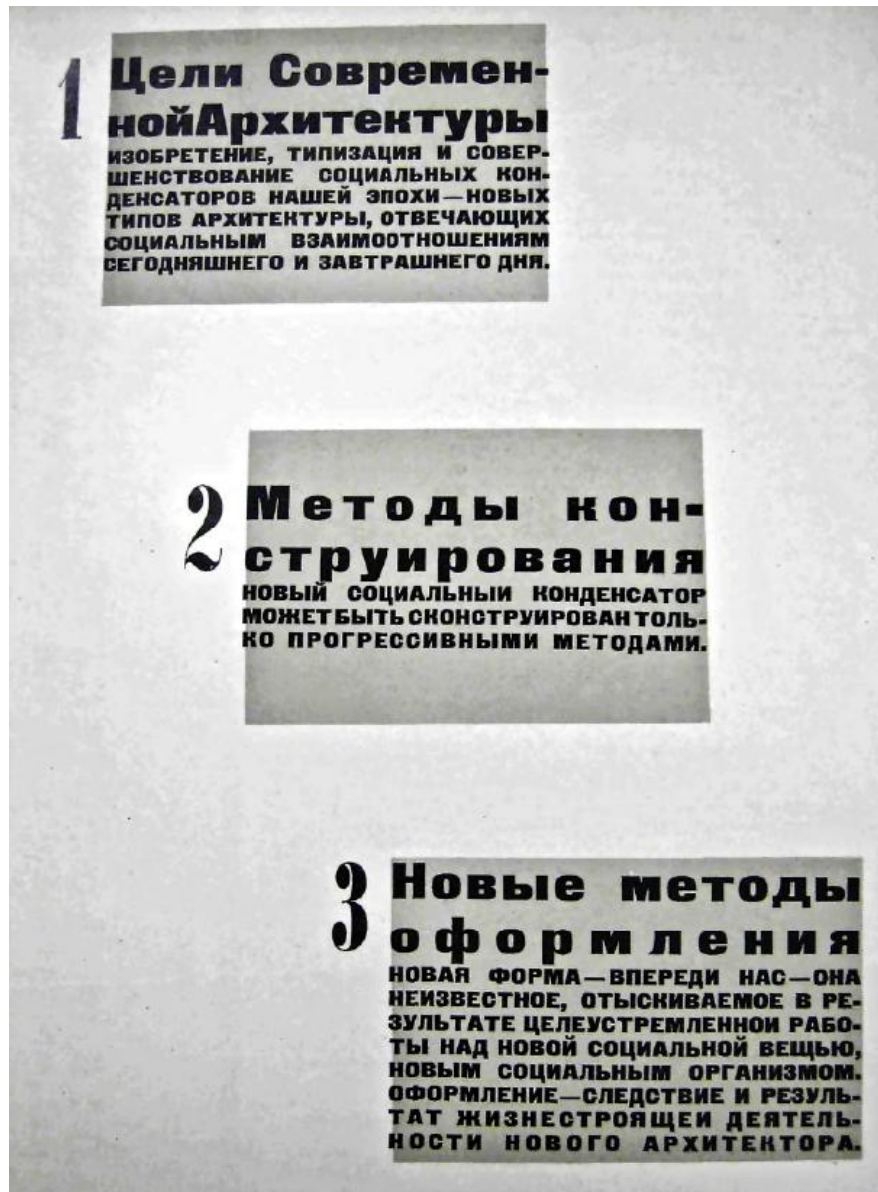
Fig. 48 Programmatic statements of OSA (*CA* 1928 (1): 41)

Even a brief consideration of these documents confirms that although they do

agree on the use of new technology, methods of construction, and the strategic

aim that their architecture should correspond to a newly proclaimed 'socialist

state', the ways they seek to achieve this slightly differ. OSA stresses the

functionality of the building, and though not completely denying the form, leaves

it for the future to decide. ASNOVA, on the other hand, declares the superiority of

forms and rational volumes in the construction practice, at the same time mocking

OSA for its overconcentration on theory and 'paper' architecture. Having

sketched the 'programs' of the two groups, it might be easier to analyse OSA's

idea of the creation of the structures needed to *transform byt* [way of life] by

constructing not just buildings, but new 'social condensers of the epoch', as

Moisei Ginzburg termed them,[60] capable of 'direct' influence on people.

Fig. 49 House-commune of the cooperative union '1st Zamoskvorech'e' [*Dom-kommuna kooperativnogo tovarishchestva '1-e Zamoskvorech'e'*] (1925-7) by the members of ASNOVA Georgii Volfenzon and Samuil Aizikovich (image taken from: http://moskvasovet.ucoz.com/index/dom_kommuna_kooperativnogo_tovarishhestva_1_e_zamoskvoreche/0-54)

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[60] 'In constructive periods of history, i.e., in periods of the intensive formation of a new culture, what is first of all required from the architect is the invention and crystallization of *social condensers for their epoch*, the creation of new architectural organisms, for this epoch of designing and maintaining architectural objects — the spatial repositories for these forms of the new life.' (Ginzburg 1927: 160)

The phenomenon of the house-commune was by no means a new one, originating from the *phalanstère* type of building offered by Charles Fourier; however, it was rethought and modernized in the 1920s in the Soviet Union. The first all-union house-commune project competition was announced in 1926 in the journal *CA*:[61]

> The necessity of creating new types of workers' housing which would be a stage in forming the *byt* [way of life] of the workers of the socialist state is absolutely clear. [...] THE MAIN REQUIREMENT: to construct a new house-organism which would *form* the new interaction between production and *byt* [environment] of the workers infiltrated with the idea of collectivism.
>
> [Совершенно очевидна необходимость в создании новых типов рабочего жилья, которое послужило бы этапом в оформлении быта трудящихся социалистического государства […]. ОСНОВНОЕ ТРЕБОВАНИЕ: создать новый организм-дом, оформляющий новые производственно-бытовые взаимоотношения трудящихся, проникнутый идеей коллективизма]. (1926c) [my italics]

Moreover, the announcement was followed by a double-questionnaire: a 'social and a *byt* one' [*sotsial'no-bytovaia*] for 'all workers' and a 'technical-industrial one' [*tekhno-proizvodstvennaia*] for 'specialists'. In theory, every interested person could take part and express his or her vision of the house-commune, according to the questions drafted below:

> 1) How do you visualize the *design* [*veshchestvennoe oformleniie*] of the new *byt* [way of life] of workers and what do you consider to be the philistinism of *things*, i.e. their *petit-bourgeois essence*?
> 2) Which new habits of everyday life do you have? Which new needs are developing and which are now dying out?

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[61] Ironically, here again the 'theoretical' call of the OSA could be juxtaposed with the 'practicality' of ASNOVA, whose members Georgii Volfenzon and Samuil Aizikovich submitted a project for the first communal house to Mossovet in 1925, which was constructed in 1927 and is known as 'House-commune of the cooperative union "1st Zamoskvorech'e"' [*Dom-kommuna kooperativnogo tovarishchestva '1-e Zamoskvorech'e'*] (Fig. 49). It is still in use today (1928a).

3) Which of the everyday habits can stay individual and separated and which could be co-organized as collective ones?
4) How are the problems of public catering linked with the liberation of women from their enforced social passivity?
5) What do you think about and how do you see the collective upbringing of children within the framework of new forms of collectivism and new social customs? How do you consider the possibility of organization of children's premises which would bring up new active workers?
6) Comrade, do you have a developed plan of organization of workers' leisure time? (1926a)

Although sociology in the USSR was fully recognized only in the 1960s, the method of 'providing the answer in the question' was used much earlier. It does not seem relevant to quote here the replies of the 'workers' to this questionnaire, as its basic presuppositions were never challenged. All in all, the features the house-commune usually included were collective facilities such as day nurseries, playgrounds, laundries, and a public dining room and kitchen, which would liberate the woman from kitchen slavery and the upbringing of children, thereby gradually abolishing the institution of the family as such, and encouraging a new way of life with no place for the self-centredness of the petit bourgeois. Before we proceed to the analysis of the actual projects of the house-communes, it must be noted that in the majority of publications on the matter (Brumfield 1990; Ikonnikov 2001; Stites 1989) the use of the adjective 'utopian' to describe these projects has completely lost any critical meaning, and has turned into a 'code word' or label for 'socialism' or 'totalitarianism' (depending on the political views of the author). Therefore, it is rewarding to explore the notion of 'utopia' in terms of whether it can actually be spatial rather than textual, architectural rather than literary; and, if so, what new connotations (if any) it acquires.

3.1.2 Thinking Utopia

Two relatively recent publications on the theory of utopia, Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005) and David Harvey's *Spaces of Hope* (2000), will supply us with the terminological apparatus for analysis of the architectural 'utopian' housing projects of the Soviet 1920s. Jameson classifies utopias into two categories: utopian programme (text or genre) vs. utopian impulse (a category he borrows from Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*): 'the one intent on the realization of the Utopian program, the other an obscure yet omnipresent Utopian impulse finding its way to the surface in a variety of covert expressions and practices' (2005: 3). However, there is one key feature inherent to utopias that enables them, but at the same time makes them very ambiguous and problematic: their commitment to *closure* and *totality*. As Jameson puts it: 'Totality is then precisely this combination of closure and system, in the name of autonomy and self-sufficiency and which is ultimately the source of that otherness or radical, even alien, difference [...]' (2005: 5). This totality is seen as an absolute pre-condition: it performs the function of opening up the space for the imagination of a radically different society, but conveniently ignores the problem of how to move from the moment of revolutionary change to utopia itself. Harvey comes to the same conclusion when he writes: 'All these forms of Utopia can be characterized as "Utopias of spatial forms" since the temporality of the social process, the dialectics of social change – real history – are excluded, while social stability is assured by a fixed spatial form' (2000: 160). However, when we displace our consideration from pseudo-temporal to an explicitly spatial axis, another problem arises that neither Jameson, nor Harvey, pays enough attention to.

Although Jameson is highly aware of the distinctive role the spatial dimension plays in the logic of utopia, he does not deal with it in any great depth beyond convenient illustrative purposes. For instance, in his follow-up essay 'Utopia as Replication', Jameson begins with the hypothetical 'new forms of the city... [which]... might well offer new models for urbanists and in that sense constitute a kind of method', in order to abandon it a few sentences later by saying that: 'The Utopian city was surely a staple of modernism' (2010: 410). Jameson struggles with the concept that Utopian methodology can be spatial, for '[h]ow can a place be a method?' Thus, in his version, utopia as a 'logical operation' again acquires a temporal genealogical connotation projected into the future; an 'utopology' that is neither programmatic, nor impulsive, yet essential for any political action.

As a social geographer, Harvey's interest in space is fundamental. His dialectical 'spatiotemporal utopianism' allows him not only to thoroughly analyse spatiality at the level of the city, but also to pose further questions as to what it 'would look like under conditions of dynamic production of the space and in relation to a theory of uneven geographical developments' (2000: 196). Yet although the dialectical relation could be either 'both–and' or 'either–or', Harvey's utopia explicitly chooses the latter, bringing us back to the connection to 'embodied' totalitarian and authoritarian control, which has resulted in much disillusionment with utopia as a thinkable alternative both authors are struggling to revive. Surely, Bloch's utopian impulse lacks any kind of totality, but then we are left with nothing else but postmodern differentiation, with no real possibility of embodied agency to counterpose (and not just 'slip out' in a Deleuzian way) the disseminated power of post-industrial capitalism. 'Utopia is left as an empty

signifier of hope destined never to acquire a material referent' (Harvey 2000: 189). So the challenge of defining the logic of spatial utopia specifically should start from it being simultaneously progressive in imagining an alternative, and conservative in avoiding showing the ways of getting to the eternal a-temporal idyllic place.

Another issue of crucial importance is the correlation between the actual built environment and the imagined place: 'Can any utopianism of spatial form that gets materialized be anything other than "degenerate"?' (Harvey 2000: 107). Or, to relate it to our situation: what is the correlation between the so-called 'paper' architecture and the actual constructed experimental housing of the 1920s? What representational relations are established between 'planned' and 'constructed'? Specific house-communes will become objects of further scrutiny in order to discuss 'utopianism' with respect to its visual representation.

'What distinguishes human labour and the worst of architects from the best of bees is that architects erect a structure in the imagination before realizing it in material form' (Marx 1976: 283 - 4); however unintended, this could be the slogan of the OSA's constructions in the 1920s. The projects suggested for OSA's competition in 1927, and later projects for Stroikom (Construction Committee of the RSFSR), were by no means equal in the level of their radicalism. Generally speaking, house-communes could be divided into 'purely utopian paper projects' and actually constructed 'experimental housing', which were to serve for a gradual transition to socialism and did leave some elements of the old 'way of life'. It is worth illustrating this with the most prominent examples, as 'Utopia would seem to offer the spectacle of one of those rare phenomena whose concept

is indistinguishable from its reality, whose *ontology* coincides with its

representation' (Jameson 2004: 35).

3.1.3 Case study 1: House-commune by Nikolai Kuzmin

Kuzmin's house-commune was submitted as a thesis project for housing 5140 miners in Anzhero-Sudzhensk in 1928–1929, but still remains one of the most radical projects of the time (Fig. 50).
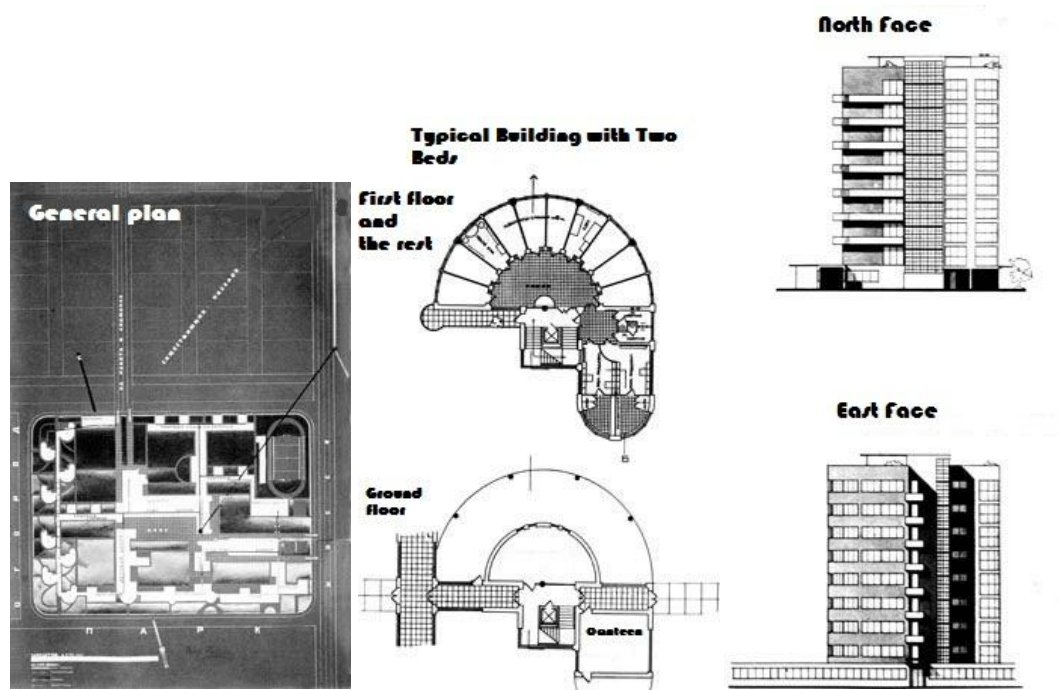
Fig. 50 Plans of house-commune by Nikolai Kuzmin (1928-9) (image taken and translated from http://arx.novosibdom.ru/node/397)

From the point of view of technical construction it has no drawbacks, and could be easily built using modern materials and structural elements of the time: flat roofs, accentuated reinforced-concrete frame, rich use of glass and clerestory (Nevzgodin 2005). However, the 'super-collectivized' way of life Kuzmin suggested could barely be more utopian. The everyday life of the adult population is strictly measured: they get up to the sound of radio, which regulates the life of the commune, and are to follow this schedule:

1)	Lights off	22.00
2)	Sleep for 8 hrs. Get up	6.00
3)	Morning exercise – 5 min.	6.05
4)	Toilet – 10 min.	6.15
5)	Shower (optional – 5 min.)	6.20
6)	Getting dressed – 5 min.	6.25
7)	Transfer to the dining room – 3 min.	6.28
8)	Breakfast – 15 min.	6.43
9)	Transfer to the cloakrooms – 2 min.	6.45
10)	Outfit change – 5 min.	6.50
11)	Transfer to the mine – 10 min.	7.00
12)	Get ready to dig in. Work in the mine. Transfer back up. Bath. Outfit change – 8 hrs.	15.00
13)	Transfer back to commune – 10 min.	15.10
14)	Outfit change – 7 min.	15.17
15)	Hand washing – 8 min.	15.25
16)	Dinner – 30 min.	15.55
17)	Transfer to the rest room for a free hour – 3 min.	15.58
18)	Free hour. Those who wish to nap or sleep properly have to go to the bedroom	16.58
19)	Toilet and change – 10 min.	17.08
20)	Transfer to the dining room – 2 min.	17.10
21)	Tea – 15 min.	17.25
22)	Transfer to the club. Recreation. Cultural development. Sport. Perhaps a bath or swim. *Here life itself will make a schedule, will make a plan* [*Zhizn' sama zdes' sostavit raspisanie, sostavit plan*] – 4 hrs.	21.25
23)	Transfer to the dining room, supper, transfer to bedrooms – 25 min.	21.50
24)	Prepare to rest (a shower may be taken) – 10 min.	22.00

Although Kuzmin noted: 'Time is shown here *not* to limit people's movement. A person is not a machine. I calculated this time merely for the *architectural organization* of the commune' [«Время намечается не для регламентации человеческих движений. Человек не автомат. Это время я намечал для архитектурной организации коммуны»] (1930: 15), it did not prevent his critics from responding sharply: 'But nobody pictured it [house-commune] as the

"barracks" later proposed by Kuzmin in which everyone has the same schedule and lived the "collective" life twenty-four hours a day' (Kopp 1970: 150).[62] Even on the level of formal logic the note does not contradict the assumption, i.e. architectural organization of the commune *would* limit people's movement, it *must* transform them, uneducated workers, into a conscious new socialist subject, or it would be nothing.[63] Moreover, the mentioned depersonalization and absolute denouncing of individuality is another specific feature of utopia's functioning. Thus, it is interesting to see what kind of functionality Kuzmin's project implies, and how he structured the 'life cycle' of the house-commune.

The 'Diagram of Life' is a *heteronormative narrative* that combines all stages of a person's life (birth, youth, *family life*, old age, and death), according to which the plan of the commune is drawn; i.e. a closed system of separate buildings for different age groups connected by 'warm corridors'.[64] All these buildings are situated around a so-called 'Culture centre', where all educational and cultural activities are to take place (the only available reproduction of the Diagram, which is of very poor quality, is provided in Fig. 51).

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[62] Moreover, the same editor of CA who wrote, in the preface to Kuzmin's article in 1930, that 'some moments in Kuzmin's work are not radical enough', and who included this as the basis for developing 'Arguments for Housing' adopted at the first congress of OSA, changed his opinion in 1934: 'Even more consistently and reducing to absurdity the same ideas were developed by Kuzmin in his house-commune' (Ginzburg 1929: 138).

[63] To re-phrase Marx 'The proletariat is either revolutionary, or it is nothing'.

[64] As Kuzmin writes: 'Children live separately, but have, of course, a corresponding connection with their parents (through the warm corridors) (1930: 15).

Fig. 51 'Diagram of Life' and residential buildings situated around 'Culture centre' by Nikolai Kuzmin (1928-9) (images scanned from *CA* 1930 (3))

Moreover, the commune should be fully autonomous, having its food supplies cultivated and reared nearby (this is what women would be doing after their 'liberation' from household obligations). Thus, it is suggested that Kumin's

house-commune could be considered an example of a utopian project, being an independent closed system with depersonalized individuals and a heteronormative narrative life cycle. Its model cannot but remind us of another famous, but never existing structure of the Panopticon. As Foucault said: 'If I had wanted to describe "real life" in the prisons, I wouldn't indeed have gone to Bentham. But the fact that this real life isn't the same thing as the theoreticians' schema doesn't entail that these schemas are therefore utopian, imaginary, etc. One could only think that if one had a very impoverished notion of the real … It is absolutely correct that the actual functioning of the prisons … was a witches' brew compared to the beautiful Benthamite machine' (Crampton and Elden 2007: 194). Consequently, the fact that Kuzmin's house-commune was never built on one hand proves its utopianism, but on the other, implies that the early Soviet society was based on dialectical tension, which later found a very particular kind of 'synthesis' in Stalinist culture.

3.1.4 Case study 2: 'Transitional' house-commune on Gogolevsky boulevard by Moisei Ginzburg

In order to explore the question of 'built utopia', an example of the actually constructed 'transitional' house-commune might be worth exploring. It still exists, functioning as a residential house, and can be found in Moscow at Gogolevsky Boulevard 8. Since OSA had been theoretically and scientifically proving the huge economic and social benefits of the house-communes, the Construction Committee of RSFSR [*Stoitel'nyi kommitet*, i.e. *Stroikom*) hired Ginzburg to develop prototypes of the living units to be built all over the country as soon as possible. Seven types of living units were developed – A, B, C, D, E, F and K, but the most efficient one was the so-called F-type (Fig. 52), so in November 1928 Stroikom commissioned six experimental house-communes: four in Moscow, one in Sverdlovsk and one in Saratov. Ginzburg explained his 'transitional' F-type apartments as follows:

> We consider that one of the important points that must be taken into account in building new apartments is the dialectics of human development. We can no longer compel the occupants of a particular building to live collectively, as we have attempted to do in the past, generally with negative results. We must provide the possibility of a gradual, natural transition to communal utilization in a number of different areas. That is why we have tried to keep each unit isolated from the next, that is why we found it necessary to design the kitchen alcove as a standard element of minimum size that could be removed easily from the apartment to permit the introduction of canteen catering at any given moment. We considered it absolutely necessary to incorporate certain features that would stimulate the transition to a socially superior mode of life, *stimulate but not dictate*. (Ginzburg 1934: 5) (translation taken from (Kopp 1970: 141)
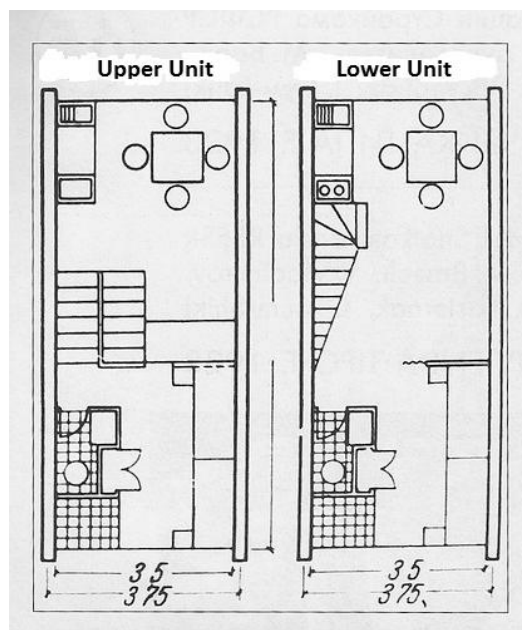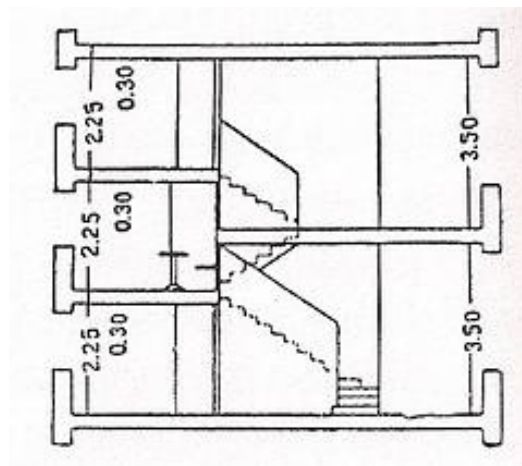
Fig. 52 F-type apartment (image scanned and translated from *CA* 1929 (1))

