

Soviet Hieroglyphics

Visual Culture in
Late Twentieth-Century Russia

Edited by

Nancy Condee

Indiana University Press
Bloomington and Indianapolis

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE


BFI PUBLISHING
BFI Publishing
London

Contents

Introduction
Nancy Condee vii

Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Citation xxxv

One
Aural Hieroglyphics?
Some Reflections on the Role of Sound
in Recent Russian Films and Its Historical Context
Katerina Clark i

Two
Televorot
The Role of Television Coverage in Russia's
August 1991 Coup
Victoria E. Bonnell and Gregory Freidin 22

Three
Documentary Discipline
Three Interrogations of Stanislav Govorukhin
Eric Naiman and Anne Nesbet 52

Four
**The Gendered Trinity of Russian Cultural
Rhetoric Today—or The Glyph of the H[i]eroine**
Helena Gasco 68

Five
In the Shadow of Monuments
Notes on Iconoclasm and Time
Mikhail Yampolsky
Translated by John Kachur 93

14-7-00 10
C197
001004

First published in 1995 by
Indiana University Press
601 North Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47404
and the
British Film Institute
21 Stephen Street, London W.1.P. 1PL, England

© 1995 by Indiana University Press
All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher: The Association of American University Presses' Resolution on Permissions constitutes the only exception to this prohibition.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.
Manufactured in the United States of America

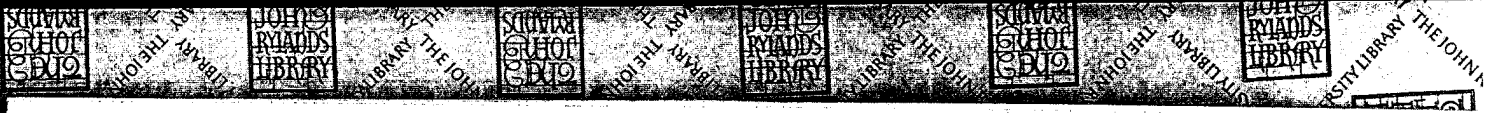
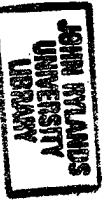
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
BFI ISBNs: 0-85170-458-1 (cl)—0-85170-459-X (pa)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Soviet hieroglyphics : visual culture in late twentieth-century Russia
/ edited by Nancy Condee.
p. cm.

Compilation of seven articles translated from Russian.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-253-31402-X (cl : acid-free paper).—ISBN 0-253-20945-5 (pa : acid-free paper)

1. Arts, Soviet. 2. Arts and society—Soviet Union. 3. Arts, Russian. 4. Arts and society—Russia (Federation). 5. Allegories.
I. Condee, Nancy.

NX555.A1S66 1995
700'.1'098094709049—dc20 94-22839
1 2 3 4 5 00 99 98 97 96 95



Yampolsky, Mikhail. "V poiskakh utrachennogo nasledheniia" (Érotika v russkom kino). Video supplement to *Ogoni' 5* (1990).
 Zenkovsky, Serge A., ed. *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963.
 Zhigul'skaya, A. F., ed. *Poëmy pobedy*. Voronezh: Tsentr-Chernozemn. kh. izd., 1976.

In the Shadow of Monuments

Notes on Iconoclasm and Time

Mikhail Yampolsky
 Translated by John Kachur

In Walter Benjamin's *Moscow Diary*, there is an entry concerning the topography and architecture of the Kremlin:

It is easy to overlook one of the basic conditions of its beauty: none of its broad expanses contains a monument. By contrast, there is hardly a square in Europe whose secret structure was not profaned and impaired over the course of the nineteenth century by the introduction of a monument. (65)

It is true that within the space of the Kremlin there is something that runs counter to the idea of the anthropomorphic monument, whose place was taken long ago by the Tsar Bell and the Tsar Cannon. Even in the Brezhnev era, no one risked defiling the Kremlin by introducing a real monument. The seated figure of Lenin, purposely small and intimate, was placed so as both to observe decorum and not be particularly striking.

In my view, any monument would be superfluous within these walls literally because of the walls themselves. Traditionally, monuments are erected in areas that are maximally open and accessible to view (important exceptions, of course, are gravestones), most often in the squares formed by street intersections, or on an elevated spot. Pragmatically, this is motivated by the fact that, by its very nature, a monument is intended to be admired, contemplated, and worshipped. In reality, however, monuments rarely become objects of a genuine cult or even of admiration. In the urban landscape, as a rule, their perception is automatized and they virtually disappear from the field of vision. Moreover, their positioning often violates the golden rule of the street's visual text: the obligatory placement of the object at—or slightly above—the passerby's eye level, a rule that advertisements invariably follow. The high pedestals that long dominated the architecture of monuments render the memorials almost indiscernible from up close. Eas-

ly visible from afar, they appear to fade from the field of vision as one approaches them.

Such a structure of perception makes the monument a rather distinctive cult object: it keeps the worshipper at a distance. This distance is inscribed into its function, and therefore approaching the monument is always a sort of transgression of a sacral zone. A number of monuments in Moscow, for example, were consciously erected in this field of inaccessibility. Dzerzhinskii, to whom it was physically impossible to get close, stands out among these aloof monuments.

The attribute of distance is closely connected with the height of the monument. The lower the monument, the easier getting close to it is, though a certain feeling of transgression accompanies even this "permitted" approach. This impassable zone in its own way resembles the "personal reserve" spoken about by Ervin Goffman, or the zone of bodily self-manifestation described by Merleau-Ponty. But these personal protective zones surrounding the body are situated around living beings and not images carved out of stone. Nevertheless, when we look upon workers installing or dismantling a monument, their physical contact with the object subconsciously shocks us.

