Bed and Sofa (Третья Мещанская) [1927] chronicles the dissolution of a ménage à trois between three flatmates in 1920s Soviet Moscow, and explores the way that быт (byt: “everyday life” and its material circumstances) and interpersonal relations influence one another.

My name is Joseph Stalin. Or am I only a portrait of Joseph Stalin? I am a calendar on the wall. I've got a cigarette and a mustache. Not only do I have a mustache, but I have beautiful eyebrows as well. But I digress. This story isn't about me. Every day, I watch Nikolai and Liudmila. They live in a small apartment, where they talk and I listen[...]

It's morning. I can hear a train. Vladimir's train is arriving at the station. He's reading a beautiful map and heading for Nikolai and Liudmila's apartment[...] He's not far from the apartment now[...]

Every day, Nikolai works and Liudmila cooks him food. They always wash up, because they are good Russians[...] Now Nikolai does his exercises. He wants big muscles because all good Russians have big muscles. Then he reads the paper and smokes a cigarette. He doesn't wait for Liudmila when he eats. Liudmila loves Nikolai, but she loves me more...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years portrayed</th>
<th>Fictional documents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1917-1920s (remaking society, NEP)</td>
<td>- Zoschenko, “The Crisis” (mid 1920s)</td>
<td>- Bed and Sofa (mid 1920s)</td>
<td>- Lenin, “Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?” (1917)</td>
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<td>30s-40s (terror, Stalin, WWII)</td>
<td>- Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita (mid-to-late 1930s)</td>
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<td>50s-60s (the Thaw, Khrushchev)</td>
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<td>70s-1991 (stagnation, Gorbachev, Perestroika)</td>
<td>- Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (mid 1970s)</td>
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<td>- Rubinshtein, “Communal Pulp Fiction” (late 70s / early 80s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**horizontal movement (through contemporaneous documents):**
- Bed and Sofa (mid 1920s film)
- Zoschenko, “The Crisis” (mid 1920s literature)

**resultant contextual knowledge:**
- degrees of luxury in 1920s life
- valence of doors in communal living

**vertical movement (through history):**
- Bed and Sofa (mid 1920s film)
- Heart of a Dog (mid 1920s film)
- The Master & Margarita (mid-to-late 1930s novel)
- Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (late 1950s, mid 1970s film)

**resultant contextual knowledge:**
- historically variable attitudes towards luxury
- historically contingent treatment of “outsiders entering private space” theme

Select bibliography on foreign language teaching & the uses of history:

Kramsch, Claire. Context and Culture in Language Teaching (1993)

Stein, Pippa. Multimodal Pedagogies in Diverse Classrooms: Representation, Rights, and Resources (2008)


Select bibliography on Bed and Sofa and Russian materials:


http://kommunalka.colgate.edu/ (Online ethnographic museum dedicated to the communal apartment in Soviet Russia)