Thus, the 'transitional' house-communes were not ordinary 'bourgeois' apartments cut down in size as much as possible in order to get approval for construction. The 'utopian' elements were still essential for them, so the house-commune on Gogolevsky Boulevard had two living blocks (connected by a covered corridor up until the 1950s, when additional 'normally' planned storages were added) and a communal one (connected by an underground corridor left there from the demolished church (Figs. 53 and 54)).
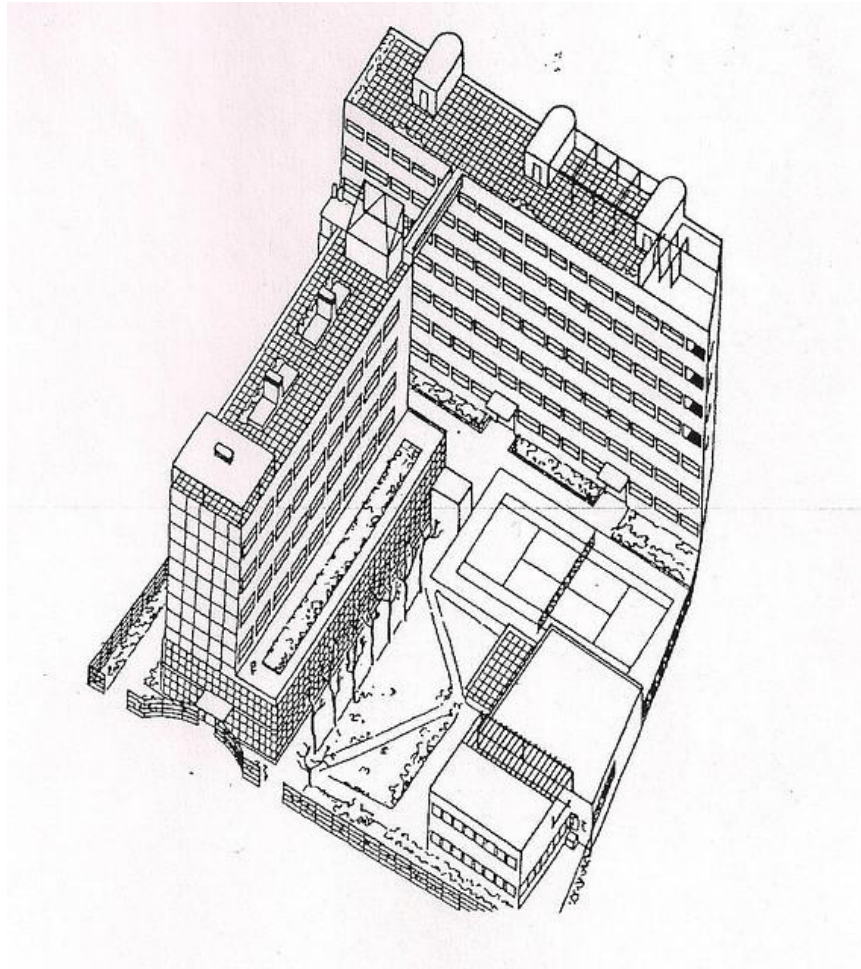
Fig. 53 Plan of the house-commune on Gogolevsky Boulevard (image taken from http://yablor.ru/blogs/o-kvartirah-yacheykah-tipa-f-i-mladshih-bratyah-do/360207)
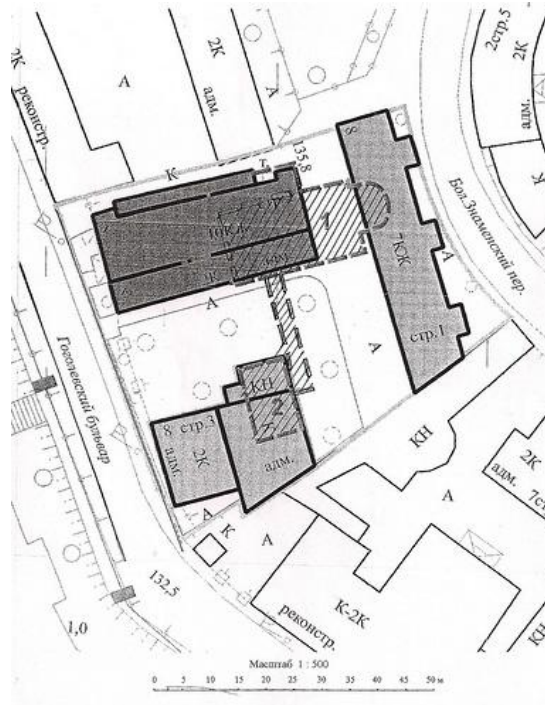
Fig. 54 An underground passage connecting a living and a communal block (left from the connection of church of Rzhevskoi Bozhei Materi (1) and a priest's house (2) marked by a dotted line) (image taken from http://yablor.ru/blogs/o-kvartirah-yacheykah-tipa-f-i-mladshih-bratyah-do/360207)

The latter included a canteen, laundry, workers club (with a small library and a stage for performances), sport facilities and a nursery. All buildings were flat-roofed, which added additional space for socializing (it was used as a solarium, a playground and a space for drying clothes). However, it is the interior of this house-commune that makes it interesting. As already mentioned, F-type apartments were unusually planned: the common corridor had good natural light thanks to the clerestory windows, and was situated on the 3 ½ and 5 ½ floors, with doors leading to two apartments on the upper and lower levels (Fig. 55).

Fig. 55 A corridor of the house-commune with doors leading to upper- and lower-level apartments (image taken from http://yablor.ru/blogs/o-kvartirah-yacheykah-tipa-f-i-mladshih-bratyah-do/360207)

The apartments themselves were small in area (33–34 square metres), but 'normal' in terms of spatial planning (approximately 50 metres) thanks to high ceilings in the living room. The lower units had two levels (upper level: a lobby and toilet; lower level: a living room, kitchen, bedroom and shower; both connected by 13 steps), while the upper units were triple-levelled (first level contained a lobby and toilet, then seven steps led to the second level with a living room and a kitchen, and another seven steps led to the third level with a bedroom and shower) (Figs. 56 and 57) (2010).

Fig. 56 A lower-unit apartment with two levels (image taken from http://yablor.ru/blogs/o-kvartirah-yacheykah-tipa-f-i-mladshih-bratyah-do/360207)

Fig. 57 An upper-unit apartment with three levels (image taken from http://yablor.ru/blogs/o-kvartirah-yacheykah-tipa-f-i-mladshih-bratyah-do/360207)

At the beginning it was populated by the architects themselves and other intellectuals such as Burov, Leonidov, Siniavsky, Barshch, Milinis *et al.* Ironic as it may be, today the house-commune is a prestigious place to live for Moscow's so-called 'metropolitan singles'. All in all, this 'transitional' house-commune poses a question relating to the embodiment of utopia without slippage to its betrayal, since it brings us back to the dialectical relations between architecture and reality and to the complex *dispositif* it produces, without fully determining subjectivity, but being 'rigorously indivisible' from it.

In May 1930 the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (TsK VKP(b)) strongly condemned all 'utopian and semi-fantastic' projects of OSA and ASNOVA in a decree, 'On the reconstruction of *byt*' [*O rabote po perestroike byta*], bringing the new terminology and the new questions of the 1930s: a discussion about '*sotsrasselenie*' (socialist resettlement), a new kind of urbanisation and the Stalinist General Plan for the reconstruction of Moscow. However, it must be noted here that the relations between the architectural avant-garde and a Stalinist return to neoclassicism are not quite as straightforward as they may seem. It is possible to argue that Stalinist architecture, *in contrast to all other arts*, can be characterized as a radical *anti*-Socialist Realism. If Socialist Realism in art is defined as 'the portrayal of an reality in its revolutionary development', it should be neither realistic, nor mimetic. By way of contrast, the architecture of the 1920s, or at least the exemplifications we have discussed, can be viewed as Socialist Realist *par excellence.* A paradox of the time is that architects' plans and projects were severely criticized by Trotsky because they were planed *as if* communism had already been achieved, *as if* all the necessary technology and materials were already available. Yet just a few

years later, precisely this vision was adopted as the official Stalinist line, marking

a new reversal of roles: artists became 'engineers of human souls', while

architects were encouraged to revive classical traditions. All in all, like the bitter

joke of the time went: in the discussion between rationalists and constructivists,

neoclassicists won.

3.2. Representations of *byt* in the cinema of the 1920-1930s

Torn between 'movies for the masses' and 'avant-garde' films, between Mezhrapom-Rus and The First State Film Factory, between 'innovation' and 'ideology and propaganda', cinematography of the 1920s, which is usually described with reference to these categories (Gillespie 2005; Youngblood 1992), constitutes exceedingly dynamic and heterogeneous spaces for analyses of housing and *byt*. A generalization could be made that portrayal and condemnation of the bourgeois *byt* of the NEP is an umbrella theme for films of the 1920s, but only to immediately abandon it and proceed to a more complex and detailed analysis of the status of *thing* [*veshch*] in them. Adopting as an analytical framework an unestablished theory of 'object as comrade' allows a problematization of *things* in the 'mass' cinematography of the 1920s, and a juxtaposition of these with Dziga Vertov's 'cine-thing' in order to show that it is the indefinite, amorphous and vague status of the *thing* in the former that enables Vertov to construct his vision of the 'new way of life'.

The idea of object as comrade was developed in the circle of the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) (*Levyi front iskusstv*) by Alexander Rodchenko and Boris Arvatov in particular. In his letter from Paris in 1925, Rodchenko wrote: 'Light coming from the East is not only the liberation of the working class; this is in a new attitude to man, woman, things. Our things in our hands should *be equal*, *be comrades,* and not black and gloomy slaves, like they are here' (Rodchenko and Stepanova 2000: 325). Proclaiming *utility* as the only appropriate goal for art, constructivism (also referred to as Productivism) tried to elaborate on the tension between production and consumption. On the one hand, it favoured the direct influence of the artist on the industrial production of things as the way to unite art

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and life (the artist who actually worked in the *Prokatchik* rolling mill in Moscow between 1923 and 1926 was Karl Ioganson). On the other, constructivism aimed to re-formulate the problem of commodity and theorize a socialist object that should be produced under the new Soviet regime. Trying to face the NEP situation with its revival of the bourgeois values and way of life, LEF continued to struggle for the ideas of revolution. The restoration of old pre-revolutionary culture had taken place more actively than ever before under the disguise of 'studying the great examples of art under capitalism' or stressing that 'proletarians need to have a rest too'. Thus, the 'struggle' needed to unfold on two strategic fronts: consumption practices of everyday life, and art in production. This is how Sergei Tretiakov, one of the LEF members, formulates the second of these concepts:

> There are two NEPs.
> One is fat and impudent, the kind that gets chewed over in all the satirical newspapers. His snout is in the display cases of the extra-gluttonous stores, in the sparkle of jewelry stores, in the Cotys and silks, in the cafes and casinos. His bull head is in cozy apartments bought for billions of rubles, made 'habitable' with curtains, fichus trees, porcelain elephants and sometimes even plates from the Soviet porcelain factory with the slogan 'he who does not work, does not eat'. […]
> And NEP No 2. The revolution continues. The onset of the revolutionary forces has changed the means of its life formation. […] LEF must set itself a task to remove itself from the display cases of aesthetic products (magazines, theatres, exhibitions) where its products lose its shocking meaning in the alien surroundings and, what is more, soften their sharp corners as they adjust to the audience.
> At the same time LEF, aiming at servicing revolutionary practice, *practicing art as the highest qualification of methods of the industrial processing of materials,* must be everywhere where the conditions of the revolutionary life need it, however unpresentable and grey it is on the face of it.

> Есть два нэпа.
> Один - жирный и наглый, обсосанный всеми газетными фельетонами. Его морда в витринах экстра-обжорных магазинов, в искромете ювелирен, в котиках и шелках, в кафе и казино. Его бычий затылок в купленных за миллиарды уютных квартирках, приведенных в "человечий вид": гардины, фикусы, фарфоровые

слоники, а подчас и тарелки советского фарфорзавода с надписью
“нетрудящийся не ест”. [...]

   И нэп N 2. Революция продолжается. Натиск революционных
сил видоизменился в формах своего обрабатывания жизни. [...]
ЛЕФ должен поставить себе задачей уйти из витрин магазинов
эстетпродуктов (журналы, театры, выставки) где его продукты, в
чуждом ему окружении теряют свой ударный смысл и больше
того, стирают свои острые углы, приспосабливаясь к аудитории.

   В тоже время ЛЕФ, ставя задачей обслуживание
революционной практики, *осуществления искусства как*
наибольшей квалификации методов производственной
обработки материалов, должен быть везде, где по условиям
революционной действительности такая работа требуется, как бы
непрезентабельна и сера она внешне ни была (1923: 70, 78) (my
italics; translation partially from (Kiaer 2005: 20)).

   To summarize debates among LEF members as to how, exactly, an artist

should engage with the factory, it might be useful to briefly consider three

categories of Productivist praxis. First, the role of the artist as 'a facilitator of

improved techniques and machine processes in the factory' (it has been suggested

that the best school for an artist is in fact a polytechnic institute, where he or she

would assume an identity of a technician – i.e. become an engineer). Second, the

role of the productive designer of commodities (like Bauhaus or Le Courbusier's

Esprit Nouveau). Third, the artist's role as an independent inventor and

intellectual who uses factory as a space to transform productive relations

themselves, thus emancipating the workers whose conditions worsened under

NEP (Roberts 2009: 529-30). However, the example of Karl Ioganson (analysed

in detail by Maria Gough (2005)) suggests that the implementation of any of these

roles was more than problematic, as balancing between the rationalization of

productive process demanded by the factory's officials (and indeed by Marxist

analysis of value itself) and introducing any critical experimental laboratory there

was doomed to failure. Nevertheless, simultaneously with production as art

theory, the idea of socialist objects was developed by Boris Arvatov, who was imagining a different consumption.

What follows is possibly an answer to an urgent question in the historical conditions of the NEP: how can the desires and individual fantasies that drive the pleasure of commodity possession be kept, while modifying the commodity fetish form they take under the capitalist mode of production? The new option was not a vulgar Marxist renunciation of material objects as such, but aimed to deprive an object of the possessive relation towards it, thereby transforming the desirous drives behind it into a socialist object. Certainly, as Christina Kiaer notes, 'The socialist object as it was developed in the early 1920s was therefore of necessity a transitional one, anticipating a future socialist culture that has not yet arrived' (2005: 4). Developed by Arvatov, in his article 'Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing' [*Byt i kul'tura veshchi*] in 1925, the relation of the individual and the collective to the Thing is believed to be defining of social relations. Unfortunately, the only relation to Things known at that time was a capitalistic one, so Arvatov structured his argument in two parts: 'the Thing in the hands of bourgeoisie' and 'the Thing in the industrial city' in order to analyse the attitudes towards a Thing that should be changed in the proletarian culture and in the Soviet industrial city. Thus, the rupture between things and people that characterized bourgeois society should be overcome and the entire world of things should be treated 'as the material form-creating' for proletarian culture (Arvatov and Kiaer 1997: 121). But what exact features need to be changed in order to transform an object from a bourgeois to a socialist one? Arvatov is straightforward on this point:

> The commodity nature of bourgeois material *byt* constitutes the fundamental basis for its relation to the thing. The Thing as an a-material category, as a category of pure consumption, the Thing outside its creative genesis, outside its material dynamics, outside its social process of production, the Thing as something completed, fixed, static, and, consequently, dead – this is what characterizes bourgeois material culture. (Arvatov and Kiaer 1997: 122)

What is anticipated instead is that 'The Thing as the fulfilment of the organism's physical capacity for labour, as a force for social labour, as an instrument and as a co-worker, does not exist in the everyday life of the bourgeoisie'(Arvatov and Kiaer 1997: 124). Thus, the 'liberation' of the Thing could partially be understood as a transformation of its passivity into activity and dynamics, as a kind of 'animation' of the object and seeing it as a comrade. Although Arvatov does not provide the reader with any examples apart from the life of American 'technical intelligentsia,' which he sees as already partially emancipated, one of the 'genuine Soviet' products he does mention is a house-commune (or 'house-instrument', as he calls it). Other famous art-into-life objects of Constructivists such as furniture, utensils, clothing, and advertisements are also suggested by Kiaer as probable embodiments of 'socialist objects' (2005). Therefore, in order to avoid the commonplace conclusion that all the Soviet Constructivist ideology lacked was a proletariat itself, and a developed technological industry to make a reality all utopian dreams it was proclaiming, let us consider the films of the 1920s as a medium in which the problem of the Thing was visualized and 'cine-things' were produced.

When engaging with the film material of the era, our optics will be mediated by the record of the foreigner who has experienced Moscow of the NEP, stating that his 'presentation will be devoid of all theory' and that 'all factuality is already theory' (from a letter to Martin Buber, reprinted in Benjamin 1986:

132).[65] Walter Benjamin did not favour Soviet 'mass' films, and was quite explicit in his views that:

> A serious critique of Soviet man is impossible in film, which is not the case with theatre. But *the representation of bourgeois life is likewise impossible*. And there is equally little room for American grotesque comedy, since it is based on uninhibited play with *technology*.[66] But everything technical is sacred here, nothing is taken more earnestly than *technology*. Above all, however, Russian film knows nothing of eroticism. As is well known, the "bagatellization" of love and sex life is part and parcel of the communist credo. It would be considered counterrevolutionary propaganda to represent tragic love entanglements on film or stage. There remains the possibility of *social comedy* whose satirical target would essentially be the *new bourgeoisie*. Whether film, one of the most advanced machines for the imperialist domination of the masses, can be expropriated on this basis, that is very much the question. (Benjamin 1986: 54-5) [my italics]

However, our focus will be precisely on such social comedies as *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* [*Neobychainye prikliucheniia mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov*] (Kuleshov, 1924), *Bed and Sofa* [*Tret'ia Meshchanskaia*] (Room, 1927) *The Girl with a Hatbox* [*Devushka s korobkoi*] (Barnet, 1927) and *The House on Trubnaya Square* [*Dom na Trubnoi*] (Barnet, 1928), juxtaposed to Dziga Vertov's *Cine-Eye* [*Kino-Glaz*] (1924). It is important to emphasize the tension between Benjamin's

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[65] Walter Benjamin's 'Moscow Diary' was written during his two-month stay in 1926–27, and is a curious example of 'a Western intellectual in the Soviet Union' sub-genre. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the autobiographical implications and literary means of constructions of narrative and 'witness effect' of this text, no matter how intriguing these issues might be. Moreover, a few other methodological points must be pointed out before trying to deal with the text itself. No studies of urban everyday life could fail to mention Benjamin, as he was the first to combine a deeply individualized mental map of the city with the theoretical analysis of it (Berlin, Paris, Naples, Marseilles and, of course, Moscow do not exhaust his body of work on urbanism, but constitute a core for further studies). Since the city of Moscow as a whole is in the focus of 'Moscow Diary', it is essential to limit ourselves to analysing housing spaces and things in them.

[66] Here I have replaced the last word of this sentence, which originally read, 'Everything technical is sacred here, nothing is taken more earnestly than *technique*' (Benjamin 1986: 55), since the original German word used was '*die Technik*' (Benjamin 1985: 340), traditionally translated in Benjamin's more famous essays as '*technology*'. A similar mis-translation was made in Viktor Shklovsky article 'Art as Device' [*Iskusstvo kak priem*] (1991), the first version of which read as 'Art as Technique' ([1917] 1965).

statement that 'the representation of bourgeois life is likewise impossible', and the creation of specific visual codes in the films of the 1920s to deal with this. The markers of 'bourgeoisity' are constructed in opposition to those of 'proletarian' everyday life, but at the same time the films not only embody the critique of *both* of them, but also often correspond to Benjamin's text on *byt* in Moscow. Susan Buck-Morss writes that the unfinished Arcades project 'put forth the notion that socialist culture would need to be constructed out of the embryonic, still-inadequate forms that pre-existed in capitalism,' thus I will analyse social comedies as examples of the forms on the screen (Buck-Morss 1989: 123). It could be suggested that social comedies are as close to Benjamin's idea that 'Moscow as it appears at the present reveals a full range of possibilities in schematic form: above all, the *possibility that the Revolution might fail or succeed*' (Benjamin 1986: 6) as the explicitly constructivist films of Vertov.

Our analysis will begin with a film about the adventures of another foreigner in Soviet Moscow. The narrative of *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* is quite simple: an American by the name of Mr. West comes to the Soviet Union to spread the ideas of the YMCA; he is a victim of the image of a savage, barbarian Russia promoted by the media, and so he takes his cowboy friend Jeddie to protect him; his briefcase is stolen and he then falls into the trap of getting 'help' from thieves pretending to be aristocrats destroyed by a 'new regime'; eventually, Mr. West is saved by the militia and is shown the 'real' Soviet Moscow. However, no matter how 'ideologically correct' the film might seem, it could be useful to analyse the different visions of the Soviet Union that are given, *whose* visions they are, and how they correlate with one another through representations of things in the film.

Although at first sight the film might be perceived as a black-and-white portrayal of two visions of the Soviet land – a 'false' and a 'real' – the structure is far from being so straightforward. The 'false' image is a complex and multi-layered mixture that includes:

- a 'barbaric' optics of the 'West' represented by pictures of 'types of Russian Bolsheviks' in the American newspaper (Fig. 58);

Fig. 58 'Types of Russian Bolsheviks' in an American newspaper

- a 'counter-revolutionary' or 'old-regime' optics the criminals impose on Mr. West, represented by showing him the 'demolished' landmarks of Moscow – a university and an imperial Bol'shoi Theatre (Fig. 59) – and by revealing the housing policy of the Soviet Union and the living conditions of 'cruel reality' (Zhban pretending to have been of blue blood, and forced to give up his palace for a hut [*lachuga*]) (Fig. 60).
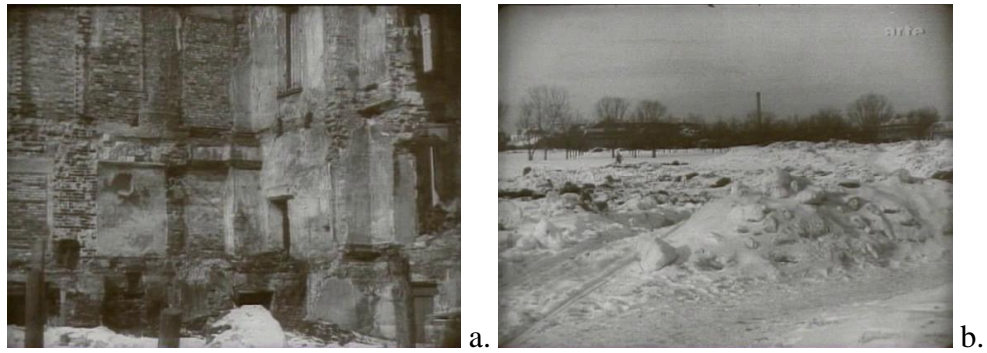
Fig. 59 'Demolished' university (a) and imperial Bol'shoi Theatre (b) shown by Zhban to Mr. West
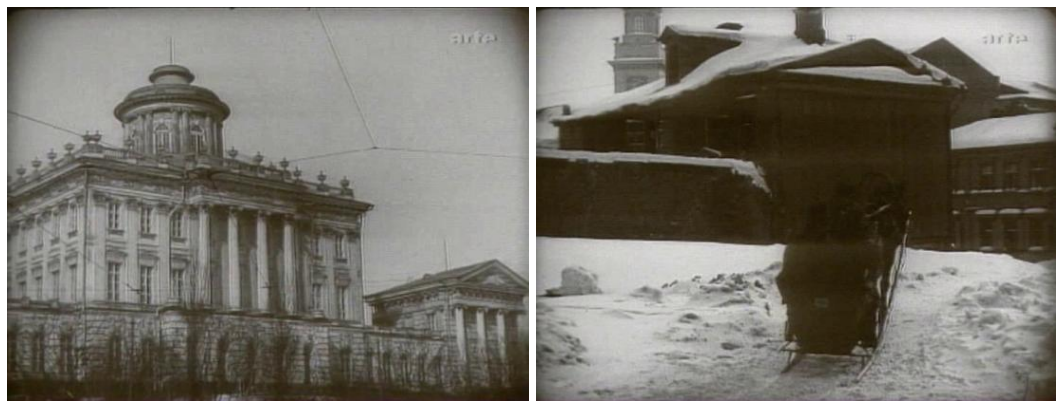
Fig. 60 Housing policy of the Soviet Union 'revealed': from a palace to a hut

However, a supposedly 'real' or 'true' image is shown to Mr. West by a militiaman at the end of the film through a sequence of landmarks of 'new' Moscow. Should this latter version thus be perceived as the 'correct' one? First, Mr. West is taken to 'real' university and 'real' Bol'shoi Theatre, both of which, however, are re-signified from bourgeois to proletarian institutions either by a sign that reads 'Science to Workers' or by a coat of arms of the Soviet Union (Fig. 61).

Fig. 61 Re-signified University and Bol'shoi Theatre – the 'official' optics

Second, Mr. West and a militiaman observe a parade in Red Square from the tribune, their gaze sliding from a privileged position above to the 'Bolshevik masses' below. It is worth analyzing the use of optical devices in the film. Mr. West's 'wrong' vision is symbolized by the round glasses he is wearing, and even, for the few moments he is watching the parade, his use of binoculars also represents a mediator between him and 'reality' (Fig. 62).

Fig. 62 An always 'mediated' = 'distorted' gaze of Mr. West from the tribune
above at the 'true Bolsheviks masses' below

In this way, he is portrayed as the one who *never* actually sees the real Moscow. Finally, Mr. West sends a radiogram to his wife asking her to burn New York magazines and to put a portrait of Lenin in his office. It is interesting to note the

work of the visual in this scene: though a radiogram is a written text (Fig. 63), the 'Bolsheviks' in it are again visualized (via portrait of Lenin).

Р А Д И О: arte
ДОРОГАЯ МЕДЖ!
ШЛЮ ПРИВЕТ ИЗ
СОВЕТСКОЙ РОССИИ.
СОЖГИ НЬЮ-ИОРСКИЕ
ЖУРНАЛЫ И ПОВЕСЬ
В КАБИНЕТЕ ПОРТРЕТ
ЛЕНИНА.
ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЮТ
БОЛЬШЕВИКИ!
твой Джон.
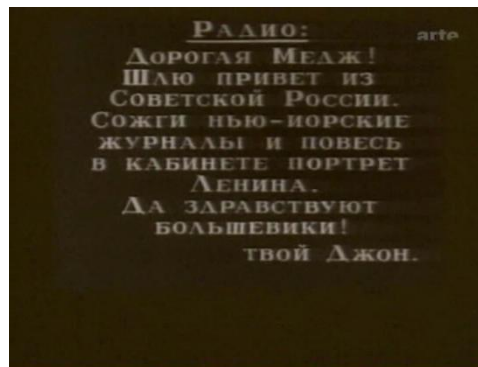
Fig. 63 A textual radiogram asking to change and internalize the visual representation of Bolsheviks

The 'public' images of mass media 'barbarians' is to be replaced by a 'private' portrait of Lenin, demonstrating an internalization of ideology (as we remember Mr. West is the president of YMCA, so an appropriate slogan here might be: 'Take Lenin into your heart instead of Jesus'). Moreover, the radiogram is sent through a tower constructed by Vladimir Shukhov (Fig. 64), which is a manifestation of the *construction* abilities of the New Country in addition to *re-signification* of the old heritage.

