Title
"We Were the River": Screenwriters of the Left Front of the Arts, 1923–1931

Author
Razor, Sasha

Publication Date
2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

We Were the River: Screenwriters of the Left Front of the Arts, 1923–1931

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Slavic Languages and Literatures

by

Sasha Razor

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

We Were the River: Screenwriters of the Left Front of the Arts, 1923–1931

by

Sasha Razor

Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Ronald W. Vroon, Co-Chair

Professor David W. MacFadyen, Co-Chair

In 1923, the preeminent Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky gathered the main forces of the Soviet avant-garde under the umbrella of the Left Front of the Arts (LEF) and its two journals, *LEF* (1923–1925) and *Novyi LEF* (1927–1928). This dissertation examines the contribution of LEF's screenwriters to the film industry in the 1920s and early 1930s by focusing on the screenwriting oeuvre of the journals' editors—Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Part and parcel of a larger discussion about the role of screenplays in Soviet film studies, LEF's screenwriting remains one of the most obscure aspects of the group's engagement with cinema. The central argument of this thesis elaborates the view that these authors' film-works had a closer connection to the group's ethos than previously understood. My analyses rely on the examination of Brik, Tretiakov, and Mayakovsky's screen ideas alongside relevant theoretical articles, extant film footage, archival sources, historical cine-press publications, and personal memoirs. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the group's screenwriting theory and praxis.

This dissertation is organized into four chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. The introduction delineates the research nexus, followed by chapter 1 that discusses the operational definition of LEF and traces the diachronic development of its engagement with the cine-medium. Chapter 2 uncovers links between LEF's project and Osip Brik's film-works and analyzes his authorship model through Viktor Shklovsky's paradigm of *literaturnaia podenshchina* (daily literary labor). Chapter 3 demonstrates how Sergei Tretiakov's idea of *production screenplay* was implemented in the corpus of his Georgian films. It also discusses Tretiakov's authorship model through the concept of *operative author*, as theorized by Walter Benjamin. Chapter 4 evaluates Vladimir Mayakovsky's screenplays written during the LEF period by drawing out their *auteur* features and juxtaposing them against the broader scope of the group's film-works. By charting LEF's contribution to cinema via categories of production principles, ideology, innovation, and authorship models, this dissertation advances a comprehensive view of the group's participation in cinema. It contributes to the interdisciplinary field of avant-garde studies, as well as to the scholarship on Soviet cinema of the silent era.

The dissertation of Sasha Razor is approved.

Yuri Tsivian

Roman Koropeckyj

Vadim Shneyder

Ronald W. Vroon, Committee Co-Chair

David W. MacFadyen, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Note on Translation and Transliteration

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Russian are my own. When available, I have used existing translations into English and provided the bibliographic information in the corresponding footnote. All Russian names, titles, and short quotations have been transliterated into the Latin alphabet using the simplified Library of Congress system, without the diacritics. The apostrophe (') indicates a soft sign (ь). Personal names have been rendered according to the Library of Congress transliteration of the Russian spelling, with the exception of popular Anglophone forms, such as "Vladimir Mayakovsky" or "Viktor Shklovsky." All Russian quotations have been preserved in the original Cyrillic script and are accompanied by their English equivalent in the corresponding footnote. All block quotes include the original Cyrillic and the accompanying translation in the body text of the chapter. All toponyms have been transliterated according to their accepted English forms, such as "Svaneti" or "Tbilisi."

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of several individuals and the generous support of UCLA's Graduate Division and the Department of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Languages and Cultures.

I am particularly indebted to my outstanding doctoral committee: Dr. Ronald W. Vroon, Dr. David W. MacFadyen, Dr. Yuri Tsivian, Dr. Roman Koropeckyj, and Dr. Vadim Shneyder. My deepest gratitude goes to my advisers, Dr. Ronald W. Vroon and Dr. David W. MacFadyen. Dr. Vroon made a lasting impact on me as a scholar by generously sharing his passion for Russian Futurism and educating my academic sensibilities throughout the rigorous advising process. It was also a privilege to work with Dr. MacFadyen, who gave valuable feedback on developing this research into a book. My dissertation would not have seen the light of the day without the support of my mentor, Dr. Roman Koropeckyj, who meticulously read numerous drafts and revisions of the project. I must also thank Dr. Vadim Shneyder for his scholarly council and help with polishing the manuscript. Finally, I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Yuri Tsivian, who joined my committee at a later stage and gave generous feedback on the project beyond the call of duty.

Two more scholars should be mentioned separately. It was a great honor to work with my late mentor, Dr. Vyacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov, who not only offered a direct link to the 1920s but encouraged my interest in screenwriting with stories about the heroes of my dissertation. Dr. Igor Pilshchikov, a graduate advisor par excellence, helped me with archival research and readily shared his knowledge of the field.

Heartfelt thanks go to my network of friends and professionals, many of whom contributed to this work. Dr. Boris Dralyuk graciously edited my poetry translations. Filmmaker

Gala Minasova generously shared her knowledge of early cinema and helped beyond measure at the finishing stage. Filmmakers Dima Malanitchev and Tatiana Minchenko consulted on the technical aspects of production and film history. Readers Vladimir Fet, Dr. Dmitrii Sidorov, Dr. Tetyana Dzyadevych, Dr. Pavel Lion, and Vadim Avrukin all contributed to my dissertation by revising its fragments. My proofreader, Sarah Bazih, was instrumental throughout all stages of the project.

I would also like to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Yelena Severina, for the years of friendship and support, be it traveling to academic conferences or exchanging late-night text messages during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, I would like to express gratitude to my family for giving me a metaphorical room of my own to write. To my children Mia and Max, my husband Mitya, and, above all, my mother Hanna, who selflessly helped during the last six months of dissertation writing, thank you.

In loving memory of Dr. Vyacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov, the teacher who is remembered and greatly missed.

Vita

Education

Master of Arts in Slavic, East European and Eurasian Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles (June 2009)

Bachelor of Arts in French and Minor in Russian with Certificate in East European Studies, California State University, Long Beach (May 2007)

Publications

Articles

"*The Hollywood Kazwup*: The Casus of White Émigré Restaurants in Los Angeles." In *Images of Home Away from Home*, edited by Maria Yelenevskaya and Ekaterina Protassova. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. (Forthcoming.)

"Domestication of Russian Cuisine in the United States: Wanda L. Frolov's *Katish: Our Russian Cook (1947)*." *Food, Childhood, and Migration. COLLeGIUM, Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences* 24 (2020). (Forthcoming.)

"Russkii iazyk v mul'tilingval'noi Kalifornii." *Slavica Helsingensia* 52 (2019): 100–119. (with Ekaterina Protassova)

"Belarusian Literature." In Heim, Michael Henry, et al. 2009. "East-Central European Literatures Twenty Years After." East European Politics and Societies and Cultures 23, no. 4: 552–581.

Encyclopedia Entries

"Klaskaniem mając obrzękłe prawice…" The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 15 February 2018. https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35900. (with Lavery, Michael, Dane Reighart, and Yelena Severina)

"Tuteishia." The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 08 January 2018. https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35818.

"Pinskaia shliakhta." The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 17 July 2017. https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35816.

"Eneida navyvarat." The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 20 May 2016. https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35751.

"Taras na Parnase." The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 17 July 2016. https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=35780.

Book Reviews

Review of *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction*, by Mark Andryczyk. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies.* 35, no. 1–4 (2017): 566–568.

"Protest Tea: Victoria Lomasko's Other Russias," Los Angeles Review of Books, May 6, 2017. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/protest-tea-victoria-lomaskos-other-russias/.

"Book Review: Skhid/Zakhid: Istoriko-Kul'turologichnyi Zbirnyk [East/West: A Scholarly Journal of History and Culture]. Special Issue: Neo-Anti-Colonialism Vs. Neo-Imperialism: The Relevance of Post-Colonial Discourse in the Post-Soviet Space." The Slavic and East European Journal. 59, no. 1 (2015): 156–158.

Film Entries

"Professor Dowell's Testament." In *Directory of World Cinema 29: Russia 2*, edited by Birgit Beumers, 163–164. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2015.

"Night Watch." In *World Film Locations: Moscow*, edited by Birgit Beumers, Birgit, 112–113. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2014.

"Three Poplars on Pliushchikha Street." In *World Film Locations: Moscow*, edited by Birgit Beumers, 62–63. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2014

"A Man from Boulevard des Capucines." In *Directory of World Cinema 4: Russia*, edited by Birgit Beumers. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2011.

Film Reviews

Egor's Grief [Egorino gore], directed by Mariia Makhan'ko. Kinokultura 33, 2011. http://www.kinokultura.com/2011/33r-egorinogore.shtml.

Morning [Utro], directed by Sergei Tkachev. Kinokultura 28, 2010. http://www.kinokultura.com/2010/28r-utro.shtml

"How Much Does a Post-Soviet Love Cost? Between the Material and the Maternal." Review of Red Pearl of Love [Krasnyi zhemchug liubvi], directed by Andres Puustuusmaa. Kinokultura 24, 2009. http://www.kinokultura.com/2009/24r-kraszhem.shtml.

"Bandits, Oligarchs, and Provincial Girls! Oh, My!" Review of Gloss [Glianets], directed by Andrei Konchalovskii. Kinokultura 20, 2008. http://www.kinokultura.com/2008/20r-gloss-sr.shtml.

Introduction: *The Paradoxical "Unrecognition"*

Left Front of the Arts and Cinema: The Problem Statement

In August of 1913, Boris Pasternak, in a letter to Sergei Bobrov, his friend and fellow member of the Centrifuge Futurist group,[1] penned his vision for the development of the cinematic arts. Discussing the possibility of employment in the motion picture industry, Pasternak remarked that he would not view this work as a compromise so long as the development of the film medium diverged from "the nucleus of drama and its lyricism" and, instead, captured drama's "circumferential plasma," its "nebula and halo."[2] Articulated at the peak of Russia's craze for Futurism and cinema,[3] Pasternak's statement formulated the dilemma faced by many writers who pursued jobs in the film industry: Was their work a compromise? While some authors turned to cinema in order to garner income as gig workers, others earnestly sought to contribute to the development of this new art.

Pasternak's query became especially relevant in the decade to come. After the October Revolution, Russian Futurism gradually ceased to exist as a cohesive literary movement. In 1923, Vladimir Mayakovsky gathered the forces of the Soviet avant-garde under the umbrella of

[1] Centrifuge was a group of Russian Futurist poets that formed at the end of 1913 and lasted for about four years. Its core members included Boris Pasternak, Nikolai Aseev, Semen Bobrov, and Ivan Aksenov. For more information on Centrifuge, see Markov 2006, 228–275.

By Futurism, I understand an avant-garde movement in Russia and the Soviet Union at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as an umbrella term for several artistic groups therein, including Hylaea, Cubo-Futurism, Centrifuge, Egofuturism, and Mezzanine of Poetry. Beginning with Hylaea's first publication, *Sadok sudei*, in 1909, Futurism flourished in Russia throughout the decade preceding the Revolution and gradually disappeared afterward, except for its select representatives who continued to write in the same vein (Aleksei Kruchenykh, for example).

[2] "Кинематограф должен оставить в стороне ядро драмы и лиризма—он извращает их смысл […]. Но только кинематограф способен отразить и запечатлеть окружную систему ядра, его происхождение и туманность, его ореол […]" (Pasternak 2005, 151).

[3] For more on the correlation between Russian Futurism and cinema in 1913, see Tsivian 1994, 12.

the Left Front of the Arts,[4] a group first organized around the journal *LEF* (1923–1925), and then *Novyi LEF* (1927–1928). These publications covered numerous cultural issues, ranging from poetry, literary theory, theater, and design to photography and film. Select members of the group also worked in the film industry. The list of LEF's screenwriters includes Futurists Vladimir Mayakovsky, Sergei Tretiakov, Vasilii Kamenskii, and Nikolai Aseev, as well as the Formalist critics Osip Brik, Viktor Shklovsky, and Yuri Tynianov.[5] The list of LEF's collaborators boasts the most celebrated directors of Soviet cinema: Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov, Abram Room, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Mikhail Kalatozov among others.

LEF's extensive employment in the motion pictures production poses a question about the group's legacy. What did LEF contribute to the cinematic theory and praxis of the 1920s and early 1930s? This dissertation turns to the field of screenplay studies to examine the work of LEF's screenwriters. In particular, it focuses on the film-works of the journals' editors—Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. The central argument of this thesis elaborates the view that these authors' work in cinema had a closer connection to the group's ethos than previously understood. My analyses rely on the examination of their screen ideas alongside relevant theoretical articles, extant film footage, archival sources, historical cine-press publications, and personal memoirs.

The state of current research on the intersection of LEF and cinema can be best illustrated by a quote from Galina Antipova:

> It is known reasonably well, although it might not have been sufficiently processed, that almost all progressive cinema of the 1920s was directly connected to the theories and existence of LEF. […] A significant part of the Russian theory of cinema was formed

[4] Henceforth, I will refer to the Left Front of the Arts as LEF.

[5] For in-depth information about the corpus of screenplays produced by these authors, see chapter 1.

either in the texts of LEF's participants or later by people who experienced LEF's influence.[6]

The existing lacuna can be explained by the history of research on LEF as such. The group's critical reception can be subdivided into four consecutive periods:

1. The years from 1930 through the mid-1960s produced few studies on LEF, which contributed to the group's near obscurity.
2. From the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, studies dedicated to individual LEF authors appeared in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Germany, Sweden, and in Anglo-American criticism.[7]
3. The 1980s inaugurated a shift in the perception of LEF as a group. Three studies dedicated to the group include Natasha Kolchevska's dissertation (Kolchevska 1980), a cornerstone monograph by Halina Stephan (Stephan 1981), and Boris Groys' classic study that considered LEF's role in the transition to Socialist Realism (Grojs 1988). Of these texts, both Stephan's monograph and Kolchevska's dissertation contain fragments dedicated to cinema. While Stephan only briefly discusses Eisenstein and Vertov's publications in *LEF* (Stephan 1981, 86–89), Kolchevska later expanded on this topic in her article "The Faktoviki at the Movies: '*Novyi Lef*'s critique of Eisenstein and Vertov'" (Kolchevska 1987). While the article focuses on the reception of Eisenstein and Vertov's ideas, it excludes the contributions of other LEF members.
4. Further studies dedicated to specific aspects of the group's work appeared in the post-Soviet era. Karen McCauley's dissertation investigated the aesthetics of productionism (McCauley

[6] "Достаточно хорошо известно, хотя, может быть, еще не совсем осознано, что почти все передовое советское кино 20-х гг. прямо связано с теориями и жизнью ЛЕФа. […] значительная часть русской теории кино формировалась либо в работах участников ЛЕФа, либо позднее людьми, испытавшими его влияние" (Antipova 2010, 409).

