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'DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH': THE BODY AS A SITE FOR STALINISM IN *BURNT BY THE SUN* (*UTOMLENNYE SOLNTSEM*)

1. Preamble

Since it was released in 1994, Nikita Mikhalkov's film *Burnt by the Sun* (*Utomlennye Solntsem*) has received "almost universal acclaim".[1] Ten years later the film is generally seen as a 'neo-Chekhovian' portrayal of the human cost of the purges which were in their early stages at the time the film is set, 1936. Beumers, for example, comments:

> The film anticipates the Great Terror that would soon become manifest: while it is still possible for a high-ranking officer like Kotov to believe in the justice of the system, the threat is tangible, audible, and visible by the end of the film [...] The emphasis is [...] on capturing the last moments before the show trials made such a firm belief as Kotov's in Revolutionary ideals impossible, and to convey the atmosphere of a pre-Revolutionary lifestyle that really did survive into the 1930s in exceptional circumstances (Beumers 2003, 63-4).

Others, while retaining an essentially political interpretation, have seen Mikhalkov's project as more broadly based. Gillespie and Zhuravkina, for instance, suggest that the film "is not revisionist in any way, but rather neo-Slavophile [...] It is a film [...] about the failure of a generation, like the pre-revolutionary generation before it, to defend its values and way of life" (Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 61).

The purpose of the present paper is to revisit these interpretations, but through a specific prism, one suggested by my title, derived as it is from a seminal work by Michel Foucault. In studying the film, I have noticed that one of the most striking aspects of it is the repeated emphasis on the human body, and especially the face, as the site of personal history – in a sense that must go without saying – but also as the site of p o l i t i c a l history.[2] In particular, it will be

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1 See Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 58. For an account of the film's reception both in Russia and abroad, see Beumers 2003, especially 114-30.

2 For a similar approach to Russian culture more generally, see Costlow, Sandler and Vowles 1993. The editors make the following important caveat in their "Introduction": "We take the

my central argument that the way the three main protagonists, Kotov (played by Mikhalkov), his wife Marusia, and Mitia, suffer their fate during the rise of Stalinism, is dramatised in the film by the marks it leaves on their bodies, almost like stigmata. More generally, the value system of the film is literally embodied by the relationship each of these three, plus Nadia, Kotov's and Marusia's six-year-old daughter, has with their own bodies. Before discussing these and other aspects of the film, I will make a brief excursus to rehearse the principal arguments of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977).

2. *Discipline and Punish*

The central argument in Foucault's work is that, between the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Victorian age, roughly speaking, the whole economy of punishment was redistributed. In particular, torture as public spectacle disappeared, and therefore, the b o d y as the major target of penal repression also disappeared. For example, in 1787 Benjamin Rush remarked: "I can only hope that the time is not far away when gallows, pillory, scaffold, flogging and wheel will, in the history of punishment, be regarded as the marks of the barbarity of centuries and of countries" (quoted in Foucault 1977, 10). By the 1820s, indeed, Foucault notes, flogging only remained in a few penal systems (including Russia, of course), while "generally speaking, punitive practices had become more reticent. One no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible" (idem, 10-11).

In the context of the period in which *Burnt by the Sun* is set, that is on the eve of the show trials,[3] the reappearance of the judicial process as public spectacle, if not of public executions and torture, is clearly of interest. Indeed, Mikhalkov's film seems to suggest that the Soviet Union was about to return to the 'barbarity' of which Benjamin Rush had spoken. Moreover, although the film is noteworthy for its reticence about showing violence – indeed almost all violence is off-screen – the way in which it does display the physical impact of both personal and political suffering is strongly redolent of Foucault's arguments. That is, Mikhalkov's characters' bodies, and the marks made on them, display the encroachment of history; they are 'disciplined and punished' c o r p o r a l l y.

I move now to my analysis of the film. As already noted, it will be my central contention that the body is at the semiotic centre of the film. Before, however, examining this contention in the four main protagonists, I wish to look at some

terms "sexuality" and "the body" principally to mean not biologically precise events or objects in the physical world, but (following Foucault) rather discursively constituted and changing entities" (Costlow, Sandler and Vowles 1993, 1).

3 See Beumers 2003, 63 for the precise dating of the film.

other key elements of the work which will further suggest that the body is, as it were, at the heart of a series of concentric circles which are the object of attack and invasion throughout the film. I begin with an analysis of the semiotics of space within *Burnt by the Sun*.

3. Aspects of Space

As Beumers has also noted (Beumers 2003, 69), the film is structured around a series of binary oppositions, Moscow and the dacha, western and Russian culture and so on. Indeed, this is evident from the very beginning. The film begins, and will end, in Moscow (apart from a vital last shot of the fields and woods), while most of the film is set in and around the dacha. The characterisation of Moscow at the beginning of the film is brief, but emblematic. We see the stars on the Kremlin (anachronistically; Beumers 2003, 63), and the political power which will gradually encroach on the lives and bodies of the protagonists is at once established. Equally, we see Mitia arrive home at the House on the Embankment in a black car, a visual premonition of the equally emblematic vehicle in which he will take Kotov to his execution. This House is bedecked with red flags and banners depicting Marx, Engels and Stalin, whose face will come to dominate the film. As Mitia lies dying in his bath, the camera cuts away to reveal the same star-bedecked Kremlin.

Another parallel between beginning and end of the film is the shots of Mitia in his bathroom. Indeed, the semiotics of this most corporally intimate space are vital to our understanding of the film as a whole. The centrality of the body to the work is suggested by the very fact that we first see Mitia's face in close-up in his bathroom mirror, as well as by the fact that we last see him lying, dying in his bath-tub. Equally, we first encounter the Kotov family, all of whom are either naked, or semi-naked, also in this environment. There is a major difference, however, in that, although there are modern conveniences in the Kotov dacha, he eschews the bathroom for the more traditional delights of the *bania*.[4] We never actually see the precise topographical relationship between this building and the dacha, but its rusticity is further encoded by the fact that there does not seem even to be a path leading to it: when the messenger comes to summon Kotov he has to scramble up a steep bank to reach it. The cultural significance of the binary opposition of bathroom and *bania* is laid bare by Olga Nikolaevna, who wonders why they won't use the more modern, indoors version, while allowing that Pushkin and Kutuzov also used the *bania*. In terms of the 'neo-Slavophile' tendency of the film, Kotov could not be in more exalted company.