Fig. 64 Shukhov's radio tower as a manifestation of the contruciton abilities of the Soviet Union in addition to re-signifying ones

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This means that the ideological 'official' power optics we are presented with at the end cannot be trusted either. Thus, it could be said that *neither* of the suggested representations of the Soviet Union is implied as 'true,' and 'another' Moscow might only be manifesting itself through the unconscious of the film in the portrayal of everyday life and things.

As has already been stated above, things in the Soviet Union of the 1920s were at the centre of debates, and should not be perceived as 'invisible' or 'neutral.' In this film, the opposition of bourgeois–proletarian objects is not marked clearly, as there is neither a portrayal of a 'classic' bourgeois, nor a 'classic' proletarian. So it is necessary to track the modification of these categories for this film. As there are no 'real' bourgeois in the Soviet Union, Mr. West's belongings (his multiple suitcases, a briefcase, socks and a picture of his wife) are ideologically charged as the only items representing bourgeois way of life. Surely, the genre of the social comedy demands the laughing-out of this 'thingism' [*veshchizm*], and this is explicitly done at three levels:

- narratively: the plot is structured around the theft of Mr. West's briefcase;

- verbally: in a dialogue between Zhban and Mr. West [*Zhban*: Let's go to my apartment, you are being spied on here. *Mr West*: But I have lots of things/stuff!]);

- and visually: (a) the few things he has in his briefcase are socks with the star-spangled banner, and the above mentioned journals containing images of the 'Bolsheviks'; (b) Countess uses Mr. West's pens to keep his attention away from the fact that the walls are shaking due to the fighting happening in the corridor (Fig. 65). The most radical visual satire, however, takes place when Mr. West tied

up by the criminals transforms into a passive *thing*, and when he is later 'rescued' by being pulled up the chimney as a kind of 'dead body' (Fig. 66).

Fig. 65 Satire of the 'thingism' [*veshchism*] of Mr. West

Fig. 66 Mr. West turns into a *thing*

Yet the status of a 'socialist' thing in the film is far more indefinite. As an explicit example of a film deprived of a 'positive communist hero,' *The Extraordinary Adventures (...)* could be manifesting the unconscious of the everyday life of the era. The main characters, being criminals 'in the land of Bolsheviks,' are represented as an inverted aristocracy or bourgeois through their names: Zhban, 'who was an aesthet and now is an opportunist,' 'Countess von Sachs,' and a dandy [*Frant*]. Likewise, the objects surrounding them have inverted 'class' features. They are everyday objects such as cups, lamps, furniture,

instruments, and other items of interior, but the context of their portrayal creates

an effect of not belonging there. Things are constantly falling down, breaking into

pieces or being scattered all over the floor. Let us try to illustrate this using the

following specific scenes: a lamp next to Countess during the tea-drinking, items

falling from the shelves inside the apartment during the fight in the corridor, and

furniture being broken during other fights (Fig. 67).

Fig. 67 Everyday objects 'not belonging anywhere' always in dynamics: falling down, breaking into pieces or being scattered all over the floor

Surely, the satire on Soviet everyday life is also very vividly presented in the 'tea ceremony in Soviet style,' 'peeping,' and Mr. West's hiding from the thin, shaking walls behind his American newspaper, the heading of which says 'Good Buildings Deserve Good Hardware' (Fig. 68).

Fig. 68 Satire on the Soviet everyday life: lack of elementary kitchen equipment, surveillance and poor quality of flats

Furthermore, the furnishing of the flat is extremely poor, consisting of the kitchen table and chairs, and a sofa in the living room (Fig. 69), so it could be said that 'incompleteness' as an essential feature of the Soviet interior is also satirized here. As Benjamin notes:

> Like all the rooms that I had seen so far (the ones at Granovsky's and Illes's), it contains only a few pieces of furniture. Their bleak, petit-bourgeois appearance is all the more depressing because the room is so sparsely furnished. Completeness is an essential feature of the decor of the petit-bourgeois interior: the walls must be covered with pictures, the sofa with cushions, the cushions with coverlets, the consoles with knickknacks, the windows with stained glass. Of all this only a few items here and there have indiscriminately survived. If people manage to bear rooms which look like infirmaries after inspection, it is because their way of life has so alienated them from domestic existence (Benjamin 1986: 26-7).

Fig. 69 Soviet interior as essentially 'incomplete'

Thus, it could be stated that the urban life of Moscow and its everyday objects in this film are represented in a complex and multi-layered way, balancing between the consciously satirically marked 'bourgeois' and conceptually incomplete, vague, inverted and undetermined 'Soviet' things. The film denaturalizes ideology by pointing to its contradictions and keeps the possibilities of the Soviet socialist future open.

Bed and Sofa [*Tret'ia Meshchanskaia*] (1927) is the only popular film of the 1920s where the problem of the *thing* is central to the narrative motivation and is openly acknowledged by both its director (Abram Room) and scriptwriter (Viktor Shklovsky). In his directorial statement of intent, Abram Room drew attention to the fact that:

> The [film] journey lasts eight reels, during which all the sparingly applied movements, the gestures, the camera angles, *the objects*, should be used, transposed and played with in such a way that they can live in the viewer's consciousness not only before but also after the end of the film.
>
> The setting is familiar to each and everyone – a Moscow flat, or more precisely '33 square arshins of living space', which belongs to an ordinary Soviet employee and is situated in a semi-basement, from the only window of which you can see a reflection of the life of the town. […]
>
> This room on the real Third Meshchanskaia Street, which is near the Sukharev Tower, is *populated by things. Each of them has its fate, its past, present and future. Together they all live, breathe, interfere in people's lives and keep them in close captivity* (cited in Graffy 2001: 11-13) [my italics].[67]

Furthermore, in another 1926 article 'My Cinema Convictions', Room had spoken of

> That exceptional significance which must be given to the *thing*. In ordinary life *things* are mute, insignificant. They do not speak of anything and show no activity. In the cinema, on the screen, a *thing* grows to gigantic proportions and acts with the same force (if not a greater force) as man himself (cited in Graffy 2001: 26) [my italics].

Hardly surprising given Shklovsky's proximity to LEF, he too stated that things in cinema are to be treated on par with actors and that the relations to things in

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[67] Julian Graffy's film companion to *Bed and Sofa* (2001) conveniently contains the majority of all available information on production, exhibition and reception of the film. As well as being a compendium of knowledge on almost every possible detail which appears in the film and helping a contemporary viewer to understand the depth of historical context shaping its unusual subject matter, it also offers a well-argued reading of the film as a whole. Thus my interpretation will focus only on the spatial relations in the film and problematize the status of things in it.

socialism should be reconsidered in line with the object as comrade theory of Arvatov discussed above. Shklovsky argued that the cinema was entering its 'second period', in which it would become 'a factory of the relationship with things', continuing: 'In the cinema in general you should not film things, what you have to do is to elucidate a relationship to them' (Graffy 2001: 26). Thus *Bed and Sofa* could be considered a programmatic film elucidating relationships to things at the same time as commenting on the living space they are situated in.

The Third Meshchanskaia Street, which has given its name to the film, connects two major spatial entities of the film: Moscow and the semi-basement flat[68], or in other words, Moscow exteriors and Moscow interiors. The street itself is shown in the film only twice (Fig. 70),[69] strengthening the argument that the connotations of the name *Meshchanskaia*, roughly translated as petite-bourgeois and philistine, are far stronger than its spatial disposition *per se*.[70]

Fig. 70 Third Meshchanskaia Street

In its own way, the opening sequence contributes to the establishing of the code of the representation of city in 1920s: the sleeping city, its awakening, morning

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[68] 'Sergei Iutkevich, the set designer, reports that he built a set with four walls, any one of which could be removed so that filming could take place from any angle […]' (Graffy 2001: 15).
[69] Apparently it was due to extreme crowding of the street during the day (Graffy 2001: 15).
[70] On the extensive list of possible connotations of the name *Meshchanskaia*, see (Graffy 2001: 20-3).

cleaning routine, (later followed by work and leisure),[71] but by gradually zooming in from the city in general to the street and finally to the semi-basement flat the main characters of the film are introduced. The intertitles states: 'Moscow was still sleeping', 'Third Meshchanskaia is sleeping too' followed by *one* shot of people, a shot of the cat and *three* shots of *the things* (Fig. 71)

Fig. 71 Introduction of the dwellers of Third Meshchanskaia

The cityscape of the pre-Revolutionary Moscow is represented by such landmarks as Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (the original demolished in 1937), the panoramic view of Moscow from the Sparrow Hills (Vorob'evy gory) and the Holy Monastery (demolished in 1937) (Fig. 72). The new socialist Moscow is

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[71] See Chapter 2.2.1

under construction and can be showcased by the building sites of the Central

Telegraph and the Lenin Institute as well as by the Freedom obelisk (aka the

Monument to the Soviet Constitution) which was the central piece of Lenin's plan

of monumental propaganda (Fig. 73).[72]

Fig. 72 Pre-Revolutionary cityscape of Moscow

Fig. 73 Socialist Moscow under construction

Moscow exteriors are also used to establish the male protagonists of the

film. Kolia works in construction, but instead of contributing to the building of

the new socialist capital he works as a supervisor on the reconstruction of the

Bol'shoi theatre which, given the fierce debates of the time about its ideological

usefulness,[73] signals to the contemporary viewer his ambiguous stance during the

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[72] Room's statement in *Kino* on 14 September 1926 anticipates the prominent place of the city in the film: 'The picture will use Moscow exteriors: the building sites of the Central Telegraph and the Lenin Institute, outdoor celebrations at the Agricultural Exhibition, the annual festival of the Society of the Friends of Aviation and Chemical Construction and various shots of morning and evening Moscow'. The actual shooting is remembered thus: 'The cameraman, Grigori Giber, recalls that they started shooting exteriors very early on the morning of 23 August 1926, filming from a car, in the street, from the tops of the Lenin Institute and the Bolshoi Theatre' [...] Sergei Iutkevich, also involved in the filming of the street scenes, described Moscow itself, in a contemporary report, as a "fantastic stage set" [*fantasticheskaia dekoratsiia*]' (Graffy 2001: 13-5).
[73] See Chapter 2.2.1 (p.86).

NEP. His devotion to the profession is represented by plans, schemes and drawing tools on the wall of his apartment as well as by his drawing desk. Yet the further shadow on his loyalty to the revolution is cast when he chooses to go home instead of the party cell meeting after work revealing his appreciation of the private home comfort over the common good. On the other hand, his past is very credible since he fought in the Red Army (where he met Volodia) and still keeps the portrait of Marshal Budennyi on the wall, reads *Rabochaia gazeta* [Workers' Newspaper] and when he is suddenly summoned on another construction site, he immediately goes to serve wherever he is needed (Fig. 74). Room does not strive to create a black-and-white film with simple answers, but contemplates the complexities of the time and the easiness with which comrades can slip into a petty-bourgeois *byt* (Graffy 2001: 12-3).
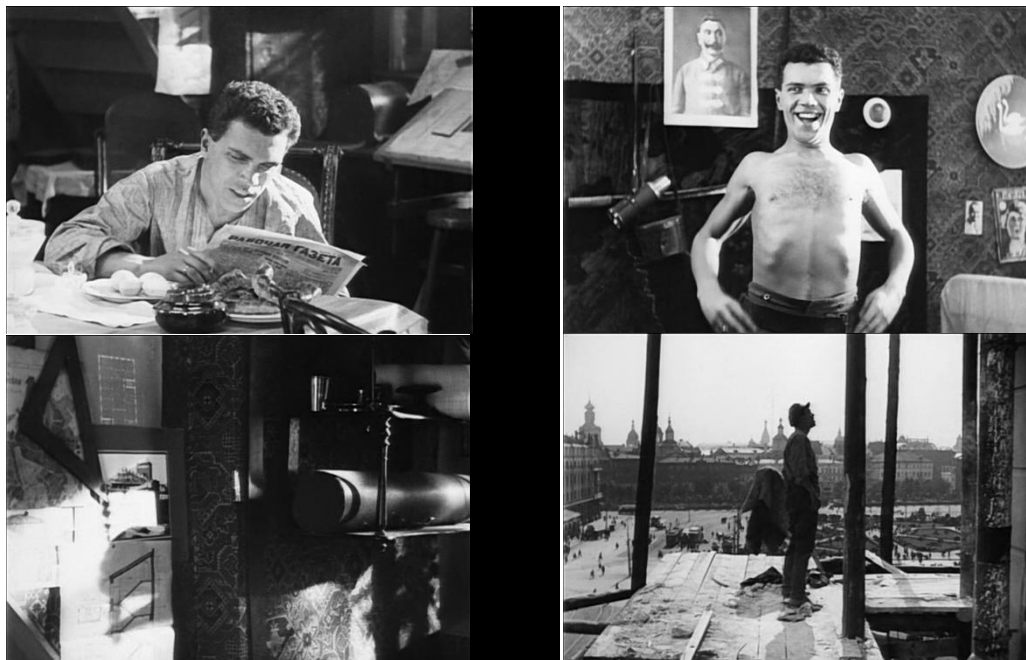
Fig. 74 Kolia's characteristic by things and spaces

Volodia also seems to be a 'wonderful fellow' (a characteristic given to both of them by the critic Nikolai Chuzhak (Graffy 2001: 96)). He arrives to Moscow by train and the rapid montage of his arrival as well as the fact that he manages to find the job straight away and feels comfortable with the city identifies him as a subject of modernity. He works in the printing shop of *Rabochaia gazeta*, a job which is directly associated with education and propaganda of the new socialist values. But he has nowhere to stay, so when he meets Kolia by chance, he accepts the offer to sleep on the sofa, making the viewer hopeful that he will bring back the revolutionary spirit into the petty-bourgeois way of life of Kolia and his wife Liuda. However, 'Soviet' things brought into the flat by Volodia – *Novyi Mir* journal and the radio (not only things *per se*, but also experiences: the flight on the plane and cinema going for Liuda) – quickly lose their emancipating potential as much as Volodia himself. Liuda is captivated by the new journal of *Novyi Mir* and starts reading it eagerly, separating the still glued pages as she continues, while also observing how Volodia voluntarily helps with clearing the table. Yet after Kolia rushes in and orders her to pack his suitcase for an unexpected work trip, Liuda tries to read again, but fails to concentrate. As for the radio, instead of representing a socialism-spreading media and an ideal collectivizing device as it was intended, it is used only as the alienating method

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of escapism from the unwanted communication since the two instances we see it

functioning is when Volodia wants to avoid Liuda (Fig.75).

Fig. 75 Volodia's characteristic by things and spaces

Moscow interiors define Liuda, the housewife, who is not shown outside her tiny flat for the majority of the film. She is confined to four semi-basement walls up until Volodia takes her out for a flight on the plane of the Aviakhim society, to the cinema and generally exposes her to the city. In the end, after becoming pregnant and deciding to keep the baby despite Kolia's and Volodia's demand for abortion, she abandons both of them and leaves the stuffy flat travelling away from the city by train which is when she is finally fully inscribed into the space of modernity. In the flat she is preoccupied by domestic chores only (cooking, cleaning, washing, mending), looking attractive for her men (she puts on a new dress to welcome her husband back from work, combs her hair, repeatedly looks in the mirror) and observing the outside world through the window (Fig. 76).

Fig. 76 Liuda's characteristic by things and spaces

As small as the flat is, the clever camerawork never fully reveals the panoramic disposition of all things in it. The viewer is struggling to see the full picture and is reminded to piece the puzzle together by the new perspective of a wall, fresh point-of-view shot or by exposing the nooks and crannies which were not visible earlier.[74] Thus new things and elements of interior are constantly introduced throughout the film *instead* of people. True to the directorial intent, in such a limited space each new thing or the changed position of the one shown earlier gains the gigantic proportions, significance and is invested with extra meanings-creating potential (such a reading is also supported by the contemporaneous reports of the audience who complained that true workers do not use metal glass holders or soup tureens). The importance of the disposition of the each thing in the room is doubled in the disposition of people: the change of Volodia and Kolia's places from bed to sofa is fundamental. Yet the most important *thing* in the room

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[74] Even the cat's perspective was not completely cut out. The viewer's first entrance to the flat from the street is mediated by the shot of the window, then the cat who mediates us further into the flat through his point of view and his movement towards the bed where Kolia and Liuda are sleeping. Later in the film the cat signifies the full acceptance of Volodia in the new home – the cat sits on the sofa with Fogel's bed made there. Towards the end, the cat is sitting under the table of draughts which unites the men in their indifference to Liuda.

in need of liberation is actually the woman. Liuda is a passive *object* manipulated according to all the classic rules of the patriarchy. Since this reading is a well-established one (Burns 1982; Graffy 2001; Mayne 1989; Sullivan 1972; Youngblood 1989; Zorkaia 1997) and liberation of the woman is a dominant message of the film, all my analysis can contribute is a reconfirmation of this message from the perspective of object as comrade theory. If Rodchenko's letter from Paris in 1925 is re-read in the context of the film, it becomes apparent that the emancipation of woman comes *before* emancipation of things, but unfortunately still *after* man: 'Light coming from the East is not only the liberation of the working class; this is in a new attitude to *man*, *woman*, *things*. Our things in our hands should be equal, be comrades, and not black and gloomy slaves, like they are here' (Rodchenko and Stepanova 2000: 325). It is vital to notice though that essentially after the revolution no one really knew how to truly liberate any of the above. Even Shklovsky admitted, that he had difficulty with finishing the film, he did not know what to do with Liuda 'and I finished it in purely formal terms – with her departure […]' (cited in Graffy 2001: 73). Liuda was invisible to men of Third Meshchanskaia throughout the film, just one of the things in the cluttered flat. Furthermore, her departure does not seem to make much difference either, similarly to the insignificance of absence of her picture on the wall. The closing scene is resolved not by a moral awakening as the intertitle goes: 'Kolia, it seems that you and I are scoundrels', but by their further comments: 'Well, Volodia, shall we have some tea?' asks Kolia, 'Is there any jam left, Kolia?' replies Volodia.[75]

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[75] Jam – as the ultimate signifier of a petite-bourgeois – is a recurring narrative-structuring object of the film. First when Kolia returns from his business trip he brings a pannier of berries and addresses Liuda: 'See what a husband you have. You will make us some jam'. Later when Volodia breaks the news that he and Liuda are together now, Liuda tries to calm Kolia down by rushing in from the kitchen with a spoonful of jam which distracts him for a moment. Jam is also associated the most prominent literary representative dealing with ménage à trios: *What is To Be Done?* by

All in all, it could be argued that *byt* of the flat on Third Meshchanskaia street had the power to annihilate any revolutionary strivings of the new socialist state. As Shklovsky noted: 'This three good persons are confused because the change of the city *byt* did not bring about the change of the *byt* inside the flat and because people have to find out for themselves what is moral and what is immoral' (cited in Zorkaia 1997).[76]

The next two films I will focus on are *The Girl with a Hatbox* and *The House on Trubnaia Square.* Both films were made by Boris Barnet only one year apart, yet if the first one is a soft, human and lyrical version of social comedy, the latter is a bitter satire on the *byt* of Moscow and, presumably, on the projects of house-communes. Unlike the film discussed above, these two examples draw a very clear dividing line between a 'bourgeois' object of the new NEP people and a 'socialist' object of the working class. Thus, let us take a look at these films in the chronological order.

The protagonist of *The Girl with a Hatbox,* Natasha, is earning a living for her grandfather and herself by producing hats in her small village house, and bringing them to Moscow to sell to the shop owned by a woman named Irène. The class to which Natasha and her grandfather belong, as well as the social relations between the 'exploiter' and the 'exploited,' are set immediately through relations to *things* (mainly hats): she produces hats, but does not consume them; they do not fit her, nor do they fit her grandfather (Fig. 77).

Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1863). Its utopian social model was mocked by the controversial pre-Revolutionary philosopher Vasilii Rozanov whose answer to the Russian eternal question is: 'I'll tell you what's to be done: if it's summer — clean berries and make jam. Such fun! If it's winter — drink tea with the jam. So tasty!' (quoted in Ready 2012: 60).

[76] «Это трое хороших людей, запутавшихся на том, что *при изменении городского быта не изменился быт квартиры* и что людям на своей шкуре приходится узнавать, что нравственно и что безнравственно».

Fig. 77 Natasha and her grandfather: producers, but not consumers

Natasha's status is demonstrated to us as she must help Irène to put the bracelet on, and, when potential customers come, fake a smile and serve as model-stand for the hats, making her a true proletarian – she has to know how to produce, use and manipulate things, but does not own or consume them (Fig. 78).
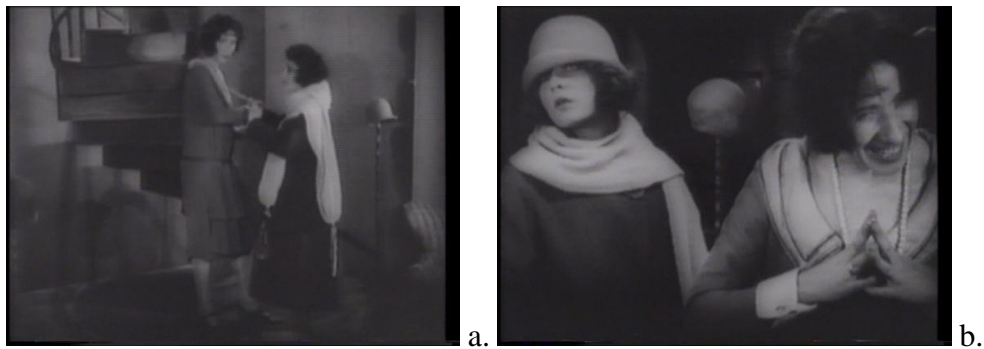
Fig. 78 Natasha's status is manifested through things she has to manipulate, but not own: (a) Putting on a bracelet on her employer's hand; (b) Serving as a hat-model for the potential customer

A housing 'reality' of the 1920s also arises immediately: Irène has registered Natasha as her flatmate, but in fact her husband lives with her. Benjamin gives us a key to this situation:

> The price of apartments here is calculated by the square meter. The cost per square meter is proportional to the salary of the tenant. In addition, the rental and heating fee is tripled for anything that exceeds the thirteen square meters allocated per person. (Benjamin 1986: 14)

Thus, when Natasha meets a poor student named Ilia who has come to Moscow to study and has nowhere to live, she invites him to fake a marriage and take up her 'official' room. Representations of Ilia on the streets of Moscow change from active portrayals of a man who uses the city as his home and places his books on a fence as if it were a bookshelf, to a passive one when he freezes during the night, and is covered with snow (Fig. 79).

Fig. 79 Proletarian student turning into a passive object by freezing on the streets of Moscow

Other obvious markers of NEP bourgeoisity are depicted in portrayals of a husband, who is just using Irina for money, a maid, without any class solidarity, a banquet, with lots of food and guests, and, of course, the excess of things in Irène's flat: an unmade bed with an assortment of items underneath, heaps of clothes thrown from one room to another to trick the inspector, portraits in frames as part of the cult of individuality, and white hatboxes, which are just 'empty containers' occupying space which do not belong in a proletarian culture – a perfect visual metaphor for the NEP bourgeois (Fig. 80).

Fig. 80 Markers of NEP bourgeoisity

Furthermore, the main 'class conflict' of the film is represented through the changes in the interior. When Natasha brings Ilia to his room, Irène is having a party there; after realizing her dead-end situation, Irène takes the entire interior to another room, leaving an empty space (Fig. 81).

Fig. 81 'Class conflict' represented through the changes in the interior

However, adhering to the genre of the lyrical comedy, and not going beyond his contribution to the 'visual dictionary' of codes marking 'bourgeois' or 'proletarian' culture, Barnet resolves the housing question in this film through the 'happy ending' of a lottery win.

In many respects, *The House on Trubnaia Square* continues to develop the housing and social themes introduced in *The Girl with a Hatbox,* but much more radically. Incorporating the elements of the genre of 'city symphony' (i.e.

portrayal of the life of a city from dawn till dusk, which was popular in the 1920s), the film narrows it down to the life of one house, which, I suggest, is a satire on the idea of house-communes. As stated above, in all projects of house-communes the common space played a crucial role as the 'social condenser' in forming a New Person. However, in the living units of the F-type in particular, the corridor was planned as the main area for communication. Since Barnet started his education as an architect, it would be logical to assume that he was familiar with these types of buildings, which were actively discussed in the press of the time. Thus, the corridor and the stairs in the film act as a super-collectivized space that makes any kind of communication impossible. The house on Trubnaia square also has a reading room and a workers' club, but no common canteen or laundry, although the whole narrative of the film, with its exploitation of women workers, seems to be making the viewer feel that there is an urgent need for these things. All in all, the film is completely disillusioned about the socialist ideas of common space, or the 'happy ending' of the Moscow housing question, since only the arrival of the Mossovet (Moscow Soviet) supervisor made the people clean the staircase and pay attention to each other. Soviet officials might bring social order and justice, but only by settling in your house.