[7] For a bibliographic overview, see Stephan 1981, 191–204.

1995) and Nikolai Kirillov's dissertation focused on the language of the journal (Kirillov 2006).

A modest number of research articles on LEF and Cinema appeared during the last period. The only in-depth article dedicated to the topic—"LEF i kino"—was written by Oksana Bulgakova (Bulgakova 1993), who provides a comprehensive overview of each LEF member's contribution to film and emphasizes the divergences in their creative platforms. Bulgakova's otherwise excellent piece suffers from its scope, which presupposes a certain number of fissures, gaps in knowledge, and generalizations that a lengthier study could have avoided. Bulgakova revisited this topic in a publication titled "*Novyi LEF* i kinoveshch'" [New LEF and the Film-Thing] (Bulgakova 2019) wherein she discusses LEF's theoretical ideas about objects in film and their correlation to the group's cine-praxis. In 2002, Martin Strollery's article, "Eisenstein, Shub and the Gender of Author as Producer" (Strollery 2002), elaborated on the gender dimension of LEF's cinematic production. In 2011, a posthumously published collection of works by Rashit Iangirov included the article "Marginal'nye temy v tvorcheskoi praktike LEFa" [Marginal Themes in LEF's Creative Praxis] (Iangirov 2011a), in which Iangirov examined the group's engagement with national cinema. In the absence of a definitive history of LEF, the group's legacy remains haphazardly inscribed in the dynamic cinematic landscape of the 1920s.

This dissertation builds on Oksana Bulgakova's 1993 study (Bulgakova 1993) by reopening the discussion of LEF's participation in the film industry and investigating the screenwriting of three of its journal editors: Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. The inspiration for this research arose from the last phrase of Bulgakova's article, which states that LEF's concept of cinema is "the example of a paradoxical 'unrecognition' and the exact divide in the fluctuations between the gravitation and repulsion of literature and

cinema."[8] The primary motivation of this work is to provide a more nuanced view of LEF's screenwriting theory and praxis, which, in turn, contributes to a deeper understanding of the group's place in the cinematic landscape of its time.

LEF and the Film Criticism of the 1920s

What was LEF's position in the film criticism of the 1920s? In the first years after the October Revolution, film criticism, particularly the critical understanding of cinema as an art form, underwent a rapid transformation—from nuanced descriptions of various schools of cinematography to what Tamara Selezneva described as "the lack of differentiation of the notion of cinema," when "everything melted in a single definition of 'cinematography.'"[9] Beginning in the early 1920s, a movement toward cinema's independence from other genres of art emerged, stimulating the development of new critical ideas. Throughout the decade, the growth of Soviet cinematography was associated with the names of leading film directors, including Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, the FEKS group,[10] Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Abram Room, and Olexander Dovzhenko. The creative philosophy and aesthetics of these directors did not develop in isolation but, instead, via "competition and struggle" among peers (ibid., 139).

One cannot overestimate the role of film criticism in this process. The journal *LEF* appeared in 1923 at a time when formative, professional periodicals dedicated to cinema began popping up. The diverse landscape of the 1920s cine-press consisted of the following print organs:

---

[8] " […] пример парадоксальной "неузнанности" и точного разграничения в колебания между притяжениями и отталкиваниями литературы и кинематографа" (Bulgakova 1993, 93).

[9] "Все сливается в едином понятии 'кинематограф'" (Selezneva 1972, 17).

[10] FEKS refers to the theater and film group titled Fabrika Ekstsentricheskogo Aktera [Factory of the Eccentric Actor] which was formed in 1921 by young directors Grigory Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg, Sergei Yutkevich, and Grigorii Kryzhitskii.

1. *Kino-Gazeta*, a weekly illustrated newspaper that began in 1918 (its Leningrad chapter opened in 1924)
2. *Ekran* (1921–1922)—a weekly illustrated journal
3. *Kino-fot* (1922–1923)—the central print organ of the Constructivist movement
4. *Foto-kino*—a monthly illustrated journal, operating from 1922 to 1923
5. *Zritel': zhurnal zhizni i iskusstva*—a bi-monthly illustrated journal that started in 1922
6. *Kino-zhizn'* (1922–1923)—a weekly journal (renamed *Art ekran* in 1923)
7. *Vestnik fotografii i kinematografii* (1923)—a monthly illustrated journal
8. *Proletkino* (1923)—the journal of the eponymous film studio (*Proletarskoe Kino* after 1925)
9. *A.R.K. Kino-Zhurnal* (1925–1926)—a monthly journal of the Association of Revolutionary Cinematography
10. *Sovetskii Ekran* (1924–1929)—an illustrated journal that changed several names and formats throughout its history[11]

Even though film was not LEF's primary focus, the group frequently discussed this medium. In particular, it furnished a platform for two important film directors of this period, Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, both of whom published their programmatic articles in the third issue of *LEF*: "Kinoki. Perevorot" [Kinoki. The Takeover] (Vertov 1923, 135–143) and "Montazh attraktsionov" [The Montage of Attractions] (Eizenshtein 1923, 70–75).[12] The rivalry between Eisenstein and Vertov[13] brought forth a wave of critical discussions throughout the

[11] From 1929 to 1930, *Sovetskii ekran* continued its publication under the title *Kino i zhizn'*. In 1931, it merged with another journal—*Kino i kul'tura*—and changed its title to *Proletarskoe kino*. Between 1933–1935, it operated under the title *Sovetskoe kino*, and from 1936 onwards under the name *Iskusstvo kino*.

[12] I discuss these publications in chapter 1.

[13] For more on the rivalry between Vertov and Eisenstein, see Tsivian 2004, 5–9.

second half of the 1920s concerning the goals, methods, language, and aesthetics of cinema. However, it would be a mistake to think that these discussions were limited to the pages of *LEF*. On the contrary, the entire spectrum of the cine-press, which was decentralized at the time, participated in this discourse.

What niche, then, did *LEF* and *Novyi LEF* occupy in the film criticism of the 1920s? The leading critics and theorists of the group—Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, Viktor Shklovsky, and Viktor Pertsov—published articles on numerous film-related topics both in *LEF* and other periodicals, which offered significant contributions to the development of film theory. Both journals spotlighted the names of leading Soviet film directors by publishing their critical texts and critical responses to their work, all of which contributed to the formation of LEFist film theory. The following table shows *LEF* and *Novyi LEF*'s interest in specific directors by charting the number of times their names are mentioned.

	LEF and *Novyi LEF*	*LEF* (1923–1925)	*Novyi LEF* (1927–1928)
Sergei Eisenstein	33	5	28
Dziga Vertov	31	11	20
Esfir Shub	21	0	21
Lev Kuleshov	15	0	15
Vsevolod Pudovkin	6	0	6
FEKS	2	0	2
Olexander Dovzhenko	1	0	1

Table 1. Soviet film directors mentioned on the pages of *LEF* and *Novyi LEF* [Compiled by the author]

In *LEF*, the topic of cinema is mentioned in nineteen out of one hundred and fifty-five articles, comprising twelve percent of the journal's publications. During the first phase of the journal,

only Eisenstein and Vertov enjoyed repeated mention. *Novyi LEF* discusses cinema in eighty-two articles out of two hundred and forty-four (thirty-three percent of the journal's publications). Its critical discussions extended to Shub, Kuleshov, and Pudovkin, who received a considerable amount of attention. *Novyi LEF* commented on FEKS only in passing, while Dovzhenko's work earned only one in-depth review from Viktor Pertsov.

Tracing the relationship between leading Soviet directors and LEF helps us to elucidate the dynamic between the group's critics and directors. Eisenstein joined LEF in 1923 but did not renew his membership with the appearance of *Novyi LEF*. Although he continued to work with Sergei Tretiakov, who was *Novyi LEF*'s last editor, Eisenstein severed his ties with the group and did not attend their 1927 meeting, which was dedicated to cinema. Despite the initial collaboration between the constructivists and *LEF*, Vertov's work became the subject of strenuous attacks by the journal, including negative reviews of his films.[14] Although Esfir Shub was not a member of the journal's editorial board, she was invited to LEF by Vladimir Mayakovsky in 1927 and attended their meetings. Shub, however, remained skeptical of the group and quit it in 1928 (Shub 1972, 120). Lev Kuleshov participated in LEF by publishing one article titled "Ekran segodnia" in the fourth issue of *Novyi LEF* (Kuleshov 1927). Both Kuleshov and Vsevolod Pudovkin belong to the LEF circle on account of their collaboration with the screenwriters of the group.

The second phase of the journal is characterized both by its increased interest in cinema and by the group's gradual marginalization in the Soviet cultural sphere. In 1927, *Novyi LEF* hosted a series of gatherings dedicated to cinema and cinematic theory. A record of one of its meetings appeared in the 11/12 issue of the journal (*LEF* 1927, 50–70). LEF's leading

[14] See "Dziga Vertov Versus Osip Brik: The Eleventh Round" in Tsivian 2004, 310–317.

theorists—Sergei Tretiakov, Osip Brik, and Viktor Shklovsky—explored emerging experimental cinematic forms and their classifications. The only film directors who participated in this discussion were Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, Esfir Shub, and Leo Esakia. By contrast, on April 25, 1927, Sovkino held a special meeting dedicated to "formalist directions in cinema"; LEF was not mentioned, but Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, and Vsevolod Pudovkin were discussed individually at great length ("Stenogramma soveshchaniia kommunistov 'Sovkino' po voprosu 'O formal'nykh napravleniiakh v kino'" 1927). Hence, the group occupied a rather marginal position in the cinematic landscape of the 1920s. Nevertheless, some of the most exciting developments in the film theory of the era took shape inside the circle of its filmmakers.

LEF and Screenwriting

The primary focus of this dissertation is the study of screenwriters. Screenwriting is an essential source for film scholarship. It contributes to the knowledge of film textology, especially in those cases where the footage is lost. It also provides a record of cinema that, for some reason, did not develop. LEF was founded, populated, and led primarily by authors, more of whom wrote screenplays than directed films. My investigation into the screenwriting theory and praxis of LEF's editors is, therefore, a step toward tracing the group's overall contribution to this medium. Such a study is facilitated by the recent advent of the interdisciplinary field of screenplay studies in the United States, as well as by the existence of a rich Soviet academic tradition, whose discoveries and methodologies can be brought to bear on the topic.

The forerunner of screenplay studies in the West is Kevin Alexander Boon, whose book *Script Culture and the American Screenplay* (2008) ignited a series of responses in American film studies. A result of this discussion was *Analyzing the Screenplay* (2010), a collection edited by Jill Nelmes, and three books published in 2013, each of which charted new territory in this

nascent discipline. Steven Price's *A History of the Screenplay* (2013) covers the screenwriting tradition in the United States and Western Europe from early cinema to the present. Ted Nannicelli's *A Philosophy of the Screenplay* (2013) focuses on ongoing definitions and the ontology of the screenwriting tradition. Ian W. Macdonald's *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (2013) suggests a new approach for understanding, studying, and researching the poetics of screenplay across the numerous drafts and documents that go into the creation of a film. Another available resource, *www.screenplayology.com*, is an ongoing digital project by Andrew Kenneth Gay that outlines the paths and problems in screenplay studies. Because all of these sources focus mainly on the English-language corpus of American screenplays, their methods and approaches require correlation with and adjustment to the Russian-language materials of the 1920s.

In Soviet historiography, screenwriting studies has a rich academic tradition. The most complete work on this topic is Liudmila Belova's book *Skvoz' vremia. Ocherki istorii sovetskoi kinodramaturgii* (Belova 1978b). Additionally, sections on screenwriting are frequently included in the surveys of Soviet silent cinema.[15] In Western scholarship, Maria Belodubrovskaya's chapter on Soviet screenwriting (from her book *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking Under Stalin*, 2017) is one of the best comprehensive accounts of the evolution of the screenplay format (Belodubrovskaya 2017, 130–165). Her earlier article "The Literary Scenario and the Soviet Screenwriting Tradition" (2016) explores how the literary scenario became the dominant form of screenwriting in the Soviet film industry from the late 1930s (Belodubrovskaya 2016). This research, from the Soviet era to more recent Russian and Western scholarship, provides a solid foundation for processing LEF's archival records.

[15] For example, see Lebedev 1947.

What additional sources are important for studying the screenwriting of the 1920s and 1930s? Primary sources on screenwriting of this era include the following publications: *Kak pisat' stsenarii dlia kino-kartin* (1925) by A. V. Goldobin (Goldobin 1925); *Kinostsenarii: teoriia i tekhnika* (1926) by I. V. Sokolov (Sokolov 1926); *Kak pisat' stsenarii* (1931) by Viktor Shklovsky (Shklovsky 1931); a joint publication edited by I. F. Popov, *Kak my rabotaem nad stenariem?* (Popov 1936); *Dramaturgia kino: Ocherki po teorii i praktike stsenariia* (1938) by Valentin Turkin (Turkin 1938). Among the secondary sources, it is important to mention work by Stella Gurevich, the most distinguished authority on the cinematic contributions of Soviet writers during the 1920s and 1930s. Her monograph *Sovetskie pisateli v kinematografe, 20–30-e gody* (Gurevich 1975) remains the best reference book on this topic. The problem with Gurevich's monograph is the scope of the corpus; it excludes many writers who have been rediscovered in the post-Soviet era. New significant contributions to a nuclear study of the screenwriters of this period include Jerry Heil (Heil 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 1990), Brian D. Harvey (Harvey 2001, 2007), Anna Kovalova (Kovalova 2010, 2013, 2017), and, most recently, Tomi Huttunen (Huttunen 2018). These sources shed light on how this period in film history gave formative moment to the theoretical formulations that predetermined the role of the screenplay in Soviet cinema in the decade to come.

