



Fig. 1 – Nikolai and Liudmila, husband and (unhappy) wife, in their apartment

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.

Fig. 2 – Liudmila receiving a gift from Vladimir, Nikolai's old army buddy who has just moved in



Fig. 3 – The portrait of Stalin that hangs on the wall of the protagonists' apartment

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[...]

Fig. 4 – excerpted student screenplay for early scene from film – narrated from point of view of Stalin's portrait (Fig. 4)

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...



Years portrayed	Fictional documents	Cinematic documents	Other documents
1917-1920s (remaking society, NEP)	-Zoschenko, "The Crisis" (mid 1920s)	- <i>Bed and Sofa</i> (mid 1920s) - <i>Heart of a Dog</i> (mid 1920s)	-Lenin, "Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" (1917)
30s-40s (terror, Stalin, WWII)	-Bulgakov, <i>The Master and Margarita</i> (mid-to-late 1930s)		-Brodksy, "In a Room and a Half" (post WWII)
50s-60s (the Thaw, Khrushchev)		- <i>Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears</i> (late 1950s)	
70s-1991 (stagnation, Gorbachev, Perestroika)		- <i>Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears</i> (mid 1970s)	-Rubinshtein, "Communal Pulp Fiction" (late 70s / early 80s)

fig. 5 – small historical materials matrix

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:

Kern, Richard. *Literacy and Language Teaching* (2000)

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

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

Swaffar, Janet & Katherine Arens. *Remapping the Foreign Language Curriculum: An Approach Through Multiple Literacies* (2005)

Wertsch, James. *Voices of Collective Remembering* (2002)

Select bibliography on *Bed and Sofa* and Russian materials:

Boym, Svetlana. *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (1994)

Graffy, Julian. *Bed and Sofa: The Film Companion* (2001)

Kiaer, Christina. *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (2005)

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

Taylor, Richard & Ian Christie (eds.) *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939* (1988)