A theory of a Cine-Thing would be a logical counter-argument to our discussion about objects in the 'mass' cinema of the 1920s. Being a promoter of the ideas of constructivism in film, Dziga Vertov is perceived as the one who actually visualized the agency of the socialist thing in its purest form. In his article *Cine-eye* (1924) about his first full-length film which is a manifesto on Cine-thing, he writes:

[It is] the first attempt ever to make a *cine-thing* without the actors, artists, directors, not using the studio, design sets, costumes.
[…] By revealing the origins of the things and bread, the camera allows every worker to vividly assure oneself that it is s/he, the worker, who makes all the things, thus they all belong to her/him.

Первая в мире попытка создать *киновещь* без участия актеров, художников, режиссеров, не пользуясь ателье, декорациями, костюмами.
[...] Вскрывая происхождение вещей и хлеба, киноаппарат дает возможность каждому трудящемуся наглядно убедиться, что все вещи делает он сам, трудящийся, а следовательно, они ему и принадлежат (Vertov 1966: 68).

And subsequently, in his article 'On the importance of the non-fiction cinematography':

We were the first to start making *cine-things* with our bare hands – they might be still clumsy, incoherent, without shine, they might be a little bit defective but still the things are needed, they are vital, they are directed towards life and demanded by life.
We define *a cine-thing* by two words: *montage 'I see'*.
Cine-thing is a completed etude of the perfect vision, sophisticated and deepened by all existing optic devices and mainly by an experimenting in space and time with the camera.
The field of vision is life; the material for a montage construction is life; the design set is life; the actors are life.

Мы первые стали делать голыми руками *киновещи* – пусть топорные, нескладные, без блеска, пусть с некоторым изъяном, но все же вещи нужные, вещи необходимые, устремленные в жизнь и жизнью требуемые.
Мы определяем *киновещь* двумя словами: *монтажное «вижу»*.
Киновещь – это законченный этюд совершенного зрения, утонченного и углубленного всеми существующими оптическими приборами и главным образом – экспериментирующем в пространстве и времени съемочным киноаппаратом.
Поле зрения – жизнь; материал для монтажного построения – жизнь; декорации – жизнь; артисты – жизнь. (Vertov 1966: 71)

So *Cine-eye* is a film without possessive relations, since it is constructed of images of working people and is not alienated from them afterwards. This means that the identification drive of the viewer with 'stars on the screen' in the 'bourgeois' fiction film is directed towards identification with workers. A thorough analysis of Vertov's *Cine-eye* (1924) should be made in order to reveal

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his construction technique of this 'First non-fiction *cine-thing* without a script, without actors, outside the studio' (as an opening intertitle states).

The majority of the film is devoted to the activity of pioneers whom Vertov categorizes into 'country' and 'urban'. Children in this film are represented as new adults, who are better and more responsible than the adults themselves. The first reel (called 'Cine-eye at a church holiday or The effect of homemade vodka on the village women') sets the opposition that is then constantly used in the film: drunk women are dancing, boys are playing an accordion and a tambourine. Village adults are represented as the ones who drink, believe in God and have fun, and are juxtaposed to pioneers who do not play, but march. The shots of the village's bridge and dam are possibly used to set modes of representation of the Dnieper hydro-electro station two years later (Lenin's GOELRO plan announced in 1920 involved construction of ten large hydroelectric power plants) (Fig. 82).

Fig. 82 Village pioneers marching over the dam: mode of representation anticipating the Dnieper hydro-electro station 2 years later

In order to involve the viewer, Vertov uses so-called human-interest stories: that is, following the lives of the pioneers Latyshov and Kopchushka, and Kopchushka's mother. The same children-as-improved-adults concept is used when Kopchushka is comparing prices at the market and in the cooperative,

fighting the overpriced market goods, while at the same time her mother plans to shops for meat there (Fig. 83).

Fig. 83 Human-interest story: Kopchushka and her mother

Finally, the mother realizes that she cannot afford it, reads, as if by chance, the poster her daughter put on the wall earlier, and chooses to shop at the cooperative instead. In order to demystify commodity fetishism, Vertov uses a backrolling technique to make 'time move backwards', 'make the bull alive again' and show where the meat or rye originated. Thus, the bull is taken back to the herd in the village and 'our friend' pioneer Latyshov delivers the letter to the shepherd, which announces the end of the first reel. Incidentally, the end of each chapter is announced using child's hand-writing, reinforcing the message of better-educated children (Fig. 84).

Fig. 84 Reinforcing the message of the Soviet educated children

Nevertheless, among all these 'propagandist' messages on production and pioneer education, Vertov inserts two episodes that appear to be totally unrelated to it, and are in the film for mere entertainment: tricks of a Chinese magician and the arrival of an elephant to Moscow. In order to decode the meaning of these two sequences, it has to be suggested that Vertov over-exaggerates the emphasis on the camera-eye in his manifestos, since the connections, transitions and associations in *Cine-eye* are more often *abstract*, *formal* and *textual*, rather than visual. Thus, just as an inanimate object turns into a mouse in the Chinese magician's trick, the bull becomes alive again by means of the camera. However, it is not the 'magic' of the camera that is shown off by such parallels, since cine-eye's primary role is a disenchantment of the capitalistic world of illusion and attractions. The camera restores the creative power and dynamism of things that are lost under capitalism. Moreover, the transition from the Chinese magician back to the topic of de-fetishization is made through an abstract, visually unmotivated connection by a textual intertitle: 'The magician's pay in units of bread' (Fig. 85).
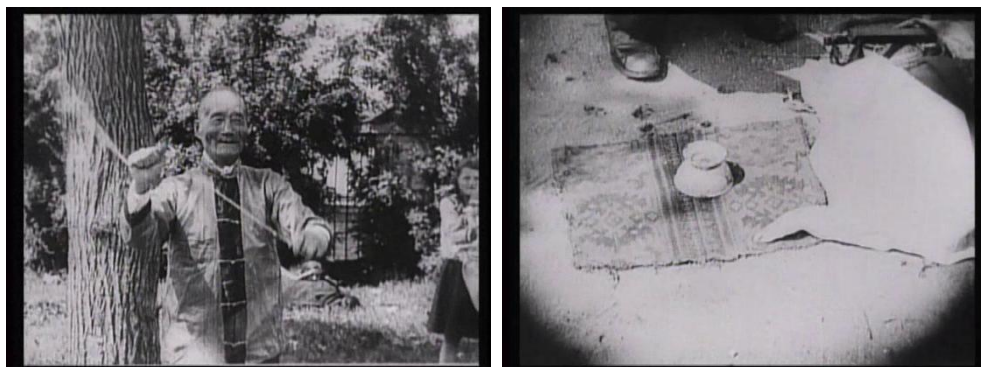
Fig. 85 Chinese magician and his pay in units of bread

The same could be noted about the episode with the elephant on the streets of Moscow, which is introduced by an intertitle: 'At the same time as pioneers, an elephant arrived in Moscow' (Fig. 86).
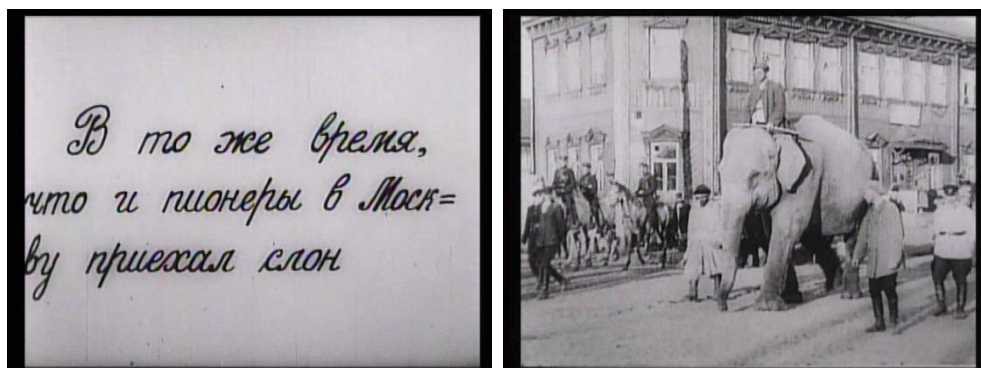
Fig. 86 Elephant on the streets of Moscow

What ideological meaning did this large animal, displaced into the tiny streets of Moscow and waking up its people, have for Vertov? Unfortunately, without being able to offer any sustainable interpretation, it must remain simply an elephant for us. After all, Vertov's films were composed of newsreels of everyday life, as well as extraordinary events, and he was always on the search for new material. The elephant is the primary object of camera attraction, infusing Vertov's documentaries with the funfair-like qualities of the early 'cinema of attractions.'

Another reel portraying the life of the pioneer camp in the village follows the earlier established framework, as it is again the pioneers who implement the 'new *byt*' model in practice. Their camp is a well-organized spatial unit consisting of a dining area, washing area (near the river), working area (boys are working as barbers and menders, offering their services to the local population), a miniature primary care clinic and a reading tent with a gigantic portrait of Lenin (Fig. 87).
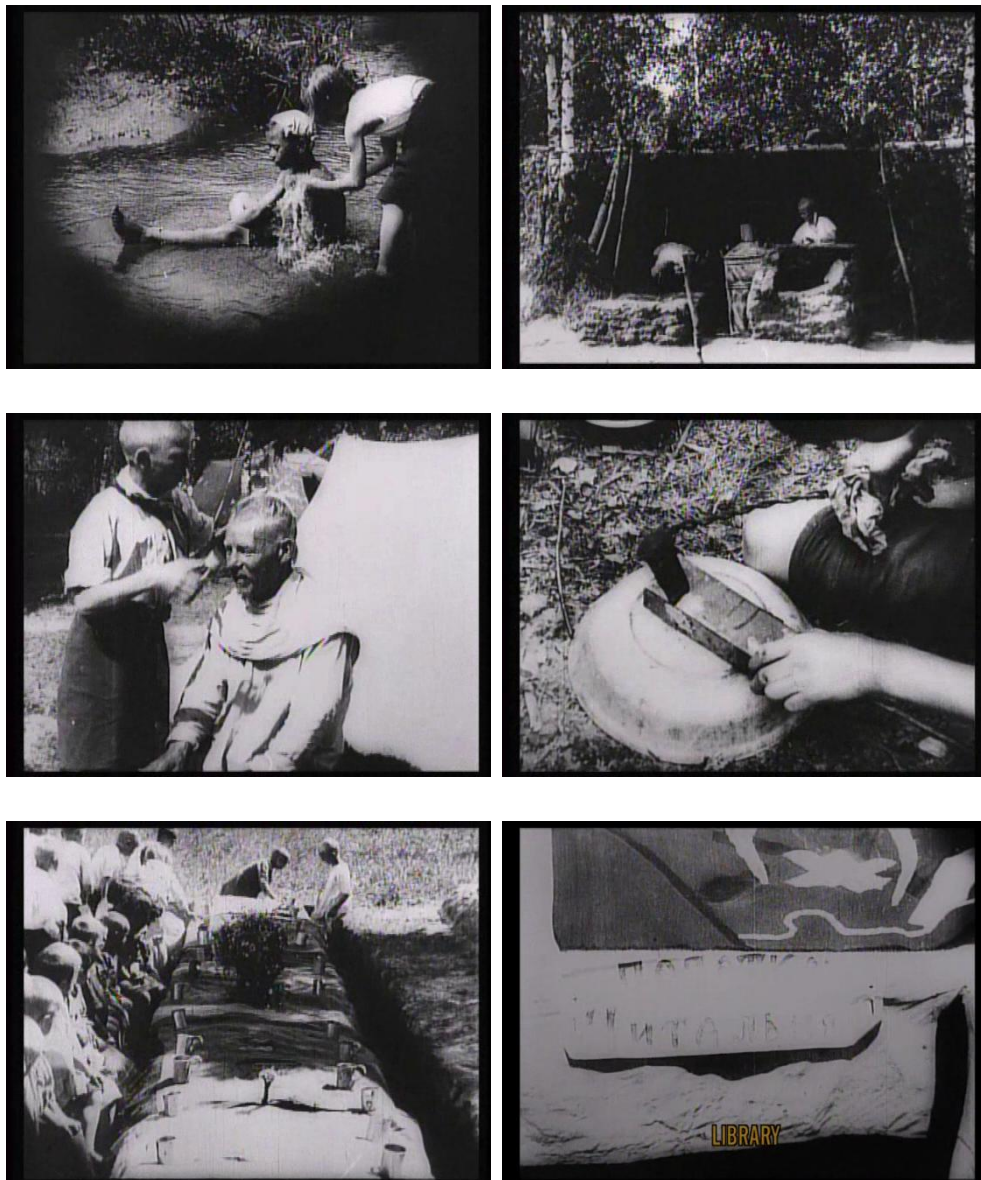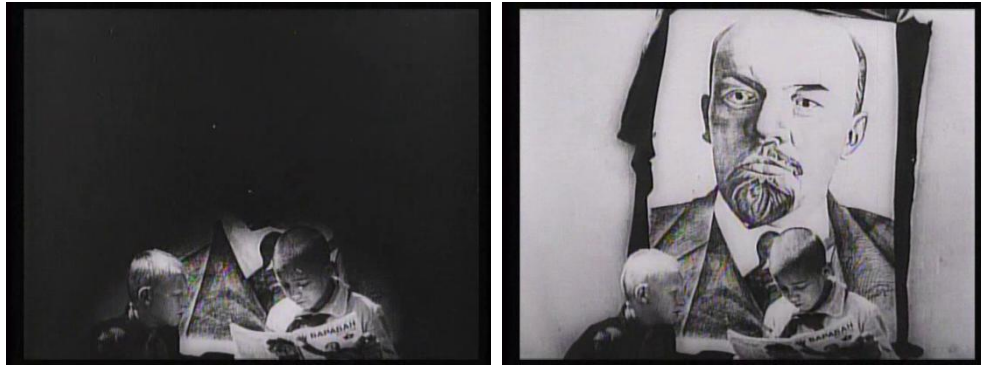
Fig. 87 Pioneer implementing 'new *byt*' in their self-made camp

After demonstrating to us the fully-functioning pioneer camp, Vertov reveals how and by whom it was organized, along with its official opening and raising of the red flag. Moreover, just like adults, pioneers have to spread the word about Lenin and organize other pioneer camps in a village down the river. At the same time, Moscow pioneers are collecting money for tuberculosis and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Their hegemony is even emphasized spatially: the club house is *above* the beer-pub of Mosselprom. Thus, children are obviously constructed as the new Soviet subjects who use 'direct action' or 'performance' to transform the reality around and below them (they throw leaflets at the drinking workers with the message: 'Adults! You are friends of tuberculosis!') (Fig. 88).
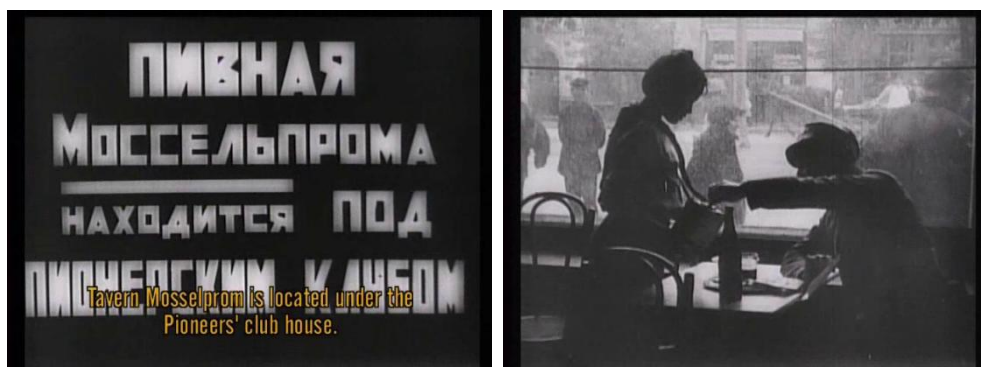
Fig. 88 Spatial hegemony of the pioneers and their 'direct action': throwing leaflets on the drinking workers with the message: 'Adults! You are the friends of tuberculosis' [*Vzroslye! Vy – druz'ia tuberkuleza*!]

Benjamin again questions such a propagandistic logic:

> On the other hand, its youth is being put through 'revolutionary' education in pioneer organizations, in the Komsomol, which means that *they do not come to revolution as an experience but only as a discourse*. An attempt is being made to arrest the dynamic of revolutionary progress in the life of the state – one has entered, like it or not, a period of restoration while nonetheless wanting to store up the revolutionary energy of the youth like electricity in a battery. It doesn't work. (Benjamin 1986: 53)

All in all, the construction of the 'the first cine-thing' of *Cine-eye* is quite

dialectical and makes us return to the discussion about utopian impulses in

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architecture and film. Having analysed both media, it could be suggested that various models co-existed and correlated with each other, although constructivist architecture and cinema led by utopian drives demanded a 'full exclusion' of everything that was not up to their revolutionary standards. On the one hand, transitional house communes, constructivist art-into-life objects and mass films could be seen as the embodiment of the Benjaminian dialectical image of revolutionary possibility: 'that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation'; and on the other, the radical house-commune of Kuzmin and Vertov's cine-things could be called 'socialist realist' in the way they pass off the desired as real. The '*possibility that the Revolution might fail or succeed*' is not posed for them, as the Revolution *has already* succeeded and needs a radical (not to use the word 'totalitarian') affirmation.

Chapter 4: Designing Modernity [*sovremennost'*] in the Thaw era

4.1 From *kommunalka* to *khrushchevka*: Khrushchev's mass housing campaign

The discussions of the economic, social and political consequences of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 provide a range of historical interpretations and revisions which reach far beyond the simplified rhetoric of the Cold War (Jones 2006). However, it would hardly be an over-generalization to suggest that the Soviet 'sweet 60s' have only relatively recently started to draw the attention of researchers from the (transdisciplinary) fields of visual and urban studies.[77] In Anglo-American film studies a book dedicated solely to the cinema of the Thaw was published only in 2000 (Woll), yet in the post-Soviet countries the attention to the topic was not so sweeping either, 'overtaking the West' by a few edited volumes (Anninskii 1991; Troianovskii 1996; Fomin 1996; Troianovskii 2002; Briukhovetska In press).[78] Furthermore, the commonplace encounters on Soviet post-war urbanism still rarely go beyond such characterizations as 'dreadful places', 'depressing rows of blocks of flats made out of concrete panels' or 'monotonous concrete-slab housing developments'(Lizon 1996: 104; Ronneberger and Schoellhammer 2010: 1), thus ignoring the fact that the so-called *khrushchevki* were the first successful attempt to provide individual living space for the majority of the Soviet population. For my analysis, the Thaw (1954-1967) is constituted as a period in a constant flux of self-redefinition with regard to the event of the Revolution and to the 1920s, Stalinism and the Second World War. These themes emerge, fade away or double-

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[77] On the Eastern European local modernities of the 1960s, see for example the cluster of articles in the journal *Red Thread* 2010 (2).
[78] It must be pointed out, however, that this excludes bibliographies on the so-called 'super-stars' of *auteur* cinema such as Tarkovskii or, more recently, El'dar Riazanov, since they are rather the exceptions that prove the general rule of the 'developing' status of the field.

expose, hinting at some consistent patterns which might be outlined here. These patterns would attempt to question the traumas and desires that contributed to the formation of the 'subject of the Thaw' as represented in particular by the design of the interiors in the films. For this discussion, it is irrelevant whether the topics and plots of the films were officially planned and imposed 'from above' (such as yet another anniversary of the Revolution or celebration of the Great Patriotic War) or chosen 'independently', not only because the whole process of film production from the literary script to Party pre-screenings was still a reality of studio productions (Woll 2000: 11, 83, 112), but also because the choice of the topic is often the result of a mixture of personal sympathies, long anti-bureaucratic struggle, demands of the officials and advice of friends (see, for example, Rubanova and Klimov 2004). What should be problematized instead is the notion of the 'subject of the Thaw' and the difference of understanding evident in the application of this term. Both parts of the phrase are problematic in their own way, but the immediate question arising is: what definition of the subject is at work here? The historical localization of the second part ('the Thaw') does not make the 'universal' abstract ontological subject obsolete, but rather is an essential condition to start the defining process. Is this subject defined, therefore, through a Eurocentric paradigm; does it constitute no more than a localized version of it? Is the 'subject of the Thaw' just another identity of the 'Soviet subject' as constructed in contemporary historical research on Stalinism, or is it rather a 'fluid set of codes'? Indeed all of these questions are in a sense impossible to answer since they are an intermingling of various categories, methodologies and theories operating in Soviet studies with a greater or lesser degree of success (Krylova 2000; Condee 2000; Etkind 2005). Thus what is at stake here is not an

attempt at finding the 'ideal' terminological apparatus, but we are just pointing to the contradiction between the existing ones and testing the validity of the apparatus/*dispositif* framework.

Yet before proceeding 'inside' the flat and trying to distinguish the *dispositif* it produces, it is necessary to touch upon some reasons for the shift which defined the period, i.e. the shift in the dialectical relation of the outside and inside, both spatio-temporally and ontologically.

The death of Stalin in 1953 is usually considered the starting point of the Thaw. Yet both cinema and urban construction are media where Khrushchev reforms could not be seen immediately, so they were literally visualized as narratives of happy housewarming [*novosel'e*] on the pages of newspapers and films only from 1956 onwards (Woll 2000: 3-13; Varga-Harris 2006: 101; Graffy 2009). A brief characterization of the major change in urban policy in this period might therefore be useful before we proceed to its representations on the screen.

It is not the case that the problem of mass housing construction did not exist before Khrushchev; it is rather a question of the priorities of the Stalinist policy which, unsurprisingly, favoured the creation of competitive industrial and military complexes rather than the improvement of standards of living. As paradoxical as it might seem, the start of industrialization was both the birth and the demise of the socialist cities (e.g. Magnitogorsk) (Erren 2002; Kosenkova 2008; 2010; Meerovich *et al.* 2011). This is not to assume that 'the demise' consisted in the fact that the 'actually built' socialist cities did not corresponded to the utopian plans of those cities. On the contrary, the major failure of socialist

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cities in the 1930s-1950s was that the Party did not even plan to bring them to life, or so it appears.

Before making any general statements on the (non)existence of a mass housing policy in the Stalinist era, it cannot be emphasized enough that interest in the topic of politics of Stalinist urban planning as opposed to Stalinist architecture is very recent, both among Western and post-Soviet scholars. Thus its current process of formation is an interesting 'object' of study in itself. So far this state of novelty facilitates very few unexpected perspectives, mostly still adhering to a tendency to fall into a strong anti-Stalinist rhetoric prolonging the 'party regime and its aggression upon a passive, victimized society' as the main approach (Cohen 1977: 7).[79] As Meerovich *et al.* state:

> The regime was badly in need of as many army-like professional architects as possible who would be obedient, ready to carry out any orders, even the most contradictory, proactive in the earliest achievement of their tasks and capable to implement any top-down tasks efficiently.
>
> Власть остро нуждалась в целой армии профессионалов-архитекторов – послушных, готовых не задумываясь выполнять любые, самые противоречивые приказания, инициативных в скорейшем достижении поставленных перед ними задач, способных квалифицированно обеспечивать выполнение любых спускаемых сверху заданий (2011: 10).

However, an unreflected inconsistency is noticed as the argumentation develops. On one hand, the stand taken is decisively anti-Stalinist and appears to treat the problem exclusively as 'regime studies' (as opposed to social history

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[79] Even though the critique of the above mentioned approach was voiced back in the 1970s, it might be noticed that the contemporary social history studies of Stalinism in western scholarship remain problematic, yet fully engaging with its limitations (see for instance the theoretical and methodological discussions in the sections of the journal *Ab Imperio Quarterly* (2002-)).

studies),[80] finding the faults already in the 'utopian' projects themselves and demonstrating that even the basics of planned economy are already 'totalitarian'. On the other hand, a contradictory argument is also present: the projects were not ever meant for implementation and were purely 'paper' propaganda. As a necessary generalization, it could be argued that the existing research fully exploits the opportunities of the newly available access to the opened archives to demonstrate the deliberate and planned character of the faults in the Stalinist policy (i.e. unequal distribution of the material funds between the construction of industrial objects and the supporting infrastructure, including housing, and its subsequent one-sided re-direction for the cottages of the Party 'elite'), yet fails to apply the new methodological approaches to it, repeating the old mantra about the 'bad Stalin' and supporting the further mythologization of the period instead.

Despite some methodological drawbacks, the key theme that mass housing construction was not feasible in the Stalinist era remains. The idea that the First Five-Year Plan was basically the period of the formation of the Stalinist hierarchical system of government could be said to find its embodiment in the housing policy of those times. Houses and apartments were used as a reward for loyalty to the Party's line and acquired an exclusively elite status. Just an example of the available types of housing in the first and 'exemplary socialist city of Magnitogorsk' would give us an idea of the distribution practices. According to Meerovich *et al.* (2011: 64), the percentual distribution of the available types of houses between different groups of the unrestricted population[81] was the following:

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[80] For the critique of the regime studies methodology in American scholarship see (Cohen 1986: 375).
[81] There were at least fifteen different categories of the population in the socialist cities which, apart from obviously differing from one another socially, were quite isolated spatially. Roughly

2-5% Party and administrative officials with the 'luxury' houses [*zhilishche povyshennoi komfortnosti*] (Fig. 89)

15-20% single workers living in basic houses – residence halls [*obshchezhitie*] (Fig. 86), military barracks [*kazarmy*] (Figs. 91 and 92), barns [*baraki*], house-communes [*doma-kommuny*] etc. (Fig. 90).

