

feature article

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Heavy skies and a cold Soviet feel: Helsinki as a Cold War cinematic body double

ABSTRACT

During the 1970s and 1980s, American and British films, and spy films in particular, situated in Moscow and Leningrad were regularly shot in the Finnish capital of Helsinki, since the film crews could not work inside the Soviet Union. This article addresses the creation of a 'Soviet feel' through the use of Helsinki locations in films such as Gorky Park (Apted, 1983) and Telefon (Siegel, 1977) in the geopolitical context of the Cold War and Finland's location as both a hub for international espionage and something of a border zone between the eastern and western power blocs. This analysis is connected to a broader consideration of Cold War geography, cinematic cities as body doubles and the 'agentiality' of urban spaces in film.

KEYWORDS

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In the opening shot of the Charles Bronson vehicle *Telefon* (Siegel, 1977), the camera pans down from a large, red-brick nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox church towards an empty street covered in snow. The morning sky is sunless, grey and heavy. The cityscape is almost void of colour, painted in a palette of brown, beiges and greys. There is little traffic on the streets. The title sequence of *The Kremlin Letter* (Huston, 1970) shows another



Image 1: The Helsinki Cathedral pins down the location as Moscow in *The Kremlin Letter* (1977).

nineteenth-century church, a neo-classical cathedral looming greyish white against a deep blue winter sky. The static shot is accompanied by the sounds of Kremlin church bells that soon turn into a suspenseful musical theme. The contrast to the film's opening shots of sunny Paris, its palaces and lively traffic, is hardly subtle. As the camera begins to move, the audience sees more of the cityscape covered in snow – some of it freshly white, some congealed into dirty, brown frozen lumps. The street lighting is minimal; there are no evident shop signs or street advertisements, cars are scarce and the only people out on the church square are dressed in drab winter coats, holding brooms and brushing away the snow. The general sense of place in both scenes is grim, cold, backward and markedly non-cosmopolitan.

It is obvious enough without a textual referent – *viz.* the men in dark winter coats and fur hats holding heavy guns who soon emerge from a battered van in *Telefon* or the horse-drawn sleigh appearing in the following shot of *The Kremlin Letter* – that the films are set behind the Iron Curtain, in the Soviet Union. The brief scenes both encapsulate and establish a cinematic Cold War, Soviet feel, introduced in North American and West European productions of the period as 'dark, cold, and menacing' (McArthur 1997: 34). For those who recognize the most popular tourist attractions of Helsinki, the Uspenski Cathedral (built in 1868), the Helsinki Cathedral (built in 1852) and the Senate Square, the issue is more ambivalent.

In what follows, I examine the discontents of the 'Soviet feel' generated through the uses of Helsinki as a body double for Moscow and Leningrad in North American and British films of the 1970s and 1980s, including *The Kremlin Letter*, *Telefon*, *Reds* (Beatty, 1981), *Coming Out of the Ice* (Hussein, 1982), *Gorky Park* (Apted, 1983), *The Jigsaw Man* (Young, 1985) and *White Nights* (Hackford, 1985). The term body double is used to denote a film performer who acts as a surrogate for an actor in a given scene. If an actor is unwilling to strip in front of the camera, unable to mimic playing a music solo or to perform the spinning roundhouse kicks required by a martial arts role, a body double or a stunt double enters the frame to do the job. Their purpose is to go unnoticed

without attracting attention to the differences between the actor and the double, the body and the surrogate. A city body double similarly stands in for another city through its selected parts, buildings and views. Isolated from the general cityscape, these details – like the breasts or buttocks of a human body double – are attached to, and used as representation of, a different entity. Such borrowed likeness inevitably involves a degree of mismatch, as local specificities and histories meet and clash with those of other places and contexts. As a cinematic body double, Helsinki contributed to the creation of the ‘Soviet feel’ central to the films discussed in this article, while also connoting and conveying its own historical layers on-screen.

