An excerpt from

REENTRY SHOCK

Historical transition and temporal longing in the cinema of the Soviet Thaw

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

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

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

—Andrei Bilzho (2008), "Little Contradictions"[1]

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

—Lawrence Raab (1994), "The Uses of Nostalgia"

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

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1993, when I was in my early 20s and already besotted with Russian culture, I had the good fortune to land a job at Mosfilm Studios in Moscow. The history of the studio had captured my imagination from afar, and each day that summer I felt that ghostly feeling one sometimes gets when inhabiting the present of a place whose past one has dreamed about. Whenever there was time, I liked to roam the studio grounds, or rather hover among them, convincing myself I could hear the talking stones. Here was a heavy building of beige brick, neoclassical, built to Stalin's tastes, its authority softened by volunteer shrubs sprouting from the rooftop balustrade. Alongside it, a graveyard of rusted out baby-blue studio buses, each grill aged to uniqueness, destroyed in its own special way. There was a traffic light in an alley between soundstages; the lights had been removed; you could look right through it and see the sky. The studio had once been one of the world's great centers of filmmaking. Now on certain days I could walk from one end of the vast grounds to the other without bumping into anything resembling a shoot. For me, a kid from Las Vegas, there was a strangely familiar air to the place—it felt like the hollowed downtown of an American city after the construction of a suburban mall. And the feeling was apt: Russian film fans had gotten their mall—the miles of roadside kiosks hawking cheap pirated copies of Hollywood films, many of them straight-to-video jobs of which I had never seen or heard. Without its once lavish state support, the studio had no way to compete with such masterworks.

My job was to translate, coach dialogue, and occasionally dig holes on the set of what was at the time Mosfilm's marquee project—a Russian-Italian-American joint venture. We were

making a Western. Starring an Italian. Filmed chiefly on a military base an hour outside Moscow. Each morning we all came to the studio, boarded one of the less distressed of the picturesque blue buses, and headed for the set. On my first day of work I had taken the Metro to Kiev Station, caught Trolley 34 to the gates of Mosfilm, and showed my documents to the guard. I'd arrived early. I didn't know who to look for, where to find them, or quite how to explain my presence. I knew the history of the studio, but its present, and my present, were something of a mystery. The guard waved me through. I wandered onto the grounds. And there I did what one does on a film shoot. I waited.

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

In the years since that summer in Moscow, my career as a journalist and scholar has shuttled me between Moscow and Las Vegas several times. I watched as Moscow, for a time, began to resemble Las Vegas in its hurly-burly oligarchic-capitalist growth; I watched with both hope and frustration as Moscow tried to find the elusive golden mean between private freedom and public spirit. I had no illusions that my beloved Soviet moviemakers of the late 1950s and and early '60s—the years of the post-Stalin Thaw—had the answers to the problems of post-Soviet Moscow, 21st-century Las Vegas, or anyplace else for that matter. But the beautiful questions they posed tore through the surface of my present just as they had breached the surface of mid-century Soviet society; the filmmakers' creative engagement with *their* world invited me to perceive *mine* from countless odd angles. And and as the years passed, I remained nostalgic for the world of the cinematic Thaw—for its air of openness and youthful risk, for the filmmakers' aesthetic search and their ethical quest, for their open-ended lyricism and their willingness to ask questions without answers.

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

on what we might call *auteur* cinema, films that, even given the collaborative nature of the medium, reflect the personal visions of their directors, screenwriters, and directors of photography.

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

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

To understand the function of temporal longing in shaping personal and cultural identities, we need to examine the ways in which it can be a catalyst for creative reflection on

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

The globalizing, digitizing 1990s were not the first time national and local cultures had to cope with totalizing transnational narratives that thumbed their nose at cherished tradition, devalued intimate personal and community memory, and left bewilderment and alienation in their wake. Soviet citizens, in fact, were quite familiar with such narratives. Russia spent the entire 20th century in the midst of one sort of transition or another—fraught moments when one world seemed to be disappearing, another was yet unformed, and ghosts of earlier ages hovered in the cultural ether, ever prepared to haunt or inspire. These pages focus on one of the most hopeful of the century's transitions, the era of cultural and political readjustment that followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 and came to be known as the Thaw. This period, which ended with the authoritarian retrenchment of the late 1960s, is a crucial fulcrum in modern Russian history, an epoch in which both the Soviet regime and the nation's intelligentsia attempted to re-brand Soviet Communism and revive the utopian promise of the October Revolution of 1917.

After years of Stalinist terror, during which fearful idolatry had displaced personal ideological faith as the motivating force behind socialist construction, the Communist Party sought to rekindle the old secular religion. Under Nikita Khrushchev, enthusiasm was to replace

coercion; the nation would be built through a divine synthesis of personal inspiration and Party leadership. Khrushchev's program, such as it was, turned out to be piecemeal, conflicted, and inconsistent in its methods, but it irrevocably broadened the range of permissible expression in the Soviet Union. It also shaped a generation of leaders who would, in the late 1980s, put to the test its central unrealized humanistic notion—that socialist progress could be achieved through individual enthusiasm.