Meanwhile, the ritual transgression of these protective zones enters into the very functioning of the monuments. Significantly, one of the most famous Soviet monumental attractions, Vuchetich's sculpture of Mamai's burial mound in Stalingrad, was wholly built so as to immerse the human being gradually into the world of cyclopean monuments, among which the visitor was intended to move about, attaining a traumatic proximity with these immense idols. Precisely the immensity of the monument, so keenly felt in close proximity, lends the monument the quality of the colossal, the incommensurable, and ascribes to it the fiction of infinite height and unconquerable strength.

Jacques Derrida has shown that colossal proportions are nothing other than the expression of the figure's incongruity with whatever concept it is ostensibly called upon to represent (196-38). The monument's immensity is a sign of the unrepresentability so important for the monument's functioning. Unrepresentability, to a certain extent, forces the monument beyond the boundaries of human semiotics, imbuing it, like anything colossal, with an elemental, innate quality. Being, of course, the fruit of man's labors, it aspires to transcend its human nature. Hence, the traditional striving of monumental forms toward coarse, "innate" styles and the open rejection of a naturalistic resemblance with the prototype.

After all, while laying claim to figurativeness and the qualities of portrait-

ture, the monument usually corresponds only weakly to any concrete human personality. It is simply a colossus, a huge magic mound, existing in complete contrast to the laws of mimesis, similitude, and imitation. Any similarity to a portrait is purely a concealment of the monument's true function.

The existence of a sacral zone around the monument has, in my view, several causes. One of them, which I will mention only in passing, is the monument's duality and its correlation, therefore, to Freud's *Unheimlich*. This aspect is well elaborated in the "sculptural myth," to use Roman Jakobson's expression (the relationships between Don Juan and the Stone Guest or Evgenii and the Bronze Horseman address, in part, precisely this topic). This cause, however, does not seem to me to be the main one.

A second cause can be described in terms of proxemics. According to Edward Hall, the "public distance" between two bodies suppresses the significant remoteness of one body from the other, such that the figure removed to a "public distance" occupies in the field of vision only the very center of the retina (fovea) (124-25).¹ Because of this, the dimensions of the monument dictate a large expanse between itself and the viewer. The higher the monument, the larger is its protective zone.

But there is yet another cause, the one that most interests me here. I have in mind the monument's absolutely unique influence on the structure of time. In actuality, the main reason for raising a monument is the desire in some kind of magical way to affect the course of time, either to change it or to avoid its influence.

In his classic work *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, Alois Riegl proposed a classification of monuments according to the temporal value contained in them (21-51). Foremost are those that contain "age-value," most often ancient structures and ruins. They are significant because they carry the imprint of elapsing time and affirm its all-conquering power over the creations of human hands. Ruins are an ironic memento mori that unmask the laughable pretensions of human artifacts, the expression in stone of the victory of nature over history. The all-conquering time of ruins is extrahistorical, corresponding to eternity to the extent that nature transcends human temporality. In a strange way, certain structures (such as, for example, the Egyptian pyramids or the Coliseum) may also emerge as carriers of age-values, ironically emphasizing the transitoriness of human pretensions.

The opposite category consists of monuments possessing an "intentional commemorative value," that is, originally and consciously conceived as monuments. These memorials are called upon forever to cement the memory of a certain event or individual, and therefore they also in their own way

transcend history. Their task is to preserve unchanged a given moment. "Intentional" monuments, thus, negate the march of time and oppose to it the permanence of human action. They are not meant to be subject to traces left by time and therefore are objects of constant renovation and restoration.

In the real urban landscape, intentional monuments, of course, interact with those that bear age-value. This interaction is far from neutral. These two types of monuments contradict each other too openly to coexist in peace. As a result, the erection of certain intentional monuments demands the reconstruction of the entire urban environment. The installation of the gigantic figure of Lenin on Moscow's October Square, conceived as the country's main Lenin memorial, demanded the complete reconstruction of the square. A special milieu was created for the monument, the distinguishing feature of which was its absolute ahistoricity. The memorial, destined for eternity, should not have to compete with a single historical building. The ahistoricity of the monument demanded the complete ahistoricity of the surroundings.

All this allows us, if only partially, to answer the question of why the Kremlin has not had to endure any contemporary monuments within its grounds. This may be connected with the fact that its cathedrals have absorbed such a concentration of history that a monument, which denies history's progression, could not withstand the powerful weight of historical evidence. By their historical gravity, the cathedrals would destroy the paths of any anthropomorphic monument.

One could also suppose that any monument creates around itself a kind of special temporal expanse in which time moves differently than in other places, a sort of mystical protective zone that surrounds the monument and is apparently connected with the experience of temporal metamorphosis. Approaching the monument, one seems to enter the context of a different time, simply to fall out of the temporal context and step into a zone where the eternal present reigns, where time, in Shehedrin's words, has ceased its movement.

The innate quality, one way or another present in large Soviet memorials, is to a certain extent also responsible for that special ahistorical time that is connected with monuments. In this connection, the process itself of the slow approach to the monument may be described as the gradual transformation of the temporal flow. While a person is far away, the monument retains its anthropomorphicity and only weakly affects the sensation of time. The nearer one approaches, the more the monument's features gradually lose their ties to figurativeness. In many cases, the sculpture seemingly shields

itself with its high pedestal—the stone mound, mainly connected with the idea of innate, nonlinear time, with the idea of nature as eternity.

Now I can explain why it appears to me that, apart from anything else, the surrounding Kremlin walls render a monument superfluous. In the contemporary urban structure, the Kremlin is a glaring anachronism—a fortress whose gigantic walls were erected in the seventeenth century, that is, precisely at the time when, throughout all of Europe, fortress walls were being dismantled as unnecessary. The liquidation of the fortress walls' historic inner city was a sign of urbanistic modernism. Vienna was one of the last European capitals to tear down its fortress walls, replacing them with the construction of the famous Ringstrasse, itself a symbol of modernism (Schorske 24-115). Above all, modernism was expressed in the opening up of space and, consequently, in the unification of time, which in its own way filtered into the various zones of the city. In Moscow, the rejection of European modernism was expressed spatially in the preservation of the Kremlin as a completely autonomous historical zone, one not subject to changes or the passage of time. In this sense, the Kremlin as a spatial structure fulfilled the same functions as a monument: it paralyzed time with its cyclopean walls.