79-80% constituted family type accommodation with communal dwelling according to the 'one family-one room' principle (Fig. 94).
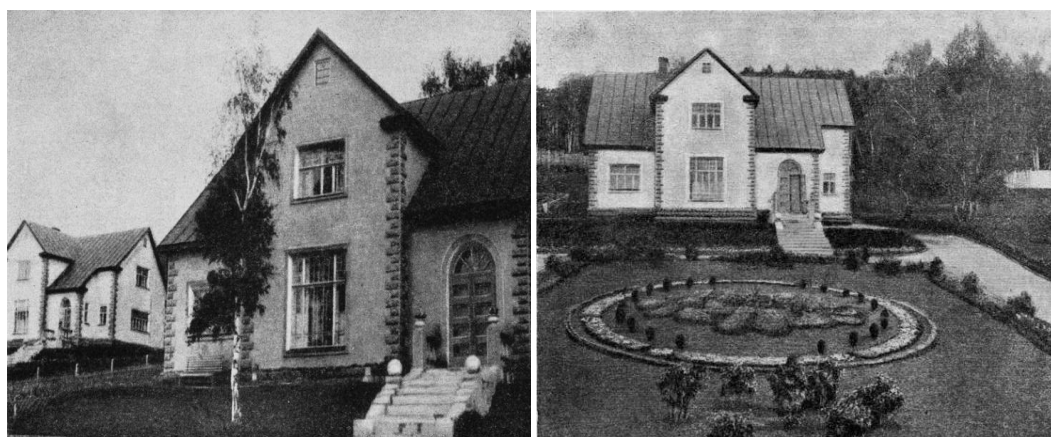
Fig. 89 Elite houses in the 'Berezka' neighbourhood of Magnitogorsk around the 1930s which in the Soviet publications were given as an example of the workers' dwellings (Shass 1951: Table 21&25; cited in Meerovich 'Tipologiia massovogo zhilishcha sotsgorodov-novostroek pervykh piatiletok [Typology of the Mass Housing in the Newly Constructed Socialist Cities of the first five-year plan]' 2010)

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they could be divided into three categories: 2-3% were the Party administration and foreign engineering specialists; 58.7% constituted the unrestricted population (10% – communists and *komsomol* members; 30-35% – freelance workers [*vol'nonaemnye*]; 13.73% – other categories); 38.3% – captives (25% – displaced rural population [*kulaks*]; 1.25% – displaced deportees ['*emigranty*']; 12% – prisoners; 0.02% – disenfranchised [*lishentsy*]).
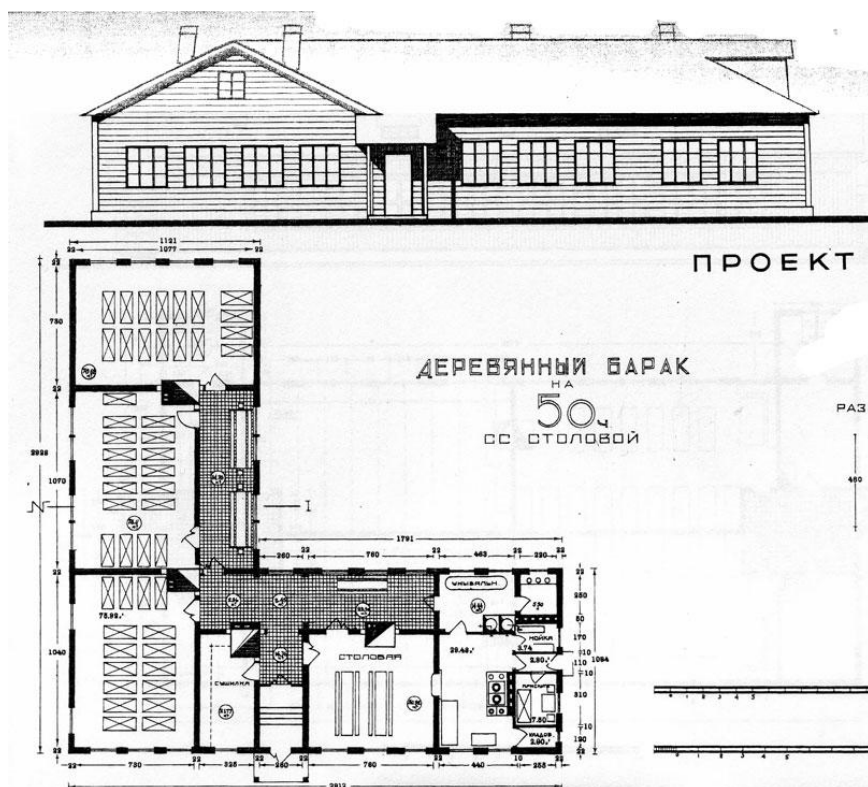
Fig. 90 A 1929 project of a wooden barracks with a canteen for 50 people (first published in Proekty rabochikh zhilishch 1929: 203; cited in Meerovich 2011)

Fig. 91 The exterior of barracks in Magnitogorsk (image taken from http://archvuz.ru/2010_3/6)
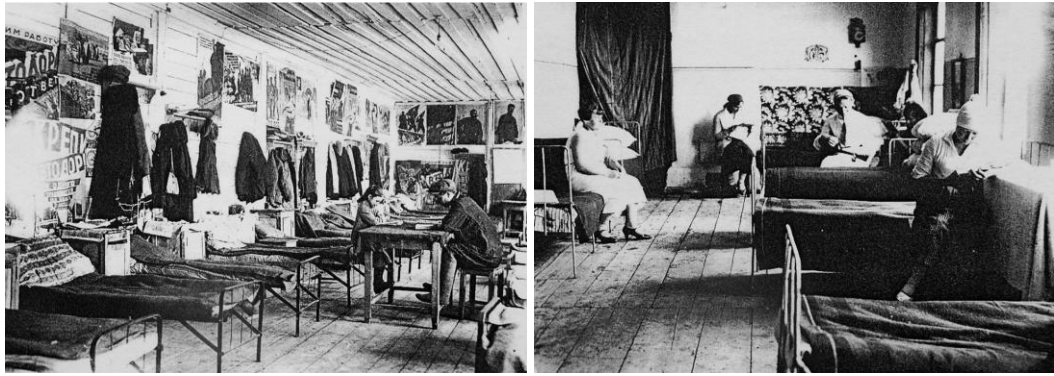
Fig. 92 The interior of male and female barracks in Magnitogorsk (image taken from http://archvuz.ru/2010_3/6)

Fig. 93 A tent camp of the builders of Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works at the beginning of the 1930s (first published in *USSR im Bau* (1932) 1)
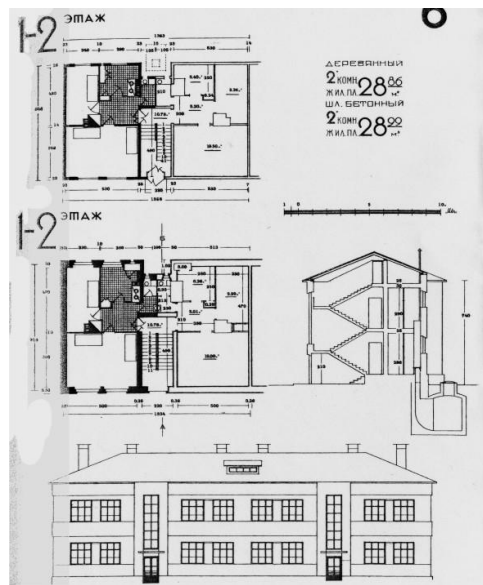
Fig. 94 A sectional two-storey wooden house, designed for the settlement according to the 'one family-one room' principle (first published in Proekty rabochikh zhilishch 1929: 127; cited in Meerovich 2011)

After the Second World War the situation worsened, since about 70,000 Soviet

cities, towns and villages and about 6 million houses were destroyed (Roberts

2006: 4-6); yet the mass housing construction rate remained unsatisfactory.

Perhaps it was not surprising again that Stalin's strategy did not change and the

task of renewing the ruined cities was replaced by the construction of yet another

new set of symbolic buildings.[82] The victorious formation of the new Moscow

skyline in the so-called 'Stalin empire style' [*stalinskii ampir*][83] is a striking

example of the chosen urban policy, or rather of its absence.

Stalin's architectural endeavour was and still is one of the defining factors

of the image of Moscow today. The seven high-rises [*vysotki*] or 'Moscow

skyscrapers', also known as the 'Seven sisters', are the most striking embodiment

and visualization of his ruling principles i.e. hierarchy and verticality (Paperny

[1985] 2007: 72-143). Even though the typical Stalin style of government was to

create an official visibility of initiatives coming 'from below', the first paragraph

of the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR 'On the construction of

the multi-storey buildings in Moscow' adopted on 13th of January 1947 explicitly

specifies the 'author' of the project: 'To accept the proposal of Comrade Stalin on

the construction during 1947-1952 of Moscow high-rise buildings, one 32-storey

building, two 26-storey buildings, five 16-storey buildings'. Further in this

document, a recommendation on the possible style is given: 'The proportions and

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[82] Pre-war examples of symbolic buildings include the Palace of the Soviets (never actually built), pavilions of All Union Agricultural Exhibition and Moscow Hotel.
[83] The post-war years of Stalinism do not have yet a consensually coined term, thus it varies from scholar to scholar depending on the angle of interpretation and the degree of originality chosen. The most common ones are 'Stalin's empire style' [*stalinskii ampir*] (Khan-Magomedov 2010; Meerovich Strategiia tsentralizatsii i zapret sovetskogo arkhitekturnogo avangarda [The Strategy of Centralization and the Ban of Soviet Avant-Garde] 2010; Rappoport 2010) and 'historicism' [*istorizm*] (Ikonnikov 1990), followed by 'neo-academism' [*neoakademizm*] (Khan-Magomedov 2010), 'proletarian classics' [*proletarskaia klassika*] (Volchok 2010), 'Stalin's decorativism' [*stalinskii dekorativizm*] and 'Stalin's baroque' [*stalinskoe barokko*] (Iovleva 2004).

silhouettes of the buildings must be *original*, and its architectural and artistic composition must be *linked with the historical architecture of the city* and the silhouette of the future of the Palace of the Soviets. As a result the projected *buildings must not repeat the well-known examples of overseas high-rise buildings*' [my italics] (Stalin and Chadaev [1947] 2006). Thus the contradictory demands the Party was famous for were posed again, i.e. the new high-rises were to have the same symbolic power as the American skyscrapers, yet somehow be inherently 'Russian' and 'linked with the historical architecture of the city'. In order to help the architects with the latter demand, they were forbidden to use 'Western' publications during the design phase and encouraged to search for examples of authentically Russian multi-storey traditions (Posokhin 1995: 49; cited in Sedov 2006). Sedov's discourse analysis of the primary sources of the 1940s and 1950s traces the sudden 'importance and primacy of Russian architecture and its explained (or rather declared) identity, expressed primarily in the high-rise buildings, verticality' (2006). The newly-found examples included 'the towers of the Russian acropolises and monasteries, the Kremlin bell-tower of Ivan the Great and other multi-storey bell-towers, the tower and the spire of the Admiralty' (Sedov 2006). Without analysing the high-rises in detail, it is worth noting that out of eight planned skyscrapers, only two and a half were residential ones (Kotelnicheskaia Embankment Building, Kudrinskaia Square Building and the Red Gates Administrative Building, half of which was residential), with the residents carefully chosen by Stalin and Molotov themselves.

The mass housing construction of the period was also symbolic, but in a way that actually undermined the proclaimed post-war promises to the 'heroes of the war'. In May 1950 the Soviet Ministry adopted two resolutions, the titles of

which speak for themselves: 'On the reduction of the cost of construction' [*O snizhenii stoimosti stroitel'stva*] and 'On payment of the project works and regulating payment of workers of planning organizations' [*Ob oplate proektnykh rabot i uporiadochenii oplaty truda rabotnikov proektnykh organizatsii*]. Even a brief skimming of the documents reveals the major problems of the late Stalinist construction practices, including high construction cost, which is 'primarily the result of large excesses in the projects and estimates', 'unjustified increase in the number and capacity of technical and auxiliary equipment', 'the use of obsolete design solutions, as well as serious shortcomings in the management of construction ministries' (Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika 1956). However, these resolutions were not effective and the general plan's figures remained highly unsatisfactory: the housing provision in the USSR was only 13.4 million square metres out of 15.8 million square metres planned in 1951 and 13.3 out of 16.1 million square metres in 1952 (Shestakov 2006: 267). These might not strike us as glaring shortcomings, but one must keep in mind that these figures are taken from official reports which are known for overestimations and falsifications of the *actual* results. Thus the problem of the mass housing construction was a pressing one and as soon as Khrushchev rose to power the following documents were issued in 1954: 'On measures to further industrialization, improving of the quality and cost reductions of construction' [*O merakh po dal'neishei industrializatsii, uluchsheniiu kachestva i snizheniiu stoimosti stroitel'stva*] and the two key ones 'On the development of precast concrete structures and parts for construction' [*O razvitii proizvodstva sbornykh zhelezobetonnykh konstruktsii*] and 'On elimination of excesses in the design and construction' [*Ob ustranenii izlishestv v proektirovanii i stroitel'stve*] which basically made *khrushchevki* a reality. As if to

sum up and reinforce the message, the Twentieth Congress of the Communist

Party of the Soviet Union (1956) set the goal of putting an end to the housing

deficit within 20 years (see a statistical visualization of the effort in Fig. 95).[84]
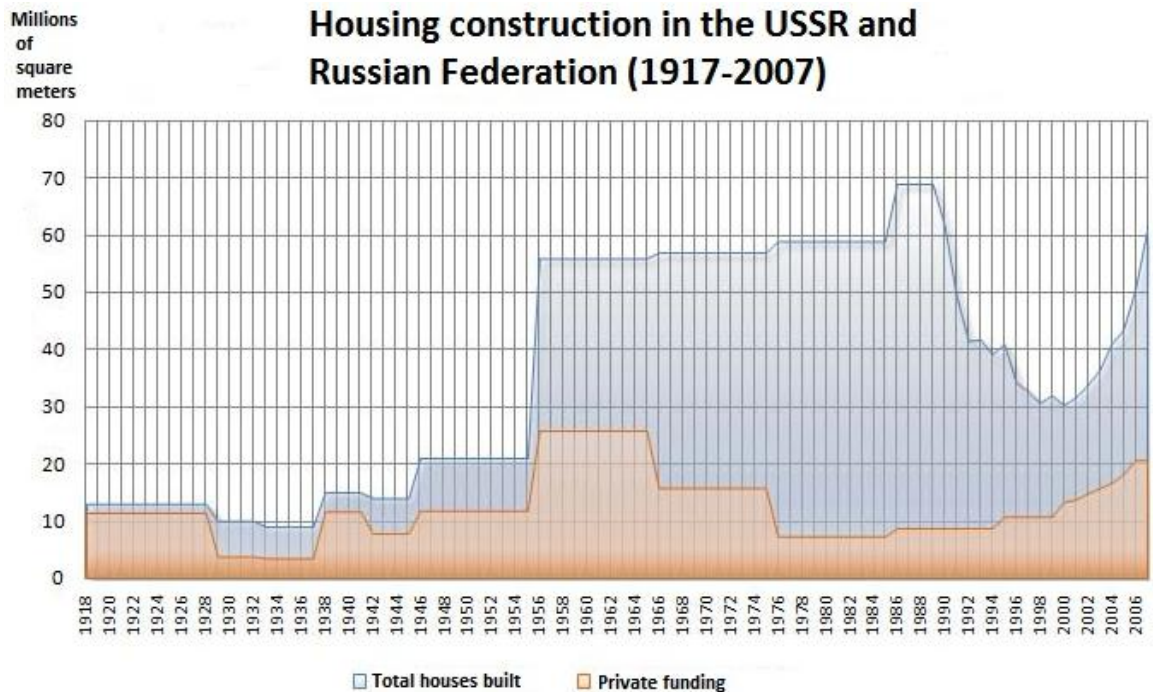
Fig. 95 The quantity of housing construction in the USSR and Russian Federation between 1917 and 2007. The graph was made using statistics from Russian Federal State Statistics Service (*Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki*, also known as *Rosstat*) by the author of Livejournal: http://muacre.livejournal.com/54014.html. The original figures can be found in (No author, '*Zhilishchnoe stroitel'stvo [Housing construction]*' 2007). English translations are mine

With this in mind, the dynamic of Khrushchev's reforms in the sphere of

mass housing construction was quite predictable and long overdue. However, the

turn to functionalism and modernism, possibly even constructivism, as some

would argue (Buchli 1997; Reid 1996; Bittner 2001; Khan-Magomedov 2006), as

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[84] The graph was constructed using the statistics from Russian Federal State Statistics Service (*Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistici*, also known as *Rosstat*) by the author of Livejournal: http://muacre.livejournal.com/54014.html. The original figures can be found in (No author, 'Zhilishchnoe stroitel'stvo' [Housing construction] 2007). English translations are mine.

a way of abandoning Stalinism, was unexpected. The question worth posing here is how legitimate it is to call Khrushchev's mass building campaign a 'return to modernism'; what understanding of 'modernism' is at work here and how does it correlate with the marker-word of the Thaw '*sovremennost''* [modernity]? In order to approach these and other problematic topics, a closer look at the conditions of the 'turn to modernism' is necessary.

The simple fact that the precise date of this 'turn' is well known points towards the idea that the Stalinist principles of government were not at all abandoned. On 30th November 1954 the 'All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects and Workers in the Building-Materials Industry, in the Construction Machinery and Road Machinery Industries and in Design and Research Organizations' [Всесоюзное совещание строителей, архитекторов и работников промышленности строительных материалов, строительного и дорожного машиностроения, проектных и научно-исследовательских организаций] was held and the top of the Party apparatus headed by Khrushchev was present. Dmitrii Khmel'nitskii's detailed analysis of the 'spectacle' proves that the conference followed a well-developed genre of Stalin's show trials and that the primary mission of it was to make the new 'general line' public (Khmel'nitskii 2005). The main points of Khrushchev's keynote speech on the 7th December 1954 could be summed up as rationalization and industrialization of mass housing construction by increasing the use of new building materials and techniques such as prefabricated reinforced concrete. This would, he claimed, 'bring about savings in the manufacturing and assembly processes, reduce overall costs and speed-up the rates of project completion' (Davies and Ilič 2010: 10-1).

Notwithstanding the *Realpolitik* consequences of the changes mentioned, Khrushchev's speech is also of interest as an exemplification of the dilemmas that characterize the Thaw and could be seen as caught in the dialectical movement between the old form and the new content. Or to phrase it in the terms of the art debate of the era: can socialist realism become a contemporary realism? (Reid 1996).

The Stalinist format of the conference included the following 'acts': the accusation of the main architects responsible for the 'faults' of previous excess (Arkadii Mordvinov – the president of the Academy of Architecture in Moscow – and Aleksandr Vlasov – the main architect first of Kiev (1944-50)[85] and then of Moscow (1950-55)); identification of a representative of a 'progressive young generation' who is not afraid to stand up and point to the 'monopolistic group of master-minds who favour the aestheticism' (Georgii Gradov); the Party who gave timely warning against such mistakes and thus under no conditions could be blamed; and Khrushchev's closing speech which would proclaim the new political decision about mass housing construction. Gradov's proposal to re-organize the Academy of Architecture into the Academy of *Construction* and Architecture [*Akademiia Stroitel'stva i Arkhitektury SSSR*] was 'heard' in 1955 leaving no doubt as to the new priorities of the Party. At the same time, at the level of content, Khrushchev's speech basically inverted all the main principles of the Stalinist construction policy.

As Day summarizes: 'private space should be prioritized over public space, interiors over exteriors, technology over art, standardization over

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[85] He was also the author of the post-war reconstruction of Kreshchatik, the main street in Kiev, in the Stalinist empire style under the close guidance of Khrushchev himself as a First Secretary of Ukrainian SSR. For a more detailed analysis of Khrushchev's economics of construction before and after him being in office, see Davies and Ilič 2010.

uniqueness, and economy over extravagance' (Day 1998: 246). The list could

easily be continued: the houses for the masses were to outbalance the elitist ones;

the engineer took the place of the architect… However, such dichotomized

mapping, suitable for the introduction to the history of Soviet urbanism, would not

help us to understand either the supposedly rehabilitated constructivism, or

Khrushchev's position, if any, on the ideological function of architecture.

Khrushchev's 'opinion' on 'beauty' might be productive in approaching these

questions:

> The facades of the houses must look beautiful and attractive as a result of good proportions of the whole building, good proportions of the window and door frames, efficient positioning of the balconies, correct usage of the surface finish and colour… truthful revealing of the wall details and constructions in the large-scale block and panel building.

> Фасады зданий должны иметь красивый и привлекательный вид за счет хороших пропорций всего сооружения, хороших пропорций оконных и дверных проемов, умелого расположения балконов, правильного использования фактуры и цвета… правдивого выявления стеновых деталей и конструкций в крупноблочном и крупнопанельном строительстве (Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie stroitelei, arkhitektorov i rabotnikov promyshlennosti stroitel'nykh materialov, stroitel'nogo i dorozhnogo mashynostroenia, proektnykh i nauchno-issledovatel'skikh organizatsii 1955: 394; cited in Khmel'nitskii 2005).

Thus Khrushchev voiced the main principles of modernism in architecture without

raising any of the 'traditional' incriminations of the 1930s. Furthermore, he also

mentioned constructivism quite favourably in the same speech. But there is an

interesting ambiguity in his supposedly proclaimed personal attitude towards it

and the official published version:

> Khrushchev said: 'I see some architects try to justify their wrong orientations and excesses in the projects by references to the need to fight against constructivism. But under the disguise of the struggle against constructivism, squandering of public funds is taking place. What is

constructivism? Here's how it is defined by the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia in particular'. Then Khrushchev quoted extracts from the article in the GSE, which stated that constructivism involves identifying the construction, focusing on the exposure of functional and constructive utility and rationality, that architects-constructivists are guided by aestheticization of the modern materials – concrete and glass, by the exposure of the construction and maximum simplification of the form.

Quoting an article in the GSE, Khrushchev said: 'What's wrong here, in my opinion, everything is correct'.

That's exactly how Khrushchev characterized constructivism in his speech. *I've heard it myself*. But in the *published version* of the speech another phrase was inserted instead of the latter: 'The struggle against constructivism must be made by reasonable means'. *Thus it seemed as if Khrushchev approved the struggle against constructivism, even though in the speech he had rather approved constructivism itself* [my italics].

'Некоторые архитекторы, - говорил Хрущев, - пытаются оправдать свои неправильные установки и излишества в проектах ссылками на необходимость вести борьбу против конструктивизма. Но под флагом борьбы с конструктивизмом допускается расточительство государственных средств.

Что такое конструктивизм? Вот как, в частности, определяет это направление Большая Советская Энциклопедия'. И далее Хрущев цитирует фрагменты статьи в БСЭ, в которой говорилось, что конструктивизм предполагает выявление конструкции, ориентируясь на выявление функциональной и конструктивной целесообразности, рациональности, что архитекторы-конструктивисты ориентируются на эстетизацию современных материалов – железобетона и стекла, на обнажение конструкции и предельное упрощение форм.

Процитировав статью в БСЭ, Хрущев сказал, – что же тут плохого, по-моему, тут все правильно. Именно так оценил Хрущев конструктивизм в своей речи, *я это сам слышал*. Но в *опубликованном тексте речи* вместо этой оценки конструктивизма была вставлена фраза: 'Борьба с конструктивизмом должна проводиться разумными средствами' *Получилось, что Хрущев вроде бы одобряет борьбу с конструктивизмом, хотя в речи он скорее одобрял сам конструктивизм* (Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie stroitelei, arkhitektorov i rabotnikov promyshlennosti stroitel'nykh materialov, stroitel'nogo i dorozhnogo mashynostroenia, proektnykh i nauchno-

issledovatel'skikh organizatsii 1955: 393; cited in Khan-Magomedov 2006).

It would be an over-interpretation to read the fissure which characterized the difference between the two versions as anything other than pure coincidence. What is, however, symptomatic is the desire of some critics to read it that way, idealizing Khrushchev's initial Thaw reforms almost to the same extent as cursing Stalin's. It might well have been a pure coincidence that the functionalism of constructivist architecture was anti-Stalinist in avoiding decorativism and suggesting the first projects of mass and cheap workers' houses (e.g. experimental houses with Flat F designed and built by Moisei Ginzburg in 1928 discussed in Chapter 3.1.4). Khrushchev's 'aesthetics' went as far as solving the housing crisis and any 'style' which would provide the tempo and quantity needed would suit him. As later became clear from the 'Manezh affair' and Khrushchev's meetings with the representatives of the intelligentsia in 1962 and 1963, his 'taste' was no less conservative than that of Stalin, formulated openly at the Manezh art exhibition dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Moscow's branch of the USSR's Union of Artists: 'In the questions of art, I'm a Stalinist' [*V voprosakh iskusstva – ia stalinist*] (Gerchuk 2008: 231).