The primary reason for studying LEF's position in the screenwriting discussions of the 1920s is its lack of cohesion. While Sergei Eisenstein[16] and Dziga Vertov[17] rejected existing screenwriting formats, LEF's theorists and screenwriters—Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, Viktor Shklovsky, and Yuri Tynianov—advocated for further development of the screenwriting medium and looked for practical solutions to overcome the deficit of screenplays suitable for production. Each of these authors had their own vision of what a screenplay should be and its role in the production process. For example, throughout the 1920s, Osip Brik consistently viewed the screenplay as a technical document that needed to be written after the production, not before. He advocated for the screenwriters' active participation in the production process and their collaboration with directors (see chapter 2). Both Viktor Shklovsky (Shklovsky 1931) and Sergei Tretiakov saw the screenplay as a technical document that should be written before production and be based on the approved thematic submission and the film's libretto. Additionally, Tretiakov theorized the production screenplay, a plot-based script that was subservient to facts (see chapter 3). When it comes to Yuri Tynianov, he drew attention to the changing relationship between literature and cinema and suggested adhering to cinematic rather than literary principles

[16] Sergei Eisenstein openly expressed dissatisfaction with screenwriting. In the article titled "O literature i kino" [On Literature and Cinema] (1928), he cited Isaac Babel: "To write a screenplay is akin to inviting a midwife to be present at the wedding night" / "Писание сценария—это все равно, что приглашать акушерку в первую брачную ночь." (Eizenshtein 1971, 529). Babel's statement echoed Eisenstein's own sensibilities expressed in "O forme kinostsenaria" [On the Form of the Screenplay] (1929): "The iron screenplay introduces as much vivacity [to the filmmaking process] as the toe tags of drowned bodies do to the atmosphere of a morgue" / "Номерной сценарий вносит в кинематографию столько же оживления, как номера на пятках утопленников в обстановку морга" (Eizenshtein 1964b, 297). In his later work, Sergei Eisenstein advocated for the development of the emotional scenario, the format pioneered by Aleksandr Rzheshevskii.

[17] In 1922, Vertov wrote about his concept of the Cine-Eye in "My. Variant manifesta" [We. A Version of a Manifesto], noting that the most complete script will not replace the Cine-Eye, "just as a libretto does not replace a pantomime" (Taylor and Christie 1988, 72). In subsequent articles, he developed the Kinoks' position on screenwriting, which regarded screenwriting as an unnecessary cinematic procedure. However, from the mid-1930s to the 1950s, Vertov wrote film pitches and screenplays, all of which were published by the Eisenstein Center in 2004 (Vertov 2004).

(Tynianov 1977). When writing screenplays for Soviet film studios, LEF's screenwriters had to reconcile their theoretical views with the industry's constraints. The plethora of theoretical articles by Osip Brik and Sergei Tretiakov discussed in this dissertation can be viewed as one part of LEF's response to the unfolding screenplay crisis of the second half of the 1920s.

Organization and Research Design

The inspiration for the research design of my dissertation comes from the metaphor of the mammoth reconstruction that Sergei Tretiakov used to describe the cinematic processes of the 1920s. His article "Kino k iubileiu" [Anniversary Films] (1927) used this metaphor to create a taxonomy of anniversary films commemorating the decennial of the October Revolution. According to Tretiakov, each filmmaker, including Esfir Shub, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Boris Barnet, depicted revolutionary events as if they were reconstructing a mammoth for a museum exhibit. Tretiakov expounded on this idea using the following examples: in Esfir Shub's film *Velikii put'* [The Great Road] (1927), the director displayed only a few authentic bone fragments in relation to the entire skeleton; Eisenstein studied the mammoth carefully and presented his own version in *Oktiabr'* [October] (1927) by assembling it out of the best modern materials; in *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* [The End of St. Petersburg] (1927), Pudovkin focused on the story of the mammoth hunter; in *Moskva v oktiabre* [Moscow in October] (1927), Barnet built a life-size model of the mammoth out of ingredients he found in a butcher shop (Tretiakov 1927).

Unlike the anniversary films described by Tretiakov via the metaphor of a mammoth, each screenwriter in this dissertation represents an entirely new species and, therefore, has to be treated separately. Furthermore, the documents available for these authors pose difficulty in reconstructing their engagement with the film industry. For example, Osip Brik's theoretical

articles are available in historic film press collections. There are several extant films based on his screenplays; however, his numerous screen ideas have been published haphazardly. Processing Brik's archival records is problematic because he not only worked in co-authorship and often as a script doctor, but there are countless screenplays in circulation to which Brik did not add his name. The textology of Brik's screenwriting oeuvre thus requires a massive editorial effort in the future. The circumstances surrounding Sergei Tretiakov's film-works are entirely different: his major theoretical articles were republished in 2010 alongside one authentic screenplay and several librettos. However, the screenplay records for his most famous films are missing. Hence, researchers have to supplement the current gap with the existing film records. Vladimir Mayakovsky's case poses a different set of problems altogether. With the absence of any cohesive theoretical statements about screenwriting on his part, all we have to work with are his unproduced screenplays and two extant films.

My research methodology, therefore, resembles Shub's approach of pinning remaining authentic fragments—film documentation and archival press publications—on a board[18] and situating them within a larger scheme. I reconstructed some of the fragments in my assemblage by relying on memoirs, correspondence, and extrapolations made by other researchers. In using this method, my dissertation does not seek to reconstruct one collective *monstre sacré* of LEF's screenwriters by engineering it out of various fragments to make the group whole. Instead, it approaches each author individually, documenting and delineating his or her position vis-à-vis other LEF members.

[18] "She [Shub] takes these fragmented parts of the skeleton, fixes them by the iron stretches of the titles, while keeping the scale and proportions imposed by the material that she is working with, displays it and says: 'These are the extant fragments that we actually have.'" / "Она [Шуб] берет эти неполные части скелета, скрепляет их железными растяжками надписей, соблюдая масштаб и пропорции, диктуемые кусками материала, выставляет и говорит: 'Вот что мы имеем действительно дошедшего до нас'" (Tret'iakov 1927, 30).

With this methodology, the three editors of LEF—Mayakovsky, Brik, and Tretiakov—occupy the central position of "masterminds" behind the group's participation in the film industry. Another author touched upon in this dissertation is Lilia Brik, who co-wrote and co-directed *Stekliannyi glaz* [The Glass Eye] (1928) with Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi and wrote *Liubov' i dolg* [Love and Duty], one of the most innovative unproduced screen ideas of the era. Outside the scope of my investigation are the screenwriting oeuvres of Viktor Shklovsky, Yurii Tynianov, Vasilii Kamenskii, and Nikolai Aseev. Among the filmmakers of the LEF circle, another relevant screenwriter is Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko, who is primarily known today for her work with Eisenstein. Finally, the picture of LEF's screenwriting would not be complete without an examination of the scripts written by the directors associated with the group: Sergei Eisenstein, Esfir Shub, Lev Kuleshov, Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, and Dziga Vertov.

This dissertation is only the first step toward evaluating LEF's diverse screenwriting corpus. By focusing on the case studies of Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, it traces how these authors answered LEF's programmatic exigencies. As such, it poses the following questions:

1. What were their theoretical ideas concerning cinema and screenwriting?
2. How did these ideas relate to their cine-praxis?
3. What model of authorship did their screenwriting praxis posit?
4. How does this model enrich our understanding of the Cinema of LEF?

Chapter 1 proposes a framework for the Cinema of LEF and establishes its participants, parameters, and the corpus. It traces the chronology of the group's interaction with the film industry, which took place over four periods. The first period (1923–1925) is characterized by the formation of LEF's initial interest in cinema and the appearance of the first programmatic

articles by Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein. After the closure of the journal *LEF* in 1925, many of its editorial members began working in film. Hence, the second period (1926) can be conventionally described as the beginning of their cinematic *podenshchina*, or daily labor (a term coined by Viktor Shklovsky). During the third period, the years of *Novyi LEF* (1927–1928), the group's cinematic platform developed to encompass several discussions on the subject of story-based vs. plotless cinema, fiction, and documentary films. Boris Arvatov's sociological approach reconciled dissimilar positions and put forward new criteria for evaluating the cinematic material based on how, by whom, and under what conditions films were produced and distributed. The fourth period of the LEF's work in cinema (1928–1934) occurred after the final closure of the journal, which corresponds to Vladimir Mayakovsky's idea about the wide participation of the LEFists in mass production.

Chapter 2 reassesses the established critical reception of Osip Brik's writing for cinema. In particular, it argues that, contrary to previous observations, there is a considerable connection between Brik's screenwriting and the ideology of LEF. It begins by reconstructing the development of Brik's views on cinema and the role of the screenwriter in this process. Using the example of Brik's previously published screen ideas, as well as produced films and archival sources, it recalibrates their thematic, theoretical, and sociological connections to the group's ethos. In particular, it demonstrates the thematic correlation between Brik's screen ideas and LEF's avant-garde experiments, shows how the author loosens the narrative framework from the inside, and how his work combines the narrative canvas and the structure of the propaganda pamphlet. The chapter ends with a discussion of Osip Brik's model of authorship as a screenwriter and how it corresponds to Viktor Shklovsky's idea of *literaturnaia podenshchina* (daily literary labor).

Chapter 3 traces the development of one of LEF's central themes—the struggle between the Old and the New—through Sergei Tretiakov's contribution to the development of the Georgian film industry. In particular, this chapter reviews the relationship between Tretiakov's movie scripts and the LEF cine-platform and highlights their correlation to Tretiakov's theories. This analysis demonstrates that Tretiakov's understanding of the Cinema of LEF did not exclude plot-based films provided they were grounded in thoroughly researched material. Extensive journalistic publications that followed the author's two expeditions to the Svaneti region confirm their factographic orientation. The author's participation in the development of the Georgian film industry reinforces Walter Benjamin's characterization of Tretiakov as an *operative author*.[19]

Chapter 4 examines the screenwriting corpus of Vladimir Mayakovsky from 1926 to 1928 in relation to LEF's praxis. The chapter begins by reconstructing Mayakovsky's views on screenwriting from memoirs, publications in the press, and correspondence with film functionaries. The second part of the chapter is structured around specific modules rather than individual texts because the standard format of all screenplays allows for such an organization. It pays special attention to the underlying principles of Mayakovsky's screenplays as well as the cinematic devices and techniques used by the author. Finally, it discusses Mayakovsky's model of authorship, the screenwriter as an *auteur*.

The instrumental value of my dissertation lies in creating a blueprint of the connections between the Left Front of the Arts and Soviet Leftist cinema. By bringing together the fields of literature and cinema and by linking key figures of film history via LEF's network, this dissertation attempts to shift the perspective on the history of Soviet silent cinema from a director-based approach to one that includes screenwriters. In discussing the emerging models of

[19] The term *operative author* comes from Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Author as a Producer" (1934).

authorship in the cinematic context of the 1920s, it opens the door for future studies on authorship in the cinema of the interwar period. All of these elements contribute to the broader momentum of reassembling the Soviet 1920s across various disciplines. With the centennial of the Left Front of the Arts coming up in 2023, the plight of LEF's radical authors and the stories they told for mass audiences provide a backdrop for the new radical narratives circulating in our own politically charged time.

Explanation of Terms

A ***screen idea*** is a key concept discussed by Ian Macdonald in his book *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (2013), which he defines as the following:

> Any notion held by one or more people of a singular concept (however complex), which may have a conventional shape or not, intended to become a screenwork, whether or not it is possible to describe it in written form or by other means. (Macdonald 2013, 4–5)

The screen idea is instrumental in investigating and discussing early forms of screenwriting when documents, technical protocols, or film footage is missing.

Screenplay is a generic term for any document that outlines a proposed screen narrative. *Stsenarii* in Russian, the term interchangeably translates into English as *screenplay, script, scenario*. In response to the ***scenario crisis*** (*stsenarnyi krizis*) of the mid 1920s (the shortage of suitable screenplays for production), Soviet film studios introduced a mechanism of splitting writing for the screen into two primary stages: literary scenario and shooting script. Maria Belodubrovskaya defines ***literary scenario*** as the prose treatment of a film's story: "In the Soviet film industry, it developed to serve as the decisive document in the production process," becoming a widely accepted screenwriting format toward the end of the 1930s (Belodubrovskaya 2016, 251). ***Shooting script*** is known as the ***director's scenario*** [rezhisserskii stsenarii]. Sometimes, an additional pitching stage would also require a ***libretto***—a short, descriptive

document written either before the screenplay or after the film was finished that outlined the plot. The format hailed from the pre-Revolutionary practice of cinematic reading, when the cinematic press published the librettos of foreign films.[20]

Additional screenwriting formats include iron, emotional, and production screenplay.

Iron scenario is a concept that originated in the 1920s to denote a "fixed script" that could not be changed during production. Sometimes referred to as a "steel scenario," the script would be fully developed prior to production (Belodubrovskaya 2016, 253). It differed from the Hollywood continuity script because it did not entail multiple authors. According to Maria Belodubrovskaya, the iron scenario was, for the majority of commentators, merely a "finalized director's scenario. The iron scenario is a preliminary working out of all the production details and editing in the film" (ibid., 256).

Emotional scenario is a concept that is usually associated with Aleksandr Rzheshevskii, who was lauded as one of the most talented scriptwriters of his generation. This concept also goes back to Eisenstein's 1929 essay, "O forme kinostsenariia" [On Screenplay Form], which defined the screenplay's role as " supplying a general impulse, an 'emotional requirement,' a shape that the director filled with his own means" (Eizenshtein 1964b, 298). Soviet cinema viewed the emotional scenario seriously because it offered a resolution to the problem of director authorship; it was an inspired literary work of such high quality that directors had to respect it in their own treatment (Belodubrovskaya 2016, 256).

Production scenario is a term coined by Sergei Tretiakov in his article "Proizvodstvennyi stsenarii" [Production Screenplay], which he published in the second issue of *Novyi LEF* of 1928. By production scenario, Tretiakov meant a screenplay whose weakened

[20] For more on pre-Revolutionary librettos, see Kovalova 2013.

fabula is subservient to facts (Tret'iakov 1928, 34). Screenplays of this type were supposed to focus on modes of production and Marxist economic analysis, choosing only the most suitable plots to organize their documentary material.