In what follows, I first examine the Cold War geopolitical context and Finland’s location as both a hub for international espionage and something of a border zone between the eastern and western power blocs. The discussion of cinematic Cold War geography then broadens to local histories, the making of the ‘Soviet feel’ and, following actor-network theory (ANT), the ‘agentiality’ of urban spaces in film. Cinematic cityscapes are fantastic in blurring the real with the imaginary, and resulting in creative urban geography that recombines and reframes ‘familiar cityscapes in something new and different, recognizable and simultaneously unknown’ (Novikova forthcoming; also Hopkins 1994: 49; Tani 1995; Heiskanen 2008: 164). Cinematic cityscapes resonate with viewers’ memories in excess to the aims and goals set by the film narrative, never quite conforming to its specific contours. Rather than examining Helsinki as a setting or background for cinematic action, or simply asking how the city has been represented, this article argues for a more active understanding of the roles played by cities and urban locations in film.

CINEMATIC GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINARIES

Films routinely invent urban geographies when cars are seen driving through unlikely, impossible or merely disjointed city routes, heading now in this direction and then in another, when public buildings stand for private palaces or when the interiors and exteriors of buildings fail to match, and people step through doors into different locations altogether. Films also regularly substitute urban locations with others: Toronto and Sydney have stood in for large American cities in films such as *American Psycho* (Harron, 2000), *Chicago* (Marshall, 2002), *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999) and *The Great Gatsby* (Luhrmann, 2013), while Dublin has doubled as Georgian, Victorian and 1960s swinging London in *Becoming Jane* (Jarrod, 2007; also Bates 2011: 112), Showtime’s *Penny Dreadful* (2014), BBC’s *Ripper Street* (2012) and *Jimi: All Is by My Side* (Ridley, 2014). Since western film crews could not work inside the Soviet Union itself, Helsinki was regularly used as body double for Soviet cities during the 1970s and 1980s (Heiskanen 2008: 124, 181), posing as Moscow and Leningrad (and, in *Coming Out of the Ice*, as both Moscow and Gorky). Meanwhile, the Baltic cities of Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius, with their recognizably Central European architecture, acted as spatial surrogates for London, Paris, Berlin and Bern in Soviet spy films of the period (Novikova 2009; Novikova, forthcoming).

Finland was a Russian Grand Duchy from 1809 to 1917. This history is evident in the architecture of Helsinki, which only became the capital in 1812 and was largely built under Russian rule. The monumental city centre, including the Helsinki Cathedral and the Senate Square seen in the title scene of *The Kremlin Letter*, was mainly designed by Carl Ludvig Engel, a fashionable

German neo-classical architect with previous work experience from St. Petersburg (renamed Leningrad 1924–1991), under the orders of Emperor Alexander I. The Senate Square was the location of the Russian revolution in Warren Beatty's *Reds* and glimpses of both the square and the Helsinki Cathedral are featured in most films where Helsinki acts as Moscow (i.e. *Telefon*, *Jigsaw Man*, *The Kremlin Letter*, *Coming Out of the Ice*) and Leningrad (*White Nights*). The Senate Square bears close resemblance to the neo-classical architecture of St. Petersburg – the Helsinki Cathedral, for example, owes much to the Kazan Cathedral (1818) – although it has considerably less in common with the urban design of Moscow. Nevertheless, Helsinki was a convenient Cold War double for both cities. The differences between the spatial referents were sutured through an overall gloomy and deprived audio-visual feel accomplished through the use of Helsinki locations, but also through western audiences' assumed unfamiliarity with the factual details of both Helsinki and Soviet metropolises.

As a country balancing between the two political power blocs of the Cold War, Finland was well suited for posing as its eastern neighbour in American and British film productions and open to collaboration with western film crews. Unfamiliar to most western viewers, Helsinki had the appropriate snow, ice and urban aesthetic – both nineteenth-century architecture and buildings in need of renovation, or at least a fresh layer of paint – necessary for creating the right atmosphere and sense of place. With Finland's small immigrant population of the 1970s and 1980s, little effort was needed to people scenes with Slavic-looking extras sufficient to convey the anti-cosmopolitan feel of a world behind the Iron Curtain. During the Stalin era, cosmopolitanism was ideologically identified with Anglo-American imperialism (Humphrey 2004). In western imaginings of Soviet life, this translated as lack of ethnic diversity of the kind evident in Moscow at the time. In short, Helsinki was approximate enough a city in several ways – geography, climate, population, architecture and overall feel – to perform as and pass for a Soviet location.