4.2 Constructing Modernity [*sovremennost'*] in the cinema of the Thaw

Now that we have exemplified the actual historical controversies surrounding Khrushchev's 'return to modernism', our focus will turn to the marker-word of the Thaw *sovremennost* [modernity]. If, however, broadly conceived, modernity, as Hell and Schönle argue, is 'invented, framed and produced ruins', then Khrushchev's mass housing campaign at the first sight seems to be the antithesis of it (Hell and Schönle 2010: 5).[86] The history of the self-representation of the Soviet Union could be traced in a set of construction metaphors: the goal to '*build* communism' [*postroit' communizm*] was first followed by radical industrialization and the 'USSR *in construction*' [*SSSR na stroike*], then by a post-war *reconstruction* [*poslevoennaia rekonstruktsiia*] of the country and the final attempt to *rebuild* society - *Perestroika*. The construction rhetoric was also at the heart of the Thaw with the house-warming [*novosel'e*] in the new flat in a *khrushchevka* as its main event. Yet when we talk about the ruins in the Thaw, it should be seen as the ruins of the subject. Thus *khrushchevki* are argued to be situated on the dialectical node of modernity, signifying the basic human happiness of the first-owned home and, at the same time, structured around a loss, embodying traumas after the Second World War and unfulfilled utopian desires of the subject. The physical manifestations of *khrushchevki* as ruins are represented in the images of unsuccessful newbuilds which for reasons of the accelerated tempo of construction and cheap construction materials either collapsed soon after

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[86] *Ruins of Modernity* (Hell and Schönle 2010) is a diverse multi-disciplinary volume structured around the idea that the concept of modernity is strongly associated with progress and improvement, but taken dialectically and with a benefit of hindsight is always mediated and framed by ruins. Although none of the contributors deal with the Soviet 1960s *per se*, but their theoretical framework (as well as recent programme of demolition of *khrushchevki* in Russia) has inspired the 'ruins of the subject' concept discussed below.

they were built or came with the flaws that were almost irreparable (as it was even visualized in Muratova's *Brief Encounters* (1967) where the main protagonist Valentina Ivanovna inspected the newly built *khrushchevki* and found all possible flaws in them from the low quality of the general finish to the absence of running water). In line with what we have argued, Reid traces the origins of modernity of the 1960s in constructivism, but not directly:

> While the aesthetic parameters of modernity embodied in the 'contemporary style' derived in part from constructivism, this was less a matter of direct imitation (the actual production of the constructivists was not yet widely known) and more of a reengagement with the international Modern Movement that the Russian movement had informed. The stripped-down, modernist Soviet design aesthetic of the early 1960s owed as much to contemporary Czech and Scandinavian design as to Russian antecedents (2002: 244).

As has been mentioned above, Khrushchev's modernity started with the de-Stalinization and no other film defines the atmosphere of the first half of the Thaw and at the same time visualizes this process with such subtlety as *Walking the Streets of Moscow* [*Ia shagaiu po Moskve*] (Georgii Danelia, 1963). The film's second opening, after the so-called 'airport-epigraph', shows the hard labour at the metro construction site [*metrostroi*] where the protagonist Kolia (Nikita Mikhalkov) works (Figs. 96 and 97). Yet one could not find any propagandistic pathos of the metro building here as the work itself is being shown for only 1 min 37 sec. This message is emphasized by the soundtrack of light, jazzy music. However, it is enough to give a hint to the 'old times' which are now gone, so in the next shot Kolia is happily washing away all the 'meaning' the documentary style shots could have had in the past (Fig. 98). Throughout the film his work is never mentioned again visually. Moreover, the closing shot, which is set in metro on University station, when Kolia supposedly has to go back to work i.e. underground, but instead he takes an escalator up (Fig. 99) and sings his famous

culminating theme song. The de-Stalinization message that Thaw is truly here is strengthened by the absence of Stalin's portrait as the white wall and ceiling of the station appear (Fig. 100), leaving no doubts about the lessening of the ideological pressure and a bright, radiant future with Nikita Sergeievich.

Fig. 96 Kolia at *Metrostroi*

Fig. 97 Leaving the shift

Fig. 98 Washing away Stalinism

Fig. 99 Back to work, but above ground
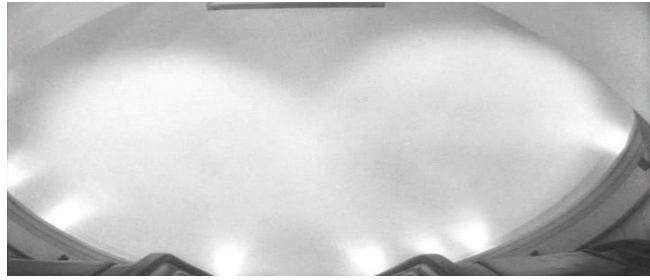
Fig. 100 Absence of Stalin's portrait– radiant future with Nikita Sergeievich

The key to such a shift was, of course, not only Khrushchev's 'secret speech', but also the new Programme of CPSU which was adopted on July 30th 1961. The main aim of the programme was no less than Communism itself, the deadline for which would have been in precisely 20 years. Its achievement would be possible thanks to the construction of the material and technical foundation, new relations of production, the formation of a new Soviet person and solving the housing crisis by 1980. Moreover, the new productive relations, as Vail' and Genis, the classics of the Thaw studies, notice were not possible without sincerity of personal interaction:

> In the 60s the cult of personal interaction was spread on all
> structures of the society. The accent shifted from work to leisure.
> To be more precise, the leisure started to incorporate the work.
> Whether a working brigade, a geological party or an institute for
> scientific research – the atmosphere of a friendly mutual
> understanding seemed much more important than the production
> goals… Friendship became the meaning and the form of leisure. Or
> even broader – of life (Vail' and Genis [1988] 1998: 69).

Thus the paradox of Soviet socialism could be characterized as the following: it arose from an underdeveloped capitalist system and all those freedoms that had to be attained within the developed bourgeois society – individual rights, civil society, high standards of living and consuming – were missing in it. But strangely, lacking the technical and economic maturity indispensible for socialism, Soviet socialism developed certain features amounting to

communism's sophisticated humanist aspirations – manifested in open education, high esteem for science and culture and free creative time as one of the main common goods (Chukhrov 2013). The relative freedom from the harsh proletarian labour of the previous two decades for the first time amounted to the majority of the population having free time and the possibility to enjoy it. The new Party programme for a common person would be the embodiment of the dream of a free table at a restaurant and of a separate apartment: 'No one will tell you again that the restaurant is full. If you decide to get married, your mother won't be asking sadly: 'Where will you two be living'' (Vail' and Genis [1988] 1998: 17). The rise of lower social layers, the changes in urban spaces and the modes of inhabiting them, urbanization of rural areas, and the emergence of neo-Marxist themes in philosophy, literature and cinema created the backbone of the Thaw. Spatially it was manifested in Stalin's vertical and hierarchical utopia embodied in the post-war reconstruction of Moscow with its seven high-risers [*vysotki*] or 'Moscow skyscrapers', giving way to a no less sublime *horizontal* utopia (Fig. 101)

Fig.101 Khrushchev's horizontal utopia in the making

Democratization of the elite spaces and commodities (restaurants, cars, etc.) happened at the point when the scientific and technical revolution happened to extend its advancement not only to all things space and 'catching up with America', but also to the level of the daily life of the city dwellers.

If proceeding from the built to the cinematic urbanism, it must be pointed out that the city starred as one of the key characters in the films of the Thaw. Among the general characteristics of the cinema of the 1960s the following are usually mentioned: the influences of Italian neorealism and French Nouvelle Vague, escape from the narrow offices and parade avenues into the streets and lanes of the 'common' city, sensitivity and attention to the people, their everyday lives and quotidian environments, individual, as opposed to 'big' truths etc. The specifically new cinematic feature of the Thaw are 'the flashback, the closeup, the pan, the long take, and the use of wide format (70 mm) and fisheye lens – an ultra-wide-angle lens that provide a 180-degree sweep, keeps almost everything in focus at once, and visibly distorts the edges of the screen' (Kaganovsky 2013: 236).

Public and private leisure spaces in the cinema of the 1960s start playing a hegemonic role in the formation of the protagonists. The modern entertainment spaces became generally more affordable, though more often than not, they were a modified version of a so called bourgeois pastime. Restaurants in the Thaw acquired a democratized status becoming a place of entertainment not just in hotels and not just for the Party elite and foreigners, as it was during Stalinism. Their quantity and affordability grew immensely and together with the so called youth café [*molodezhnoe kafe*] these spaces were stripped of their bourgeois meaning and gained an educational and socialization functions (Fig. 102)

Fig. 102 Modern and 'international' **y**outh café [*molodezhnoe kafe*] vs the
Stalinist skyscraper in *Walking the Streets of Moscow*

The film which openly deals with the de-Stalinization of interior spaces is

one of the early films by El'dar Riazanov *Give Me The Complaint Book* [*Daite*

zhalobnuiu knigu] (1964). The plot of this 'lyrical comedy' is set in a restaurant

Oduvanchik [Dandelion] and involves a journalist Nikitin helping a young,

enterprising director of the restaurant Tat'ana to transform the place from the

Stalinist space into a modern youth café. The usual narrative-motivating obstacles

include red tape and conservative management, but it is the stunning visual

transformation of the place which actually holds the film together. The typical

markers of the philistine Stalinist *byt* are a lampshade with fringe, which is then

shown stacked up in the background during the renovation; and the artificial

columns, which are being destroyed (Fig. 103). By contrast, the new modern

interior was rational, minimalist and constructivist in style (Fig. 104).

Fig. 103 Demolition of Stalinist interior

Fig. 104 Restaurant's transformation into the modern youth cafe

Similar modern spaces were represented in other films of the era such as *The Colleagues* [*Kollegi*] by Aleksei Sakharov (1962) (Fig. 105)

Fig. 105 Modern interiors in *The Colleagues*

Often accompanying the restaurants, but sometimes acting as a separate entertainment space where modernity manifested itself was the dance floor. Quite often the non-authorized dance floors sprang up in the courtyards of the city with someone providing their personal radio or a vinyl record player as a music accompaniment. Such dance floors are found in the mentioned *Walking the Streets of Moscow* or in *I Am Twenty* by Marlen Khutsiev (Fig. 106)

Fig. 106 Spontaneous public dance floors between the residential spaces

The dances inside apartments were quite often in the non-approved Western styles
such as rock-n-roll and foxtrot. The examples of these can be found in Marlen
Khutsiev's *I Am Twenty* and *July Rain* (Fig. 107)

Fig. 107 Modern bourgeois dancing inside *khrushchevka* apartment

And finally the third type is approved Soviet dance floors in clubs and palaces of culture, for instance in *The Colleagues* or *Walking the streets of Moscow* (Fig. 108)

a.

b.

Fig. 108 Authorized dancing in modern urban spaces in *The Colleagues* (a) and *Walking the streets of Moscow* (b)

My collage of the main cinematic topoi representing modernity will be finalized with the film which, as I argue, closes the Thaw itself – *July Rain.* A ten-minute tracking shot watching the crowds of Moscow going about their daily business opens the film with a radical affirmation of horizontality of the city (Fig. 109).

Fig. 109 Lena amongst the crowd in the opening sequence of *July Rain*

The soundtrack, however, is deliberately fragmented, seeming to originate from a short-wave radio changing stations. As Kaganovsky points out: 'The sound is disjointed: it is, first of all, pointedly non-diegetic because it is mismatched in terms of exteriority/interiority – we are outside, moving along Moscow streets, but the sounds seems to come from an interior space, either a car or an apartment' (2013: 241-2). At first the camera is objectively distanced and impartial, but then people start noticing it and returning its gaze. Khutsiev is playing with 'life caught off guard' techniques and the effect is to underscore the presence of the cinematic apparatus, to provoke the subjects the camera is trying to film. This scene is in dialogue with a famous sequence from Dziga Vertov's *MWMC* where the car with Mikhail Kaufman moves through the streets, filming the subjects on its way. But if peoples' reaction to filming in Vertov's documentary could be attributed to the novelty of the technology and his 'life caught off guard' method, Khutsiev uses this method in order to intrude into reality itself, to play with the documentary vs feature film canons, to come closer to the subjects of the Thaw and also create the effect of distrust as opposed to the already mentioned sincerity of the early Thaw

years. Kaganovsky points out that: 'As the camera locates its object, Lena, and begins to follow her down the street, we see her turning around and glancing over her shoulder, aware that she is being followed, watched, filmed and reproduced' (2013: 242). This keeps on happening throughout the film whenever Lena is filmed walking across the city alone corresponding to her distrustful attitude towards the people who are surrounding her: from her lover Volodia and his friends – to the dismantled ideology of the city represented in the disassembled giant letters that would form a slogan celebrating the victory of the May parade (Fig. 110) – and her contemporaries in general.
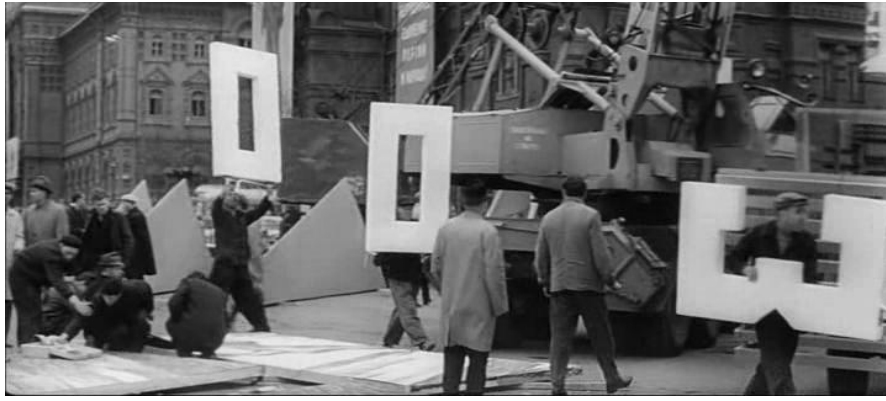
Fig. 110 Disassembled giant letters and disjointed society of the late Thaw

In the final scene the lost unity is given as only existing among the previous generation, among the veterans who survived the Second World War, but not in the present generation of students who stare at the camera calmly and distantly. A new and yet unknown feeling was born at the end of the Thaw – alienation. No other utopia will ever be trusted again.

I would like to conclude with another observation by Vail' and Genis: 'A Soviet person has been living among ideas, not things for too long. The objects were always just the tags of the ideas, their labels, names and often allegories… On the contrary, the world of Hemingway, whom the Thaw generation adored and copied, is full of things which don't have any idea behind them. Things here don't designate anything beyond what they are: 'We had lunch in *Lavinia* restaurant and then went for a coffee in *Versailles* café.' Such accuracy in Hemingway's topography is just like a mindless determinacy of the map. And he is open about it by saying: 'This, by the way, bear no relation to the story whatsoever''([1988] 1998: 66). Yet unlike the heroes of Hemingway, new Soviet modernity could not afford such a luxury.

PART III WORKING SPACES OF THE SOCIALIST CITY

Chapter 5: Technology and Labour

5.1 Dialectics of technology: from Marx to Marxism-Leninism through Benjamin

> Indeed, it is worth noting that the word
> 'revolution' is used in *Capital* almost
> exclusively to describe technological change.
> -Fredric Jameson-

During the roughly 70 years during which the Soviet Union was in existence, almost every official book published had to contain a reference to *diamat* [dialectical materialism]; this was no more than a legitimizing device, comparable to acknowledgement of the funding body in contemporary publications. However, today, inclusion of the term 'dialectics' in a title demands at least a footnote-style comment with justification of its usage and clarification of the genealogical tradition the author aspires to – and this is even more true inside than outside the post-Soviet countries. Thus this chapter aims to contribute to re-establishing dialectics as a useful theoretical instrument by approaching its questioning from an uncommon perspective.

Diamat, as the 'official Soviet philosophy' (a contradiction in terms in itself), can be characterized as the reified version of the dialectic, which is ironically reminiscent of the idealist Hegelian 'End of History'. Having said that, *diamat* is far from being a homogeneous and continuous entity. Among the very few studies undertaken so far,[87] all agree that in this sphere Stalin was the one who stopped all discussions about *diamat* by Deborinites and mechanists and unified the field by publishing his *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* in 1938,

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[87] See (Bochenski 1963; Marcuse 1958; Bakhurst 1991; Mareev 2008).

and therein stating: 'Dialectical materialism is the world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist party' ([1938] 1973: 253). The danger of *diamat* in scholarship was similar to socialist realism in arts, since both were empty signifiers, re-defined from year to year by the Party politics and forcing representatives from these spheres to hopelessly search for some hidden 'inner logic' behind it and 'guess the Desire of the Party'.[88]

If one tries to abandon Soviet Marxism and approach the question of dialectics from the West, then the need to acknowledge its 'fathers' – Hegel ([1807] 1977) and Marx ([1883] 1976) – then 'godfathers'– Lenin ([1908] 1972) and Lukács ([1923] 1967) – and everyone in between – Adorno ([1966] 2005), Benjamin ([1940] 2002) and Lacan ([1960] 2006)– would result in an exegeses of the history of dialectics, which is not possible in the format of this chapter.[89] However, a brief sketch of the dialectical method, as a sign of respect to the author who is attempting to revive dialectics for the contemporary humanities, might be appropriate. Furthermore, interrogation of the method will be carried out using a specific example, which, in the end, might appear to be more than a random illustration.

The mechanics of the functioning of dialectics always demands a search for the 'third' term. Starting from Hegel's *Aufhebung*, or sublation, the need to somehow avoid the burden of oppositions has been driving intellectuals to a synthetic phrase of one kind or another. Yet, already from the title of Fredric

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[88] For the outcomes of the *diamat* for science see (Krementsov 1997).
[89] The scrutiny of the question of dialectics keeps tempting critical thinkers since Hegel's first mentioning of the lordship and bondage. The most recent attempt was made by Slavoj Žižek in *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (2012). However, intentionally limiting my understanding of dialectics to field of technology and adopting the version suggested below by Jameson, I use it here almost as a conceptual device to temporarily resolve base/superstructure dilemma the success of which is situational and dependent on the film material used.

Jameson's book *Valences of the Dialectic* (2010), another development is anticipated. After characterizing *the* dialectic as a philosophical system, and *many* dialectics as the analysing instruments used by different philosophers and cultural critics in the local context without total dedication to the dialectic itself, Jameson not only avoids 'the trap' of a convergence of opposites, but openly disregards it. Making an interesting conceptual shift from the tyranny of nouns, he introduces the adjective 'dialectical' to pursue the analytic work of the negative, which will 'stand as an imperative to hold opposites together, and, as it were, to abolish the autonomy of both terms in favour of a pure tension one must necessarily preserve' (Jameson 2010: 65). The theoretical potential of this notion, which at first sight might just appear to be an updated version of the Freudian death drive, needs to be exemplified in relation to the 'classical' logic of functioning of binary oppositions.

Even though opposition as such always implies an asymmetry, such an asymmetrical dualism could either degrade the logic of fascism and racism (i.e. 'one term turns out to be more defective than the other, or in other words in which that second term radiates a kind of essentiality or plenitude which cannot be ascribed to its alleged opposite' and 'identify the centre and the margin, an essential and an inessential term'), or remain productive and be preserved despite its immobilization (Jameson 2010: 19-21). It is exactly the latter that Jameson advocates, since the *preservation of the dialectical impulse* when faced with a false dichotomy might lead to a deeper understanding of the two parts that form it, as well as the process of their mutual relation to one another, even if it is a contradictory one that involves 'dividing as much as they relate, or relat[ing] as much as they divide' (Jameson 2010: 45). As with any theoretical instrument, it

has to be tested on concrete examples and the choice of the opposition of base and superstructure proves to be particularly useful one, not least because of the unexpected role the technology begins to play within it, or, rather, which the opposition itself starts playing within technology. The paradoxical reversal of roles here needs a more careful examination; thus, a brief insight into a '150-year-long scholastic debate' (to use Jameson's metaphor (2010: 44)) on the primacy of base or superstructure is called for.

Since the beginning of capitalist modernisation and rapid industrialization in the nineteenth century, technology has been undifferentiated from the capitalist mode of production, and Marx's analysis in *Capital* vol.1 vividly illustrates how the technology of the large-scale productions 'enslaved' the worker and turned him or her into 'an appendage of the machine'. Yet, to rephrase Mayakovsky[90], we say 'the dialectic' and imply 'Marx', who could not fail to see the basic contradiction of this situation: the machine, which is just a more advanced instrument of labour invented to 'serve' the worker, was appropriated by capitalists and turned into an instrument of further exploitation. This is the starting point of the '150-year-long scholastic debate' about the birth of socialism from the spirit of capitalism, the debate 'whose futility has exhausted most of its participants' (Jameson 2010: 44).[91] Thus, it might not be an over-exaggeration to

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[90] '*My govorim – Lenin, podrazumevaem – partiia, my govorim – partiia, podrazumevaem – Lenin*' [We say – Lenin, and mean – the Party, we say – the Party, and mean – Lenin] (from the poem *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* (1924))

[91] This chapter is once again not the space to explicate the long-standing debate, so for further exploration see for instance Williams 1973; Hall 1977; Harman 1986; Harvey 2010. Yet very crudely it could be summed up as the question of the supremacy: is it the base (infrastructure) which determines/reflects/expresses/influences superstructure or vice versa? Marx has not written much on the superstructure as it were and famously concentrated on the questions of the base, (mis)leading many of his followers into assumption that this is what he preferred. The truly influential critic who favoured the reciprocal connection, i.e. superstructure over base, was Antonio Gramsci who in turn was inspirational for the New Left cultural criticism of the post-1968. However, all of these exegesis are productive only if explored in the own historical moments

state that *technology* lies at the heart of every debate about relations between base and superstructure. Yet, for this point to demonstrate its theoretical productivity it needs to be put more radically; i.e. the notion of technology *is* the relations between base and superstructure, and thus the word 'revolution' is used in Marx's *Capital* almost exclusively to describe technological change. What follows from here, and what will form the core of our argument, is a suggestion that the *dialectic of technology, which is the relations of the instrument of production ('the machine') and the labour process ('human agency') appears already within the base itself.* As Jameson notes:

> Thus this *first* opposition not only brings into visibility two distinct ways of reading or representing production itself: it posits each as the indispensable correction of the other, in a situation in which neither is the essential term in some asymmetrical opposition and which thereby demands a constant dialectical movement back and forth which must not be allowed to harden into a static sociological model of some kind (2010: 46).

All in all, the relation between base and superstructure, or between the further developed ideological positions of technological determinism and human agency that they began to represent, has not been, and cannot be, defined once and for all. The abstract theoretical considerations are always 'corrected' by the local practice taken at a singular moment, and therefore stop their dynamic dialectic for the purpose of analysis. Thus, it might be opportune here to rejoin the Soviet Union at the point at which we left it, and consider it from the perspectives of technology and base/superstructure relations.

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as opposed to an attempt to create a linear genealogy. I do follow Jameson in his cutting of this Gordian knot by restructuring the question and supplying only ad hoc and punctual answers.

In order to start addressing the question of technology in the Soviet state, it might be worth not only stating the common-sense historical circumstance that, after the establishment of the Soviet Union, the member-countries were predominantly agrarian with no technological base from which to pursue even the bourgeois revolution (not to mention the socialist one which, according to its apologists, must be enacted in industrially developed countries, with the critical mass of superfluous proletariat carrying it out), but also problematizing it by showing that this 'drive for technology' was happening not only, and not even predominantly, in the 'base', but also in the 'superstructure', at equal or greater intensity. The present chapter will limit its encounter with representations of technology to the 'most important of all arts', which leads to the necessity of considering the specificity of the media itself before proceeding to a further exploration of the Soviet cinematic and theoretical legacy from the 1920s to the 1960s. Thus, what will follow is an analysis of the medium of film not only from 'the point of view' of technology, but by means of positioning the technology *per se* within the film [production] as a much more ambivalent embodiment of the base/superstructure relations.

The dialectic of film as a medium originates from the basic presupposition that it is a technical invention; an apparatus, nonetheless, that is capable of producing and, importantly, reproducing a peculiar type of 'commodity' – a film – that thus belongs simultaneously both to the base and to the superstructure. Yet, the logic of this chapter suggests that the technological aspect of this inseparable 'opposition' (if it is one) be touched upon, instead of ignoring it or assuming its neutrality as the majority of film studies concentrating on film sequences do. The attempt to distance oneself from the mechanism of production of meanings should

not be seen as an intention to abolish the dialectical tension between the film's base and superstructure in favour of the technological determinism. However, it might well be that the above warning is superfluous, since every freezing of the internal dynamic for the purpose of analysis is always temporary, and the motion is quickly restored via resistance from the material under consideration.

Hitherto, this purely theoretical dilemma might have appeared too abstract to attract the interest of the state, yet it had to be dealt with by Soviet officials, who were to solve it practically by answering the following question: Which of the bureaucratic administrative branches should the film belong to: industry or propaganda? Thus, the change of its 'Master' from *Narkompros* [*Narodnyi komissariat prosvechsheniia*] (People's Commissariat of Enlightenment) to *Narkomat legkoi promyshlennosti* [*Narodnyi komissariat legkoi promyshlennosti*] (People's Commissariat of Light Industry) was made in 1932, but just a year later a separate film administration was formed under a title that preserved the 'industrial' element by threading film and photo media on top of it: *Glavnoe upravlenie kinofotopromyshlennosti* (Main administration of cine-photo-industry). Next a re-organization occurred in 1938 when *Komitet po delam kinematografii* (Committee of Cinematography), an individual 'ministry', was established; this stayed a separate institution until the beginning of the Thaw. As if reviving its 'Enlightenment' functions of the 1920s, a new *Ministry of Culture* incorporated cinema as one of its branches until 1963 (Bulgakowa 2010: 24). A symptomatic reading of these institutional shifts and their frequency might reveal that the dialectics of base/superstructure within the film medium, as seen by Soviet practitioners and representations of labour and technology, offer a particularly favourable backdrop, since, as Walter Benjamin noticed during his stay in

Moscow in 1926–1927: 'Everything technical is sacred here, nothing is taken more earnestly than technology' (my translation)[92]. Yet, there is more to mentioning Benjamin here than just a random summing-up of the Soviet experience by a foreigner. His investigations into the complex film/technology relations given in one of the 'canonical' humanities texts would be mentioned here not so much for the sake of an 'eternal return', but, hopefully, for unexpected connotations if extrapolated into a wider Soviet context.