Chapter 1: *We Were the River*: The Cinema of LEF Revisited

There is no sphere in which LEF is working as productively as in cinema, but…
- Sergei Tretiakov, 1927

Introduction

This chapter delves into the history of engagement of the Left Front of the Arts with the cinematic arts along with its print organs, the journals *LEF* (1923–1925) and *Novyi LEF* (1927–1928). Founded as a publishing firm on January 16, 1923 and later as a journal, LEF gave voice to the avant-garde forces within Soviet culture.[21] The 1929 publication of the *Literature of Fact* collection by *Novyi LEF* constituted the end result of the group's activity, "the last stage of its production" (Chuzhak and Brik 2000, 5). But is there such a thing as the Cinema of Fact? Among several articles dedicated to this topic, including those by Natasha Kolchevska (Kolchevska 1987) and Valérie Pozner (Pozner 2006), the best in-depth study belongs to Oksana Bulgakova, who points out numerous discrepancies between LEF members' theoretical ideas and the group's cine-praxis (Bulgakova 1993). This chapter builds upon Bulgakova's survey. Departing from her article's structure, which explores the individual contributions of LEF's members, I attempt to view LEF's engagement with cinema—with both discrepancies and contradictions—as a part of an on-going experiment in search of new cinematic forms. In particular, I argue that, by the end of 1928, the group articulated a joint theoretical film platform on the pages *Novyi LEF* but lacked the determination, time, and resources to finalize and publish it as a separate collection. Hence, my goal is to define LEF's engagement with cinema, reconstruct its chronology, delineate its theoretical premises, identify its corpus of films, and

[21] The journal was formally registered on July 17, 1923. Its first publications transpire how the group attempted to establish Futurism as a major movement in the Soviet state. Its effort ultimately failed in 1925 (Stephan 1981, x).

suggest future research directions. Establishing the pivotal stages of LEF's engagement with cinema will serve as a foundation for the case studies discussed in this dissertation. In doing so, I have not approached LEF as a monolithic group but, rather, considered the peculiarities of the individual artistic platforms of its members and contributors.

Tthe relationship between the literature and cinema produced by LEF is not at all obvious. By factography I understand the technical term coined in Russia in the latter half of the 1920s that designates an aesthetic practice preoccupied with the inscription of facts (Fore 2006, 3). The factographers not only depicted the construction of factories and reorganization of society, but they also actively participated in these changes by incorporating advanced technical methods and media into their own practices in literary, photographic, and cinematic mediums. In other words, factography was a mode of praxis that ran across mediums (ibid., 5). The historic definition of the Literature of Fact can be summarized as a variety of documentary genres, including sketches, scientific monographs, newsreels, *fakto-montazh*, feuilletons, biographies, memoir literature, essays, diaries, court protocols, travelogues, meeting stenograms, reportages, and event coverage, among many others that analyze and describe contemporary social processes (Chuzhak 2000a, 61). The new literature, according to its theorist Nikolai Chuzhak, was conceived as a call for action [pobuditel' k deistviiu] (Chuzhak 2000b, 19) and engaged in life-building [zhiznestroenie] (ibid.). Although LEF's collection did not provide ready-mades or "how to" instructions, it specified that the new literature should have precisely expressed the truth of the living fact [pravda zhivogo fakta] (ibid., 18).

Any attempt to transpose this definition to cinema mechanically, however, inevitably faces the following challenges. First, the discussion of documentary cinema in the 1920s was not limited to LEF. Besides directors Vertov and Eisenstein, it also included such participants as

Aleksei Gan (the editor of *Kino-Fot*, 1922–1923),[22] Ippolit Sokolov (a critic, screenwriter, and poet), as well as Vladimir Erofeev (the editor of *Kino-gazeta* and documentary filmmaker). Therefore, the idea claiming that LEF somehow had a monopoly on this discussion would be erroneous. Second, filmmakers still debated whether cinema should draw from literary models or stay completely independent and guided by its visual logic. The filmmakers' positions on the role of a screenplay varied, while screenwriting itself was undergoing a rapid evolution of form. Third, the theoretical premises of the Cinema of Fact, like the Literature of Fact, were not fully developed. Its concept of "matter" or life [material] was used impressionistically and required additional theoretical grounding.[23] Finally, it is important to reflect on the innate paradoxical tension of the cinematic documentary genres. As noted by Siegfried Kracauer, "the desire for storytelling develops within a genre which repudiates the story as an uncinematic element" (Kracauer 2012, 116). Thus, in order to include the entire scope of LEF's cinematic activities, it would be germane to discuss the more general category of the Cinema of LEF as a totality of the group's cinematic output rather than the narrow and still fuzzy concept of the Cinema of Fact.

I understand the Cinema of LEF as the experimental film platform for the avant-garde forces of the 1920s. Guided by the politics of *sotszakaz* [socially relevant themes], it paid a special attention to the innovative form. Additionally, it valued the primacy of the "matter" of life above literary schemes. Its goal was to "fix the fact" and to "propagandize" via the entire spectrum of the nascent cinematic genres: from newsreels, documentaries, played plotless cinema, Kulturfilms, production movies, to fabula-driven feature films. In other words, unlike the Literature of Fact, the Cinema of LEF (or Cine-LEF) included dramatic plots in its corpus. It

[22] For more on Gan, see Romberg 2018.

[23] For in-depth discussion of the significance of LEF's ideas on the life of objects as applied to Soviet cinema, see Bulgakova 2019, 61–94.

was not the kind of cinema that LEF aimed to create but rather a practical outcome of LEF's work in the film industry. The analysis that follows will serve as a roadmap through the many paradoxes, discords, overlaps, and dissonances of LEF's film theory and praxis.

Toward an Operational Definition of LEF

Definitions of LEF vary and can be subdivided into the following three categories: (1) a united cultural platform of the left-leaning forces in art; (2) a free association of leftist culture intellectuals; and (3) a family enterprise. The first definition was propagated by Vladimir Mayakovsky, the journal's founder, and appears in his articles and speeches from 1923 to 1925. For example, in his 1923 article "Za chto boretsia LEF?" [What Does LEF Fight For?], Mayakovsky writes: "LEF has to gather together the forces of the left. […] LEF has to unite its front for the destruction of the old, for a fight to embrace the new culture" (Maiakovskii 1959h, 43). In his 1925 speech entitled "Vystuplenie na dispute po dokladu Lunacharskogo 'Pervyie kamni novoi kul'tury'" [On the Occasion of Lunacharsky's Speech "First Foundation-Stones of the New Culture"], Mayakovsky proclaims that "LEF is not a small group, it is a movement, it is a perpetual tendency, a perpetual struggle of forms, which, of course, stems from the change in the entire economic base. It is the perpetual struggle of new forms against forms that are dying out."[24] However, in the second iteration of the journal (*Novyi LEF* 1, 1927), despite a joint effort to delineate a common theoretical platform, Mayakovsky reframes his definition of the group as a "free association of all workers of the left revolutionary front."[25] This definition is later echoed by Sergei Tretiakov who, in his introduction to the eleventh issue of *Novyi LEF* (1928), labeled

[24] The original text reads: "Леф не группка, течение Леф—это всегдашняя тенденция, всегдашняя борьба форм, обусловленных, конечно, переменой всей своей экономической базы, постоянная борьба новых форм с формами отживающими, с формами отмирающими" (Maiakovskii 1959f, 289).

[25] "Леф—вольная ассоциация всех работников левого революционного искусства." Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Chitatel'!" (Maiakovskii 1927, 2).

LEF as "a conglomerate of loners with their squads."[26] In her article "Lef i kino," Oksana Bulgakova names the following categories of LEF participants: Futurists, Productionists, Constructivists, Formalists, and adjuncts. Among the Futurists, she names members of the former Hylaea (Vladimir Mayakovsky, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Vasilii Kamenskii, and Velimir Khlebnikov),[27] the *Tvorchestvo* group (Sergei Tretiakov, Nikolai Aseev, Nikolai Chuzhak, and Viktor Pal'mov), and Centrifuge (Boris Pasternak and Boris Kushner). The Productionists were Boris Arvatov and Osip Brik. The Constructivists consisted of Alexander Rodchenko and Anton Lavinskii, as well as others who signed the manifesto published in the seventh issue of the journal. The Formalists were Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum,[28] and Grigorii Vinokur. Lastly, Isaac Babel and Artem Veselyi made up the adjuncts (Bulgakova 1993, 165). Bulgakova's categorization parallels Mayakovsky, who, in a 1925 speech at the First Workers Congress of Left Front of the Arts, asserted that LEF consisted of twelve distinct

[26] " […] вольный конгломерат одиночек, сошедшихся вместе со своими 'дружинами.'" Given the fact that the article was published near the end of LEF's existence, this definition should be taken with a grain of salt. The same definition was repeated without attribution by Oksana Bulgakova in her article "LEF i kino" (Tret'iakov 1928a, 1–2).

[27] Although Velimir Khlebnikov died in 1922 and could not have participated in LEF, the journal promoted this author as the forerunner of LEF movement and published his poetry and memoirs about Khlebnikov on its pages. For more information on Khlebnikov and LEF, see Stephan 1981, 117–121.

[28] The inclusion of Formalists in LEF posits a methodological gray zone and the arguments for and against the inclusion of its specific members should be made with caution. While both Shklovsky and Vinokur were extensively published in *LEF*, Tynianov only published three of his articles in the journal: "Slovar' Lenina–polemista" [The Vocabulary of Lenin the Polemicist] (Tynianov 1924b, 81–110), "O literaturnom fakte" (Tynianov 1924a, 101–116), and "Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka" [The Problems of Study in Language and Literature] (Tynianov and Iakobson 1928, 35–37). At the same time, Yuri Tynianov was one of the creators of Lenfilm's Screenwriting Department and the Film Department of the State Art History Institute in Leningrad. Tynianov's contracts with the film studios about screenplays and staging of films are kept at the Russian Government Archive of Literature and Art (Moscow) (henceforth cited as RGALI (*fond-opis-edinitsa khranenia, list*). The contracts with the film studios include the following: SevZapkino, Sovkino, Belgoskino, State Cinema Industry of Georgia, and Mosfilm. The aforementioned documents discuss the following titles: *Shinel'* [Overcoat] (based on N. V. Gogol's story), *Poruchik Kizhe* [Lieutenant Kizhe], *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara* [The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar] and *Pushkin* (RGALI, *f.* 2224 (Tynianov, Yuri Nikolaevich), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 191). Tynianov's screenplay *Obez'iana i kolokol* [Monkey and the Bell] is considered lost.

groups, nine of which he named: Zaum poets, Productionsists, Constructivists, Futurists, Formalists, newspaper workers, dramatists, art theorists, and a special group of pure lyricists (Maiakovskii 1959h, 280–282). The difference between these two definitions is that the first represents the movement as informed by avant-garde aesthetics while the second describes the organization and its members.

Dmitrii Bykov suggests a third, narrower definition insisting that LEF was "a family enterprise" run by Vladimir Mayakovsky and the Briks. In his biography of Mayakovsky, Bykov elaborates on LEF's specific familial bond:

> Regardless of anything, LEF was precisely a family journal dedicated to family affairs, a chronicle of the new everyday practices exhibited for general display. […] The core of the problem was the fact that almost all LEF participants were unprepared that the main content of their journal—and the entire activity of their group—would be centered around the life of Mayakovsky and the Briks.[29]

Indeed, the members' personal histories influenced the group's professional activity. For example, Lev Kuleshov was close to the group not only by virtue of his love affair with Lilia Brik, but also because he directed movies based on screenplays by LEF members[30] and had friendships with Esfir Shub, Sergei Eisenstein, and Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko.[31] In other words,

[29] "Но как бы то ни было—'ЛЕФ' был именно семейным журналом о семейных делах, хроникой нового быта, вынесенной на всеобщее обозрение. […] Проблема была в принципиальной неготовности почти всех лефовцев к тому, что главным содержанием журнала—и всей деятельности литературной группы—станет жизнь Маяковского и Бриков" (Bykov 2017, 486).

[30] Lev Kuleshov directed *Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov* (1924), based on the screenplay by Nikolai Aseev. Osip Brik wrote the following screenplays for Kuleshov: *Kleopatra* [Cleopatra] (1927), *Dva-Bul'di-Dva* [Two-Buldi-Two] (1929), *Dokhunda* [Dokhunda] (1936), *Sluchai v vulkane* [Incident on a Volcano] (1941), as well as two films for which Brik edited the screenplays—*Veselaia kanareika* [Merry Canary] (1928) and *Sibiriaki* [The Siberians] (1940). Viktor Shklovsky wrote *Po zakonu* [By the Law] (1926) and *Gorizont* [Horizon] (1932) for Kuleshov. Moreover, Kuleshov had plans to work with Vladimir Mayakovsky and Lilia Brik, but these plans did not come to fruition.

[31] For more information on the friendship and intellectual exchanges between the LEF circle members (Lev Kuleshov, Alexandra Khokhlova, Esfir Shub, Sergei Eisenstein, and Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko), see Kuleshov and Khokhlova 1975, 107–108.

the power of these connections is an essential factor to consider in determining the group's joint corpus and aesthetics.

Bengt Jangfeldt, in his biography of Vladimir Mayakovsky, suggests another, more radical interpretation of LEF. Jangfeldt writes about "LEF aesthetics and mores" and "LEF's lifestyle" specifically as a sect:

> LEF group practiced a common set of aesthetics and mores and was so united that one can practically discuss it as a sect. […] United by common ideas and common enemies, they communicated with each other almost around the clock.[32]

Although underscoring the unity of the group, Jangfeldt's view of LEF as a sectarian enterprise lacks a proper definition and critical grounding alike.

An even more radical take on LEF emerges in Mikhail Prishvin's diaries and was recently discussed by Vladimir Katsis (Katsis 2018, 20). Together with Prishvin, Katsis explores the parallel between LEF and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Besy* [The Possessed], with Vladimir Mayakovsky as the incarnation of Nikolai Stavrogin. While Katsis makes a compelling case by finding intertextual connections between Dostoevsky and Mayakovsky's works, Prishvin's extrapolation of the elements of Dostoevsky's poetics to the life-building strategy of LEF is nothing but an artistic hyperbole and, therefore, an unlikely candidate for the operational definition of the group.