During the post-war period, Finnish film professionals were engaged in a range of international co-productions with Soviet and American partners (e.g. *Sampo* [Ptuško, 1959], *Doverie*'Trust' [Laine and Tregubovitš, 1976], *Make Like a Thief* [Lindman et al., 1964]). In addition, a range of other international productions such as David Lean's 1965 *Doctor Zhivago* were shot in the country (see Heiskanen 2008). Visiting film groups brought in revenues and afforded Finnish professionals with valuable international contacts. Many of the Finnish American collaborations resulted from the liaising efforts of the actor and director Åke Lindman, who also performed in *Telefon* and *Reds*. Soviet officials disapproved of the shooting of so-called western propaganda in Finland, making international film production in the country a continual source of political tension: the erection of a prop statue of Lenin for *The Kremlin Letter*, for example, was denied at the last minute due to complaints from the eastern neighbour, and no red flags were allowed in the shots of the Helsinki city centre for *Telefon* (Heiskanen 2008: 146, 153).

During the Soviet period, Finland – not unlike Yugoslavia – traded and collaborated with both the East and the West, aware of the overpowering presence of the USSR yet desiring to be identified as a western country (Häkli 2008; Kuulaa 2012). Dedicated to a state policy of neutrality, Finland belonged neither to NATO nor to the Warsaw Pact. Instead, she maintained a bilateral Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, dating to 1948. As something of a border zone between the eastern

and western power blocs, Helsinki was the location of the first Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, and the Helsinki Accords are generally considered a signpost in the ensuing *détente* (e.g. Thomas 2001).

At the same time, Helsinki – much like Vienna – functioned as a Cold War hub, bridge and gate for international spies from the West and East alike: ‘Finland exceeded her overall international importance in regard to intelligence and espionage, famous world secret services being very active in this country, such as the KGB, CIA, STASI, to quote only a few’ (Popescu 2008: 87). The role of Helsinki as key espionage and intelligence outpost figures in films such as Ken Russell’s 1967 spy film, *The Billion Dollar Brain* (while some scenes shot in the city of Porvoo represented Riga, Helsinki, exceptionally, stood for itself). Perhaps unsurprisingly, espionage is also a key theme in most of the films discussed in this article.

AMBIGUOUS BODY DOUBLES

The first shots of *Gorky Park* feature people skating in grey-blue wintery twilight as Tchaikovsky plays on loudspeakers. The colours are muted and people move quickly in and out of the shot, smiling and socializing in a park covered in snow. The surrounding cityscape is grey; no buildings are lit and no signs or adverts are visible. While the heavy wool scarves and fur hats worn by the actors and extras – such as the babushka drinking tea in a small wooden kiosk – provide hints about the location, it is the red star decorating a tower in the background, alluding to the Kremlin’s Spasskaya tower and seen as the music is disrupted by discordant notes, that defines the location. The scene is shot in Kaisaniemi Park in central Helsinki and the interpolated red star decorates the tower of the Finnish National Museum. In the background, one can spot other monumental buildings, such as the Finnish National Theatre, House of Parliament (Eduskuntatalo) and the Finlandia Hall (designed by architect Alvar Aalto and known as the venue of the Helsinki Accords).

Designed by the architects Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen, the Finnish National Museum represents the national romantic style



Image 2: The Finnish National Museum sports a red star in the opening of Gorky Park (1983).

of the early twentieth century as one inspired by the national past, culture and tradition, from traditional folk building styles to the architecture of medieval churches. The ceiling of the museum lobby is decorated with Akseli Gallen-Kallela's 1928 frescoes featuring scenes from *Kalevala*, the national epic compiled by Elias Lönnrot and first published in 1849 that became the cornerstone of Finnish culture and heritage during the nineteenth century. Gallen-Kallela's frescoes are remakes of those he painted for the 1900 Paris World Exhibition Finnish Pavilion, designed by the same architects as the museum building, when Finland was still a Russian Grand Duchy. As a declaration of cultural specificity, the Pavilion has been considered a central symbol for emergent Finnish independence (see Kivirinta 2014). The national romantics worked towards securing Finnish autonomy within the Russian empire through their emphasis on national myths, origins and particularities. The National Museum, which opened in 1916, one year before Finnish independence, encapsulates much of this quest for national identity as a shrine built especially for the purpose.

Decorating the museum tower with a red star in order to render it a passable Soviet Russian body double therefore went explicitly against the project of national autonomy, differentiation and distinction that gave rise to the building in the first place. From the perspective of the international production team, such incongruities were insignificant since the point of using Helsinki as a location was to convey a particular Soviet impression and atmosphere. A body double lends its approximate likeness, and only this likeness is of consequence. The specificities of the double's identity do not matter.

