

Title: The Touch of the Thaw: Memory and Haptic Visuality in Marlen Khutsiev's *I am Twenty* and Larisa Shepitko's *Wings*

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Abstract:

As Birgit Beumers suggests in *A History Of Russian Cinema*, “the cinema of the Thaw shows most clearly the shift from a social narrative to the individual and his fate” (117). The turn to the individual is especially evident in the way the films of the Thaw engage with the themes of loss and trauma caused by World War II. Yet the concern with the individual is present not only in the choice of the topic and specificities of the plot, but also at the level of cinematography. Looking at the way personal memories of the war enter the cinematic time of Khutsiev's *I am Twenty* and Shepitko's *Wings*, I explore the potential of haptic imagery to introduce memories of trauma and loss, and to sustain non-linear filmic narratives. As I argue in this paper, materiality and tactility are effectively used in the Soviet films of the 1960s to transition the narrative into the realm of memory. Comparing the optical images of the official memorization and the haptic images of the private memories, I contend that the 1960s Soviet cinema offers a new way of remembering the war which downplays the official narrative and emphasizes personal experience.