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[4] Gillespie and Zhuravkina also make this point (Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 61).

This tendency within the work goes rather deeper, however. That is, it seems to me, Mikhalkov has sought to create not merely an idyllic, traditionally Russian world which will be destroyed, but also one that is, almost explicitly, Edenic. Kotov and Marusia, it is suggested by some of the film's iconography, are, in some senses, Adam and Eve in a pre-lapsarian world. This is perhaps first intimated by the shot immediately following our first encounter with the family. Leaving Nadia sitting on Kotov's back while thrashing him with birch twigs, the camera cuts away to show what will be a visual synecdoche of the whole film, a panoramic shot of a virgin wheat field, framed by pine woods, and with a dark, threatening tank sitting in the space between the two. Shortly thereafter we have a shot of Marusia and Nadia in the wheat fields, a shot which, as Beumers has noted (Beumers 2003, 25), evokes the iconography of the Madonna and child.

Throughout the film there are a number of moments when the camera pans across, or lovingly dwells on scenes which are quintessentially Russian, but are framed and lit in such a painterly way as to suggest a more mythological, or Biblical topos. The first entrance by the lost and wandering truck driver, who will later be shot,[5] is against the backdrop of an Arcadian scene of a meandering river, framed by trees, and bathed in summer sunshine. Similarly, when all the family troop off to this same river to relax and bathe, we are again given a panoramic shot of a steep bank leading down to the river, and the bucolic idyll is reinforced by the fact that everyone is dressed in shades of white.

The river itself is, of course, an ancient symbol of paradise and of life. The river plays a crucial role in two of the central 'duets' in the film, between Kotov and Nadia on the one hand, and between Mitia and Marusia on the other. While other members of the family relax on the riverside beach, father and daughter take a small rowboat and float off downstream. This is a moment of intense intimacy, to which I will return. In the present context, it should be noted that the river itself forms a central ingredient of this idyllic escape for a while from the threatening modern world. (Indeed, it is one of the very few scenes away from the dacha.) They wonder why they can't always remain like this. The conscious invocation of a paradise soon to be lost is emphasised by the shot moving back from close-up to middle distance, as we see their boat drifting down the swift flowing river, and then out of the frame.

If this sequence evokes the imagery of the 'river of life', then the earlier iconography of the dacha within which most of the film is set, is pure fairy-tale.

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[5] This figure has been variously interpeted. Gillespie and Zhuravkina conclude their brief discussion of this emblematic figure by saying: "There could be no clearer metaphor for a nation that is lost, bewildered, finally betrayed and destroyed" (Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 60). Mikhalkov, who based the trope on an event which had occurred during his shooting of *Oblomov*, has commented that "The driver is a metaphor for Russia that searches for its path, and everybody points her in different directions" (quoted in Beumers 2003, 67).

Early in the morning a rider comes looking for Kotov. He rounds a bend in the woodland path, and the viewer is given a frame-filling shot of the dacha. Immediately evoked is the classic topos of the 'little house in the clearing', a place of safety amid the encroaching dark forces which lurk in the forest. Several details are picked out as the camera dwells on the scene. First we see the archetypal picket-fence, featured prominently in "Old-World Landowners", for example. Then we see the lovingly framed shots of the dacha's triple gable-ends, the carved window-frames, all surrounded by birch trees and an aureole of early morning mist. Later on when we go inside there are a series of 'painterly' shots through door-frames which emphasise how orderly, how safe everything is in this world.[6]

But, as was the case for Afanasii and Pulkheriia, the eponymous landowners of Gogol's tale, nothing and nowhere is safe.[7] Even as the rider approaches the dacha, we have a fleeting glimpse of the threatening outside world in the guise of red flags in the trees. More generally, the return of Mitia will be the catalyst for the complete destruction of the sheltered haven. Indeed, as soon as he enters the dacha, this particular haven is, in a sense, at once destroyed, as it becomes immediately obvious that *he* not Kotov is a member of this family; he is *svoi*, while Kotov is *chuzhoi*.[8] From the moment he arrives in the house and reveals his identity (though not, of course, why he has come), he begins the ousting of Kotov from his nest.

Equally, almost from the beginning of the country sequences, Mikhalkov constantly reminds the viewer that the barbarians are at the gate, and that they have come to destroy the old culture, the way of life, and, ultimately, the very bodies of those the viewer will come to love. As already noted, the visual synecdoche of the tank embedded between the golden fields and the woods comes very early in the film. Similarly, after this threat has been driven off, and the family settle down to breakfast, the film cuts away to the construction of the dirigible. The idyll on the beach is broken by the blaring of the siren for the gas attack training evacuation. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this is when Kotov and Marusia enjoy their first, and, as it turns out, only moment of intimacy in the film, and the camera cuts away to a visual rhyme of the earlier shot, the black NKVD car, nestling in the space between the fields and woods, like a dangerous black beetle.

As we know, Kotov will leave the enclave, the Edenic haven, in this black car, a car he discovers is taking him to his death. This opposition of 'house',

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6 Beumers, ibid., makes a similar point.

7 See Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 59: "the [later] film is about the disruption of this harmony by external forces."

8 See Beumers 2003, 72 for a similar point.

'leaving the house' fits exactly into an ancient semiotic pattern, as described by Iurii Lotman:

> Amongst the universal themes of world folklore a large place is occupied by the opposition 'house' (one's own, safe, cultural space, preserved by the protective gods) to the anti-house, 'the house in the forest' (alien, devilish space, the place of temporary death, entry into which is equivalent to a journey into the world beyond the grave) (Lotman 1992, 457; my translation. – J.A.).[9]

For Kotov this is indeed, a 'devilish' place, a place of death.

Yet we should also note that Kotov's staged, metaphoric death, to be followed by Mitia's actual death at his own hands, is not the end of the film. The final shots of the film have Nadia skipping through the fields, while the dedication to all "those burnt by the sun of revolution" rolls over another view of the golden wheat fields, framed by the woods, suggesting, perhaps, that the eternal values of the Russian countryside, of nature itself, of an Edenic scene are, literally, in the end, the most important values.

All this said, it remains the case that the diegesis of the film is primarily concerned with the barbarians' attack on the civilised body. That this will be the film's central thematics is suggested by an unwavering refrain of dangerous machines and weapons which present a constant threat both to the human body and to the body politic.