Walter Benjamin wrote his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' in 1935, but it still is one of the most widely cited pieces in the contemporary humanities, partly because of the cryptic style of writing he used, but predominantly because of the mind-mapping of themes that define modernity, such as the technical reproducibility of an art; aura; mass culture and fascism; and the optical unconscious, to mention but a few. Of course, such a high density of topics on just a few pages, with the argumentation style differing dramatically from the institutionalized logical narrative, is perceived ambiguously, and labelled either as a 'set of category mistakes' (Hennion and Latour 2003) or as a challenging example of the new method of philosophical investigation, the 'dialectics of seeing' (Buck-Morss 1989). The second version of the essay, written at the beginning of 1936, will be referenced here, not only because it is the original piece that the author wanted to publish in the first place (his so-called '*Ur*-text'), but also because a lot of references made to the dialectical role of technology were omitted in the widely reprinted third version of the essay.[93] What makes Benjamin's essay important for our argument is his definition of contemporary aesthetic models, which places neither the author and

[92] See note in Chapter 5.1 on translation of the word "*die Technik*".
[93] On the differences between all three existing versions of the essay, see (Hansen 2004: 3-4).

his/her social relations (although he also discusses them in another essay 'The Author as Producer' (1934)), nor the content or form of the representation, but rather the *technological reproducibility* at the core of the debate about art. What undeniably accompanies the 'first truly revolutionary means of reproduction' (i.e. 'photography, which emerged at the same time as socialism') is politics, which allows the artwork to abandon the realm of cult and acquire an exhibition value, thereby simultaneously 'democratizing' the medium for enjoyment and appraisal by the masses, and endangering it for capitalist appropriation (Benjamin [1936] 2002: 106).

'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' is usually seen as a statement of the superiority of the film as a medium of modernity; indeed, Benjamin is quite explicit in his statement that 'Painting, by its nature, cannot provide an object of simultaneous collective reception, as architecture has always been able to do, as the epic poem could do at one time, and as film is able to do today' ([1936] 2002: 116). Although his reflections on photography appeared in his piece 'A Short History of Photography' (1931), oddly enough, the medium is rarely mentioned here. The same could be said about music, which is also carefully avoided in the essay, making it a particularly noticeable case of failing to mention sound cinema (which is obviously 'corrected' in the third version of the essay). In order to understand why simultaneous collective reception is such a key element for Benjamin, we must pay attention to the technological changes that enable it, and trace the dialectics of technology within it.

When speaking about technology, Benjamin differentiates two stages, which should ideally be diachronic; instead, they are mostly synchronic, and located 'in the world-historical conflict'. 'First technology' could be understood as the 'mastery over nature'; it existed in fusion with ritual, and 'made the maximum possible use of human beings'; on the contrary, the 'second technology', which 'aims rather at [the] interplay between nature and humanity', barely needs human beings at all. Thus, 'the achievements of the first technology might be said to culminate in human sacrifice; those of the second, in the remote-controlled aircraft, which needs no human crew'. Stating that art belongs to both simultaneously, Benjamin defines the social function of art today as 'the rehearsal of the interplay':

> The function of film is to train human beings in the
> apperceptions and reactions needed to deal with a vast apparatus
> whose role in their lives is expanding almost daily. Dealing with
> this apparatus also teaches them that technology will release
> them from their enslavement to the powers of the apparatus only
> when humanity's whole constitution has adapted itself to the
> new productive forces which the second technology has set free.
> (Benjamin [1936] 2002: 107-8)

However, it would be too simplistic to reduce the role of film to the mere instrumentalism of adapting human senses to the new industrial reality around them, whether for the sake of capitalist exploitation (as Horkheimer and Adorno assume in their essay on the cultural industry (Horkheimer and Adorno [1947] 2002: 99)), or for possible 'socialist good'. As Hansen points out, 'Notwithstanding Benjamin's advocacy of positioning art in the relations of production of its time, he was interested in labour primarily within the larger (anthropological-materialist) frame of humanity's interaction with nature, negotiated in the medium of technology' (Hansen 2004: 19). From Hansen's

remark it is clear that Benjamin's materialism has little in common with the orthodox Marxist historical materialism, or *istmat*, especially with its Soviet version represented by Nikolai Bukharin. Without entering into a discussion of historical materialism, it should be mentioned that Bukharin's reductive and determinist understanding of technology, which states that 'the historic mode of production, i.e. the form of society, is determined by the development of the productive forces, i.e. the development of technology', was one of the earliest Soviet attempts to justify the start of industrialization ([1921] 1969: 124). Needless to say, Benjamin was not the only contemporaneous thinker to disagree with this version of technological determinism. In fact, as early as 1925, Georg Lukács wrote: 'Technique is a part, a moment, naturally of great importance, of the social productive forces, but it is neither simply identical with them, nor [...] the final or absolute moment of the changes in these forces' ([1925] 1966: 29). With these different positions in mind, Benjamin's further statement that 'The most important social function of film is to *establish equilibrium between human being and the apparatus*' appears even more problematic (Benjamin [1936] 2002: 117).

The demand for equilibrium is in itself dialectical because, as the logic sketched above regarding the functioning of binary oppositions demonstrates, it points to the situation of domination, oppression and inequality between two terms.[94] The answer to the question of what is repressing what is clear in view of

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[94] Not intending to touch in any depth upon the field of science and technology studies (which, incidentally, is no less exposed to the burden of non-dialectical thinking, seen as a rivalry of social construction of technology (SCOT) theory and technological determinism), it might still be useful to quote Bruno Latour, who said that 'techniques are always involved when asymmetry or irreversibility are the goal' (Latour 1992: 154).

the danger that Benjamin envisages in the capitalist technology. What is not so clear, however, is how the film, as technological device, provides the medium in which re-appropriation of the human (e.g. establishing the equilibrium) could take place.

According to Benjamin, film happens to embody a dialectical movement between over-determining technological apparatus and an 'equipment-free aspect of reality':

> The illusory nature of film is of the second degree; it is the result of editing. That is to say: in the film studio the apparatus has penetrated so deeply into reality that a pure view of that reality, free of the foreign body of equipment, is the result of a special procedure – namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted photographic device and the assembly of that shot with others of the same kind. The equipment-free aspect of reality has here become the height of artifice, and the vision of immediate reality the Blue Flower in the land of technology. [...] Hence, the presentation of reality in film is incomparably the more significant for people of today, since it provides the equipment-free aspect of reality they are entitled to demand from a work of art, and does so precisely on the basis of the *most intensive interpretation of reality with equipment.* (Benjamin [1936] 2002: 115-6)

Furthermore, as stated above, the simultaneous collective reception of the 'equipment-free aspect of reality' is important for Benjamin only as long as it returns self-alienation to the individual through the 'optical unconscious' and does not suggest a therapeutic identity of wholeness. By saying that 'The representation of human beings by means of an apparatus has made possible a highly productive use of the human being's self-alienation', Benjamin is trying to sketch the still-possible 'psychic immunization' against overwhelming forces of technologization, which, instead of liberating, brings the individual back to the chaos of the first technology ([1936] 2002: 113). The fact that the 'optical

unconscious' is discovered only through the camera, which in turn allows for a close connection to the psychoanalytic unconscious, is crucial here since, 'Thanks to the camera, […] the individual perceptions of the psychotic or the dreamer can be appropriated by collective perception' (Benjamin [1936] 2002: 118). In terms of cinematic examples, it is Charlie Chaplin who, for Benjamin, keeps the work of productive negative self-alienation going by 'dissecting the expressive movements of human beings into a series of minute innervations' (Benjamin [1935] 2002: 94), and Mickey Mouse who, as a 'figure of collective dream', offers a therapeutic effect of collective laughter.[95] On the other side, Hollywood musicals and Socialist realist films supply the viewer with the ideal reified forms of identity, offering a comfortable escape into a positive self-alienation. Notwithstanding the fact that, in 1927, Benjamin denied Soviet cinema the chance for the therapeutic effect of slapstick comedy, arguing that 'The new Russian is unable to appreciate irony and scepticism in technological matter', it might still be worth considering the dialectics of technology and labour in different periods of Soviet film production.

Although Benjamin gives us a hint as to which historical period he roughly means by the 'first' and 'second' technology (which starts from Fourier's work), he also emphasizes their immanent 'world-historical conflict', which should not be forgotten when trying to adopt his analytical framework for the Soviet context. His dialectical thinking should not be abandoned due to a temptation to seriously perceive his idealistically utopian dream about their diachronicity, especially a chronological one, since it would suggest a homogeneous linear-positivist time model, which actually contradicts Benjamin's own theory of temporality given in

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[95] In the third version of the essay, references to Mickey Mouse were cut on the advice of Adorno (Hansen 1987: 222).

'On the concept of history' (1940) (Benjamin 2006). Thus, it is precisely the *synchronicity of both technologies* that could be noted in both Soviet 1920s and 1930s, and in the period after the death of Stalin until the middle of the 1960s, which we will trace within the filmic material of these eras. The following section of the paper will therefore try to demonstrate the dialectical work with the traumas of industrialization in Thaw films such as *Pavel Korchagin* by Alexander Alov and Vladimir Naumov (1956), *The Communist* [*Kommunist*] by Iulii Raizman (1957) and *The Motherland of the Electricity* (a short film from a film almanac *Beginning of the Unknown Era* [*Rodina elektrichestva* from *Nachalo nevedomogo veka*] by Larisa Shepitko (1967). Quoting Benjamin once again: 'the more the collective makes the second technology its own, the more keenly individuals belonging to the collective feel how little they have received of what was due them under the domination of the first technology' ([1936] 2002: 124).

5.2. Representations of technology and labour in the cinema of the 1920s and 1930s

With the benefit of long hindsight, Soviet-style communism was Soviet power plus the electrification (plus industrialization, plus collectivization, etc.) of the whole country. Yet there was a major difference between Lenin and Trotsky's view that technology was of a neutral universal character, and later Stalin's argument that socialist technology was somehow distinct from capitalist (Josephson 2010: 21). In order to show the constant struggle for re-definition of 'Lenin's testament' on screen, it could be useful to start as early as the 1920s, since it is establishing continuity with the latter that the Thaw era aimed at.

The context of the end of Soviet 1920s could be a good experimental ground on which to attempt to grasp the logic of the dialectic of technology, precisely because it represents a space of contradiction. Thus, the state of alertness to details in the films of the period is conditioned by the transition from Leninism to Stalinism, as it might, or might not, be the first attempt to 'break Lenin's will' – assuming, for the time being, there was one. The film that will provide conscious and unconscious material for our analysis is *The Old and the New* (aka *General Line*) [*Staroe i novoe* (aka *General'naia liniia*)] (Eisenstein, 1929 (1926)). The strongly suggested contextual framework given by its own declaration on the opposition in the title will be accepted. Despite the fact that the book, published in 1934 under the title *Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin about Technology*, aimed to leave no doubt about philosophical singleness of authority [*edinonachalie*] and succession of the unified opinion on the matter, it has been suggested that the problem is far more complex (Marks *et al.*). Thus, the main focus of our analysis is on the notion of technology and its representations as exemplifications of dialectics of Lenin, Stalin and Eisenstein in the film.

We need not point out that the title that Eisenstein gave the film was *General Line*, and that it was Stalin who made him change it to *The Old and the New*; nor that he started to shoot the film in 1926. What is relevant is that the urgent order from the Party to make *October* meant *The Old and the New* was not finished until 1929. Yet, thanks to the recent re-publication of Eisenstein's article preceding the film in 1926, it could be argued that the new title imposed a different interpretation that corresponded to the new policy of collectivization adopted in 1927 (Eisenstein and Kleiman [1926] 2009). If analysed from the point of view of the 'historical context of collectivization and cultural revolution', this film is usually considered to be 'anachronistic' in the topics it deals with and the suggested political 'solutions', and this symptom is a logical result of the paradoxes it contains (Burns 1981).

In the article 'Five epochs (about the making of the film *General Line*)' Eisenstein gives his answer to the problem of multistructurality (*mnogoukladnost*) raised by Lenin, which can be loosely described as the coexistence of multiple means of production and of life.[96] It is well known that Lenin suggested state capitalism as a temporary measure in the transition to socialism. At the same time, Eisenstein writes: 'We are constructing in all five epochs simultaneously' ['*Vo vsekh piati epokhakh zaraz. Stroim*']. Thus, the question that arises is: are these

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[96] Let us quote the explanation given in the introduction to the article by Naum Kleiman concerning *многоукладность*: 'Народники также первыми употребляли слово «уклад», обозначая им и структуру хозяйства, и характер отношений в семье, и общее устройство жизни. Они явно не придавали ему основополагающего категориального смысла. Так, при экономическом анализе они чаще употребляли термин «хозяйственный быт». Критикуя народников, Ленин воспользовался понятием «уклад» и в 1897 году ввел его в марксизм статьей «К характеристике экономического романтизма». В дальнейшем он широко пользовался словосочетаниями «уклад общественного производства», «уклад общественного хозяйства», «общественно-экономический уклад», то есть обозначал этим термином лишь производственные отношения, которые, по марксистской доктрине, образуют в совокупности экономическую структуру и являются основой общества. В социально-экономической реальности России он обнаружил одновременное наличие нескольких укладов...' (Eisenstein and Kleiman [1926] 2009: 116)

statements as contradictory as they might seem? It is important here not to slip

into retroactive determinism, as Kleiman does in the preface to Eisenstein's

article, over-interpreting the quoted statement:

> Ленин полагал, что переход советского государства к "новой
> экономической политике" и развитие кооперации есть
> необходимый этап на пути преодоления многоукладности в
> хозяйстве России. Неизбежным *следствием* такой
> идеологической установки стали *кровавые сталинские*
> *репрессии под лозунгом "беспощадой борьбы с пережитками*
> *прошлого"*—ради построения теоретически чистой, социально
> и экономически однородной формации.
> Эйзенштейн в своей статье 1926 года полагает нечто
> принципиально иное:
> "Во всех пяти эпохах зараз. Строим".
> Сосуществование разных "укладов" явно понимается им как
> *исторически сложившаяся и социально допустимая*
> *симультанность* экономических и социальных форм, которую
> *можно вполне продуктивно использовать во благо*
> *государства и его граждан* (our italics).[97]

Within this large quotation, the political views of the author, who directly

connects Stalin's bloody repressions with Lenin's legacy, are obvious. Yet it does

not seem possible for us to determine the definite Eisensteinian position of which

Kleiman assures us.[98] In order to see how much more complicated the possible

answers to these questions might be, and to situate Stalin's view of them, we will

consider the role of technology in *The Old and the New*.

Basically *The Old and the New* thematized the idea of the union of the city

and the village, a *smychka* (Malle 2002: 396). The plot is in the style of agitational

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[97] 'Lenin believed that the transition of the new Soviet state to the New Economic Policy and the development of the cooperation is an essential stage on the way of overcoming the multistructurality in the economy of Russia. The inevitable consequences of such ideological orientation were the bloody Stalinist repressions under the slogan of "ruthless struggle with the relics of the past" in order to build a theoretically pristine and economically and socially homogeneous formation. Eisenstein in his 1926 article suggests something fundamentally different: "We are constructing in all five epochs simultaneously". The co-existence of different ways of production and living is clearly understood by him as a historically conditioned and socially acceptable simultaneity of economic and social forms which can indeed be productively used for the benefits of the country and its citizens' (Eisenstein and Kleiman [1926] 2009: 117).
[98] For more on the complexities of 1920s vs 1930s nexus see Chase 1987; David-Fox 2004; Fitzpatrick 2008; Alexopoulos *et al.* 2011; Karlsson 2015.

'vulgar dialectic', where the horizontal, vast, yet divided village (Fig. 111) is represented by a poor peasant woman, Marfa Lapkina, who dreams of organizing a dairy worker's cooperative association and bringing a tractor from the city in order to be able to work on the land; and the vertical industrialized city, which sends its 'superior' and 'enlightened' people to help her do so (Fig. 112).

Fig. 111 Horizontal, yet divided, village

Fig. 112 Vertical city (on the right is the Gosprom building in Khar'kov, one of the finest examples of constructivism)

However, it is the technology that makes this film far from straightforward. The means of production, such as the milk separator (Fig. 113) and tractor, become Marfa's obsession.

Fig. 113 A milk separator (left) and the 'orgasmic' joy of Marfa as the first drops of cream land on her face (right)

Treated psychoanalytically, these two objects carry too-straightforward implications of the 'phallic lack', which the woman, and the feminine village in general, needs to fill. The visual material in scenes that show the milk separator's cream on Marfa's face and the double-exposure technique Eisenstein uses when the tractor virtually penetrates the village seems to confirm my suggestion (Fig. 114).
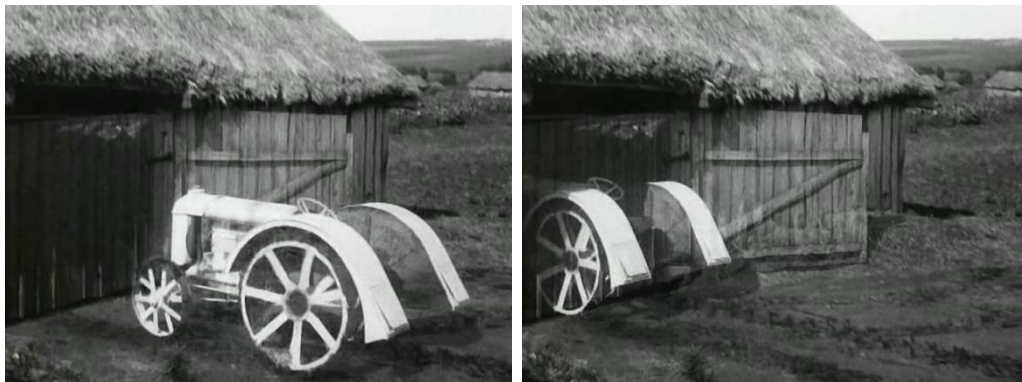
Fig. 114 Double-exposure of the tractor penetrating the village

However, to interpret the final scene, when Marfa returns to the village as the driver of the tractor, it might be useful to refer to Freud's concept of *Unheimliche,* the uncanny, as the fear of *replacing* some parts of the human body with mechanical ones, or the *convergence of the human being and the machine* (Grigor'eva 2005: 486): visually, this is exactly what happens: the effect of

defamiliarization is particularly strong since Marfa turns into a kind of hybrid, a robot (Fig. 115).

Fig. 115 Convergence of the human being and machine: the monstrosity of Marfa on the tractor

Let us quote here Eisenstein again, but this time from an article written *after* the film was released: 'Through cultural propaganda and real help that crosses the *muzhik* with science a *new breed of man is being born*. Collectivist man. Collectivizing man' (Eisenstein and Alexandrov [1929] 1988: 257). Thus, it is possible to suggest that Eisenstein's vision corresponds with the zeitgeist of the avant-garde when the dialectical relations between human and machine would find the full positive synthesis in their merger (numerous Soviet examples include manifestos by Dziga Vertov, the mechanical theatre of Meyerkhold, and Kuleshov's mechanic of the body as an acting technique). Let us juxtapose this version of 'industrialization' with another proclaimed by Stalin, which can be seen as his definition of 'socialist technology': 'Putting the *muzhik* on a tractor' (cited from Laue 1971: 195). Here, the dialectic of the first opposition of base and superstructure reaches neither positive, nor negative, synthesis. At the same time, Stalin could certainly not be called a humanist, nor a technological determinist in the conventional meaning of the term (i.e. when technology is believed to define and improve human beings through its own evolution and moulding of social

relations). What we might be facing here is a special kind of technological dynamism that is *disjointed* from the human 'improvement'. The ideal of the Stalinist relation to the base/superstructure dialectics could be formulated this way: technological evolution without development of the human being; that is, his or her stasis within the state of the 'adult child'. Thus, the dialectical 'opposition' falls into two unrelated parts.

As late as 1938, Stalin had finally formulated his own version of the question by employing a broader definition of productive forces in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*: 'The *instruments of production* wherewith material values are produced, *the people* who operate the instruments of production and carry on the production of material values thanks to a certain production experience and labour skill – all these elements jointly constitute the *productive forces of society*' (*our italics*) ([1938] 1973: 318). Yet, as an American engineer who helped building the Moscow metro pointed out: 'The construction was carried out by a force unknown abroad i.e. by the Party that was not only managing, but taking an active part in the work' (Morgan 1935). So it is neither human agency, nor technology, but rather a Party's determinism, that can be considered Stalin's synthesis in the dialectics of base and superstructure.

However, the analysis of Eisenstein's visual argumentation on the succession of Lenin in *The Old and the New* does not present us with a direct visual metonymy of Lenin-Stalin as yet. It can be demonstrated that Lenin's gaze here still embodies qualities of 'protector' of the common people again the injustices of bureaucrats. This is obvious in two episodes when Lenin himself joins the 'struggle against bureaucratism': first, when Marfa, with her collective farm fellows, comes to the city's governing body to ask for the tractor and is unduly

rejected, Lenin's gaze consistently reflects the anger of the workers (Fig. 116 and 117); second, when the bureau's chief ideal image of himself as Lenin is satirized through juxtaposition with his 'real' bureaucrat self-isolated from the world of workers by a wall of telephones and a secretary (Fig. 118).

Fig. 116 Lenin himself joins the 'struggle against bureaucratism': 'Less political jabber'

Fig. 117 Lenin consistently reflects the righteous anger of the workers

Fig. 118 'Imaginary' and 'real' chief of the bureau, isolated from the world of workers by a wall of telephones and a secretary

Thus, as early as 1926 Lenin's figure and testament was represented as the embodiment of 'socialist good' that was always ready to fight the 'injustices of the world', thereby initiating the pattern to which the 1960s would return. All in all, it can be said that Eisenstein's view on technology correlated with Lenin's programme of building socialism, yet both were incompatible with Stalin's non-dialectic. The change of the title of the film from the *General Line* to *The Old and the New* possibly embodies these contradictions.

Another film that presents us with a different perspective on the *kolhoz*, and the role of the '*muzhik* on a tractor' in it, is *Happiness* [*Schast'e*] by Alexander Medvedkin (1934). Although made in the same year as Socialist realism was proclaimed, and conforming to the Party line on the level of the content by posing the problem of 'left-behind collective farm worker' [*otstalyi kolkhoznik*], and satirizing the possession [стяжательство], the film was not enthusiastically received (Widdis 2005: 54-5). In addition to being stylistically eccentric (via the use of grotesque, masks, folklore and *lubok* in particular), and suggesting bitter satire instead of the newly found formulaic laughter of Stalinist musical comedy 'for the millions', *Happiness* is a metacommentary on the forced industrialization of the village. It visualizes the consequences of leaving technology in the hands of the peasant which did not go through the *smychka* and is did not come to revolutionary consciousness after being educated by the urban proletariat as we could see in Eisenstein's film. In the episode set on a collective farm, *muzhik* 'falls into temptation' by drinking some vodka set out for him by a *kulak* Foka, and leaves the tractor. After completing a couple of obedient circles, the tractor goes 'mad', destroying water supply and field kitchen and almost

killing the field workers on their lunch break. All attempts to stop it are in vain, and the tractor inevitably approaches the end of the cliff. Finally, the disaster is prevented by Foka, which makes him a local hero (Fig. 119).

Fig. 119 Losing control: Stalinist fear of technology exposed

In this short satirical scene, Medvedkin skilfully manages to sum-up the non-dialectic of Stalin, and criticize the industrialization without further attempts to create a New Subject.

Finally, the film that openly deals with 'Lenin's testament', and is considered one of the prime examples of Socialist realism, is *The Vow* [*Kliatva*] by Mikhail Chiaureli (1946). Not only in terms of its visual polemic with *The Old and the New* and *Happiness*, but in an explicit dialogue between Stalin and Bukharin, the only acceptable official version of industrialization is proclaimed: 'We'll create a technical base and start building beautiful machines. Machines that will produce more good machines. But first we need to clear up the road for the construction. Without breaking the opposition we cannot aim at turning our present Russia into a Socialist one'. Bukharin here is a strong supporter of American goods, with lines such as 'It's better to buy tractors in America – they are cheaper, and faster and of a higher quality.' Yet Stalin's position is firm: 'Although it's bad, it's ours' [*Khot' plokho, da svoe*]. A sequence depicting a tractor in Red Square driven by Stalin himself strikes the viewer with its straightforwardness (Fig. 120).

Fig. 120 Stalin on the tractor in Red Square

Although the tractor does not work perfectly here either, Stalin soon fixes it, exclaiming 'Of course, it's the plugs' ['Ну конечно, свечи!']; he then mounts the tractor and drives it on through Red Square. The non-dialectical opposition finds its logical conclusion: now it is not just a *muzhik* on the tractor, it is the chief, *vozhd* himself, forging industrialization to build '100,000 tractors', just like 'Lenin has always dreamt of'.

As for the succession between Lenin and Stalin, again the visual and verbal discourses constantly correlate and mutually strengthen one another: after Lenin's death in Gorki, Stalin goes to his famous bench,[99] where he melancholically draws dozens of portraits of Lenin sitting in his cabinet (Fig. 121), vows to stay true to Lenin's testament made in Red Square, and receives a letter for help, which was supposed to be given to Lenin.

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[99] The visual symbolism of Lenin's bench was established by Dziga Vertov in *Three Songs about Lenin* (1934) (Bulgakowa 2010: 122).