The actual Gorky Park is a vast site of urban entertainment and leisure known for its Ferris wheel, amusement rides and wintertime skating rink. It was also a regular site for Soviet parades and other public spectacles (see Tillberg 1998). For its part, the Kremlin is a monumental fortress dating back to the fourteenth century, renowned for its churches and the iconic Red Square. These two locations are situated a few kilometres apart. In the cinematic reimagining of Moscow, the Kremlin is reduced to one tower with a single star and Gorky Park is reduced to the size of two or three blocks. Such stripping down of scale and volume is evident, as much as it is unavoidable, in all films in which Helsinki stands for Moscow and Leningrad. Helsinki is void of the spectacular scale of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and there are no shots of landmark buildings, famous monuments, busy streets or masses of people. In the mid-1980s, Helsinki had some half a million inhabitants, while the number was over four million in Leningrad and over eight million in Moscow. The body double in question was a somewhat Lilliputian one.

In most instances, an American film located in Rome will include shots of the Coliseum, St. Peter's Basilica or the Spanish Steps. Similarly, location shots of London tend to be inclusive of the Tower Bridge, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben or Buckingham Palace, while those of Paris feature the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame or *L'arc de triomphe*. No matter how brief and unconnected to the narrative developments of the films in question, glimpses of local icons are quick ways of locating and spatially framing the action and calling to mind a particular urban atmosphere. Cinematic Soviet Helsinki is sorely lacking in both the iconic and the spectacular: it is small, grey, and unable to impress with sights that would be instantaneously recognizable to an international audience. As a body double, Helsinki could offer buildings, street corners and occasional squares that might pass for places elsewhere but none of the characteristic, iconic likeness of Soviet cities: the viewer glimpses no Kremlin, Red

Square, St. Basil's Cathedral or the Seven Sisters skyscrapers of Moscow, no Neva River, Winter Palace, Peter and Paul Fortress or Nevsky Prospect of St. Petersburg. Helsinki cityscapes functioned as convenient and unspectacular proxies, the function of which was not iconic but symbolic – and even allegorical in conveying 'a Soviet feel'.

SOVIET FEEL

The use of Helsinki locations was a means of creating a desired effect through semiotic practice where iconic buildings and locations are replaced with others on a diminished scale. Furthermore, these body doubles are not only seen to replace the original ones but also to convey a range of social and political meanings connected to them. In symbolic depiction, locations act as shorthand not only for places and spaces somewhere else, but also for intangible things such as ideologies, sensibilities, sentiments and values. Hence a single tower stands for a selection of dozens while a single red star stands for communist ideology and state system, and a small park with a skating rink refers not only to large urban leisure grounds but equally to the simple joys of Soviet metropolitan culture. Public buildings of the nineteenth century and shots of 1970s suburbia are similarly used in *Gorky Park* to envision city blocks, parts of cities and even the overall feel of life in Soviet Moscow, the modest, mundane realities of Soviet citizens and the powerful – even all-powerful – position of Soviet state officials.

Crossing the Iron Curtain, entering and especially leaving the Soviet Union, is a central theme in virtually all films discussed in this article. As the protagonists go behind the Iron Curtain, western material wealth and technologically saturated everyday life gives way to grim backwardness. Sunshine is, in most instances, replaced with dark winter skies and the casual routines of everyday life give way to the menace of violence. The coldness of Soviet Helsinki is both tangibly concrete – depicted through shots of snow, ice, sleet and steaming breath – and metaphorical, referring to material scarcity, totalitarianism and the brutality of political machinations. Ice skating and football played on a desolate concrete yard in *Gorky Park*, like children's ice hockey in *Telefon*, represent the mundane joys of Soviet life marked by the lack of available consumer and entertainment culture.