4. Machines and Weapons

Indeed, weapons of both mass and individual destruction feature from the very opening shot of the film. That is, although the film may seek to establish an idyllic, pre-lapsarian world which will t h e n be destroyed, and although Kotov may think he controls his own destiny, that 'we all have a choice' until the very last minutes, i n r e a l i t y, from the opening moments Mikhalkov lays an abundance of clues to suggest that the world the characters inhabit is under threat, is indeed doomed to destruction. Thus, in the opening sequence of the film, as the black car takes Mitia home, we see a group of young soldiers marching down under a bridge. Their rifles have fixed bayonets. After this prologue, the film proper begins with a mock fight, 'the battle of the tanks'. The mock heroic tone in which this is enacted is one of the many tragic ironies of the film. As the tanks circle menacingly, churning up the pristine fields, and while Commander Kotov is sent for to save the day, the local peasants attempt to fight off the invader with a motley collection of traditional farming implements. This

[9] See also van Baak 1990, 3.

again suggests the deeper, more primitive resonances of the work. The fight is an almost elemental, neo-Luddite attempt to stop the new destroying the old. At the same time, it reveals why Kotov 'must' be purged. In stopping the tanks in their tracks, he reveals he is n o t part of the Soviet machine, for all his later rhetorical love of his *rodina*.

The tanks are driven off to the sound of ironically heroic, ersatz military music, the *narod* cheers its defeat of the encroaching threat of modernity, but the victory is entirely pyrrhic. Within minutes, we cut back to the first shots of the construction site which will be returned to on and off for most of the rest of the film, and from where the dirigible will be launched. We read a banner with the words "Glory to the Builders of Stalin's Airships". Later we see the site in greater detail: in effect, the workers are creating a s c a f f o l d, and the visual coincidence with the place of execution is surely not accidental. On both of these later reminders of the construction site, the amplified hammering increases the sense of menace. And, of course, it will be the eventual launch of the craft which will fill the screen with the minatory face of Stalin.

Auditory invasion of the idyll is featured elsewhere, as the bodily senses of the characters, and the viewers, are attacked. As the family stroll down to the beach to relax and bathe, the loudspeaker blares out the announcement of a (fictitious) public holiday, the sixth anniversary of the Day of Dirigibles and Aeronautics. The blaring siren later disrupts the parallel intimacies of Marusia and Mitia on the one hand, and Kotov and Nadia on the other, to announce the beginning of the training exercise, an evacuation after a simulated gas attack. Like the 'battle of the tanks', this is handled in parodic fashion, with even dogs decked out in gas-masks, but behind the surrealistic image, the menace of modern machines remains evident.

The scenes on the beach also contain another form of weapon, which takes us closer to our central theme, the threat to the vulnerable bodies of the four main protagonists, in the guise of a broken bottle. Although he is the one to notice its potential dangers, Mitia is the one to step on the glass, while Kotov (and Nadia) for now at least remain inviolate. More broadly it should be noted, however, that the issue is also that n o w h e r e is safe; there is danger even w i t h i n Eden.[10] Equally, it is another reminder to the observant viewer of what is to come.

Indeed, to return to the beginning of the film, we see that from the very outset, Mikhalkov has interwoven his narrative with visual intimations of the fatal outcomes which will befall all three of the adult protagonists. As already noted,

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[10] Beumers has also noted the centrality of this episode. Describing how Kotov nearly treads on the broken glass, Nadia runs past it, before Mitia does actually stand on it, she continues: "Mitia is injured by the item that he had identified as a potential danger: Kotov and Nadia remain unharmed, not even noticing the danger, while he is aware of it and still cuts himself. This small episode epitomizes the positions of Kotov and Mitia." (Beumers 2003, 80).

the soldiers are tramping the Moscow streets with fixed bayonets. When we follow Mitia into his apartment in the House on the Embankment, his manservant removes a gun from his discarded jacket: clearly Mitia had been out with his gun that night for a purpose. As soon as Philippe places the gun on the telephone table, the phone rings, suggesting that even the phone is a dangerous modern weapon, a herald of death. Shortly thereafter, of course, Mitia will make the call to accept the commission which will lead to the deaths of Kotov and Marusia. Before that, he will turn this self-same gun on himself to play the game of Russian roulette, which will also decide literally whether he is still alive to take the commission. Here too the gun and the phone are intimately linked: Mitia lets the phone ring and ring while he lets a bullet decide his and others' fates. The actual Russian roulette sequence is one of the most extraordinary moments in the film. As he draws the revolver slowly towards his forehead the barrel faces upwards, almost into the camera, so that the viewer is drawn in, implicated into his action. In turn, the actual moment of the failed attempt, even though only a few minutes into the film, is full of suspense, which is very visually realised, with a close up of the gun against his head, which is part outside the frame.

The prologue to the film, that is the sequence before the opening credits, is full of such intimations. The soldiers' bayonets prefigure the razor which appears in close-up as Mitia leaves the bathroom. The razor, in turn, anticipates the broken bottle, and will, of course, be the instrument by which Mitia dies. In a similar fashion, our introduction to Kotov includes an ironic anticipation of his ultimate fate. The first image we have of him in the diegesis of the film (that is, apart from the winter tango sequence) is of him lying in the *bania* being thrashed with birch-twigs by Nadia. Although this image is e m o t i o n a l l y utterly different, it should perhaps be seen as a harbinger of the dreadful beating he will later receive.

Perhaps the most telling instance of these visual premonitions, however, is the black car, which too will become a powerful symbol of death. As noted, it appears in the opening frames, and then reappears at the most intimate moment in the film, the love-making of Kotov and Marusia. The note of tragic irony which permeates the film is particularly intense when Mitia tells Nadia that a car will be coming to take her father away, and she whoops with joy. Later on, of course, she 'drives' this car to the first bend in the road. Mikhalkov emphasises the menace of this machine when it finally approaches the dacha. We see it drive down the woodland path, thereby desecrating this icon of traditional Russia. Its danger is emphasised by the car being driven 'into' the camera, so that it looms above the audience's point of view, overflowing the frame.

As we can see, then, one of the key narrative devices is the positioning of weapons, or weapon-surrogates from the very beginning of the film to tell the

audience that vulnerable bodies are in danger, and there will be no happy ending. More broadly, the narrative is predicated on the principle of 'deaths foretold', as we may see from a more general consideration of this aspect of the film.

