

Title: Teleology as Eternal Return in Vladimir Voinovich's *Moscow 2042*

Author: Inessa Gelfenboym, University of Southern California

Abstract:

In his “Что Такое Социалистический Реализм?” Abram Tertz writes “Ах, если бы мы были умнее и окружили ...смерть [Сталина] чудесами! Сообщили бы по радио, что он не умер, а вознесся на небо и смотрит на нас оттуда, помалкивая в мистические усы.” In *Moscow 2042*, Vladimir Voinovich does just that. By launching his immortal Soviet dictator – who is referred to only as Genialissimus – into space, Voinovich consolidates teleology as the guiding principle of the future Soviet Union while thoroughly undermining it. In the future Moscow of 2042, the linear temporality of Stalinism has been fully restored as the official historical emplotment. History is appropriated and manipulated to fit a narrative whose inevitable end is the Communist Future; even Jesus Christ is recast as a harbinger of future Communism. This official narrative is presented against the backdrop of obvious stagnation and is itself an indication of that stagnation – of a society mired in a reading of history which maintains the status quo by assuring people of the progress they’ve made. The dreams of the pre-revolutionary and early Soviet period undergo a similar treatment. Rather than heralding the advent of Utopia, scientific achievements such as a cure for death and the “New Man” – longed for and anticipated as sources of potential salvation during the early 20th century – are used by the establishment to maintain the world as it is. Written in 1986, Voinovich’s novel seems to cast a sidelong glance at a Soviet Union on the cusp of change, displaying skepticism toward its very possibility. However, the time travel device and the text of the novel – an artifact of this time travel – seem to suggest the possibility of a more open temporality – one that is not bound by contingency.