In biographical narratives such as *Reds* and *Coming Out of the Ice*, set in the 1910s and 1930s respectively, American protagonists enthusiastically travel to revolutionary Russia and gradually witness its hardships unfolding. Incorporating the form of travelogue, the films introduce Soviet life (in Helsinki settings) to the foreign eyes of the protagonists and audiences alike. Establishing shots featuring Helsinki streets, squares and churches locate the action in Soviet locales, while interior shots of grandiose yet weathered public buildings, dimly lit private and shared residences contribute to a claustrophobic effect. This is the case in *Coming Out of the Ice*, in which a single shot of Kanavakatu in Helsinki, facing the Helsinki Cathedral, establishes the location as Moscow, where the protagonist, Victor Herman (John Savage) and his family have just arrived. Two red flags decorating a nineteenth-century warehouse building, two 1930s cars, a motorcycle and some extras wearing dark wool coats and fur hats provide additional local markers. In the following shots, passengers are huddled indoors in a neo-classic lobby, wearing drab black and brown clothing, carrying battered suitcases, staring ahead, unsmiling, as officials check their belongings. The following shots show a train cutting through



Image 3: *Kanavakatu as Moscow in Coming Out of the Ice (1982).*

a snowy landscape towards Gorky. The colour palette consists of greys, blues, browns and blacks: the overall feel is inhospitable.

Just as Tallinn and Riga were used to convey urban cinematic fantasies of the 'spying and corrupting' West in Soviet films (Novikova forthcoming), Helsinki helped to register a cold, icy, grey and authoritarian Soviet feel. *The New York Times* review of *Gorky Park* characterized the film as colourless and frozen (Maslin 1983). The effect was achieved by shooting on the streets of Helsinki removed of western cars and packed with extras wearing large fur hats and winter coats sporting scant fashion allure. It took little make-up to render Helsinki a passable Soviet location here or elsewhere: some Cyrillic letters and plywood here to cover up shop signs, a propaganda poster and a red flag there, numerous Lada and Volga cars and an occasional Soviet-style phone booth or kiosk for added effect. Soviet make-up involved inserting red stars, Soviet insignia, Russian street signs and posters in the cityscape and removing signs and adverts that might undermine the cinematic illusion – or, as was the case in *White Nights*, scenes shot in Reposaari (on the western coast of Finland) were staged by dirtying up buildings, covering windows and adding debris to create a suitably desolate feel (cf. Heiskanen 2008: 177). Soviet Helsinki is regularly covered in dirty snow and wet sleet, its colourless streets composed of shades of grey and brown, its waterways perpetually frozen over, its buildings in need of restoration and its unappealing suburbs made of grey concrete.

Under Stalin, private trade in the Soviet Union was restricted, creating a general shortage of everyday consumer goods as well as long queues. One result was outright privation, which impacted on the country's austere image to the western public (see Fitzpatrick 2000; Hessler 2004). In the cinematic images of Soviet cities of the 1970s and 1980s, there are no inviting cafes, restaurants or shops, hardly any public lighting, neon signs or other markers of consumer culture. Affluence and urban pleasures are clearly unavailable

except for the very top political elite, while urban residents are seen facing their mundane environment with joyless, stony comportment that is only interrupted by moments of sociability involving vodka (mostly identified as the recognizable export brand of Stolichnaya).

This urban imagery in these American and British films may not seem too distant from the depictions of Helsinki in the films of Aki Kaurismäki or the Helsinki episode of Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* (1991), even if they lack the reflexive, nostalgic and ironic undertones characteristic of these films (cf. Nestingen 2013: 95, 127). The 'Soviet feel' films envision Helsinki as both grim and non-cosmopolitan in their selection and combination of locations, props and settings. By doing so, they illustrate the degree to which cinematic cities are always fantastic creations that do not represent so much as reframe and reimagine the cities they represent or stand in for, thereby giving rise to 'mindscapes' that are both personal and shared (Tani 1995). When urban locations substitute for other cities, as was the case in Helsinki posing for Moscow and Leningrad, a further layer of reframing and reimagining emerges. By detaching and relocating spatial referents, these urban reimaginings aim to convey political, social and economic differences and particularities through *mise-en-scène*.