The transfer of the capital to Moscow and the concentration of political power in the Kremlin have their own symbolic aspects. This is, of course, a transfer of power from the periphery to the spatial center, but it is also the placement of power inside walls, as into a core protected by a shell. Power becomes its own monument, symbolically moving beyond the boundaries of time. Michel Foucault has observed that "at the end of the eighteenth century architecture begins to deal with questions of population, health, and building in urban areas. Previously, architecture was concerned only with the necessity to make visible power, divinity, and might" (148). In Russia, this task is addressed by space much more than in Europe. The Kremlin, of course, was captivating to rulers because of its exceptional suitability to the symbolic manifestation of power.

The significance of monuments for the semiotics of Soviet power is not completely clear. It seems to me that their function as signs—to organize certain islets of eternity in the movement of time—is considerable. But it was precisely toward achronistic space of this type that the whole ideology of the Soviet regime gravitated, its aim being the immediate achievement of an ahistorical condition (Communism) that originally was supposed to arise as atemporal islets in the social space, gradually spreading and seizing the whole country. The construction of tall buildings, which became the favorite décor of official films, was oriented precisely toward the creation

of some sort of utopian preserve of the future where time would not flow. Sculpture has an especially intensive existence in just such preserves.

The urban space of the 1930s through 1950s (a schema also followed in the urban utopias built under Khrushchev) is based on the opposition between (on the one hand) streets and avenues along which there is ceaseless movement of people and cars, and (on the other) squares adorned with monuments. Here movement is dried up into an immovable atemporality. In such a structure, the monument has an utterly unique function. It does not so much portray someone as it serves as a sort of vertical centering axis that spatially organizes the hierarchy of social signs. In monuments of the Soviet epoch, as I have already noted, it is not the similarity to a model or the mark of workmanship that is essential, but rather two qualities: a fundamental solidity and dimensions. A monument is not so much meant to imitate one or another person as it is to express the idea of not being subject to time, of extrahuman temporality, of ahistoricity.² Thus, the monument finds itself literally at the center of the totalitarian project, which, according to Hannah Arendt, is constructed as endless movement centered around an unattainable core.

A social structure of this type, reflected in the urban utopia, demands a monument for its completion. Moscow's uniqueness stems from its uncommonly wide arterial roads, along which transportation is organized according to a strange sort of logic. Left turns are prohibited almost everywhere, and even right turns are often not possible. City authorities have diligently replaced above-ground pedestrian crossings with underground ones, and prohibited not only parking, but even stopping along such major roads as, for example, Tverskaiia. As a result of these diligent measures, traffic on Moscow's main streets ideally should not stop for even a minute or change its direction. This astonishing movement—ceaseless and only forward—transforms Moscow's "traffic" into a sort of social utopia. It is noteworthy that Walter Benjamin, discussing Moscow of the 1920s, observed revealingly: "Thus, even the traffic in Moscow is, to a large extent, a mass phenomenon" (*Reflections* 112).

Moscow's streets were built for the potential movement from place to place of huge masses of the population. But in such a stream the masses also remain their own type of potential phenomenon. The people's movement condenses into a *mass* only when it stops and when the people composing that mass are concentrated in a particular space—on a kind of symbolic square, or agora.

Elias Canetti proposed that a pile of stones might be considered one of the symbols of the masses: "Such heaps are made of stone precisely because

it is difficult to take them to pieces. They are meant to endure for a long time, for their own brand of eternity, and to never shrink, but to remain always as they are" (*Crowds and Power* 88). By their contours, Soviet monuments mostly resembled precisely piles of stones rather than the works of sculptors. But, by the same token, they also absorbed the symbolism of the masses. The masses form themselves around a monument; its solidity (and the solidity of the Communist future is first of all the solidity of the masses and of the authority that commands them) is supported by that atemporal expanse that crystallizes around the monument. This expanse is as difficult to penetrate as it is to abandon.

That every monument is only a substitute for a pile of stones appears to me to be extremely important. The commemorative function of the totalitarian monument is always gradually yielding room to age-value, essentially to the symbolism of eternity as such. Commemorativeness is only the initial motivation for the emergence of monuments. Therefore, even a new monument seems to incorporate a sense of unseen future ruins. In 1938, Hitler's sculptor, Albert Speer, elaborated his "Theory on the Significance of Ruins," in which he praised ruins as the unshakable signs of a heroic past. In the opinion of Paul Virilio, Speer's own architecture was constructed precisely with future ruins in mind: "In the end, to construct a building is first of all to foresee how it will be demolished so that, as a result, you will have the kind of ruins that a millennium later 'will inspire thoughts just as heroic as did their ancient prototypes'" (101).

In some sense, ruins are the ideal condition of any totalitarian monument just as the pile of stones is the fullest symbol of the masses. It is impossible not to observe, however, that whole complexes of monuments in the Soviet Union seemed to incorporate into themselves ruins, made transparent through the novelty of the construction. The complex on Mamai's burial mound, with figures standing out from imitation ruins, is a good example of this. The ruins are the final state beyond which any evolution, any movement of time, is already impossible. Communist society, in this sense, is a world of ruins.

Public squares with monuments in the center are the utopian component of the urban totalitarian space. Of course, no plan for monumental propaganda could provide for monuments at every intersection of the existing main streets. Their surrogates, however, structured the urban space in the form of gigantic, inscribed figures of Lenin, workers, and collective farmers staring out from walls and huge panels. Erik Bulatov's famous picture *Krasnaya Svezel'* (1976) well reflects the work of such monumental simulacra.