5. Aspects of Narrative

As Beumers has noted the way the film is structured also lends it an air of predicted doom: "The circular structure of time and space enhances the closed system of the film's narrative: there is no way out, either in time or space: the characters are entrapped" (Beumers 2003, 66-67). Equally, this sense of inevitability is enhanced by the pre-credit sequence which acts as a rough summary of what is to come, with its key symbols of the gun, the phone, the car, bayonets and razor. (The prologue also places the body and face at the centre of the film's iconography, as we shall see in due course). The very positioning of the titles is significant. Mitia calls back to accept the commission, and this 'triggers' both the titles, and the accompanying title song "Utomlennoe solntse", which, in turn, leads us onto the 'winter tango' sequence of Kotov and Marusia watched by the softly singing Nadia.

In this sense it is Mitia saying 'It's me. I agree' which sets the rest of the film in train. Again, the audience knows that Kotov's later confidence that he calls the shots is mis-placed, because, even before the film proper begins, Mitia is in control. Similarly, it is only when Mitia arrives at the dacha, about a quarter of the way through, that the action of the film really begins in earnest. Immediately, he establishes himself as the driving force in the film, and shows he knows the intimate secrets of the other characters by a well chosen phrase. He shows control in other ways as well. His 'fairy-tale' with backwards names acts as a kind of meta-narrative, and he intimates hidden knowledge in a variety of ways at other times. A prime example is when he recites Kotov's former telephone number at OGPU. This both tells Kotov that he knows his past, but reveals in code what his own present affiliation is.

But, as already indicated, Mitia's foretelling of the future is merely part of a broader pattern. In this sense much of the film has a double purpose. Many details and episodes, that is, both reveal information, but also have a hidden meaning which only later becomes apparent. As we have already noted, Nadia's beating of her father in the *bania* predicts what will later happen to him. When Kotov sorts out the young soldiers in the tanks, he both threatens them with violence, only semi-playfully, and then squeezes their testicles as a parting gesture. Again, his own destiny is tragically anticipated – and Kotov plays the ancient part of the tragic hero in that he is unable to read the signs.

The metaphor of the broken bottle is a key illustration of this device. Another aspect of this metaphorization of the whole film is when Mitia picks up the broken bottle. Its jagged edge is turned first towards Kotov, but, for now, he is out of reach. It is then turned towards Mitia, in another anticipation of his ultimate destiny. Other details of these scenes by the river have the same function. Mitia looks at Kotov's imposing physique, his smile, and remarks to Marusia that, for all this, and for all the fact that his portrait hangs everywhere, 'with one flick', and it will all be gone. Tragically, Marusia, like her husband cannot hear the hidden message.

These messages now come thick and fast, and, significantly, each is centred on the body. Mitia, sadistically, pretends to Marusia that he has drowned in the river, anticipating his later death, which will only be successful because he, unlike Marusia in her failed attempt, slits his wrists in water. When Marusia comes back out of the water, she tells the people conducting the mock evacuation that she is "seriously wounded", while Mitia follows her and says that "I've been killed", both of them thereby speaking more truth than they realise.[11]

Other deaths continue to be foretold. The wandering driver chances on the construction site, and is chased away by an angry soldier, whose hand twice reaches for his gun. When Nadia listens to Mitia's tale she anticipates his story by declaring "Off with his head", while sliding her finger across her throat to symbolise what would have happened if 'Iatim' had not done what he was ordered to do. Later, in one of the most poignant of moments, Nadia, in effect, dresses Kotov in his best uniform as if for burial when she helps him get ready.

There are other such moments. Suffice it to say that close examination of the dialogue and imagery of the film leaves the audience in no doubt as to the tragic outcome which will befall the characters. We should also emphasise that most of these tragic predictions are predicated on the bodily harm which will be done to them. I now turn to another corporeal structuring device of the film, in an examination of the role of dance, together with music.

6. Music and Dance

Although, as Beumers has noted (Beumers 2003, 100-101), non-diegetic music does not feature prominently in the film, music played, sung or referred to by the characters is central to our understanding of the work. Mitia again calls the tune! On more than one occasion he reminds Marusia and others of his *jeunesse dorée* as a music student with Marusia's father. Equally, he announces his arrival by energetic piano playing and singing, while still wearing disguise. This

[11] See Beumers 2003, 71-72 for a different interpretation of these comments.

emblematic moment is reprised after the beach scenes when Mitia, now wearing a gas mask, plays a can-can which all the family join in with, while Kotov departs to begin lunch alone, emphasising again that Mitia is *svoi* and Kotov is, effectively, a stranger in his own home.

Like the title tango, this can-can is, of course, a non-Russian dance, and Mikhalkov again shows his neo-Slavophile credentials in the tap-dance sequence. Just before this, almost exactly three quarters of the way through the film, Mitia has finally disclosed to Kotov the real purpose of his return. Despite this, and even though we know that Mitia has, in effect, been in control of the plot since before the title sequence, Kotov thinks h e is still master of his own destiny. In this context the tap-dance is very much a disguised power struggle between the two men, both to reveal who has the greater prowess, but also in their battle for Nadia's approval. With apparent slight reluctance, and at Nadia's request, Mitia nonchalantly reveals his terpsichorean mastery. In terms of the political semiotics of the work it is important to emphasise that his is encoded as very much a W e s t e r n dance. Kotov, who, significantly, is standing higher up the staircase, responds with disdainful ease, and with a Russian folk dance. Once more the body is very much at the centre of the value system, and once more Russian is valorised against the foreign. Again, however, Kotov's victory has a hollow ring.[12]

Central to this element of the film is the song "Utomlennoe solntse", which underpins the title. This is a popular tango from the 1930s, whose precise grammatical formulation is altered to form the film's title.[13] Like the can-can and the tap-dance, the tango is a dance which focuses very much on the body, and, like the can-can, very much on the s e x u a l body, having its origins in the brothels of Buenos Aires. Equally, like the other two dances, it is a Western dance which lends it particular resonances in the film's value system. Like the other two, although to a much greater extent, it has a key structural function.

The title song, in fact, strikes up non-diegetically, just as Mitia is accepting his commission. The film titles then roll, and we cut away to what is, in effect, a flash-back, a very curious scene of a band of white-suited middle aged men playing and singing this tango, on a bandstand in a park. It is winter, or perhaps early spring (there's snow on the ground, but the water in the lake or pond is not frozen). In front of this ensemble dance a lone couple, he in a dark grey soldier's greatcoat and cap, she in furs. This sequence represents a visual oxymoron. They dance a hot, sexy Latin dance, embracing closely, bespeaking great intimacy, yet they are fully, indeed, very warmly dressed. The scene is thus filled with ambiguity and semiotic dissonances. This sense of ambiguity is reinforced

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[12] See Gillespie and Zhuravkina 1996, 61 for a similar evaluation of these performances.