CITY AS ACTOR

In the collected works of Helsinki as body double, the KGB headquarters are located at the House of Estates (Säätytalo, in *Telefon*), the Swedish Embassy (*The Jigsaw Man*) and the main building of Helsinki University (*Gorky Park*). The KGB headquarters of *Telefon* is therefore also the site of the Russian revolution in *Reds*, in a scene notably reminiscent of the storming of the Winter Palace in Eisenstein and Aleksandrov's 1928 film *Oktyabr/October*, based on the book *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919) by John Reed – also the protagonist in *Reds*. Reed (Warren Beatty) is seen strolling and listening to speeches by agitators in 1917 on the same spots of Esplanadi where Arkadi Renko (William Hurt) of *Gorky Park* follows a suspicious American in early 1980s Moscow. The former main building of the University of Technology acts as both the militia headquarters of *Gorky Park* and St. Petersburg's Kirov ballet school in *White Nights* (and, in Aki Kaurismäki's 1987 *Hamlet liikemaailmassa/Hamlet Goes Business*, as Hamlet's castle): the list could go on. The same neighbourhoods, street corners and buildings are circulated from one film to another in order to render a desired Soviet effect. In the course of their repeated display, these locations, cut off from the fabric of Helsinki as a city, gain a particular recognizability of their own as Soviet locations.

As a cinematic body double, Helsinki is more than a passive background, setting or location for cinematic action. With their layered histories that may or may not remain unrecognized by viewers, the buildings and streets of Helsinki contribute to and even generate a Soviet feel. Cinematic cities, individual buildings and locations can be seen as actors in their own right (cf. Augustine 1993), and even as 'agential' in the sense outlined in ANT. Considered in this vein, films can be seen as assemblages consisting of heterogeneous elements that range from individual people (producers, actors, editors, extras, directors, assistants) to corporate entities and institutions (production companies, film boards), material objects (technological equipment, props, costumes, locations and sets), as well as the more or less tangible aspects of economy and skill (Dixon and Zonn 2004). Viewers are parts

of such cinematic networks as they experience and engage with music, editing, actors, performances, dialogue, settings and locations. It is through such simultaneously material and semiotic networks that films gain meaning and begin to matter. As these networks of human and non-human actors move and change – when, for example, audiences from different geographical locations engage with the films – so do the meanings and associations evoked, and the resonances that the films afford.

As actors in these cinematic networks, locations matter in and for the experiences of viewing, sensing and making sense of films. Hardly intentional actors in the human sense, cinematic cities and locales affect and impact the overall assemblage of a film and the ways in which it becomes experienced (cf. Latour 1999: 18–22). Places, whether built with props or shot on location, play a more crucial role in some instances than in others – consider, for example, the fundamental role played by the Mount Rushmore monument in *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959), the Waterloo bridge in the eponymously titled film (LeRoy, 1940) or the Golden Gate Bridge in *A View to a Kill* (Glen, 1985). They should not be understood merely as passive backdrops for action, for that perception would undercut the appeal and power of cinematic urban geography. As networks of people, things, places and stories, films generate effects that are not always predictable. Replacing one actor – such as a city or a building – with another transforms the network and its possible effects.

The performances of Helsinki as a Soviet body double are primarily about the Western imagination concerning the USSR as a geographical location that is cold, austere and menacing. Soviet Helsinki conveys the feel of an impoverished economic and social system, while also acting as a stage for Cold War espionage and political transaction. The Moscow of *Gorky Park*, *The Jigsaw Man* and *The Kremlin Letter* is animated by political struggles for power and the complex machinations of spies and double agents. These are exercises in Cold War meaning-making that do not obsess over their attention to detail, be this in terms of architecture or the fabric of everyday life, but rather rely on a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the viewer. For those who recognize the actual locations, the places assume a different kind of agency, diverting viewer attention from the diegesis, as they do, and towards the specificities and layered histories of the city itself.

Cinematic cities combine the actual and the imaginary into a creative whole. Their imaginary is nevertheless fragile, as it easily unravels if audiences recognize the location as different from the one it is depicting. While a studio setting may be recognized as such with little effect on the viewing experience, a glimpse of Toronto's CN tower in a film supposedly set in New York is likely to disrupt the cinematic illusion for those recognizing it. In such moments of rupture, narrative continuity moves to the background while the cityscape – the assumed backdrop of the action – steps into the foreground. While such rupture would have been unlikely to occur with American audiences watching espionage movies shot in Helsinki during the Cold War, it is an inescapable experience for viewers such as me, who are inhabitants of the city. When watching *Gorky Park*, I cannot help spotting the building where I used to live in a shot that is supposedly facing the Moskow River, or recognizing an immense propaganda wall poster with Lenin's head that I remember seeing, with some puzzlement, as a child at the time of the shooting in central Helsinki. No degree of suspension of disbelief helps when sites lived and felt make their presence known through cinematic assemblage, in which city locations acting as body doubles show their actual names and faces.