And, finally, there is another important property of monuments in the context of social time. It is well known that Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda emphasized mass production. Of course, this was accompanied by unprecedented iconoclasm, the destruction of old monuments. The point was to replace some monuments with others quickly, as if the emptiness created by the broken idols possessed some sort of destructive force that had to be subdued.

The fact that the new (and, as a rule, temporary and short-lived) monuments were constructed on the locations of the old, demolished monuments is far from accidental. Destruction and construction can be understood, in a certain context, as two equally valid procedures of immortalization. Destruction affirms the power of the victor to the same extent as the erection of a monument to victory. A tradition has developed historically to build a new monument precisely on the site of the old one, as though accumulating in one place two commemorative gestures: vandalism and the erection of a new idol. Hitler's hesitation, analyzed by Canetti, is curious: either to destroy Paris, or to let it be, both gestures to an equal extent connected with the strategy of immortalizing the victor. Canetti describes Hitler's indecision as "the twofold delight in permanence and destruction, characteristic of the paranoid . . ." (*The Conscience of Words* 163).

This "paranoid" enjoyment is expressed especially graphically in the last one hundred years in cinema, which has felt a particular weakness for the fixation (potentially for eternity) of various kinds of destruction, including that of monuments. Film in a sense immortalizes the moment of destruction, transforming it into its own brand of monument. The immortalization of destruction as something eternal, or eternally recurring, was fully apparent in Sergei Eisenstein's *October* [1928], which shows the destruction of the monument to Alexander III repeatedly, from various angles. At some point this ceaseless destruction is transformed into its opposite; by the reverse motion of the film, the monument "assembles itself" out of ruins. This eternally protracted moment of destruction resembles the satiric Freudian compulsion to repeat, in which iconoclasm imperceptibly turns into a new fetishism. This is particularly evident in Eisenstein's film, with its obsessive attachment to the theme of monuments.

The new monument erected on the place of the old one becomes, in some sense, this kind of memorial to eternal destruction. It paradoxically turns out to be also a vestige of what is absent, its substitute. Such a "monument-successor" is the signifier of two signifieds: itself and what is absent, its demolished predecessor.

Such a double semiotics can be readily traced in the history of the Ca-

thedral of Christ the Savior. This cathedral was demolished. In accordance with Canetti's principle of "twofold delight," a new cathedral, the Palace of Soviets, was supposed to have appeared in its place. This huge building was never erected. On the site of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a large swimming pool was constructed. The pool, which, as it were, is a minus-cathedral (a foundation pit instead of a pyramid), is interesting in that, for a long time now, it has been a sign of two nonexistent buildings: the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Palace of Soviets. One of them existed and was demolished; the other never was and never will be built. But both of these phantom structures in their own way are inscribed into the pool, which is transformed into a sign of memory. Mnemonic traces of this type are scattered all over Moscow, all over many Russian cities.

In the case of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the principal role in its phantom existence was played by the cinema.⁸ The destruction of the cathedral was filmed. In the last few years, this small newsreel fragment has been shown in theaters and on television hundreds of times. One could say without exaggeration that this fragment today is the most shown piece of the Soviet chronicle. In a significant number of films, the precise moment of the collapse of the cathedral, of the explosion that smashes it to pieces, is shown in slow motion or repeated over and over. The directors/producers of the interesting documentary film *Disgraced Monuments* (1992), Mark Lewis and Laura Mulvey, did not escape this temptation.⁴ Twofold delight from immortalized destruction, which is so fully manifested in cinema, transforms the Cathedral of Christ the Savior into a sort of supermonument of totalitarian culture, a monument to never-ending destruction, the dual will of vandals, which both does away with the huge stone structure and does not allow it to collapse once and for all (see Fig. 5).

This perpetual destruction (similar to *perpetual return*) contains within itself a deep tie with the principle of pageantry as such. It instantly makes supersignificant a monument that is usually effaced in the urban landscape. The moment of explosion is, from the point of view of spectacle, undoubtedly the most significant in the whole biography of the monument. Destruction increases space (in this sense, every wide main street in contemporary Moscow carries within it the bleeding mark of mass destructions, somehow symbolically analogous to Stalinist terror). An empty expanse is the unending potential for new spectacles, but it is also a sort of higher moment in the "creative" utopia of destruction. Walter Benjamin remarked that such emptiness "is a sight that affords the destructive character a spectacle of deepest harmony" (*Reflections* 301).

The connection that arises between new and old monuments by preserv-



5. *Disgraced Monuments*, 1992. Directors, Mark Lewis and Laura Mulvey.

ing unchanged the location of the monuments, reflects through their memory the contradictoriness of *time* as they represented it. Such an early orientation toward new monuments is intimately connected with the concept of revolutionary time, by its nature standing out as something *new*, something that breaks with the uninterrupted flow of preceding history. In the context of the radical regeneration of time, however, the monument by itself looks, of course, paradoxical. It instantly creates the illusion of continuity, organizes a genealogy, and introduces into the consciousness the very concept of a father-founder, so indispensable for the legitimization of any new regime. Not accidentally, for example, the monument to Lenin in the Kremlin stands on the exact same spot where earlier was situated the monument to Alexander II. By the same token, Lenin is symbolically transformed into the tsar's "legitimate" successor. At the same time, the idea of *founding* is extraordinarily strong in Russia. The founding of Moscow and the creation of a new city on the Neva were the most important facts in the national mythology, which, by the way, acted within the boundaries of a traditional paradigm that saw every founding as a renewal (Rome as the new Troy, Moscow or Petersburg as the new Rome). Every founding within such a paradigm paradoxically demands a forerunner.⁵