[13] See Beumers 2003, 65-6 for these points, and idem, 99-100 for the cultural significance of the tango in the Soviet Union of the 1930s.

by the fact that this scene breaks the temporal unity of the rest of the film, which spans exactly 25 hours. Moreover, it is never explicitly referred to again. At the same time it creates the sexual and cultural tensions which will dominate the rest of the film. Coming as the titles roll, it stands in effect as a visual summary of the whole film.

Because of the precise placing of the music and the dancing, all three protagonists are linked in a dance, not of sex, but of death. And so too is Nadia, as she sits on a bench near her dancing parents, softly singing the words of the song. As the title credits roll, the camera slowly zooms in on the daughter of this marriage of cultural dissonance. This visual device suggests that, in some senses, she will be the centre of the film. Indeed, she will be the last character we see, and she will still be singing this song.

The title song features several times in the rest of the film, and it is always linked with Mitia or Nadia. It is next heard when Nadia returns to the dacha with her parents after the tanks have been dismissed. She sings the song to herself, performing a kind of solo tango, and we are reminded of the ambiguities, tensions and semiotic dissonances of the opening, and of Mitia's "I agree". As with so many other of the film's devices, menace is constantly being introduced to the sheltering enclave. We next hear it immediately after Mitia's meta-narrative *skazka* about his own former life, and of how 'Kotov' had prevented him form marrying Marusia. Reflectively he picks up the guitar to strum the song, while Nadia softly sings it. Again menace creeps in, again Nadia and Mitia are linked.

The hidden poignancy of the song, and the links between Mitia and Nadia are reinforced in the final minutes of the film. As Kotov is driven away to his brutal destiny, Nadia skips back home singing the song. Shortly afterwards we go full circle, back with Mitia to Moscow, and to his bathroom, where he lies dying in his bathtub, softly whistling the title track. The Latin tango has its origins in sex: in this Russian enactment, it speaks not of sex and intimacy; rather, it is a dance of death, with which the film both begins and ends.[14]

As argued throughout this paper, the body is at the centre of the film's thematics and imagery, from the first shots, through the title song, in every key moment, and right to the end. Let us, then, move to a more detailed consideration of how each of the three adult protagonists displays and relates to her or his body, with reference also to Nadia. I begin with Marusia.

[14] On the musical front one should also mention the use of the poem/song "Vechernii zvon", sung to Kotov before he is taken away, and described by Beumers as the "most frightening sequence in the film" (Beumers 2003, 100). In fact, this sequence is missing from the foreign language version.

7. Marusia: Body, Face, Clothes

The key notes attached to Marusia's body are innocence, childishness and vulnerability. Leaving aside the tango flashback, we first see Marusia, like Kotov, semi-naked. The physical ease and intimacy of the Kotov family, their sense of being comfortable in their own bodies, is established from the very beginning, and it will differentiate them very markedly from Mitia. We next encounter Marusia, with Nadia, as Madonna and child, in the wheat field, dressed in white, just in their shifts. Indeed, for important moments of the film, Marusia will often be naked or semi-naked, emphasising both her innocence and her vulnerability. (Interestingly, this sequence is the only scene in which we see mother alone with daughter, whereas Nadia has a number of duets with both her father and with Mitia). Her semi-naked vulnerability is revisited during the scenes of intimate recollections by and in the river. She wears a one-piece bathing costume, while Mitia, as almost always, remains fully dressed.

While she lies on the beach the camera dwells on her almost boyishly vulnerable body, and her c h i l d i s h body is recalled at a couple of vital moments.[15] Soon after his arrival, Mitia recalls how he had taken her, as a six-year-old, to the Bolshoi, where she had met Rakhmaninov, because she had needed to pee, and he'd taken her to the gents. A similar event is recalled in Mitia's disguised biography. 'Iatim' meets 'Iasum' when he returns from ten years away, and, most romantically (!), asks 'Are you the girl who peed in her pants during my music lesson with your father?' In a slightly different vein, when Mitia recalls their first night together, what he recalls in particular is the mark her knicker elastic had left on her tummy which was 'as pink and soft' as a baby's. Now, as Beumers suggests, this may tell us something about Mitia's psychology, a point to which I will return, but it also establishes Marusia's body a s t h a t o f a c h i l d – and the most intimate places and functions of that body – as one of the dominant motifs attached to her.

In the present of the film, a central motif attaching to Marusia is her inability to face the truth, a failing which is often rendered visually. This is suggested when Mitia first reveals his identity. We see her face looking at Mitia, not directly, but in a mirror. On three later occasions Mitia reveals intimate moments from the past either directly or in code. On every occasion we do not see them in the same frame, and thus their intimacy is disrupted; often we do not see Marusia's face so we cannot see her reactions. Thus, while Mitia first recalls her toiletry habits, he is off camera, while she is not even in the same room as him, and looks away from the camera into the middle distance. By the river, while he recalls the night they spent together, again their heads are not in the same frame, and we only see the back of her head. After playing the can-can,

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[15] See Beumers 2003, 77 for a different interpretation of this.

and after everyone else has left the room, Marusia brings his clothes in and sees him, presumably now naked, but again we do not see them together. As always we see them as separate even at their most intimate moments. Equally, as Mitia tells his tale, they are again in different rooms, and once more the camera withholds Marusia's face from view: we see only her trembling hands and profile as she tries to drink her tea.

On one very intimate occasion we do see her face expressing her emotions. In the post-coital embrace with Kotov, the camera dwells on her beatific face, which is surrounded by an aureole of her hair, loose for the only time in the film, and bathed in an aura of light. Marusia, unlike her husband is naked. However much this angelic innocence may valorise her, it will not save her.