MESHWORKS

Unlike the other films discussed in this article, *White Nights* was, as its name indicates, shot during mid-summer and the film is altogether void of snow, sleet, ice and looming winter skies. Even more crucially, it includes documentary footage shot in Leningrad especially for the purpose by a Finnish film crew using the same type of film (see Heiskanen 2008: 174). Shots of Leningrad, its architecture and canals, were edited into a hybrid meshwork with the scenes shot in Helsinki in an impressive feat of *trompe l'oeil*: when buildings of Helsinki are intercut with those of St. Petersburg, the busy streets and scenic canals create a hybrid composite cityscape where seams between the two are nearly impossible to identify. As an assemblage, *White Nights* facilitates a heightened sense of being in ways that are missing from the other films shot in Helsinki.

The film's climactic scene involves one of its most elaborate meshworks. Footage shot in Helsinki is literally bridged together with that from St. Petersburg via a set piece replica of the Bank Bridge that crosses the Griboyedova Canal of St. Petersburg (Heiskanen 2008: 175). We first witness Daria (Isabella Rossellini) and Nikolai Rodchenko (Mikhail Baryshnikov) about to elope to the American embassy, approaching the end of the bridge replica (from the corner of Kirkkokatu and Meritullinkatu in Helsinki). A reverse shot then shows the other end of the bridge and pans the banks of the Griboyedova Canal, including the ornamental wall on the other bank. The camera enters the bridge, as if visualizing the nervous movements and gazes of the elopers. And as the protagonists cross the bridge, we see the same set piece, decorated with gilded griffins, placed in reverse in front of a replica of the wall seen in the previous shot. Daria and Nikolai move through the gate to a courtyard sporting a similar arch as the wall. In all likelihood these shots are of the same blocks near the Senate Square where John Reed and Louise Bryant (Diane Keaton) of *Reds* once resided. The film moves back and forth between bits of Helsinki and St. Petersburg, nineteenth-century griffins and their replicas, in an elaborate exercise of creative cinematic geography. The cinematic body double merges almost seamlessly with the original to the degree that it took me a while to identify the building that Daria and Nikolai are standing in front of as the one where I once used to buy my daily groceries. The editing of *White Nights* renders the mundane strange, detaches familiar locations from their everyday frameworks and gives rise to a hybrid fantasyscape.

Such cinematic composites are rare in the films discussed here, which are representative of an era of film-making preceding digital imaging and postproduction, as well as the accessibility of actual Russian film locations for western crews. When a still image of the St. Peter's Basilica merges with a shot of the Uspenski Cathedral in the establishing shot of *The Jigsaw Man*, the location is firmly pinned down with no further representation of Russian architectural wonders. The post-Soviet *The Jackal* (Caton-Jones, 1997) presents a notable exception in showing a Helsinki street (Tehtaankatu) leading up to a digitally generated Kremlin. This composite image weaves urban landscapes together into an imaginary Moscow as the setting for violent action, and provides an early example of the increasing malleability that the intermeshing of digital film production and postproduction affords.

The Arnold Schwarzenegger comedy *Red Heat* (Hill, 1988) was the first American film to include location shots (used mainly as establishing shots) from Red Square, even if most of the film was shot in Hungary. Since the

1990s, western film crews have had increasing access to shooting locations in Russia and elsewhere behind the former Iron Curtain. Consequently, Helsinki's role as body double has disappeared. Although actual locations may be more easily available across distance and geopolitical divides than they were during the 1970s and 1980s, shooting on location may not even be desirable for the practical reasons of expense and labour: in *The Bourne Supremacy* (Greengrass, 2004), it was therefore East Berlin, with its plausible enough Soviet-style architecture, that substituted for Moscow.

The use of body doubles is conditioned by decisions concerning convenience, expense and verisimilitude, yet locations can also be replaced with others, or with digitally generated imagery to better convey the desired impression, feel or effect. Cities may be presented through iconic and select shots, as digital composites or as body doubles that generate a suitable atmosphere of bygone days, geographical elsewhere or emergent futures. The agentiality of physical spaces in cinema is crucially an issue of the production of a specific sense of place, such as the austere, simultaneously physical and metaphorical 'Soviet feel' addressed in this article. The roles that cities in film play, even as body doubles, are not those of extras. Rather, they work to set the overall mood and tone as stages of possible action and as horizons of possibility.

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