From my perspective in early 1990s Moscow, with its vague hopes and concrete pains, its shimmering opportunities and its palpable ethos of every-man-for-himself, the cinema of the Soviet 1950s and 60s seemed not only relevant, but magical: It captivated me with its air of anxious renewal, its fraught meditation on individuality within the public sphere. The landmark films of the era attempt to locate freedom at the intersection of private integrity and public responsibility. This emphasis is in part the result of historical circumstance: The post-Stalin era was fueled by nostalgia for what one might call "imaginary Leninism", for an idealized vision of the 1920s atmosphere of political enthusiasm and creative ferment. (The Khrushchev regime's vision of the Leninist spirit favored heartfelt socialist consciousness, and the artists' vision favored creative spontaneity. These visions did not always coexist in harmony.) The focus on private embrace of the public good had even deeper roots in the Russian Orthodox principle of *sobornost*, or conjunctivity, which holds that individual uniqueness is desirable precisely for the selfless contribution it makes to the social whole.[2] Long before the Revolution, Russian artists had seen themselves not simply as the nation's mirror, but its conscience.

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

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

In an important way, the Thaw was a return home for the Russian arts after a long twilight journey into Stalinist terror. The thematic and narrative conventions of socialist realism did not disappear entirely; nor did the often-arbitrary administrative management of the culture industry and the careers of the men and women who worked in it. But the change in degree of domination was so significant that it amounted to a fundamental qualitative change in the lives of artists. In the Stalin years, rigid aesthetic discipline was enforced by total bureaucratic coercion: the "cast-iron" screenplay, which, once approved, was not to be changed; the threat of the camps for the ideologically and aesthetically disobedient; the hypnotic thrall of Stalin's cult of personality; the ever-shifting campaigns against Trotskyism, formalism, cosmopolitanism—all of these kept artists forever off-balance, insecure, far from self, far from "home".

While Stalin's aesthetic preferences leaned toward grandiose neoclassicism and traditional Aristotelian narrative, the culture he built was utterly dependent on *one moment* in

one place. The secret to life and livelihood was encoded in the very latest vibrations emitting from the old fortress in central Moscow. Authoritative communication began with the radio sign-on *Govorit Moskva*: This is Moscow speaking. Personal memory and idiosyncratic, polyphonic dialogue between eras had no place in this model; how could one long for what was missing when the strictly enforced social teleology of the nation held that nothing could possibly be missing?

The transition from this state of affairs toward one where terror and the cult of personality had been renounced created an opening to memory, a reentry into the polyphonic eddies of Russian cultural history, with all its aesthetic and ethical debates. In the 1960s, the Soviet intelligentsia engaged in energetic polemics around three dualities: fathers and sons, physicists and lyricists, and town and country. The first debate—ostensibly between the dreamy '60s youth and their hardheaded war-generation fathers—was a role-reversal reprise of the discourse, immortalized by Ivan Turgenev, between the hardheaded proto-revolutionary sons of the 1860s and the dreamy liberal fathers of the 1840s. The second discussion—which posed the parlor-game question of whether the poet or the particle researcher was more important to the national future—had associative links to the vibrant 1920s discourse on the interwoven roles of science and art in Soviet life. The third polemic was an echo of the 19th century debate between Slavophiles, who sought to build Russia's future through a revival of the spiritual traditions of Russian Orthodoxy and the social traditions of the peasant commune, and Westernizers, who believed that the future wellbeing of the country depended on its absorption of Western culture and science. In both the earlier times and the 1960s, each of the pairings constituted not a strict dualistic choice, but a sliding scale of adaptations, a field of conversation across space and time.

The Thaw, then, for all its enthusiasm for modernization and the glittering future, represented a return from a culture of the determinate instant, in which regularly updated answers from the center illuminated the artist's path (the answers were often arbitrary, and the path was tortuous, but it was illuminated all the same), to one in which the past, and individual longing for shards of that past, once again had meaning. Looser bureaucratic management of culture in the Khrushchev years made room for open and fierce debate, from the ideological warfare between Alexander Tvardovsky's liberal journal, *Novy Mir* (New World) and Vsevolod Kochetov's conservative *Oktiabr* (October) to the scene at the Manezh exhibition of modern art just outside the Kremlin gates on December 1, 1962, when Khrushchev raged at the young sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, and Neizvestny raged right back at him and lived to tell the tale (and to continue creating modern art, including Khruschchev's tombstone).[3] Paternalistic advice in studio meetings, administrative harrumphing at higher levels, and a situational system of carrots and sticks that included everything from project approval to living space ensured that artists continued to live anxious lives and lead careers subject to administrative whim. But the end of terror, the revival of debate, and the cultural uncertainty as to what exactly art should look like allowed them to continue their always invigorating, sometimes shocking, reentry into Russian history.