In the end, the aspect of Marusia which most clearly defines her, and of which we are reminded at the film's close, is the mark on her wrists, left by her unsuccessful suicide attempt after Mitia had seemingly abandoned her. These signs of suffering are constantly alluded to. We first see them as she listens to Mitia's Bolshoi recollection. On the beach Mitia notices them and asks their provenance, and she explains that she had not known such a method of self-murder would only work in water. We see them again as she and Kotov argue just before their love-making. Indeed, he emphasises her stigmata by holding her by these very wrists, a reference she underscores by her threat, serious or not, to jump out of the top-floor window. And finally, of course, Mitia reminds us of Marussia's bodily history by killing himself not with the revolver he had played with at the beginning, but as a kind of homage to the woman he may still love, but whose life he has just destroyed.

In a variety of ways, then, Marusia's body tells her story, and much the same may be said for Mitia to whom I now turn.

8. Mitia: Body, Face, Clothes

Like the other characters Mitia is characterised by his first appearance. His clothes throughout emphasise his Western culture, especially, perhaps, the cricket or tennis sweater he later wears at the dacha. In terms of the 'neo-Slavophile' tendency of the film, this foreignness is encoded negatively, and Mitia's danger for the innocent, 'naked' Russians we will encounter is also emphasised when we first see him. Indeed, the point to be made here is that we do not fully see him, as his face is obscured by the lift cage in which he is travelling up to his flat. At many key moments, in fact, as was also the case to some extent with Marusia, but not with Nadia or Kotov, Mitia's face will be obscured. Thus when he first arrives at the dacha, disguised as a blind beggar, his face is further obscured by the bars of the gate, a visual rhyme with the lift shot. Simi-

larly, when he begins his moments of intimate recollection with Marusia, the riverside bushes and trees form a kind of natural set of bars to obscure his face. So too, during his fairy-tale autobiography his face is obscured by a net curtain, or only seen in long shot at the most painful memories. In other words, Mitia tends to hide his face when the truth is to be told. This hiding of the truth even infects our view of Kotov, for, when Mitia finally tells him why he has come, both men are only seen through a glass darkly, and their words cannot be heard.

In other words, Mitia is a master of disguise, a skilled actor, and someone whose true motives and even identity remain obscure.[16] Significantly, he first enters the film proper wearing heavy disguise, and soon claims to be married with three children. On the beach he again pretends to be blind, a disguise which reveals one truth about him while concealing another. Soon he dons a gas mask which again completely hides his face, and leads to one of the most memorable, and emblematic moments in the film, when Mitia thumps out the can-can, while wearing his mask, and a borrowed red dressing-gown. Equally, when he tries to tell the truth about himself, it's in the disguised form of a fairy tale – and Kotov later reminds 'Andersen' that he'd missed out some vital facts. Perhaps, indeed, the only time we see the 'real' Mitia is when he is in the car with Kotov. Now he says very little, and acts in a completely business-like way – although, significantly, he now seems unwilling, or even unable to look Kotov in the eyes.

As we have seen with Marusia, the ability to, literally, f a c e the truth and to stand naked, are important indicators of moral worthiness. As we shall shortly see, Mitia stands in marked contrast to both Marusia, as well as Kotov and Nadia, although he i s naked in some sense in the course of the film. Thus, after he and Marusia have returned from the beach, we see his clothes hanging to dry. Later, as we know, Marusia will see him (presumably) naked at the piano, but, significantly, the camera again withholds this from the viewer. In a different mode he stands naked in the course of the fairy-tale, in that the doll which represents him does. Clearly, then, nakedness is encoded as significant, and, significantly, Mitia is never revealed naked as such to the audience.

That it is a sign of moral worth in Mikhalkov's scheme of things to reveal the nakedness of the truth, but also dangerous, is metaphorically signalled for Mitia in the synecdoche of the broken bottle. When they reach the beach both he and Kotov remove their shoes, and we even have a close-up of Mitia's bare heels. As we already know, it is h i s heels which will be cut by the jagged edge, and it is surely meaningful that the only part of his body which he undresses is precisely the part that is injured![17]

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16 See Beumers 2003, 92-3 for a discussion of this aspect of the film.

17 In the original scenario Mitia has a large scar on his shoulder. The omission of this in the version released abroad is, in the present context, significant symbolically.

As we have seen, Mitia's face is hidden or partially obscured at certain moments where the truth is revealed. At other times, however, we do see his face quite clearly, and this especially applies to the establishing scenes in the prologue which lay down the critical motifs for our understanding of this character. Almost immediately, after arriving back in his flat, Mitia goes into his bathroom. As the phone rings and rings he stares at himself in the mirror, his face full of fear and apprehension: clearly he had been expecting this call. This real mirror conjures up the metaphor of the face being the mirror of the soul, and it is certainly the case that we will very rarely get this close to Mitia's true face, and therefore, his true feelings. Immediately after this mirror scene, however, we come to one of the most remarkable episodes in the film, when Mitia plays Russian roulette. We have a close-up of his head, in three-quarter profile, partly outside the frame. His arm and hand tremble, his lips are retracted, beads of sweat, which will still be there when he goes to return the phone-call, stand out on his forehead. Here we see his soul entirely embodied, both in his, perfectly understandable, animal fear at the possibility of imminent death, yet also in his control, for he is simultaneously correcting Philippe's gallicised Russian. Another rare instance when we see Mitia's face in such revealing close-up is by the river when it eventually moves outside the 'cage' formed by the bushes, and which had partially hidden his expression.

A strange, but highly significant aspect of these sequences by the beach, and especially when Mitia plunges into the river, is that he remains fully clothed throughout. Mitia's relationship with his own body is utterly different from that of the other three protagonists, and this marks him out as 'unnatural'. This motif is adumbrated in the opening sequences. As soon as he enters his flat he begins to disrobe, tossing his jacket to Philippe, but that's as far as it goes. On the beach, and even when swimming, he disdains to undress, apart, of course, from his shoes – and we've already seen the result of this. He dare not reveal his body, for the body cannot lie.[18]

That not daring to undress signifies lack of trustworthiness, or even evil, is confirmed when the NKVD men come to take Kotov away. It is a glorious, hot summer's day, but these three thuggish individuals sit in the black car with hats and jackets on, the windows shut, sweating profusely. Like Mitia these men of evil are ill at ease in their own bodies. We should also note, therefore, that when Mitia calls back the hapless truck driver so he can be eliminated he puts his jacket back on. Even more importantly we remember the final time we see Mitia. He is lying in his bathtub, drifting into death, but even at this moment of existential truth he remains fully dressed, even with his tie neatly fastened!

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[18] One should note a small detail at this point. Although Mitia d o e s remain fully dressed, apart from his shoes, he does go so far as to undo a number of his shirt buttons!