My approach to LEF is closer to the second definition: an organization centered around a journal. Such an approach requires precision in identifying the periods of the group and the position of its members vis-à-vis the journal's editorial board. All in all, it includes the editorial

[32] "Лефовская группа исповедовала общую эстетику и мораль и была настолько сплоченной, что о ней можно говорить практически как о секте. […] Объединенные общими идеями и общими врагами, они общались друг с другом почти круглосуточно" (Jangfeldt 2009, 405–406).

board members (Mayakovsky, Osip Brik, Tretiakov, Rodchenko, Aseev, and Arvatov),[33] and the wealth of LEF's contributors and collaborators, all of whom formed the circle of LEF's friends. As discussed by Oksana Bulgakova, the LEF participants in cinema include: Mayakovsky, Brik, Tretiakov, and Shklovsky, who all wrote screenplays; directors Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, both of whom were members of the editorial board at different times in the journal's history;[34] and collaborating directors Esfir Shub, Lev Kuleshov, Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, Leonid Obolensky, Leo Isakia, and Mikhail Kalatozov (Bulgakova 1993, 169). I also suggest including the following figures in LEF's cinematic circle: Lilia Brik, Isaac Babel, Abram Room, Alexander Kurs, and Alexander Rodchenko. Although not listed as an editorial member of the journal, Lilia Brik participated in all of LEF's activities and wrote five screenplays and librettos.[35] Isaac Babel debuted his best short stories in *LEF*[36] and later formed a working relationship with Sergei

[33] Nikolai Chuzhak left the editorial board because, according to Mayakovsky, "he was in the minority on all organizational and ideological issues" (Maiakovskii 1959f, 279). Mayakovsky also described Chuzhak's approach to art as "modernized Nadsonovism" [modernizirovannaia nadsonovshchina] (Maiakovskii 1961d, 71). Semyon Yakovlevich Nadson (1862–1887) was a Russian poet associated with the intonation of gloom and sorrow in Russian poetry.

[34] Sergei Eisenstein participated only in the first stage of the journal and did not renew his membership for *Novyi LEF*.

[35] Lilia Brik, with Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, co-wrote the screenplay and co-directed *Stekliannyi glaz* [The Glass Eye] (1929) (RGALI, *f.* 2577 [Lilia Iur'evna Brik], *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 39.). Independently, Lilia Brik wrote another screenplay titled *Liubov' i dolg = Sovremennaia Karmen* [Love and Duty = Modern Carmen] (RGALI, *f.* 2577 [Lilia Iur'evna Brik], *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 41.). Another libretto titled *Patentovannaia kraska* [Patented Paint] (RGALI, *f.* 2577 [Lilia Iur'ievna Brik], *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 40.) was Lilia Brik's cine-adaptation of Nikolai Nekrasov's short story titled "Novoizobretennaia privilegirovannaia kraska brat'ev Dirling and Ko. Nepravdopodobnyi rasskaz" [The Newly Invented Patented Paint of Brothers Dirling and Co. A Fantastic Tale.] (1849-1850). Two additional screenplays by this author include *Leila and Sergei* (RGALI, *f.* 2679 [Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov], *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 929.) and *Kinopovest' o Mayakovskom* [Cine-Novella about Mayakovsky] (RGALI, *f.* 2577 [Lilia Iur'evna Brik], *op.* 1, ed. *khr.* 720.). With the exception of *Stekliannyi glaz*, none of the screenplays went into production.

[36] In 1923, the fourth issue of *LEF* published eight short stories by Isaac Babel from both *Konarmiia* [Red Cavalry] and *Odesskie rasskazy* [Odessa Tales] ("Pis'mo" [Letter], "Smert' Dolgusheva" [Death of Dolgushev], "D'iakov" [Dyakov], "Kolesnikov" [Kolesnikov], "Prishchepa" [Prishchepa], "Sol'" [Salt], "Korol'" [The King], "Kak eto delalos' v Odesse" [How It Was Made in Odessa]). The following year, the fifth issue of *LEF* published another short story titled "Moi pervyi gus'" [My First Goose] from the *Konarmiia* collection.

Eisenstein.[37] Abram Room directed the following films based on Viktor Shklovsky's screenplays: *Ukhaby* [Potholes] (1927), *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* [Bed and Sofa] (1927), and *Evrei na zemle* [Jews on the Land] (1927), co-written by Shklovsky and Mayakovsky. Alexander Kurs was a friend of LEF who wrote the screenplay for Lev Kuleshov's *Vasha znakomaia* [Your Acquaitance] (1927). Leo Esakia directed *Amerikanka* (1930), whose screenplay was written by Viktor Shklovsky, and participated in LEF's 1927 colloquium on cinema. Finally, Alexander Rodchenko, a core member of the group, worked as an art director on the following films: *Moskva v Oktiabre* [Moscow in October] (1927), *Vasha znakomaia* (1927–1928), *Kukla s millionami* [The Doll with Millions] (1928), and *Albidum* (1928).

From "Yellow Blouse" to Red LEF[38]

For many of LEF's members, their engagement with cinema dates back to the Futurist movement of the pre-Revolutionary period. The question of the intersection of Futurism and cinema remains understudied. In Western scholarship, there is a popular consensus that Russian Futurism influenced Soviet cinema indirectly as a worldview. For example, in the preface to *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina write: "We know that Russian Futurism as an artistic movement had almost no formal or ideological influence on cinema. Relations between Futurism and cinema appear to have been marked by outward rejection […] rather than mutual attraction" (Kaganovsky and Salazkina 2014, 29). At the same time, extensive evidence points to Futurist interest in and direct engagement with cinema. The two Futurist movies of the pre-Revolutionary period include

[37] For more on the collaboration between Babel and Eisenstein, see Belova 1978a.

[38] This particular phrase comes from Mayakovsky's 1926 speech thesis titled "Pop ili master?" [Priest or Master?] (Maiakovskii 1961c, 163).

Drama v kabare No. 13 [Drama in Cabaret No. 13] (1914) and *Ia khochu byt' futuristom* [I Want to Be a Futurist] (1914), which featured the famous circus clown, Vitalii Lazarenko (1890–1939). The Futurist position on film is well documented in David Burliuk and Mayakovsky's publications in *Kine-zhurnal* (1910–1917) under various names.[39] Another three films with Mayakovsky—*Baryshnia i khuligan* [The Lady and the Hooligan] (1918), *Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia* [Not Born for Money] (1918), and *Zakovannaia fil'moi* [Chained by Film] (1918)—were produced immediately after the Revolution. The same year, Georgii Evangulov, a minor Futurist poet from Georgia, published his tragic poem "Baron v zaplatannykh shtanakh" [The Baron in Patched Trousers] (1918), in which the lyric hero's desire to go to the movies functions as the plot driver.[40] In 1922, Mayakovsky wrote his programmatic article-manifesto "Kino i kino" [Cinema and Cinema] in which he outlined his view on the building of the new socialist cinema: "Communism should reclaim cinema from the speculative leaders. Futurism should evaporate the deadly waters of inertia and morals."[41] In 1928, Aleksei Kruchenykh's self-published collection titled *Govoriashchee kino. Stsenarii, kadry, libretto* [Talkies. Screenplays. Movie Images, Librettos] (1928) provided poetic reviews of select movies and his thoughts about cinema. Its last part included a screenplay-sketch titled "The Birth and Death of LEF" in which

[39] For a discussion of the problem of attribution of the pre-Revolutionary articles on cinema written by Burliuk and Mayakovsky, see Pronin 2019, 21–29.

[40] "I could not control my desire / I was driven to hit the bottom … / So one day / I went to the movies … / I saw something there / That I was not able to understand … / colonnades of wondrous villas / the golden wrists of flexible hands / I do not have my peace of mind since then, / Oh, Cinema! / You have poisoned me / With the desire for happiness!"

"Не совладал я с жаждой: / Потянуло взглянуть на дно … / И вот однажды / Пошел я в кино … / Что-то увидел такое, / чего мне понять не дано … / … Колоннады сказочных вилл / гибких рук золотые запястья. / Но с тех пор я не знаю покоя / О, кино! / Но с тех пор ты меня отравил жаждой счастья …" (Evangulov 1918, 3).

[41] "Коммунизм должен отобрать кино у спекулятивных поводырей. / Футуризм должен выпарить мертвую водицу—медлительность и мораль" (Maiakovskii 1959b, 29).

the poet extended the periodization of LEF from 1909 (the year of the very first Futurist publications) to LEF's victory and death in 1937 (Kruchenykh 1928, 51–62). Moreover, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many figures previously affiliated with Futurism turned to writing screenplays: Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vasilii Kamenskii, Vadim Shershenevich, Sergei Tretiakov, Boris Lavrenev, and Nikolai Aseev. The abundance of aforementioned examples demonstrates that the Futurists had extensive contact with cinema prior to the 1920s. LEF's engagement with this medium, however, differed in quality. The summary that follows elucidates the nature of this difference.

The history of LEF and cinema can be subdivided into the following four periods: (1) 1923–1925; (2) 1926–1927; (3) 1927–1928; and (4) 1928–1934. Let us examine each of these in turns. The formative period begins in 1923 when the third issue of the journal *LEF* published two programmatic texts by Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. In his article "Montazh attraktsionov" [The Montage of Attractions], dedicated to the staging of a play by Ostrovsky, Eisenstein formulated his principles of montage, which he would later apply to his film-works, for the first time:

> The new device is a free montage of arbitrarily selected effects (attractions) which are independent (and also exist outside of the given composition and the plot), but with the precise goal of achieving a specific final thematic effect, *i.e.*, montage of attractions.[42]

Prior to 1923, the Kinoks group, led by Vertov, was already known for its manifestos ("WE: Variant of a Manifesto," 1919) and a number of newsreels.[43] In his *LEF* publication "Kinoki.

---

[42] " […] новый прием—свободный монтаж произвольно выбранных, самостоятельных (также и вне данной композиции и сюжетной сценки действующих) воздействий (аттракционов), но с точной установкой на определенный конечный тематический эффект—монтаж аттракционов" (Eizenshtein 1923, 71).

[43] *Godovshchina Revoliutsii* [The Anniversary of October Revolution] (1918); *Mozg Sovetskoi Rossii* [The Brain of Soviet Russia] (1919); *Boi pod Tsaritsynom* [The Battle of Tsaritsyn] (1919); *Protsess Mironova* [The Trial of Mironov] (1919); *Vskrytie moshchei Sergiia Radonezhskogo* [The Unveiling of the Remains of Sergii of Radonezh]—the authorship for this film is contested by Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov, and Eduard Tisse (Tsivian 2004, 406); *Literaturno-instruktorskii agit-parokhod VTsIK "Krasnaia Zvezda"* [*The Red Star* Literary Instructional

Perevorot" [Kinoki. The Takeover], Vertov compiled fragments of his earlier writings with transcriptions of the group's meetings and postulated the following principles:

1. The use of the film camera as the cine-eye, which is more perfect than the human eye[44]
2. A new understanding of the newsreel[45]
3. A system of montage based on the work of a mechanical cine-eye, which "contests the visual conception of the world produced by the human eye"[46]

Whereas Eisenstein theorized his montage of attractions as a tool to achieve an emotional impact on the viewer, Vertov's principles aimed for profound changes, both in cine-language and in the evolution of man, "the electric youth":

> "I am the cine-eye, I am creating a man more perfect than Adam who was created. I create thousands of various humans by using various blueprints and outlines" (Vertov 1923, 140).

These two positions would inform LEF's cine-polemics for the next five years. In a separate publication titled *Reviziia Levogo Fronta v sovremennom russkom iskusstve* [The Revision of Left Front in Contemporary Russian Art] (1925), Viktor Pertsov summed up the intersection of LEF and cinema by underscoring the position of the Kinoks, emphasizing its importance in "scientific and pedagogical cinema" (Pertsov 1925, 54), and remarking that "screenplay-based cinema is only starting to develop" (ibid., 55). He further formulated the general task for contemporary cinema as "the problem of fixing historical experience in its visual representation"

Agit-Steamer of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee] (1919); *Agitpoezd VTsIK* [The Agit-Train of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee] (1921); *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny* [The History of the Civil War] (1921); *Protsess pravykh esserov / protsess esserov* [The Trial of the Right S.R.s./ The Trial of the S.R.s.] (1922).

[44] " […] использование кино-аппарата, как кино-глаза, более совершенного, чем глаз человеческий […]" (Vertov 1923, 138).

[45] " […] новое понимание кино-хроники" (ibid., 143).

[46] " […] оспаривающий зрительное представление о мире у человеческого глаза" (ibid.).

(ibid.). In its next iteration, the journal *Novyi LEF* would address the scope of these tasks delineated by Pertsov.

Another curious publication dedicated to cinema took place on pages of *Krysodav*, a satirical journal the three issues of which were published in July–October of 1923. To a certain extent, it is possible to describe *Krysodav* as LEF's side project in that it featured contributions by the LEF's founders and closest associates: Vladimir Mayakovsky, Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, Nikolai Aseev, Nikolai Chuzhak, Igor' Terent'iev, and Aleksei Kruchenykh. The third issue of *Krysodav* published a two-page graphic satire under the pen name Ver-nef with drawings by Boris Zemenkov. The article represents a satire on the mores of bourgeois society—gambling and dancing—in which Charlie Chaplin assumes the role of the moral police. Disappointed with Western society, he joins the Soviet Dinamo sports club and engages in its health promotion policies (Ver-nef 1923: 9–10). This *Krysodav* publication is significant for understanding the extent of LEF's film criticism in 1923. In other words, when the journal was launched, the medium of cinema was only important to the group as an agitational and didactic tool, while a more nuanced discussion of the film theory was the prerogative of the filmmakers themselves.

During LEF's two-year existence, the joint cinematic output of its contributors and collaborators included the following titles:

1. Sergei Eisenstein directed *Dnevnik Glumova* [Glumov's Diary] (1923), *Stachka* [Strike] (1925), and *Bronenosets Potemkin* [Battleship Potemkin] (1925).

2. Dziga Vertov made a number of newsreels: *Kino-pravda* (1925),[47] *Goskinokalendar'* [State Kino-Calendar];[48] the three special issues of *Daesh' vozdukh!* [You Give Us the Air!] (1923); *Segodnia* [Today]; *Avtomobil'* (GUM) [Automobile (GUM)]; *Pervoe maia v Moskve / Prazdnik pervogo maia v Moskve* [The 1st of May in Moscow / The 1st of May Celebration in Moscow] (1923); *Kino-Glaz na pervoi razvedke: pervaia seriia tsikla "Zhizn' vrasplokh"* [Kino-Eye on its First Reconaissance Mission: First Episode of the Cycle "A Life Caught Unawares"] (1924); *Pervyi Oktiabr' bez Il'icha* [The First October Without Ilyich] (1925). Vertov also directed the graphic animation of *Sovetskie igrushki* [Soviet Toys] (1924) and *Iumoreski* [Humoresques] (1924).
3. Vasilii Kamenskii wrote the screenplay for *Sem'ia Gribushinykh* [The Gribushin Family] (1923).
4. Nikolai Aseev wrote the screenplay for *Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov* [The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks] (1924).
5. Isaac Babel wrote the intertitles for *Evreiskoe schast'ie* [Jewish Luck] (1925).[49]

During this first period, LEFists did not view cinema as the group's direction or activity. Vladimir Mayakovsky's notebooks from 1925 include such categories as "LEF in poetry, LEF in prose, LEF in advertisement, and LEF in theater" (Maiakovskii 1961c, 157), while "LEF and cinema" is missing from his agenda. It would be another year before Mayakovsky decided in

[47] *Kino-Pravda* was a newsreel film journal. Its twenty-three reels have appeared from June 5, 1922 to March 1925. For in-depth information, see Tsivian 2004, 403-405.