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

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

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

Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba* (1964), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966/71), and Marlen Khutsiev's *Ilich's Gate* (1961, released with changes as *I Am Twenty* in 1965) were planned in the anxious years surrounding Khrushchev's fall, and they mark a high point of Thaw-era cinematic audacity. Each of these films is epic in scope; each deploys temporal longing to generate narrative ambiguity and dialogue between historical epochs. The films are haunted by ghosts; they challenge the hegemony of the *now* by insisting on the phantom presence of a thousand *thens*; they refurbish old dreams and question contemporary assumptions. They enable the unpredictable intercourse between disparate images, days, decades, centuries; they replace continuity with contiguity, causality with poetic association. The Thaw permitted the intrusion of private memory into public history, and the past became a zone for exploration

rather than justification. Easy answers became harder to come by, but the profusion of questions and suggestions created a brief silver age for Soviet cinema. For us, these films offer an extraordinary glimpse into creative life during one of the great unsung social transitions of the 20th century, and reveal the crucial contribution of individual memory in the artistic quest for aesthetic impact, spiritual depth, and ethical engagement.

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

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In *I Am Cuba, Andrei Rublev* and *Ilich's Gate* we encounter images that both communicate the reflective nostalgia of their producers and enable the reflective nostalgia of their consumers. We are invited to contemplate the filmmakers' longings, and to feel our own.

Images in these films are in constant conversation with neighboring images, with history, and with us. What makes the conversation unique—even in the ostensibly propagandistic *I Am Cuba*—is that the longing it enables has no prescribed object. It is ineffable, inchoate, a sentence with an open-ended predicate. Longing itself is the point. These images present us with neither the commercially and ideologically viable directive *Believe in THIS* nor the ostensibly open but empty inspirational canard *Don't stop believing*; instead they send us back to our memories—to our sensations of lived time and lived-in space—with three implicit questions:

How shall I express myself in the world?

What does the material world mean to me?

How am I to live among others?

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

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

The three filmmakers brought different longings to their art, and different attitudes toward the Soviet inheritance. Kalatozov was born in 1903; his aesthetics and enthusiams were forged in the crucible of the 1920s. Kalatozov's films retain an aesthetic and ideological connection with the heroic mythos of early Soviet avant-garde culture, where individual spontaneity, personal bravery, and aesthetic risk went hand-in-hand with earnest support for the Leninist project. For Khutsiev, born in 1925, and Tarkovsky, born in 1932, the ethic of the pre-revolutionary Silver Age and the stormy, vibrant 1920s were mediated by culture, elders, and hearsay; their relationship with the Soviet and Russian past was more nuanced, their longings more distant from mythologies of politics and progress. They had different angles of reentry into Russian memory, and the images they created brought different shocks to the Soviet 60s.[4]

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

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

the step pyramid where Stalin resides. In the Zhivago vision, man has no complete answers: The wisdom to ask is shared by all and the power to answer is held by none. The structure of moral hierarchy favors those who remember well, live creatively, appreciate space and time, and do not impose their will.

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

As Anatoly Zubok details in his magisterial *Zhivago's Children*, Pasternak, one of the last great torchbearers of the pre-revolutionary and 1920s intelligentsia, passed his ethic along to the young cultural intelligentsia of the Khrushchev era, and, far from greeting it as antiquated, they built their worldview around it. I argue that what was most energetically alive in this worldview was its creative, reflective nostalgia, its longing search for the ghostly continuation of roads long since cut off. And I believe this contribution is relevant beyond Pasternak's era and the borders of his homeland. We in the West have made a religion of obsolescence. This church even has a name for its enemies: Luddites. The longing backward glance is in disrepute among both corporate technocrats and political progressives. By all means, we'll get out of the way if

we can't lend a hand—but has anyone checked where we're going? And is it possible that the things we miss—the things that are missing—might help us find our way?

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

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

The image of blind travel through oncoming time is chilling, particularly if we consider that the stuff at the angel's feet—at *our* feet—is truly debris. But while it can never be made whole, it can be made *valuable*. After all, the geography of Benjamin's meditation has the winds of progress blowing not from the future—which would, of course, blow the angel backward—but precisely from the past. In other words, this *debris* is all we have from which to construct tomorrow, or even today. As we fly through time, backward and blind toward what's next, each of us has no choice but to perceive the world *through* the debris—through a lens we forge from the crushed crystalline fragments of our remembered (or re-membered) past. To look through this composite substance, fashioned from lost yesterdays and dim remembrances, is to penetrate the terrifying blankness of the oncoming day. The backward glance gives the hollow present form and value and resonance in time. But because of the vagaries of memory and longing and the percussive collision with the *now*, the past-present we glimpse is always new, and always surprising. We are dazzled, disturbed, and renewed by it. This feeling, generated at the impact point of past and present—of longing, hope, and fear—is essential to creativity, individuality,

and progress. It is our reentry shock upon return to a dimly known, perhaps even loved, but suddenly unfamiliar world.

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