Perhaps since Tolstoi, the 'seer of the flesh', no artist has so prioritised and valorised bodily ease. This contention may be further confirmed by an examination of the final protagonist, Kotov, played, of course, by Mikhalkov himself.

9. Kotov: Body, Face, Clothes

If Mitia dare not get undressed, then Kotov's sign is his nakedness. As we have already noted, apart from the brief flashback, the first we see of Kotov and his family, they are naked or semi-naked in the *bania*: their innocence and their pre-lapsarian vulnerability are emphasised. We have our first proper shot of him when the messenger comes to fetch him to sort out the tanks, and we see his naked, powerful torso. Even while dealing with the army he wears only a singlet on his upper body, and he is seen semi-naked afterwards back at the dacha as he washes again at the kitchen sink. Later, at the beach, and on the river, he is once more in his singlet. In fact, he retains this garment even when making love, as well as during the tap-dance competition, where his semi-naked informality is in stark contrast to Mitia's full set of clothes. Indeed, when Kotov is fully dressed, he seems somehow incongruous, almost ill-at-ease, as when he dons a jacket and tie for lunch, and at first, at least, sits alone while the others are engaged in the carnivalesque can-can.

In the first couple of shots of Kotov the camera stresses not only his nakedness, but his physical prowess, and this will remain a dominant motif until almost the end of the film. As Beumers has noted: "His pursuit of physical exercise also reflects the obsession with the body characteristic of Stalinist culture, where the muscular bodies of the working class are the ultimate model for man's fitness to help build communism" (Beumers 2003, 81). This is indeed the case, but it also has a much more individual resonance within the thematics of the film, although here too it will end with tragic irony.

His physical powers are especially in evidence in the first quarter of the film. Once summoned he rides off, bare-back to confront the modern machines, and he tears across the screen like a latter-day *bogatyr* (or, nearer to home, Chapaev). Later Mitia will himself comment on his 'broad, muscular shoulders', though also noting that this could, and indeed will, vanish at a flick of the fingers. Even towards the end of the film Kotov continues to attempt to demonstrate his physical prowess, and, *ipso facto*, his invulnerability, as in the tap-dancing scene, or just before that, when he subdues Marusia to his will. Twice he uses physical violence, and on both occasion he winks laddishly at the camera. In the interlude during the football match, just after Mitia has warned him of what awaits, he strikes him to the ground. On the second occasion, in the car, his punch in the face of one of the NKVD guards is what prompts his

dreadful beating. *Mutatis mutandis*, those who live by the sword, the film suggests, will die by it.

In the end, then, Kotov's physical strength will count for naught. Equally, his famous face will be reduced to pulp. However, looking at the film as a whole, it remains the case that the prominence of Kotov's face is in marked contrast to Mitia's desire to hide his. For both men, though, the approach is the same: the face reveals the soul of the man. In Kotov's case the emphasis is on its openness, and its recognisability. We see this when he confronts the young soldiers at the tanks. At first they do not recognise him; when he borrows an army cap and turns his face in profile, copying an image of him we will see later, at once they see who he is. When he goes to the beach, bystanders make to stand up out of respect – everywhere he goes his face is known. One of the many poignant ironies towards the end of the film is his taking of the salute from the pioneer group who bear his name, and whose shirts carry stylised portraits of the face that will soon disappear forever. A further tragic twist is that it is because the truck driver recognises his face that he too must die. As with Kotov's physical strength, an asset turns out to be a dangerous liability.

Just as the film's value system clearly valorises Kotov's 'nakedness' and sheer physicality, so too it emphasises that he is both able to be intimate, and that, unlike Mitia, he is not afraid to show his true face. We see this with Marusia and, especially with Nadia, played, of course, by Mikhalkov's own daughter, also Nadia. Interestingly, in fact, although we see the Kotovs *en famille* at their ease in the *bania* at the beginning, there is only one 'duet' between Kotov and his beloved wife. Even here there is some ambiguity in the situation. Immediately after Mitia has revealed, in the thinly disguised code of Yatim and Yasum, that his departure from her had not been voluntary – and therefore that Kotov has not told her the entire truth, she runs out, and runs upstairs. In the first of two 'dumb scenes' (the second, already referred to, is when Mitia discloses his mission to Kotov), Kotov first attempts to talk Marusia round. She runs further upstairs, with Kotov in pursuit. At first this scene might be construed as a fairly crude attempt on his part to reassert his sexual, even physical hold over her. But the scene that follows is one of great lyrical intimacy and love-making, with much blissful physical and non-verbal communication. Although this is the only scene in the film where we see husband and wife alone, their leave-taking, which will be, of course, the last time they ever see each other, is marked by the look of terrific tenderness in his eyes. Mikhalkov clearly, then, strove to make the part he himself was playing into a man not merely of heroic action and energy, but a deeply feeling, family man. This aspiration is especially evident in the rather more frequent scenes with his daughter Nadia. In terms of the overall value system of the film these are, in my estimation, the most significant in the whole work.

From the very beginning, it is suggested that Kotov has his closest and most intimate bond, not with his wife, but with his daughter. (In reverse, it should be remembered that there are n o developed scenes *à deux* between mother and daughter, the partial exception being the shots of them standing together in the wheat fields). In the agenda setting *bania* sequence, Nadia is sitting on Kotov's naked back, thrashing him with the traditional foliage. After they all return to the dacha we see them together again, face pressed closely to face, as Kotov gets Nadia to do the platypus. When Mitia arrives and plays the piano, Nadia presses up close to Kotov, looking up into his eyes, full of trust.

The fundamental scene between the two comes, as we saw earlier, during perhaps the most idyllic moment in the whole film, as they float down stream, and wish they could do so forever. There are several shots of their two faces pressed together, filling the screen. Even more importantly, this is the occasion for the principal speech by Kotov which establishes him as a true Soviet patriot. Interestingly, especially in the light of the immediately preceding sequence of the danger of the jagged edge to vulnerable bare feet, to say nothing of my overall theme, Kotov's entry into his disquisition is via Nadia's soft pink feet, a pure symbol of physical vulnerability. As he holds and caresses them he tells her that they will be ever thus. His feet are hard and calloused, like the soles of shoes, but the great Soviet motherland is building trains and planes, the metro, and so she will never have to do all the walking and running he has had to.