[48] Fifty-seven issues of *Goskinokalendar'* came out from April 1923 to May 5, 1925.

[49] This and the following lists of films and screenplays constitute the joint output by the filmmakers and collaborators associated with LEF as a group. These lists do not represent the the Cinema of LEF as a separate category, which requires in-depth critical discussion and theoretical grounding.

favor of LEF's engagement with cinema, and another two years for the category to appear in his notebooks.[50] His eventual interest in cinema was conditioned by two events: the closure of the journal and LEF's need for international representation, which he thought could be grounded in the internationally understood language of cinema. In a note titled "O kinorabote" [About Cinema-Work] (1926), Mayakovsky writes:

> I like film work mainly because it does not require translation. For ten years, I have had enough of explaining the beauty of the "Left March" to foreigners. The word "Left," when applied to art, even if you translate it, does not mean anything to them. Frequent travels have forced me to think about engaging with international art of some sort.[51]

Ironically, a year would pass before the release of the first feature-length talkie film in the West (*The Jazz Singer*, 1927) and another five years before the demonstration of fragments of the first Soviet sound film, *Putevka v Zhizn'* [Road to Life] (1931).

The Beginning of the *Kino-Podenshchina* Years[52]

The year 1926 was a turning point for LEF, which had lost its journal earlier in the year when Gosizdat ended its publication. During the years 1926–1927, the group's critics turned to filmmaking. The increase in film production (from 58 films in 1925 to 89 films in 1926 and 104 in 1927) (Taylor and Christie 1988, 424) caused a deficit of good professional screenplays, which, in turn, prompted the Soviet film studios to attract professional writers to work for

[50] "LEF and cinema" as a separate category appears in Mayakovsky's notes only in 1927 (Maiakovskii 1961a, 166).

[51] "Киноработа мне нравится главным образом тем, что ее не надо переводить. Я намучился, десятый год объясняя иностранцам красоты 'Левого марша' а у них слово 'левый' в применении к искусству, даже если его перевести, ничего не значит. (…) Частая езда заставляет меня думать о серьезном занятии каким-нибудь интернациональным искусством" (Maiakovskii 1959c, 125).

[52] Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *literaturnaia podenshchina* was theorized in the eponymous collection published in 1930. Erroneously translated in Shklovsky's reader as a *potboiler work* (an inferior work produced chiefly for profit), *podenshchina* actually denotes the idea of work-journey, literary daily labor, or temp labor. It signifies a new regime of freelance writing in journalism and cinema that emerged in the 1920s as a response to the political and social exigencies of the time. *Podenshchina* reflected not so much the material needs of the writer but rather his or her professional ethos and social obligation. For more on the topic, see Kalinin 2014.

cinema. Thus, the so-called "second literary wave of cinema" began. Theorized by Sergei Eisenstein (Eisenstein 1964, 274–279) and later by Viktor Shklovsky (Shklovsky 1930, 100–104), this period was marked by the following transitions: the rise of the screenplay's role for the entire process of film production, and a change in screenwriting format from an iron to a literary scenario.[53] The film press of the time described the screenplay situation in terms of *scarcity*, *famine*, *crisis*, and *frenzy*[54] and ran extensive coverage of writers in cinema ranging from articles and poems to feuilletons and caricature drawings. For example, in a satirical poem published in *Kino* (Moscow) on February 23, 1926, the famous parodist Alexander Arkhangel'skii uses the metaphor of "field work" for authors in cinema. He points out the lack of artistic freedom and predicts that writers will return to literature. Out of five names mentioned in the poem, four were members of LEF: Babel, Tretiakov, Shklovsky, and Aseev (Arkhangel'skii 1926, 2).

Круговорот	Rotation
… писатели ушли в кино. Они, как в море канули. Но море их не принимает. В. Шкловский	… the writers turned to working in film as if They have sunk into the sea. But the sea does not accept them. V. Shklovsky
Озабочены и хмуры (Развернуться не дано!) От полей литературы Прут писатели в кино.	Anxious and gloomy (No room to breathe!) Writers flee from literature To the movies in droves.
Средь буденовок и сабель Ослепительно велик Несказанный скачет Бабель С ординарцем Беней Крик.	Amid Red Army hats and sabers Dazzling in all his glory The ineffable Babel gallops With Benya Krik, his orderly.
Зерна рифм везде рассеяв, Золотым пленясь руном,	Scattering the rhyme-grains all over, Captivated by the golden rune,

[53] Scholars who worked on this problem are Natalia Gornitskaia, Stella Gurevich, Alla Kovalova, Maria Belodubrovskaya, Anka Henning, and Rashit Iangirov.

[54] For more on the topic of the screenwriting famine, see Gornitskaia 11–28.

Мчится к финишу Асеев—
Соловьем запеть в кино.

Прорычатель из Китая[55]
(Прорычал и был таков!)
Окиночился, вростая
в кадры пленки, Третьяков.

Скучен лирики гербарий,
Путь и цель в другом конце.
Инбер делает сценарий
о веснушках на лице.

Что писатели, поэты!
Нынче Шкловскому дано
Наворачивать сюжеты
В развороченном кино.

Но, клокочет гнев, как гейзер,
От кино неважный прок.
Сценаристов Гольденвейзер[56]
Режет вдоль и поперек.

Сценаристы злы и хмуры
(Развернуться не дано!)
На поля литературы
Прут обратно из кино.

Aseev rushes toward the finish line—
To sing like a nightingale on screen.

The Proarphet from China
(Made a roar, then made off!)
Tretiakov is encinemaed,
in filmstock head-to-toe.

The lyrical herbarium is boring—
Her path and goal lie in another place:
Inber is writing a screenplay
about a freckled face.

It's not just writers and poets!
Shklovsky, too, is engaged
In convoluting the plots
Of films unfurled and made strange.

Anger bubbles like a geyser—
What good are movies, pray tell?
Right now, Goldenweiser
Is slashing screenwriters to hell.

The writers are mad and gloomy
(No room to breathe!)
They flee back to literature
From the movies in droves.

Al. Arkhangel'skii[57]

A caricature drawing by E. Klein (Figure 1.1), accompanied by a short satirical poetic text signed under the pen name Iamaika, shows the duplicity of the critics-turned-screenwriters' position: they are depicted as the two-faced Roman god Janus. Similarly, in 1930, Kukryniksy

[55] The author alludes to the popular play by Sergei Tretiakov titled *Rychi, Kitai!* [Roar, China!] (1926), which described the revolutionary struggle of Chinese port workers against the American colonizers.

[56] A playwright, theater director, screenwriter, and literary translator, Lev Goldenveizer was the head of literary department of Goskino USSR from 1927 to 1937.

[57] All poetry translations in this dissertation were edited by Boris Dralyuk, unless otherwise noted.

depicted Viktor Shklovsky as a two-faced Janus in their 1930 collaboration with Alexander Arkhangel'skii (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.1. *Two-Faced Janus*, caricature by E. Klein (1927)[58]

«И развелось же кино-лент!
Откуда столько прет бездари?»
Так хмуро шепчет рецензент,
Уктнувши нос в чужой сценарий.

Чужое нас бросает в дрожь!
Бранить чужое—не обидно!
Но свой сценарий?—Он хорош!
В нем даже и бревна не видно!

"Far too many films these days!
Where did these hacks all come from?"
Nose buried in somebody's screenplay,
The critic grumbles and harrumphs.

What others do can make you shiver!
Easy to trash what others write.
But your own screenplay—it's a wonder!
Can't even see the beam in it!
(Iamaika 1926, 2).

[58] Iamaika is the *nom de plume* of the Soviet satirist who published in the cine-press of the 1920s, mainly *Kino* and *Sovetskii ekran*. Iamaika worked in collaboration with various comic artists, with Getmanskii being his most consistent collaborator.

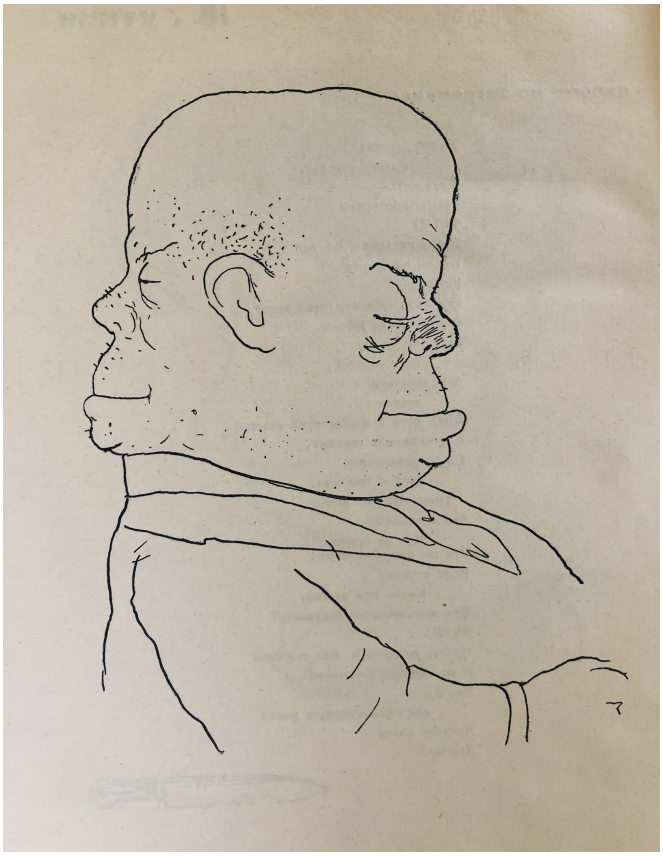


Figure 1.2. *Viktor Shklovsky*, caricature by Kukryniksy (1930)

During this time period, Mayakovsky signed several contracts with VUFKU (All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration) for writing screenplays. Shklovsky began working for Sovkino (All-Russian Photo Cinematographic Shareholding Company) where he headed the screenplay department of its Leningrad branch. Brik started a new job at Mezhrabprom-Rus (Workers International Relief Shareholding Company) where he became an adjunct consultant and directed its screenplay department from the end of 1926 to the beginning of 1927. Tretiakov served as a literary consultant for Goskinprom Gruzii (State Cinematographic Industry of Georgia). Yuri Tynianov became one of the creators of Screenwriting Department of Lenfilm (Leningrad Film Studio) and the Film Department of the State Art History Institute in Leningrad.

LEF's circle of friends took shape during this time and included Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Esfir Shub, Lev Kuleshov, Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi, Leonid Obolenskii, Mikhail Kalatozov, and Isaac Babel among others (Bulgakova 1993, 169).

Additionally, authors associated with LEF started writing for *Sovetskii ekran* [Soviet Screen]. In 1926, Alexander Kurs became its editor-in-chief, and the magazine started to feature cover and graphic art aesthetically similar to the style of Alexander Rodchenko, albeit the artist's name is missing from its pages. About a third of *Sovetskii ekran* staff were associated with LEF, including Nikolai Aseev, Isaac Babel, Osip Brik, Semyon Kirsanov, Lev Kuleshov, Mikhail Levidov, Piotr Neznamov, Viktor Pertsov, Abram Room, Sergei Tretiakov, Viktor Shklovsky, and Sergei Eisenstein. Other contributors included a member of OPOJAZ Boris Eichenbaum, as well as poets Anatoli Marienhof, Vadim Shershenevich, Tikhon Churilin, Osip Mandelshtam, and a constructivist Alexei Gan.

LEF's work of this period was commemorated in a poem by Varvara Stepanova, the wife of Aleksandr Rodchenko, who had worked at Mezhrabpom for some time as a production designer.

…ЛЕФ наш еле держится,
видимость одна:
в Межрабпоме встретимся,
пока же
кто куда. […]
Слушайся приказу,
левая братва:
межрабпомь не сразу—
по одному, по два. […]
ЛЕФы были—
больше нет:
фильмы делать учатся.

…Our LEF is barely holding on,
it's just a façade:
we'll meet at Mezhrabpom,
but for now,
everyone goes their own
way. […]
Listen to the order,
lads of the Left:
go Mezhrabpoming not right away—
one at a time, two at a time. […]
There used to be LEFs
but no more:
they are learning to make films.[59]

[59] This poem was translated by Natalie Ryabchikova. For in-depth discussion, see Ryabchikova 2019.

Stepanova penned this poem in October of 1927 and then recorded in her diary a comment made by Lilia Brik: "I don't like jokes that look like the truth" (Stepanova 1994, 215; also cited in Ryabchikova 2019, 74).

Members of LEF circle produced the following films in 1926–1927:

1. Sergei Eisenstein directed *Oktiabr'* [October] (1927).
2. Isaac Babel wrote screenplays for *Kar'era Beni Krika* [Career of Benia Krik] (1926), which was originally intended for Sergei Eisenstein.
3. Dziga Vertov directed two newsreels: *Shestaia chast' mira* [The Sixth Part of the World] (1926) and *Shagai, Sovet!* [Stride, Soviet!] (1926).
4. Viktor Shklovsky wrote the screenplays for *Prostitutka* [The Prostitute] (1926) (in co-authorship; the film was edited by Esfir Shub), *Predatel'* [The Traitor] (1926), *Po zakonu* [By the Law] (1926), and *Kryl'ia kholopa* [The Wings of a Serf] (1926).
5. Yuri Tynianov wrote the screenplay for *Shinel'* [Overcoat] (1926).