It is interesting that, within the confines of imperial mythology, every new imperial capital—Rome, Constantinople, Moscow—arises as though

on the ruins of one that has been destroyed. The ruins enter the complex of each new imperial capital in the capacity of source. The destruction of the predecessor allows for the realization of founding in the form of Freudian repetition. Ruins become a mnemonic sign on which there appears a likeness that both cancels and repeats it. Destruction and memory have so solidly entered into the basis of empires that, as Elisabeth Bellamy has noted, "the association between the fall of Troy and the faculty of memory has become so conventional throughout cultural history that it is almost as if Troy existed only to the extent to which it was remembered" (56).⁶

If we look at the films of destruction of monuments or the cathedral of Christ the Savior from this point of view, then we see before us, in essence, the mystical act of *founding*, naturally manifested in the form of destruction, obliteration, negation⁷ (in Freudian terms, repression). This is the unceasingly contested "primal scene" of Soviet power.

There is probably still another cause for the obtrusive necessity of repetitiveness in the representation (particularly in cinema and on television) of scenes of the destruction of monuments. The capital-forerunner always appears in the form of ruins also because the unconsciousness of the "successors" calls into question the very fact of inheritance. Troy and Rome are repressed, so to speak, as ideological fictions, not having any connection at all to the new capital. They undergo what Freud called "de-realization."⁸ De-realization takes the form of obliteration. Troy *must* be destroyed because, in reality, it is not a predecessor of Rome. Ruins, thus, become the product of the self-proclaimed empire's political unconscious.

The destruction of symbols of the Russian Empire after the revolution expresses the "homelessness" of the new leaders, that is to say, the unconscious of pretenders who settle on the tsar's throne while simultaneously blowing it up, or de-realizing it.

The need for a predecessor, apart from these "psychological" causes, is connected with the destruction of the old state system and its structures in a more pragmatic way. It is well known that, in pregovernmental social formations, the cult of ancestors played a fundamental role in structuring society. Only gradually among the Greeks was the cult of ancestors replaced by the cult of hearth and its god Zeus Herkeios, and also the cult of heroes. The historical tie between the cult of ancestors and the cult of heroes was established by Erwin Rohde in 1893.⁹ Societies with unconstituted state systems often attempt to organize themselves according to an archaic type. Totalitarian society, with its underdeveloped civil institutions, attempts to preserve the archaic stage of "family" organization (the leader as father).

Thus, monuments of predecessors are organizers of continuity, fictitious

indicators of the uninterruptedness of time and, simultaneously, the presence of an origin (the very act of foundation, the first model, the primordial act of creation). The masses organized by these monuments are a metaphorical family, whose time, of course, is nonhistorical. It may be mythological or private, but in any case it is excluded from historical chronology.

Red Square in Moscow, which since the twenties has gradually been transformed into a public square cum cemetery, becomes the symbolic point of concentration for such a mass-family. The central grave of the necropolis that unexpectedly arises here is, of course, Lenin's mausoleum. But a genuine cemetery soon springs up around it. The penetration of graves into the very heart of the symbolic social sphere is less surprising than it seems to some observers. In the Middle Ages, the cemetery was usually the site of basic social manifestations, including commerce, carnivalescic celebrations, and so on. Philippe Ariès has shown that such an interpenetration of what seem to be functionally diverse social spaces is connected exactly with the presence of the dead and the special sacral status of consecrated burial grounds. The cemetery is the kingdom of the dead and, because of this, is extraterritorial (62-71). The "return" of corpses to the central square merely marks, in its own archaic manner, the special sacralization of space here, a transformation of the world from profane to "other-worldly."

The exclusion from historical time marked by such spaces is one of the fundamental traits of socialist culture, which, although it also cultivates an ideology of progress, is wholly oriented toward a stable atemporality. The individual in socialist society sometimes experiences stability and the absence of change as something oppressive, but most often this atemporality creates the psychological basis for stabilizing inner conflicts.

Of course, human beings exist as though in two temporalities: the cyclical time of everyday life and myth, and the chronological time that brings them closer to death. Chronological time is always painted in dramatic tones. It is quite possible that the greatest achievement of Soviet culture was the maximal suppression of chronological time and the creation of the illusion of stability and stasis indispensable for the functioning of the masses.

This static time most clearly manifests itself in the space surrounding monuments. It is as though the monument were guarding with its weight the clot of stagnant time that is so soothing to the human psyche. Every monument seems to contain a sign of the cemetery, a sign projected onto the surrounding space. It is here that every memorial reveals its genealogy from graveside sculpture, from ancient Greek colossus.

The disintegration of the masses and of the utopia cementing them is

inevitably expressed in the transgression of the zone that surrounds the monument and in the aggression directed against the monument itself. Attacks on monuments, characteristic for certain stages of change in Russia, cannot, in my opinion, be described in terms of pure iconoclasm. Rather, they express the deep dependence of the masses on the monument they are attacking. The transfiguration of the masses, their transformation, often symbolically takes place around the monument.

Naturally, monuments acquired a special significance during the August coup. The very direction of the coup fully depended on the complexly organized mass *mise-en-scène* on the streets of Moscow. On the side of the coup plotters, the main operation became the filling of the capital's streets with masses of soldiers and armored equipment. As for the opposition, resistance chiefly amounted to the formation on the streets of large masses of the population, who did not abandon their "posts" day or night. With this in mind, the coup plotters steadfastly attempted not to allow the accumulation of people on the streets during the night. Little by little, the coup assumed the form of a clash between two masses. It is well known, however, that a mass of people, being a dynamic formation, cannot remain for long in a state of immobility. The downfall of the coup plotters became more or less obvious when the slow decomposition of the mass of soldiers began, although they were breaking up and becoming bogged down in the crowd of Muscovites. In general, I can say as an eyewitness that the military columns in Moscow were symbolically effective only on the march, that is, when the columns of tanks moved, rolling the streets with an unbelievable roar. Such movement was, of course, the embodiment of destructibility. At the moment the armored vehicles parked in the back streets, they lost their potential to frighten, as though they'd been sucked into the urban mass.