This is one of the bitterest ironies of the film. Kotov believes that the Soviet system will preserve the soft machine, the vulnerable body. Instead, he will discover just a few hours later that the new barbarism which was about to envelop his country would instead reduce his own famous face to an almost unrecognisable bloody pulp. Indeed, we might say that this sequence on the river encapsulates not merely the thematics of the whole film, but in microcosm reflects all of Soviet history. The body is political.

We see Kotov and Nadia together on several occasions later on. As Kotov prepares to leave the dacha for the last time Nadia helps him dress. In the course of this there is another intensely lyrical 'portrait' of their two faces pressed together filling the screen, and just before this he gets her to do her charming platypus for the third and last time. Nadia leaves with him, and when she has to get out the car they kiss for the last time. The change in the situation is marked by the camera. Now we see them not in close-up, but in the middle distance, in silhouette only, through the glass of the black car of death, darkly.

Of course, many things change in the final quarter of the film, amongst them Kotov's relationship with his own body. The film highlights Kotov the family man, the loving husband and devoted father, but we never forget that he is a military hero. As we have already seen, he dons an army cap when by the tanks, so the soldiers will recognise him. Significantly, when he learns of Mitia's true

purpose for being there, Kotov switches roles, and for the first time he abandons his 'nakedness', and dons full military attire. In terms of the semiotics of the body that the film has established, this change is a sign of Kotov's fall from his pre-lapsarian innocence. As noted, it is Nadia, rather than Marusia, as one might have expected, who assists him – another poignant irony, as she is, in effect, dressing him for his execution. Once he is in full uniform, including medals, they hug, and the contrast to their earlier embraces on the river, when he wore only a singlet and loose trousers, is very marked.

One of the most noticeable aspects of *Burnt by the Sun* is its restraint. Although it certainly deals with the brutalising and destructive effects of Stalinism, it does so with almost classical decorum, in that almost all violence is either inferred, or off-screen. Yet, we should also remember that violence is never far away, as in the many weapons that are seen from the very first shots. Equally, we have seen that Kotov is marked by his physical prowess, which often threatens to turn to actual violence. So too, towards the end, threats of violence or real violence explode into the film's diegesis. Mitia warns him that in five or six days he will be crawling in his own excrement, at which Kotov punches him in the face. In this sense, Kotov sparks the violence of the film, and so too in the car, for it is his punch which precipitates his own terrible beating. The last we see of Commander Kotov is the ruins of his face, the film's most haunting image, and an image which is iconic of the whole film. A face that had been instantly recognisable to thousands might now not be recognised, even by his beloved wife or daughter.[19]

And so, we see that the film has established a series of points by which we might evaluate the principal protagonists, most especially the rivals Mitia and Kotov. Many of these are centred on the body, although there are of course, other points of reference, beyond the scope of the present paper, and which are in any event considered elsewhere. In assessing the characters in terms of the semiotics of the body, it would seem that Kotov is very clearly valorised. He is at ease in his body, he is ready to stand naked, and to turn an open face to the truth. Indeed, in semiotic terms at least, he, together with his wife and, especially, his daughter, are constructed as almost Edenic, pre-lapsarian in their innocence.

For all this, however, he is taken away to his death, as is his wife, while Mitia dies before either of them. In this sense, as others have remarked, there are no

[19] *Mutatis mutandis*, this image continues the theme of masking, in the sense that we can no longer be sure of what Kotov's facial expression is: I am indebted to Lucinda Thompson for drawing this point to my attention.

winners in this film.[20] Indeed, so: although Kotov, Marusia and Nadia stand apart from all others in this tragic film, as positive poles, beacons in and against the rapidly encroaching darkness, there is one other face we need to examine, a face that appears in the first few frames, and which becomes an increasingly insistent presence as the film develops to its inexorable conclusion. This, of course, is the face of Stalin.

10. The Face of Stalin

At first, Stalin's presence in the film seems unobtrusive. His face is first glimpsed as Mitia arrives at the House on the Embankment, which has draped across it a banner featuring Stalin's face, alongside those of Marx and Engels. His face is next seen at the breakfast table, on the front page of *Pravda*, another instance of external dangers invading the idyllic enclave. Shortly thereafter, this domestic interior is inter-cut with the construction work on the dirigibles, where we see Stalin's face on a poster. Shortly afterwards, the pioneers march by, bringing with them, of course, the disguised Mitia, and the first thing we see is Stalin's face on a banner at the front of the march.

For nearly forty minutes of running time (that is, about one third of the film) the audience is allowed to forget, in some sense, this ominous presence, but then, from almost exactly half way through, Stalin gradually becomes increasingly a visible factor in the film. As the family gathers for lunch, the film cuts back outside to the dirigible site, and we read a quotation from Stalin. At this point, the huge banner which will later be unfurled is attached, and the audience is allowed to glimpse the top of a very familiar head. The reminders of lurking, and now imminent danger, become a nagging refrain. As Kotov and Marusia make love in the attic, downstairs Mitia studies a picture of Kotov with Stalin. As he prepares to leave Kotov himself will study this same picture, which, on the latter occasion is filmed in close-up, and fills the entire screen. In fact, this is a visual preview of perhaps the most famous sequence of shots in the whole film. Immediately after Kotov's beating, the dirigible finally goes up, and the huge banner of Stalin's stern, unsmiling face is unfurled, and this too occupies the whole frame of the shot. Mitia stands smiling his sardonic grin, and slowly his arm lifts into a salute, seemingly against his will, and as if forced up by a puppeteer. But then, in a most enigmatic moment, the wind catches the banner, causing it to furl, so that the face is distorted beyond recognition, a neat visual

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[20] See, for example, Beumers' concluding words: "For Mikhalkov, there are no winners [...] Mitia's resistance to the cult of Stalin and Kotov's support for the Leader bear the same result: death" (Beumers 2003, 131-132).

suggestion perhaps, that this face will not always be able to conjure reflex actions in all those it surveys.

For most of the rest of this film, however, this awe-inspiring and awful face remains the dominant image, reflected at first in the mirror on the dresser on the truck. Then, as the black car slips through the beautiful fields, we see the banner again, still huge in the sky, while we hear from afar Kotov sobbing. For the last, climactic moments of the scenes in the countryside Stalin's face is the dominant, and dominating image, although it is important to remember as well, that Mikhalkov chose not to end with this face, but with the tribute to those destroyed by his malevolent presence. From the perspective of 60 years later, Stalin's face too may now be obliterated, but never forgotten.

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