The Cine-Platform

In 1927, the journal reopened under the title of *Novyi LEF* and proclaimed its goal to be the "technology of Soviet culture." Vladimir Mayakovsky explained the journal's purpose in the following way:

> What is LEF? It is a group of people working on the technology of our culture inasmuch as this technology is dictated by the proletariat and the revolution, and because the proletariat and the revolution demand a change of old forms and their replacement by new, socialist forms. This is the central premise of our journal.[60]

[60] "Что такое 'Леф'? Это—группа людей, работающих над технологией нашей культуры, поскольку она диктуется пролетариатом, революцией и поскольку пролетариат и революция требуют изменения всех старых форм и замены новыми, социалистическими. Это—основная установка нашего журнала" (Maiakovskii 1959g, 501–502).

The third period lasted from 1927 to 1928 and can be characterized by its movement toward a united cine-platform. Although not finalized and articulated in a single text, this platform is reconstructed from the select articles published on the pages of *Novyi LEF*. While the group lacked a single prescriptive concept of the new cinema, its aesthetic unity was articulated through a binary opposition between "ours and theirs."[61] One good example of this rhetoric is the article "Nashe kino" [Our Cinema], which Tretiakov wrote for the international cinematographic exhibition in the Hague in 1928. All the directors mentioned by Tretiakov—Esfir Shub, Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov, Abram Room, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Sergei Eisenstein—were either close to LEF or worked in collaboration with one of LEF's contributors. The article became part of a brochure titled *Kino—mezhdunarodnyi iazyk dlia vzaimoponimaniia narodov* [Cinema as the International Language of People's Mutual Understanding], which was translated into English, German, and French (Treti'akov and Ratiani 2010, 38). The beginning of Tretiakov's article was published in the fifth issue of *Novyi LEF* under the title "What Sustains Cinema" [Chem zhivo kino].

> Soviet cinematography of the left, unlike that of the right wing, carries out, in more or less a clear manner, the two main social functions of our time: demonstration of the fact, *i.e*., its informational function, and activation of the viewer, that is, its agitational function. […] Cinema as the intellectualizer and emotionalizer—these are the two sides from which cinema serves the active construction of our new reality.[62]

The following survey of these articles published by LEF will explore the group's views on cinema and help to speculate on the factors its joint platform could have entailed.

---

[61] For detailed analysis of the language of LEF criticism, see Kirillov 2006.

[62] "Левая советская кинематография, в противоположность правому крылу ее, с большей или меньшей ясностью осуществляет в своей работе две главные социальные функции нашего времени: показ факта, то есть функцию информационную, и активизацию зрителя, то есть функцию агитационную. […] Кино как интеллектуализатор и кино как эмоционализатор—вот две стороны, которыми кино служит активному строительству нашей новой действительности" (Tret'iakov 1928b, 27–28).

In 1927, the first issue of *Novyi LEF* featured an article by Viktor Pertsov titled "Grafik sovremennogo Lefa" [Schedule of Contemporary LEF] in which the author conceptualized LEF's contribution to cinema in terms of the creation of an experimental filmmaking platform:

> When the newest technology brought cinema to the fore as a means of impact, LEF has immediately set the highest records of Soviet (and international) filmmaking. This did not happen by accident. LEF has brought up such figures of cinematic high culture as Eisenstein, Vertov, Shklovsky, Tretiakov, and Brik—the avant-garde of the Soviet film directors and filmmakers. The very selection of these people who set off to build the young cinema illustrates LEF's spirit of innovation.[63]

The proceeding theoretical conversation included the following publications: the article "My ischem" [We Are Seeking] ("My ishchem" 1927, 1–2) and the round table discussion, "Lef i kino" [LEF and Cinema] ("Lef i kino" 1927, 50–70), both published in the 11/12 issue of *Novyi LEF*; Boris Arvatov's afterword to this discussion (Arvatov 1928, 34–37); film reviews of Dziga Vertov's *Odinnadtsatyi* [The Eleventh Year] and Sergei Eisenstein's *Oktiabr'* (Brik et al. 1928, 1–4); as well as Tretiakov's final remarks published in two articles: "Bol'shaia oshibka" [Big Mistake] (Tret'iakov 1928a, 1–2) and "Prodolzhenie sleduet" [To Be Continued] (Tret'iakov 1928c, 1–4). These texts lay the foundation of LEF's collective views on cinema from which its position can be crystallized.

The preface to the 11/12 issue of *Novyi LEF* titled "My ischem" reconfirms LEF's orientation toward both cinematography of fact and agitational function ("My ishchem" 1927, 2). It rightly assesses the group's development as a stage at which they are only learning to make films and are taking the first steps toward developing its film theory (ibid.). LEF's immediate

[63] "Когда новейшая техника выдвинула в первый разряд средств воздействия кино, Леф поставил с места самые высокие рекорды советской (и мировой) кинематографии. Это произошло не случайно. Леф воспитал для кино-работников высокой культуры: Эйзенштейн, Вертов, Шкловский, Третьяков, Брик—авангард советской кино-режиссуры и кино общественности. Самый этот отбор людей, которые двинулись в строительство молодого кино-дела, показателен для лефовского новаторского нюха" (Pertsov 1927, 17).

goal, according to the article, is to analyze the social function of various genres and determine which of those they will support in the future (ibid.).

It is not surprising that the colloquium "LEF i kino," the transcript of which was published in the same issue, featured a variety of opinions and approaches. Its participants (Brik, Zhemchuzhnyi, Lavinskii, Mchavariani, Neznamov, Pertsov, Tretiakov, Shub, Shklovsky, and Esakia) discussed the principles of the classification of material between the documentary and drama. Tretiakov suggested separating films into three categories: *flagrantnyi* (or documentary, meaning non-distorted),[64] *igrovoi* (played), and *instsenirovannyi* (drama) ("Lef i kino" 1927, 51). Viktor Shklovsky proposed to differentiate between *fabul'nye* (fabula-driven) films vs. *nefabul'nye* (plotless cinema) (ibid., 57). Eisenstein's films, according to Shklovsky, were classified as plotless cinema. Regarding LEF's de-facto work in cinema, Osip Brik acknowledged the difference between the group's declared goal to create more leftist newsreels and his individual (together with Shklovsky) cine-praxis by stating that they had to do what they could under the circumstances.[65] The same statement can be equally extrapolated to the rest of the group members.

The third issue of *Novyi LEF* published in 1928 features an article "Kinoplatforma" in which Boris Arvatov, who was absent from the colloquium, gives his response to the discussion

[64] The word *flagrantnyi* is a historic term from the 1920s used by LEFs and the formalists. By *flagrantnyi* material, they meant unmodified historic footage, but they distinguished the gradations of changes that specific footage underwent.

[65] "Why is it that the LEF group would like to assume the responsibility for everything that is happening in cinematography? I personally work at Mezhrabrom 'Rus',' and I do not assume any responsibility. Both Shklovsky and I are working in a certain department, the screenwriting department. We influence [the cinema] inasmuch as we can." / "Мы, лефовцы, хотим брать на себя ответственность за все, что должно делаться в кинематографии. Я лично работаю в Межрабпом 'Руси' и не беру на себя никакой ответственности. И я и Шкловский работаем там только в определенном цеху, в сценарном цеху. Поскольку мы можем влиять, мы влияем" ("Lef i kino" 1927, 69).

and summarizes LEF's position on cinema. As a theorist of productionism, Arvatov removed the opposition between the newsreel and played cinema by showing their potential (Arvatov 1928, 34). Additionally, he warned against the aestheticization of the movie frame (ibid., 35–36), and underscored the social function of art by identifying its main criteria, that is, the way art is produced and consumed (ibid., 36–37). Arvatov saw the end goal of LEF's cine-platform as abolishing movie theaters and the creation of cinema departments in factories and research institutions with the purpose of educating new generations of filmmakers and carrying out cinematic research (ibid., 37). Arvatov's emphasis on aggressive future-leftist ideology as the primary unifying factor of leftist cinema allowed the existence of a variety of transitional forms (the primary topic of LEF's debate). According to him, "one has to search for the social and class distinctions of artworks not inside the immanent artistic production, but on the outside—in the ways it is produced and consumed."[66] Arvatov's sociological approach removed the tensions and disagreements between various LEF members (discussed at length by Bulgakova) and provided a theoretical basis for the phenomenon of the Cinema of LEF under the umbrella of productionism:[67]

> The productionist movement in art (*Novyi LEF* being one of its main participants), is socially oriented through and through. Its program is built not on the properties of the product, but on the properties of the social process of artistic production: the criteria of "productionism" or "non-productionism" relies on who, how, with what practical goal is making the film.[68]

---

[66] "Социальное, классовое отличие художественных произведений следует искать не внутри их, не в имманентно-художественной продукции, а вне ее—в способах ее производства и потребления" (Arvatov 1927, 36).

[67] By *productionism* [proizvodstvennichestvo], I understand a theoretical model developed by Boris Arvatov (1896-1940) that manifested in the avant-garde orientation toward an industrial approach aimed at producing socially useful objects. Arvatov's theoretical ideas contributed to shaping art, literature, cinema, and aesthetics in the 1920s and informed the transition from avant-garde to socialist realism. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of productionism, see McCauley 1995.

[68] "Производственное движение в искусстве, одним из главнейших участников которого является 'Новый Леф,' насквозь социально, и его программа строится не на свойствах продукта, а на свойствах

In practical terms, this means that any film produced by the members of the LEF group and its distant circle, which used a specific approach associated with the ideology of the group, even if packaged in a narrative-base form, belongs to the Cinema of LEF.

The next issue of the journal put the group's theories to the test. In the article "Ring Lefa" [LEF's Ring], Osip Brik, Viktor Pertsov, and Viktor Shklovsky responded to two new films, Dziga Vertov's *Odinnadtsatyi* (1928) and *Oktiabr'* (1927) by Sergei Eisenstein and Gregory Aleksandrov. Both films were made to commemorate the decennial anniversary of the October Revolution. In his introduction, Osip Brik criticized Vertov for the absence of a screenplay and plot motivation (Brik et al. 1928, 27–28) and incriminated that "the movement toward documentary films is being halted by the filmmakers' general disregard for scripts."[69] Contemporary documentary cinema, according to Brik, suffered from the absence of screenplays and plots. Brik further articulated LEF's position on cinema in his critique of *Oktiabr'*. The main point of criticism was the excessive freedom the directors took in portraying historical events:

> LEF's position that facts should be the basis of cinematic art seems too narrow [to Eisenstein], his artistic freedom is way too limited by empirical reality. Eisenstein does not want to understand cinema as a way of depicting reality, he claims to create philosophical cine-essays. We believe that this is a mistake […]"[70]

Shklovsky and Pertsov joined the discussion of *Oktiabr'*. Pertsov criticized Eisenstein's departure from historical veracity but acknowledged his own inability to estimate the artistic

---

общественного процесса художественного производства: кем, как, с какой практической целью производится фильма—вот критерий 'производственности' или 'непроизводственности'" (Arvatov 1927, 36).

[69] " […] движение вперед неигровой фильмы тормозится сейчас пренебрежением работников к сценарию" (ibid., 28).

[70] "Лефовская точка зрения, что основным в киноискусстве является материал, кажется ему слишком узкой, слишком приковывающей творческий взлет к реальной эмпирике. Эйзенштейн не хочет понимать кинематографию как способ показа реальной действительности, он претендует на философские кинотрактаты. Мы полагаем, что это ошибка […]" (ibid., 33).

innovation of the film (ibid., 34). Shklovsky underscored Eisenstein's formal innovation in *Oktiabr'* and offered a sophisticated analysis of the film's montage sequences.

All in all, in the third period of LEF's existence, the crystallization of the group's theoretical position on cinema revolved around the development of socialist cine-genres and the codification of reality effects. Much of this discussion can be read as a reaction to the strong positions represented by Eisenstein and Vertov, wherein each of the participants aimed to formulate and articulate his own vision of the dilemma. The further development of individual creative platforms increased the theoretical gap between LEF's members. Arvatov's sociological approach to cinema production united all of these divergent theoretical directions. At the same time, LEF's cine-praxis could not meet the expectations set by the theoretical premise of the group due to the collective nature of authorship in cinema and strict government control.

The End of LEF

From 1927 onwards, *Novyi LEF* was tormented by conflicts. The journal was attacked by Viacheslav Polonskii, the editor of *Novyi mir*. In two articles—"Zametki zhurnalista: Lef ili blef?" [The Journalist's Notes: LEF or Bluff?] and "Blef prodolzhaietsia" [The Bluff Continues],—Polonskii accused LEF of "hypertrophied individualism" and "a continuation of the pre-Revolutionary 'bohemian' habits of Futurism" (Polonskii 1927). As a result, LEF's contributor Boris Pasternak left the group in the summer of 1927.[71] Another conflict between Viktor Shklovsky and Lilia Brik[72] prompted Mayakovsky and Osip Brik to leave the group on September 26, 1928, together with Nikolai Aseev, Semen Kirsanov, Alexander Rodchenko, and Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi. Vladimir Mayakovsky explained his departure at his lecture titled "Levee

[71] For in-depth analysis of Boris Pasternak's reasons for leaving *LEF,* see Shcherbin 1983, 684–702.

[72] For details on the conflict between Shklovsky and Lilia Brik, see Gratchev and Evdokimova 2019, 30.

Lefa" [More Left Than LEF], which took place on September 26, 1928 (and later on Septermber 29) by stating that LEF's work was acquiring the air of a group eccentricity of sorts,[73] that the time of small groups in art was over,[74] and that although LEF in its previous format no longer existed, it did not mean that their "struggle for a left art will, even for a minute, become lesser."[75] In October of 1929, Mayakovsky declared the opening of a new literary group, REF [Revolutionary Front of the Arts], but this intention was short-lived. On January 3, 1930, Mayakovsky wrote a letter asking to join RAPP (the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) (Maiakovskii 1961a, 162). Without a leader, REF fell apart and failed to publish its first journal issue. Cinema was never on REF's agenda.

Figure 1.3. *Mayakovsky and the critic*, caricature by Kukryniksy (1928–1930)
[Holding of the State Museum of the History of Russian Literature named after V. I. Dal']

[73] "Новаторская работа, которую мы вели в журнале 'Новый Леф' приобретала характер какого-то группового чудачества" (Maiakovskii 1959a, 503).

[74] "В порядке дня сейчас стоит вопрос не образования новых группировок, а борьбы с ними" (ibid.).

[75] "Леф в том виде, в каком он был, для меня больше не существует, но это не значит, что борьба за левое искусство, которую мы ведем, ослабеет хотя бы на минуту!" (ibid., 504).