As far as the coup symbolically took place through the theatricalized clash of the masses, through their organization, preservation, and disintegration, the urban expanse during the coup acquired a dramatic significance. As during any revolution (and the coup was such a microrevolution), events shifted entirely onto the streets, where the fearsome and the laughable were combined in an openly carnivalescic structure. And, as the carnival prescribes, it ended with the destruction of some kind of symbolic figure (the scarecrow tsar, Shrove-tide, and so on).

It is well known that the monument to Dzerzhinskii on Lubianka Square became the main object of aggression after the collapse of the August coup. Its choice is seemingly easy to explain by Dzerzhinskii's specific role as founder of the ChK, the embryonic form of the KGB.¹⁰ Other factors, however,

also played a role in the enactment of its defeat: above all, its location in the very center of the square. The roadway here fenced in the monument, so to speak, by means of the repressive authority of the traffic police. This spatially least accessible monument symbolized the complete inaccessibility of the KGB itself, in whose honor, essentially, the monument had been erected. But at a certain moment, not far from Dzerzhinskii, another monument unexpectedly appeared—a stone in honor of the victims of KGB repression, installed with the participation of the KGB itself. This situation in and of itself was, of course, extremely paradoxical. By that I mean the proximity of the memorial in honor of the founder of the secret police to the monument in honor of its victims. The second monument signified that the organization founded by Dzerzhinskii was criminal, which, of course, irrevocably compromised the founder himself.

Dzerzhinskii's monument escaped the traditional vandalism of revolutionary times. On the order of Moscow's mayor, Gavril Popov, it was carefully dismantled, hoisted by a crane, placed on a platform that had been pushed up next to it, and driven away. The next day, attempts were undertaken to erect a cross on the monument's pedestal (in memory of the KGB's victims, which would finally have turned the pedestal into the likeness of a grave), but the authorities systematically hampered these attempts. They decided, however, to preserve the pedestal because, as it was announced, it had belonged to a prerevolutionary monument (to General Skobelev) and therefore was of historical value. The pedestal's preservation recalls the dictum of Polish writer Stanislaw Lec, "Destroy the monuments, but keep the pedestals!"

In reality, the semiotic situation of Dzerzhinskii's monument is more complicated than it seems at first glance. A monument was detached from a pedestal that was recognized to be historically more valuable than the monument itself! The pedestal remains and is even preserved by the authorities, while the monument is carted away. The question arises: to what is the pedestal a monument, if there is no figure on top of it? The answer is, apparently, the stability of time, a stability completely autonomous of any hero or any event, simply stability as such. The pedestal without Dzerzhinskii is unique in that it continues by itself to designate a place of the accumulation of time as pure abstraction.

Dzerzhinskii's monument in Moscow was taken down during the night of 21–22 August 1991. The next day, the Lenin monument in Tallin was taken down, also by order of authorities, and also with a crane. The empty pedestal instantly became a place of pilgrimage for the residents of Tallin.

The emptiness above the pedestal begins to radiate time; the pedestal itself becomes a monument.

But that is not the only point. The preservation of a pedestal as the carrier of special historical value is maximally, if it can be expressed this way, humiliating to the monument itself. The usual value relationships are turned upside down. The heightened value of the base only emphasizes the complete depreciation of the figure. It is essential that the statue itself was not destroyed. The first gesture of iconoclasm for a long period of Russian history was wholly inscribed into a situation of variable temporality.

The movement of the crane that separated the Iron Felix from its pedestal tore the monument out of the zone of sacred, immovable time and transferred it into the space of "ordinary" temporality. Today this statue, along with several others, is installed alongside the House of the Artist on Krymskii Val and has thus been inserted into a chronology. If, earlier, it was guarded by the government, restored, and symbolically excluded from the written text of time, now people can go up and touch it, even scratch it a little. From now on, the statue is just as subject to the influence of time as all the objects that surround it. Thus, the iconoclastic gesture became only a gesture indicating the change of status: the intentional commemorative value was in an instant exchanged for the value of historical antiquity. The monument was transformed from a symbol of intrinsigence into a symbol of vanity and the inevitability of destruction. I would define this gesture as *temporalization*.

It seems to me that this temporalization reflects a certain fundamental and highly traumatic moment in the recent evolution of Russian lived experience: the engaging of a chronometer that seems as if it had been stopped for a long time. The most important words in recent accounts of Russian actuality are "rapid changes." Common passages in today's descriptions go something like this: "in the past three (four, five) months everything has changed so much that you can't recognize anything."

Curiously, the pronouncement of these changes rarely is accompanied by anything convincingly concrete. A friend of mine, a Slavist with a good knowledge of Russia, recently spoke of his impressions of Moscow after a year's absence: "Everything has changed so much in the last year that it's not even easy to put it into words. . . ."

"What exactly?"

"There are fewer outdoor stands in the streets and more kiosks. The sense of danger on the streets is greater, but the salespeople in the kiosks are very polite . . ." and so on.

I could feel that my friend was having difficulty formulating the essence of the changes until he had found a precise sign of their head-spinning velocity: money, inflation, the insane price increases.

Of course, money and prices are the basic motif of today's stories about Russia. This fact is connected not only with their fundamental significance, but also precisely with the fact that they are namely the most effective metaphor for the sudden lurch and forward rush of time.