Fig. 121 Stalin misses Lenin after his death

Finally, *The Vow* is also a good example of how the rhetoric of heroization, having shifted from labour and technology to war patriotism, would make a logical point of closure for the period. Nonetheless, as soon as the Socialist realist canon established Stalin and his politics of industrialization as direct successors of Lenin, the model was meant to be changed again with the advent of Khrushchev.

Chapter 6: Back to Lenin's Testament: working with trauma in Post-Stalinist cinema

'Lenin is alive! Just Wounded...' such was the phrase printed in *The Communist* to disprove the news about Lenin's death in Moscow. If contextualized properly, this phrase points to de-Stalinization establishing continuity with the 1920s, and acknowledging that Leninist ideas had been damaged. However, the 1960s depended on Stalinization and debating with its heritage no less than, if no more than with that of the 1920s.

The beginning of the Thaw was generally characterized in cinema by the legitimization of private emotions and lives, and a radical revision of the main themes and values. Although the degree of freedom was considerably greater than before, the scripts and attitudes expressed in the era's films were still officially sanctioned. However, yet another anniversary of the Revolution was to be celebrated, allowing new points of view on the old topics of technology and industrialization to be presented. As Josephine Woll states:

> Films presented critical national icons, Lenin in particular, and the
> mythologized history of the civil war and the Second World War,
> with different emphases and from different angles – actual as well
> as figurative – than had been possible before (2000: xiii)

The acceptance of private feelings and the Marxist point of view on the individual emotions were under discussion here; moreover, they were now allowed to be in conflict with the Party line, and even disprove it. The battle over the memory of the 1920s and 'Lenin's testament' had started again, with such

phrases as 'trench truth' [*okopnaia pravda*][100] and the term 'de-heroicizing'

entering the common discourse (Woll 2000: 63).

The Soviet 1960s are generally characterized by the so-called return to

'Lenin's testament'. From the historical perspective, 'Lenin's testament' was his

political articles and letters written (but mostly dictated to his secretary), and

partially published, in deteriorating health throughout the period from 23rd of

December 1922 to the beginning of March 1923 and supposedly indicating future

directions for the Soviet state. 'Lenin's testament' includes 'Letter to the

Congress' [*Pis'mo k s'ezdu*], 'Granting Legislative Functions to the State

Planning Commission' [*O pridanii zakonodatel'nykh funktsii Gosplanu*], 'The

Question of Nationalities or "Autonomization"' [*K voprosu o natsional'nostiakh

ili ob 'avtonomizatsii'*], 'Pages from a Diary' [*Stranichki iz dnevnika*], 'On Co-

operation' [*O kooperatsii*], 'Our Revolution (Apropos of Nikolai Sukhanov's

Notes)' [*O nashei revoliutsii (po povodu zapisok N.Sukhanova)*], 'How We

Should Reorganise the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection' [*Kak nam

reorganizovat' Rabkrin*], 'Better Fewer, but Better' [*Luchshe men'she, da

luchshe*] (Lenin [1922-23] 1970). Yet only one document of all – 'Letter to the

Congress' [*Pis'mo k s'ezdu*] – was raised to the status of Lenin's ultimate

testament. The reason for such an exceptional designation was the fact that apart

from the strategic note on increasing the number of members in the Central

Committee, its text also included brief political and personal characteristics of

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[100] A new literary 'genre' appeared at the end of the 1950s under the title 'trench truth' or 'lieutenant's prose' (as opposed to the 'general's prose') about the events of the Great Patriotic War. Such texts as *Batallions are asking for Fire* [*Bataliony prosiat ognia*] by Yurii Bondarev, and *Span of the Earth* [*Piad' zemli*] by Grigorii Baklanov, were not aiming at heroization and glorification of the war, but instead dealt with personal everyday topics that soldiers 'really' cared about. The parallel film representation of the 'other' war was manifested by such films as *Destiny of a Man* [*Sud'ba cheloveka*] (1959) by Sergei Bondarchuk, *The Cranes are Flying* [*Letiat zhuravli*] (1958) by Mikhail Kalatozov, and *Ballad of a Soldier* [*Ballada o soldate*] (1959) by Grigorii Chukhrai.

Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin and Piatakov. The power attributed to these couple-of-sentences-long characteristics, however, was mythologized on a truly admirable scale. However contradictory, 'Lenin's testament' was conveniently held responsible for all major political changes in the USSR in the years to come. It was the 'Letter to the Congress' which helped Stalin to liquidate the so-called 'Trotskyist opposition'. It was the same 'Letter to the Congress' which warned about the danger of letting Stalin become the General Secretary of the USSR. It was the 'Letter to the Congress' which was kept secret and first published fully in Russia only in 1956 after Khrushchev's speech 'On the Personality Cult and Its Consequences'.[101] It was 'Lenin's testament' which became a synonym of de-Stalinization and a rhetorical figure of cultural discourse of the time. Finally, it was again one of Lenin's political testament articles ('On Co-operation') and its phrase 'that there has been a radical modification in our whole outlook on socialism' which was used in the rhetoric of the Perestroika by Gorbachev and contributed to bringing 'socialism' to an end altogether (Gorbachev and Ikeda 2000: 49-50).

The consistency of its importance for today's Russia could be noted in the recent historical attributive analysis of 'Lenin's testament' which doubts the authenticity of the documents altogether. However, since admittedly there is not enough evidence to prove the falsehood of the document, its contemporary neo-Stalinist interpretation is offered instead by Valentin Sakharov as well as some of his reviewers (2003; Ivanov *et al.* 2005). Interestingly enough, Sakharov also

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[101] In spring and summer of 1923 Nadezhda Krupskaia brought these letters to the attention of the Central Committee without any sign of secrecy. Only after Lenin's death in January 1924 did these letters start to be considered 'Lenin's testament'. At the 13th Party Congress in May 1924 the 'Letter to the Congress' was read to the Party delegates who were warned not to divulge it. Thus although the letters were made public, only the selected few were aware of them. As mentioned above, the publication occurred in 1956 in *The Communist* [Kommunist] journal (Issue 6) (Sakharov 2003: 5).

acknowledges the mythologizing power of cinema in such questions. In its

preface, Alexander Sokurov's film *Taurus* [*Telets*, 2001] is strongly condemned

for '[…] Blasphemy towards Lenin-as-person […] [*koshchunstvo po otnosheniiu*

k Leninu-cheloveku]' since 'The final report of the highly-authoritative national

and international doctors who were treating V.I. Lenin testified that despite the

loss of the major part of his capacity for work in the period of dictation of the final

letters, articles, and notes, he kept the clarity of mind and the adequacy of

perception of political events' (Sakharov 2003). Such attention to the last will of

Lenin goes hand in hand with attention to the body of Lenin. Both his testament

and his embalmed body in the Mausoleum performed the function of the signifiers

structuring the symbolic order of the Soviet Union, but after its dissolution their

meanings unsurprisingly changed. Having lost its legitimizing status in

contemporary Russian history, the former became the source of eternal

interpretation for a minority of Russian historians, while the latter's loss of

symbolic support turned it into the pure *thing* (das Ding) in the Lacanian

understanding of the term. In order to elaborate my point I would have to turn to

another famous purloined letter, i.e. the Edgar Allan Poe short story by the same

title.[102] The extent to which the exposure of the similarity of the letters'

undermining logic will be convincing depends on the basic presuppositions of

Lacanian analysis of Poe's short story, the reminder of which will hopefully not

be one too many.

Poe's *Purloined Letter* is a detective story featuring the amateur detective

Auguste Dupin who helps police to solve the riddle of the Queen's important

missing letter containing compromising information stolen by the Minister in

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[102] The parallels to follow are based on the psychoanalytical interpretation of Poe's short story *Purloined Letter* made by Jacques Lacan (Lacan and Mehlman 1972).

order to blackmail her and gain power. By using the method of identifying with the mind of the criminal, Dupin manages to spot the letter openly displayed on the wall, but masked as an unimportant one, replaces it with a fake and solves the case. Apart from being an engaging detective story, *Purloined Letter* offered an analytical case for Jacques Lacan whose interpretation constitutes the classic exposition of the logic of the signifier and the importance of the symbolic order for structuring the Subject. Since a paradoxical and yet repetitive role of 'Letter to the Congress' could productively be paralleled to a pure signifier structuring Subject, or, in our case, Soviet history, I will give a brief reminder of Lacan's analysis of this short story.

Jacques Lacan, known for his 'back to Freud' motto and the more general inscription of Freud's classical concepts into the fields of structural linguistics and post-structuralist theory, suggested that the content of the letter in Poe's story is irrelevant and that the 'place' of the signifier is determined by the signifying chain, or the symbolic order, within which it is constantly displaced. The Letter functions as the Unconscious which is constantly repressed, denied or foreclosed. It is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the Subject because it receives its 'decisive orientation from the itinerary of the signifier', i.e. the Letter (Lacan and Mehlman 1972: 40). It (the Letter, the Unconscious) remains inconsistent and it is the symbolic chain that 'binds and orients' it in order for the Subject to start making sense of its experiences. Lacan states that there are two key scenes of the story: the primal one (stealing of the letter by the Minister) and the repetition of it (confiscation of the letter by Dupin). These two scenes are the example of the death drive, the repetitive desire for self-harm.

> Thus three moments, structuring three glances, borne by three
> subjects, incarnated each time by different characters. The first is a

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glance that sees nothing: the King and the police. The second, a glance which sees that the first sees nothing and deludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides: the Queen, then the Minister. The third sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whoever would seize it: the Minister, and finally Dupin (Lacan and Mehlman 1972: 44).

The Unconscious is the discourse of the Other and thus during the intersubjective repetition the subjects relay each other in their cement. We shall see that their displacement is determined by the place which a pure signifier – the purloined letter – comes to occupy in their trio. And that is what will confirm for us its status as repetition automatism.

However, what is perhaps more relevant for our analysis is not Lacan's original structuralist interpretation of this short story, but Žižek's re-inscription of it in the late Lacan's legacy of the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. As Žižek points out:

> Such a reading, however, leads beyond Lacan's "Seminar of the 'Purloined Letter', which stays within the confines of the "structuralist" problematic of a senseless, "mechanical" symbolic order regulating the subject's innermost self-experience. From the perspective of the last years of Lacan's teaching, the letter which circulates among the subjects in Poe's story, determining their position in the intersubjective network, is no longer the materialized agency of the *signifier* but rather an *object* in the strict sense of materialized enjoyment – the stain, the uncanny excess that the subjects snatch away from each other, forgetful of how its very possession will mark them with a passive, "feminine" stance that bears witness to the confrontation with the object-cause of desire (Žižek 1992: 22-3).

This 'stain' and 'uncanny excess' is precisely what makes the logic of the letter in Poe's short story so relevant to Lenin's 'Letter to the Congress'. As we have determined, Lenin's testament prolonged the idea that he is somehow alive and guides the Soviet state through all the 'hardships' it faces. However the object

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which Žižek calls 'the leftover, the remainder, the object-excrement that escapes it [the symbolic identification]' (Žižek 1992: 4) is in our case Lenin's embalmed body in the Mausoleum. His body acts as a 'separation, namely a separation between *I* and *a*, between the Ego Ideal, the subject's symbolic identification, and the object: the falling out, the segregation of the object from the symbolic order' (Žižek 1992: 4). His embalmed body is in *interposition*, always placed between a look and the sight which is its destination; it does not allow the beholder of the gaze to get directly to the ideal object of its desire. As if covered by, interfered with, by a stain which leads the gaze astray, it deprives the ideal object of its true focus, demanding all the attention for itself. It is precisely such a function that is performed by Lenin's embalmed body in the Mausoleum nowadays. It defers the traumatic realization of the fact that Lenin's discourse is not legitimate any more, but on the other hand, not being buried, his body does not allow its inscription into the Orthodox ideology of contemporary Russia. Thus not retaining its symbolic capacities, the body could be characterized as precisely the object, the stain, the excess in the Lacanian meaning of the term. Though the possession of the letter was characterized as 'enjoyment' and bringing about 'feminine' qualities in those who owned it, the same is hardly applicable to Lenin. At the same time, interesting parallels could still be made between Lenin's testament and his embalmed body, in the Communist Party's own paradoxical logic; Lenin's body is thus not buried but displayed as evidence of the fact that the deceased has irrevocably parted from this world, offering irrefutable proof that he truly and irrevocably died and cannot be redeemed. It is for this reason that Lenin's spirit or 'cause' remains available for incarnation in subsequent Soviet leaders. The

mausoleum is this belief's monogram while his testament plays a curiously similar role.

Among the first radical re-adaptation of Socialist realism was a new film version of the Stalinist classic novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1934) by Nikolai Ostrovsky. The name change to *Pavel Korchagin* by Alexander Alov and Vladimir Naumov (1956) might already have signalled a shift in attitude. In the opening shot, instead of depicting the childhood of the hero, we are confronted with a close-up of a pale, blind and paralyzed man (Fig. 122), with a voice-over reading his official Soviet-style biography and stating that the only copy of the novel he has written was lost in the post.

Fig. 122 Paralyzed and blind: the consequences of industrialization for Pavel

The film itself is a vivid example of the change of attitude towards the canon of representation of the achievements of the Revolution or industrialization. Instead of the exaltation of the leader, we experience exaltation of the labour process. As Stephen Hutchings points out: 'The film ostensibly fits the corrective mould of the Stalinist *ekranizatsiia* [*the author is referring here to the 1942 version by Donskoi*]. Sections of the novel dealing with the Bolsheviks' struggle against anti-Semitism and Trotskyist opposition are replaced with highly visceral representations of railway construction work, reinforcing the work ethic at the

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heart of Soviet mythology' (Hutchings 2004: 121). When interpreted psychoanalytically, Pavel's blindness might be a reaction to the lies of the 'too bright' future of communism, whilst his paralysis is the true answer to the ideology of heroic labour. The process of construction of the narrow-gauge railway [*uzkokoleika*] could not but remind of another shock-construction projects of the time – the Moscow metro or indeed The Baikal–Amur Mainline – and the hundreds of young volunteer komsomol workers or labour camp prisoners respectively, that it attracted. The commander's statement of 'Sons, there will be no relief... No relief will come from the city to replace you!', which is met with the desperate reply: 'But we are here!' might be read as the sacrifice of the first and last generation to believe in the Soviet industrialization rhetoric. The 'reward' for the labour is death, a human sacrifice, which, as Benjamin stated, defines the era of the 'first' technology. Yet, only in the 1950s was cinematography finally able to represent it; and still it found nothing to laugh about.

Time, forward! [*Vremia, vpered*] (1966) by Mikhail Shveitser is an adaptation of the classical production novel by Valentin Kataev written in 1932 (for the analysis of the book see Hellebust 2013). The film reconfirms my perspective that neurotic vision is key to Stalinist culture introduced in Chapter 2.2.2, but on a much more visually sophisticated level. It opens with the newsreels from the 1930s and gradually creates the illusion that the feature film is a direct continuation of the former. This is one step ahead of the much beloved use of documentalism in the cinema of the Thaw (Margolit 2012: 495). Without comparing the book or indeed the film to the life in the real Magnitogorsk (reconstructed by Kotkin 1995), it should be mentioned that the focus of enthusiasm to beat the record of Khar'kov and then Novokuznetsk is indeed in the human subject, not the machinery itself.

Margulies does hesitate at the beginning of the film about the technological dimension of the task, but after getting the confirmation from an academic in Moscow and the most updated newspaper, he makes the decision to proceed. The film was made to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the revolution and reinstates my suggested framework that the 1960s seek their legitimization in the 1920s. It is symptomatic though that there are no human sacrifices or indeed any serious injuries in the film, they are suppressed by the delirious faith in the bright future to come and this is precisely what makes this film, just like the book, a socialist realist one despite the avant-garde cinematography (as well as cinematographic writing style of Kataev's novel).

Another film that problematizes the post-Revolutionary years, but which, surprisingly enough, does not portray the Civil war, is *The Communist* [*Kommunist*] by Iulii Raizman (1957). The script writer Evgenii Gabrilovich offered a different perspective on a classical 'historical-revolutionary' genre: 'Suddenly I realized that just because the film had to be about the Civil War period, it didn't have to be about war' (Woll 2000: 237). Thus, the film is about the construction of the Shaturskii Electrification Plant. Nevertheless, it can be seen another symptomatic Thaw 'trick' in order to deal with the theme of industrialization. Yet, this film is far less 'revisionist' than it might seem at first. It can be suggested that the image of Lenin here goes through an evolution: from the already mentioned embodied 'protector' of the common workers, who personally finds the nails for the main hero, Gubanov, at the beginning of the film, he turns into a Stalin-type *vozhd* towards the end. Having heard about the fire that ruined the whole construction site and houses of the people, and about the death of one man ('The one who asked for nails, remember?'), he makes a speech: 'Yes, we are

losing people. Well, what can we do – it's also a front. Each of our technical successes is a blow against capitalism. The struggle and the victims signal about the determination of the people to reach the goal. This means that the people believe in this goal, believe in the Party, that's why we win'.

The final and most radical representation of technology and labour in the cinematography of the period, a variant of Zastoi's summing up of the Thaw, can be considered the short film *The Motherland of the Electricity* by Larisa Shepitko (1967). The film was also made to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution, but was banned until 20 years later. Re-thinking technology as a new sacred for the young Soviet state, Shepitko's film was made to ask questions which were still not acceptable in the 1960s. The film is set in a village in the 1920s that is experiencing drought. A young boy represents the embodiment of Soviet power: educated and atheist. As if in dialogue with Eisenstein's *The Old and the New*, Shepitko also portrays a religious procession praying for rain. But there is no satire or irony here; just a weak and lost old woman who does not believe in anything anymore and only lives because her heart 'keeps on beating despite her will'. The main source of hope for the village is a motor, which stands in the middle of the village and functions only to lighten up the bulb of Illich and the star of Soviet power (Fig. 123).

Fig. 123 The only function of the motor: lighting up the bulb of Illich (top) and the red star of Soviet power (bottom)

The boy promises the people that he will make a pump and supply water with the help of technical invention. Everyone believes him and starts to bring the parts they have that might be needed for the pump. The boy's attempt is successful: the pump works and the water starts running. The people's faith in God is officially proven useless. However, after a couple of hours of work the motor explodes, leaving the people weak and at a loss again. Yet just at the same moment it starts raining.

Since the film was produced at Experimental studio in Moscow [*Eksperimental'naia tvorcheskaia kinostudiia*], the avant-garde camera flow and editing techniques could possibly be allowed by the censorship. But its de-

heroization of labour, technology and Soviet power itself on the limit of despair

was too much even for the Thaw. Lenin was not just wounded, he had been killed,

and this was not allowed until a quarter of a century later.

All in all, the question of the correlation between base and superstructure

must always be asked in relation to a particular context. The historical situation

between the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, and 1940s and 1960s, seems to us

interesting and productive because, being situated on the boundaries between eras,

they allowed for a crystallization of vivid examples and radical positions. Having

considered the theoretical framework of dialectical movement between both sides

of the opposition, it can be suggested that technology *per se* poses the problem of

the machine/human interaction within it. Having followed Benjamin in his

statement that the Soviet Union could not treat technology with irony, we have

tried to understand why this was the case, and how 'Lenin's testament' stayed the

imaginary point at which both the 1930s and the 1960s were trying to establish a

'serious' continuity. But perhaps the true answer to this would be to remember the

words and tears of Boriska from Tarkovskii's *Andrei Rublev* (1966), who, having

cast a bell that sounds as clear as can be, confesses: 'My father, old dragon, hadn't

passed me his secret… he died, and hadn't passed it, he took it to the grave with

him, ragged vein' [Отец, змей старый, так и не передал секрета... помер, так и

не передал, в могилу утащил, жила рванная...].

AFTERWORD

> The tragedy of today's 'leftists' consists in the fact that
> the still incomplete analytic process
> finds itself in a situation in which synthesis is demanded . . .
>
> Sergei Eisenstein 'Notes for a Film of *Capital*'

Yuri Tsivian finishes his introduction to *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties* with the statement that his edited volume is at times liberal with chronology, but Vertov's liberal treatment of space and time in *MWMC* gave him the confidence to do so (Tsivian 2004: 26). I would like to start my conclusions with the statement that this thesis has been subject to the time constraints that Kaufman and Vertov experienced while producing their cine-thing. By that I mean that having filmed the material only for the first part of the planned film, they were summoned to start editing and ordered to finish the film as soon as possible. Pushed for time, overwhelmed by material and the constant pressure of explicating the logic behind it, they actually created one of the most cryptographic cine-things in documentary cinema and one admired by many. I sincerely doubt that my thesis will follow the same path, but even if this conclusion was written ten years after the expected deadline, the raw taste of the material would never disappear in the author's mouth. The material which was put together according to an inner formal logic, with montage at times too rapid to comprehend, connections too abstract to be coherent, and beautiful freeze-frames that catch a breath before they are re-edited and take the viewer to a completely different context in space and time.

My choice of theoretical framework of *dispositif* was the result of the search of the Third Way, as it were between the structuralist burden of oppositions

which have admittedly conveniently, but so reductively framed the complex histories of the Soviet subject productions. The novelty of its application to the Soviet space and cinema brought about its challenges (perhaps in the form of too extensive Chapter 1), but also proved its theoretical productivity by supplying the thesis with the myriad of insights which would not have been possible otherwise. The mentioned challenges with the concept of *dispositif* were also a result of the parallel development of the notion in two different, but frequently interlacing fields of postmodernist philosophy and Lacanian film theory. Nevertheless, this challenge turned into advantage in the process of mapping the often cryptical contributions of both and dialogizing the common characteristics into the joint concept of *dispositif*. The basic presuppositions which allowed me to do it are the emphasis on the multitude (be it the heterogeneous ensembles of Foucault or the multitude of lines of Deleuze), non-identity (whether the non-identity of *dispositif* to the apparatus of Jean-Louis Baudry or the non-identity of *dispositif* to the sum of the lines of power, knowledge, visibility and enunciation according to Deleuze), spatiality (the key organizing principle of all the approaches mentioned – *disposition*) and above all the production of subjectivity or subjectification in both approaches. These common denominators helped me to extend the network of potential to another field crucial to my thesis – which is that of urbanism – and apply all of them to the analysis of the Soviet railway, city, living space and technology.

The choice of two Modernisms, or two Cultures 1 in Paperny's ([1985] 2007) terminology, might at times have seemed scarcely credible. The 1920s and the 1960s could not be more similar and more different at the same time. Yet this thesis has envisaged the 1960s as the logical continuation of the cultural

production of the 1920s that was censored and caesura-ed by low and high Stalinism and the Second World War. The figure of the caesura is essential in some types of poetry; although silent, it structures the rhythm, lines and enunciation of a poem itself. Thus the continuities of the 1920s would not be possible in the 1960s without everything that Stalinism censured, paused, silenced, but never fully erased. The Leninist revolutionary ideas were once again returned to and redefined according to the needs of the new era thanks to the re-interpretation of the so called 'Lenin's testament'. The urban utopian ideals which were just paper architecture in the 1920s had a chance to redefine the urban landscape of the Soviet Union in the 1960s because of the availability of new construction materials, technology and, perhaps most importantly, political will. The housing question which famously 'spoiled' Muscovites in the 1920s, found its partial resolution in the mass housing construction of the 1960s. With constructivism being rehabilitated to a limited extent, the new design – or technical aesthetics in the contemporary terminology of the 1960s – emerged as the embodiment of the VKHUTEMAS functional furniture which came back to the Soviet Union via Western influences and the international style. Furthermore, the scientific and technological revolution in the 1960s allowed workers to re-evaluate the traumas of industrialization and to question openly for the first time the price which was paid for it. However, the Party's policies for the arts and cinema became the first symptom that the system was about to start the closure of its cultural pluralism. The Manezh art exhibition and the brutal demand for the re-editing of Marlen Khutsiev's film *Zastava Il'icha* were the first signs of the approach of a new era. Brezhnev's policy was despised in the arts at the time, but the area they were actually welcomed was mass housing construction and the

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renewed urbanist drive towards quantity *and* quality, but this is a matter for someone else's investigation in a future space and time.

Continuities with avant-garde film traditions in the 1960s were no less intense. The filming with a mobile camera which Kaufman had pioneered in the 1920s was slowly becoming the norm. 'Life caught off-guard' sequences were used in such era-defining films as *July Rain* (Khutsiev, 1967) (the veteran reunion sequence) and *Ordinary Fascism* (Romm, 1965) (the sequence at the beginning with graduates waiting for their test results), the latter example also being a successor to Esfir Shub's tradition. The wide-angle lenses and new wide-format screens to accommodate their results produced the new horizontal mode of representing urban spaces. The verticality of aerial shots from the 1920s became more acute and distanced, while the horizontal radio-type/radio-eye cinematography managed to inscribe the human into her/his urban environment without losing either out of sight. It is true that Moscow did not need to be redefined as socialist any more, but what needed to be redefined was the meaning of socialism itself. So it is the city space again which becomes contested with questions which had not been asked so openly before: if Moscow is once again the capital of international socialism, why does the intelligentsia retreat to the interiors of *khrushchevki*? What questions can the war generation of fathers answer if they have either not survived the war at all, or, if they did survive, why do they only feel truly alive at the May day parade where they can reenact their memories, but not when in dialogue with their children inside *khrushchevki*? Where is the line between decorating your flat according to the cosmic style of international minimalism and slipping into philistine *byt*? All these discussions were renewed once again, and once again they were left unanswered. In one way

or another, my thesis aimed to address all of these dilemmas, but in doing so it might have created many more. One can only hope that the flickering of the film and urban constellations is bright enough to attract future Tereshkovas and Gagarins. Even if the space of Soviet space is much closer to Earth.

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