I will quote another entry from Benjamin's diary:

I don't think there's another city with as many watchmakers as Moscow. This is all the more peculiar since people here are not particularly worried about time. But there must be historical reasons for this. When you watch people on the street you rarely see anybody rushing; unless, of course, it happens to be very cold. They have gotten into the habit of walking in zigzags. (It is quite significant that in some club or another, as Reich was telling me, there is a poster on the wall with the exhortation: Lenin said, "Time is Money." Just to express this banality the highest authority had to be invoked.) (47)

The connection between money and time, as Benjamin justly observed, is, of course, a banality. Russian time to some degree reflected the oddity of Russian money. This money existed, but it was impossible to buy anything with it. Being an exact equivalent, money was practically never exchanged for anything. Russian watches ran, but time stood in place. The Kremlin's chimes were one of the central symbols of the country, even providing a title for Pogodin's play, but their function mainly was to mark the cyclical stability of static time.

Money and time are mobile, circulatory, and intimately connected with the human body. Inflation sharply alters the sense of time. The future now does not accumulate in the form of money, but passes by with unbelievable speed. Sharp jumps in prices and the impossibility of saving money psychologically plunge the individual into a stream of time almost physically flowing away from him. This situation is particularly unpleasant, since people try to structure their time on the principle of repetition, cyclicality, and recurrent rhythms. Inflation, for instance, forces a person to experience time as an irrepressible and traumatic linearity. Benjamin writes, "When a currency is in use, a few million units of which are insignificant, life will have to be counted in seconds, rather than years, if it is to appear a respectable sum" (*Reflections* 87). Indeed, in Russia today there reigns the ubiquitous sense of life's depreciation, particularly in the persistent theme of

dreadful crime, of gangsters who kill innocent citizens without reason on the street in the middle of the day.

In my view, money in Russia in the past, however much it provided the semblance of normal existence, was to a greater degree a clear sign of stability (hence the important ideological emphasis in the past on the reliability of the ruble, though everyone understood that as hard currency it was a sham). The coinciding of inflation with the crash of both stable prices and the consciousness of a guaranteed future is not at all accidental. Money has started to work in Russia today as a symbolic equivalent, but only in order to reflect the disappearance of all equivalents in society. The stability of the ruble previously was guaranteed by the will of god, the church—in other words, the state. The state is destroyed, its symbols turned into dust. Inflation, while having dramatically intensified the feeling of instability, has also incarnated in itself the catastrophic alteration of temporality.

The disappearance of the stable ruble is somehow connected with the disappearance of monuments. Money, like monuments, originally was manufactured from metals resistant to corrosion and doomed to eternity. Coins were decorated with sculptured depictions of monarchs and therefore had a commemorative value. The middle ground between coins and monuments was the medal, which possessed a specific value potential. During the reign of Louis XIV the difference between a medal and a coin was far from clear and even the object of special deliberations; in 1702 the abbé Tallemant determined that the only difference between medals and coins was that the medal commemorated a specific event.¹¹

Curiously, the disappearance of monuments coincides with inflation. Inflation, meanwhile, causes the phasing out of metallic money, that is, precisely the kind that is meant to last. Incidentally, it might seem paradoxical that the least valuable money is minted in eternal metal while large denominations are manufactured out of paper. There are several reasons for this, the first of which is historical. Banknotes were substituted for mass quantities of metal coins that were inconvenient to transport, and as a result they began to take the place of *masses* of money. The second reason is a semiotic one and, for us, the more interesting. Paper money, being an expression of pure fiction, had to be supported by an element with at least some nominal value. The value of paper money was to a certain degree guaranteed by the aggregate value of the metal in the coins, the sum of which was represented by the banknote.

The symbolic disappearance, therefore, of metallic money from everyday life is a sign of an inflationary avalanche. Paper notes lose that fictitious

Notes

foundation of guarantee that is created by the customary presence of coins. The disappearance of coins—those micromonuments for personal use—like the disappearance of monuments on the public squares, marks both the destruction of cocoons of temporal stability and cyclical recurrence, and the switching on of a swift, linear time.

Preserved only in paper form, money sheds its last connection with reality and genuine value. A sign of this phantasmagoric fiction was the retention on the money (right up to 1993) of the symbols of the extinct Soviet Union. Significantly, the Soviet emblems have also remained on passports, lending these two important "texts" what seemed to be an intentionally fraudulent character. The two texts that most guarantee in society a broad identity and equivalence have, for an extended time now, referred symbolically to nonexistent realities as the main signs of legitimization.

This preservation of what no longer exists imposes itself on the renaming of what is unchangeable, cities and streets. The total replacement of names disorients a person and also contributes to the feeling of swift changes. After all, names and naming are basic means for the stabilization and organization of chaos.

Canetti has made note of the intimate tie between inflation and the behavior of the masses. In his opinion, someone accustomed to relying on the value of money cannot help but experience a feeling of personal degradation when this value falls: "the individual feels depreciated because the unit on which he relied and with which he had equated himself starts sliding . . ." (*Crowds and Power* 186).

The special phenomenon of the inflationary crowd has appeared, consisting of masses of depreciated individuals. The inflationary crowd is precisely the crowd in Hannah Arendt's understanding; that is, the totality of the "refuse" from all groups and classes (*Origins* 155). Its emergence is closely connected with alterations in temporality. Such "refuse" appears precisely as a result of the *passage* of time, which discards certain elements as outdated and anachronistic. It is not hard to observe that, for the first time in all the years of Soviet power, perhaps since the 1920s, an image has entered peoples' consciousness of a part of the population as being left behind, thrown by the wayside, and doomed. The accumulation of inflationary crowds, of course, is a very dangerous phenomenon, fraught with, among other things, the possibility of fascism. It is also for the first time, however, that this new mass formation arises precisely when an excited group of people crosses the invisible boundaries of the sacred zone surrounding monuments, switching on the chronometer of history, and, by this very act, condemning themselves to be left behind.

1. That the tenets of proxemics extend to monuments follows if only from the accepted norms of photography. In the absolute majority of cases, monuments are photographed at their full height. The visual articulation of the monument always presupposes some aesthetic or ideological higher task. The human body, in this sense, is much less protected from any visual manipulations.

2. In this sense, the totalitarian monument is close to the ancient Greek colossus that, in the opinion of Jean Pierre Vernant, "while substituting for the corpse in the depths of the grave, does not strive to reproduce the characteristics of the deceased, or to create the illusion of its physical appearance. It embodies and immortalizes not the dead, but life beyond death" (97). Like the Greek colossus, the Soviet monument only embodies atemporal existence, "life beyond death." Both of them are located somehow between naturalistic figurativeness and the abstractness of stone or ruins. On the history of the worship of nonanthropomorphic stones, see Donohue 219-30.

3. The same could be said also about the Palace of Soviets, the design and model for which were shown repeatedly on television. As a result, the real, demolished cathedral possesses the very same phantom reality as does the palace that never existed.

4. It is extremely interesting to what extent "twofold delight" is present in Lewis and Mulvey's film, two artful masters given to complex reflection on the problems of revolutionary iconoclasm. In spite of this, the film, a significant portion of which is devoted to shots of collapsing statues of Lenin and Stalin, cannot completely avoid the melancholy tone that is inescapably connected with allegories of vanity and perishability. In spite of the directors' wishes, something different appears in the film: a fixation with what is departing, the immortalization of what is disappearing. The film itself, thus, falls within the semiotic sphere of monuments.

5. On the paradoxes of this paradigm within the boundaries of "revolutionary" consciousness, see Arendt, *On Revolution* 179-214. Among other things, Arendt shows the presence of an intimate tie between the ideology of "foundation," the mythology of the child, and the Christian cult of birth and the infant (211). It seems to me that the cult of the "happy childhood" and the abundance of children in Soviet iconography may also be compared with this complex.

6. Bellamy provides an interesting analysis of the connection between the destruction of Troy, the displacement of its memory in Aeneas, and the founding of Rome.

7. Walter Benjamin described such destructive creativity through the cabalistic metaphor of angels created by God and instantly disappearing or perishing (Scholem 213). In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin proposes another metaphor. He describes an angel who has turned its back to the future, is looking into the past, and appears in the form of a constantly growing "pile of debris" (*Illuminations* 260). In such a context, destruction is the equivalent of historical creation. The demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior makes history before the faces, seized with horror, of the angels. And like any creative act, it *must* be immortalized and endlessly repeated.

8. Freud links, for example, the gap in memory (repression) that he experienced on the Acropolis with the fact that as a child he did not believe in the Acropolis's reality (317).

9. Finley gives a contemporary account of this problem (47-49).

10. This stone openly resembles a cemetery gravestone and was its own kind of debris

or ruin. The constant intrusion of the thematics of cemeteries and ruins into those city spaces that are subject to intensified sacralization seems significant to me.

11. On the semiotics of medals and coins, see Marin 156--57.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.
 ———. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.
 Ariès, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death*. New York: Vintage Books, 1982.
 Bellamy, Elisabeth J. *Translations of Power: Narcissism and the Unconscious in Epic History*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
 Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. London: Fontana, 1973.
 ———. *Moscow Diary*. October 35 (Winter 1985): 9-121.
 ———. *Reflections*. Ed. Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.
 Canetti, Elias. *The Consistency of Words*. New York: Seabury P, 1979.
 ———. *Crowds and Power*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984.
 Derrida, Jacques. *La vérité en peinture*. Paris: Flammarion, 1978.
 Donohue, A. A. *Xoana and the Origins of Greek Sculpture*. Atlanta: Scholars P, 1988.
 Finley, M. I. *Use and Abuse of History*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.
 Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
 Freud, Sigmund. "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis." *Character and Culture*. Ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
 Hall, Edward Twitchell. *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday, 1982.
 Marin, Louis. *Le portrait du roi*. Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1981.
 Riegl, Alois. "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin." *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 21-51.
 Scholem, Gershom. "Walter Benjamin and His Angel." *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.
 Schorske, Carl E. *Frin-de-siècle Vermont: Politics and Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.
 Verant, Jean Pierre. "Figuration de l'invisible et catégorie psychologique du double: le colosse." *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs, II*. Paris: Maspéro, 1971.
 Virilio, Paul. *Guerre et cinéma I: Logistique de la perception*. Paris: Cahiers du cinéma-Ed. de l'Écaille, 1984.

Encoding Difference

Figuring Gender and Ethnicity in

Kira Muratova's *A Change of Fate*

Susan Larsen

Kira Muratova's 1987 film, *A Change of Fate* [*Peremena uchastl*], opens with a woman's voice telling a story: "And then, awakened by a daring kiss . . . , only to trail off. The screen is blank (black) during this first voice-over, then dissolves to the face of a white woman wearing a red sweater and a black half-mask—no fairy-tale Sleeping Beauty she. In the background, a distant howling—like that of wolves—commences and continues throughout this opening scene. The masked woman's lips do not move, but her voice is heard again, "And then, awakened by a daring kiss. . . ." Behind the mask the woman's eyes flicker open as a male voice is heard off-screen, "You wanted my advice about a present." "I don't want [it] now." The camera remains focused on the woman's still face as the voice-over continues, "You wanted to give your husband a gun." As the woman's voice replies, "I don't want [to] now," the film cuts away to a thicket of palm trees and boulders inside an enormous arboretum. Now the man, also white, comes into view, leading the woman by the hand through the trees. He wears a white suit that contrasts sharply with the woman's red sweater and black skirt as they pursue each other through the arboretum, tripping over exotic foliage and their own words:

- You wanted my advice about a present.
 —I don't want [it] now.
 —You wanted to give your husband a gun.
 —I don't want [to] now.
 —You don't want advice?
 —I don't want [it].
 —My advice or to give the present?
 —My husband left me a revolver. If you touch me, I can kill you, if you don't go away.¹