After the secession, Sergei Tretiakov, the managing editor of LEF, commented on the group's failure in the next issue of *Novyi LEF*:

> In the middle of last year, LEF took up the question of turning this conglomerate into an organization commited to common social and artistic principles and organizational discipline. But a platform of the resistance to such an idea was developing simultaneously, [a platform] that not only rejected the subjugation of LEF to a separate set of rules but also denied it the role of a separate literary-aesthetic group.[76]

Tretiakov arrives at another self-definition, based on the need to defend a united resistance front against the dominance of aesthetically outdated and vile art (ibid.). In the last issue of *Novyi LEF*, Tretiakov published another article "To be continued" in which he sums up the history of the movement through the metaphor of a river:

> On the map of literature, we were the river that broke off before emptying into the sea. Thus, the Art of the Commune ended in 1919, the old LEF dried up in 1924, the New LEF was sabotaged in 1928. We would be worthless if we did not empty ourselves into the sea—the sea of mass culture.[77]

At the same time, LEF's cine-work proves that the group more or less succeeded in joining "the sea of mass culture." The third period of LEF (1927–1928) can be characterized as a continuation of the earlier *podenshchina* years and resulted in a wealth of films that would enter the history of cinema. These included the following items:

---

[76] "В середине прошлого года в Лефе встал вопрос о превращении этого конгломерата в организацию, связанную единством общественных и художественных принципов и организационной дисциплины, но одновременно вызрела и формула сопротивления, отрицавшая уже не только перевод Лефа на устав, но даже отказывавшаяся от него в качестве отдельной литературно-эстетической группы" (Tret'iakov 1928a, 1–2).

[77] "Нашей всегдашней лефовской бедой было то, что на карте литературы мы являли собою реку, обрывающуюся, не добежав до моря. Оборвалось в 1919 году "Искусство Коммуны", усох в 1924 году старый 'Леф' сорван в 1928 году 'Новый Леф'. А грош нам цена, если мы не впадем в море—в море массовости" (Tret'iakov 1928c, 4).

1. Esfir Shub's directed *Velikii put'* [The Great Road] (1927), *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* [The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty] (1927), and *Rossia Nikolaia II i L'va Tolstogo* [Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy] (1928).
2. Dziga Vertov directed *Odinnadtsatyi* [The Eleventh Year] (1928).
3. Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov directed *Oktiabr'* [October] (1927).
4. Lilia Brik and Vitalii Zhemchuznyi wrote *Stekliannyi glaz* [The Glass Eye] (1928).
5. Yuri Tynianov wrote the screenplay for *SVD* (*Soiuz Velikogo Dela*) [Union of a Great Cause] (1927) in co-authorship with Iulian Oksman.
6. Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote the screenplay for *Oktyabriukhov i Dekabriukhov* (1928).
7. Abram Room directed *Evrei na zemle* [Jews on the Land] (1927), the screenplay co-written by Viktor Shklovsky and Vladimir Mayakovsky.
8. Viktor Shklovsky wrote screenplays for the following films: *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* [Bed and Sofa] (1927), *Ukhaby* [Potholes] (1927), *Ledianoi dom* [The House of Ice] (1927), *Dva bronevika* [Two Armored Cars] (1928), *Dom na Trubnoi* [The House on Trubnaya] (together with Nikolai Erdman) (1928), *Kazaki* [The Cossacks] (1928), *Ovod* [The Gadfly] (1928), *Kapitanskaia dochka* [The Captain's Daughter] (1928), and *Molodost' pobezhdaet* [Youth is Winning] (1928).
9. Sergei Tretiakov wrote screenplays for Nikoloz Shengelaia's *Eliso* (1928).
10. Osip Brik wrote the screenplay for Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Potomok Chingiskhana* [Storm Over Asia] (1928).
11. Alexander Rodchenko worked as the art director on Leonid Obolenskii's *Albidum* (1928) and Alexander Kurs' *Vasha znakomaia* [Your Acquaitance] (1927).

Despite the variety of approaches and genres, as well as the collective nature of these productions, the listed films do not contradict LEF's conception of the left cine-praxis, which continued well after the formal closure of the journal. In his speech "O Lefe" [About LEF], Vladimir Mayakovsky declared:

> There is no such thing as LEF's schisms. Simply the most active LEF members—Brik, Aseev, Rodchenko, Zhemchuzhnyi and others—are widening the scope of LEF's ever-changing and developing work. This is yet another transition in a series of transitions that we already underwent: from Futurists to "Art of the Commune," from "Art of the Commune" to LEF, and so on.[78]

Osip Brik also promoted this viewpoint. In his lecture on March 31, 1933, he explained that Mayakovsky joined RAPP to engage this organization in debate, but he never denounced his association with LEF (Brik 1993, 119).

To Be Continued[79]

After the dissolution of the journal, the former members of LEF continued their work. There are several events that can be taken as LEF's finale: (1) Vladimir Mayakovsky's suicide in 1930; (2) the declaration of Socialist Realism at the First Congress of Soviet Writers Union in 1934; and (3) the arrest and execution of Sergei Tretiakov in 1937, at the height of the Stalinist purges. Ironically, Alexei Kruchenykh also predicted that the year 1937 would mark the death of LEF in his cine-pamphlet titled "The Birth and Death of LEF":

> 6. Intertitle: "The year 1937." The LEFs are walking down the street in a tight squad. We see thick journals shrouded in moss on both sides. Various old men jump out of them, dash aside from LEF, making menacing gestures. Intertitle: "LEF has died. It became the

[78] "Никаких лефовских расколов нет. Просто инициативнейшие из лефов—Брик, Асеев, Родченко, Жемчужный и др.—вновь расширяют, еще и еще раздвигают постоянно меняющуюся и развивающуюся лефовскую работу. Это—один из тех переходов, которые и раньше были у нас: от футуристов—к 'Искусству коммуны' от 'Искусства коммуны'—к Лефу и т. д." (Maiakovskii 1959d, 183).

[79] "Prodolzhenie sleduet" [To Be Continued] is the title of Sergei Tretiakov's preface article published in the last issue of *New LEF* in which Tretiakov argued that, despite the end of the journal publication, LEF would continue to exist through factographic work (Tret'iakov 1928c, 1–4).

domain of history. We needed it back in 1927, and now it is all dust and *khlestakovism*.[80] We will not allo-ow….” They run out of steam.

7. Intertitle: “Apotheosis.”
LEFs and writers who joined the group: Babel, Artem Veselyi, Sel'vinskii, and others are carrying the books and journal editions of LEF, flags, and floats. Young LEF members are crowding around them. Then we see journalists, university students, and other revolutionary youth. The LEF’s books are falling from above. The crowd lifts them up. The enemies get out of the way with forced respect while holding stones behind their backs.[81]

Throughout the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, LEF’s former members continued to make movies:

1. Osip Brik wrote screenplays for Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi’s *Opium* [Opium] (1929), *Kem byt'?* [Whom to Be?] (1931), and Lev Kuleshov’s *Dva-Bul'di-dva* [Two-Buldi-Two] (1929).
2. Sergei Eisenstein directed *Staroe i novoe* / *General'naia linia* [Old and New / General Line] (1929) and the unfinished *Que Viva Mexico* (1930–1931).
3. Dziga Vertov directed his most famous documentaries—*Chelovek s kinoapparatom* [The Man with the Movie Camera] (1929), *Simfoniia Donbassa* [Enthusiasm] (1930), and *Tri pesni o Lenine* [Three Songs About Lenin] (1934).[82]
4. Yuri Tynianov wrote the screenplay for *Poruchik Kizhe* [Lieutenant Kizhe] (1934).

---

[80] Ivan Aleksandrovich Khlestakov is the main protagonist of *Revizor* (1835), a comedy by Nikolai Gogol. *Khlestakovism* became a separate category in Russian culture, denoting the unmoderated braggadocio.

[81] 6. Надпись: ‘в 1937 году’. Лефы дружным отрядом проходят по улице. По сторонам—обросшие мохом толстые журналы. Из них выскакивают разнообразные старички, шарахаются от Лефа, грозят ему. Надпись: ‘Леф умер. Он стал достоянием истории. Вот в 1927-ом году он был хорош и нужен, а теперь—пыль и хлестаковщина. Мы не позво-о-лим’. Выдыхаются.

7. Надпись: ‘Апофеоз’. Лефы и прошедшие в Леф писатели: Бабель, Артем Веселый, Сельвинский и др. несут книжку журнала и изданий Лефов, знамена конструкции. Вокруг них толпятся молодые лефовцы. За ними—рабкоры, вузовцы и всякая революционная молодежь. Сверху сыплются книжки Лефов. Толпа подхватывает их. Враги сторонятся с принужденной почтительностью, а за спиной в их руках камни (Kruchenykh 1928, 61–62).

[82] Vertov’s situation was quite different. Falling out of favor with LEF and harshly criticized for *Odinnadsatyi*, Vertov continued to work throughout the 1940s but had to change his position on many principal issues, including the role of the screenplay.

5. Sergei Tretiakov wrote the screenplays for Michael Kalatozov's *Sol' Svanetii* [Salt for Svaneti] (1930) and Micheil Chaureli's *Khabarda* (1931).
6. Viktor Shklovsky wrote the screenplays for *Poslednii attraktsion* [The Last Attraction] (1929), *Turksib* (1929), *Amerikanka* (1930), *Otchim* [The Step-Father] (1930), and co-wrote the screenplays for *Mertvyi dom* [The House of the Dead] (1932), *Gorizont* [Horizon] (1932), and a documentary titled *Belomorsko-Baltiiskii vodnyi put'* [The White Sea–Baltic Canal] (1933).
7. Abram Room directed three documentaries: *Plan velikikh rabot* [The Plan for Great Works] (1930), *Manometer I* (1930), and *Manometer II* (1931).

If LEF's contribution to literature materialized in the collection of articles titled *The Literature of Fact* (1929), a collection titled *The Cinema of Fact* remained outside the realm of possibility. If one were to assemble a book from a variety of LEF's texts, it would not be called *The Cinema of Fact* but rather *The Cinema of LEF* and would include a plethora of critical discussions situated at the crossroads of cine-genres, from drama, newsreels, montage experiments, played and non-played films to Kulturfilms and Komsomol films.

The following three chapters will examine the screenwriting practices of LEF. Born at the intersection of film and literature, or *demi-literature* in Rashit Iangirov's terms, screenplays serve as a viable link between the Literature of Fact and cinema, while the extant versions of these screenplays sometimes serve as the only reliable source of cinematic textology of the time. A detailed analysis of the screenplays by the group's founding members—Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky—will elucidate the divergent and competing approaches to screenwriting that characterize LEF's cinematic practices in their comparative diachronic development. Such a study, in turn, contributes to the formation of a more complete history of

LEF, a project for future generations of researchers. Regardless of its definition, as a family, a platform, and eventually a free association of culture workers, LEF became that intermittent river, inventing and reinventing itself as an avant-garde impulse in several iterations, until its suppression in the 1930s. Yet, it was LEF's work in film that directly reached "the sea of mass production," as Vladimir Mayakovsky had sought.

Chapter 2: *Kino-podenshchina*: Osip Brik and Screenwriting

We influence [cinema] inasmuch as we can.
- Osip Brik, 1927

Introduction

Osip Maksimovich Brik (1888–1945) was the founder and co-editor of *LEF* and *Novyi LEF*. Like Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergei Tretiakov, he made a profound editorial contribution to both journals. He is well known as a theorist, film critic, educator, and organizer of Soviet cinematography in the 1920–1930s. Alongside Viktor Shklovsky, Osip Brik was the most influential screenwriter of his cohort.

Brik's screenwriting career spanned more than two decades: from 1923 to his death in 1945. His extensive work record at the screenwriting departments of Mezhraprom-Rus (1926–1928), Vostok-kino (1928–1935), Mezhrabprom-film (1928–1936), and Soiuzdetfilm (1926–1941) distinguishes him from other LEF members. All in all, Brik authored screenplays for seven known films: *Potomok Chingiskhana* [Storm Over Asia] (1928), *Dva-Bul'di-dva* [Two-Buldi-Two] (1929), *Dokhunda* [Dokhunda] (1935), *Opium* (1929), *Kem byt'?* [Whom to Be?] (1932); and two films for which Brik acted as a script doctor: *Sibiriaki* [The Siberians] (1940) and *Sluchai v vulkane* [Incident on a Volcano] (1941). Additional published materials include the unproduced screenplay for *Prikliucheniia El'vista* [The Adventures of Elvist] (1923) and librettos for *Kleopatra* [Cleopatra] (1927) and *Prem'era* [Opening Night] (1929).

Evaluating Osip Brik's screenwriting oeuvre is hindered by the lack of systematized textological work. Most of his screenplays are located at RGALI and remain unpublished. Even though Anatoly Valiuzhenich's list of Brik's unrealized screenplays and librettos includes more than fifty items (Valiuzhenich 1993, 363–364), the exact number of all documents written for the

screen and worked on by Brik is difficult to estimate. An accurate count is obfuscated because Brik extensively advised other screenwriters, edited their scripts, and often refused to put his name on texts he helped develop. Additional difficulty lies in the great variety of formats championed by Brik (iron scripts, librettos, screenplays, sound cinema, animation, stereo films, and diafilms). Moreover, his screenwriting corpus needs to be evaluated within an extensive system of texts written for the broader entertainment industry, including plays for the theater, ballet, opera, and *estrada* programs.

Research on Brik and his screenwriting gathered steam only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Oksana Bulgakova first described Brik as a "connoisseur of belletristic ornaments" and claimed that his work was little different from the story [fabula] production[83] of this period (Bulgakova 1993, 175). Since her list of sources did not include archival materials, Bulgakova made her assessment on the basis of the produced films authored by Brik. Anatolii Valiuzhenich included the literary screenplay of *Potomok Chingiskhana* in his book on Osip Brik; this was the first publication of a Brik screenplay (Valiuzhenich 1993, 63–73). Ten years later, Valiuzhenich printed another, previously unknown screenplay, *Prikliucheniia El'vista*, as well as the librettos of *Kleopatra* and *Prem'era* (Valiuzhenich 2003, 81–110). The same issue featured an article by Rashit Iangirov dedicated to Brik's work at Vostok-film (Iangirov 2003, 111–114). The first collection of Brik's memorial conference proceedings appeared in 2010 and included two articles on cinema: Valérie Pozner's comparative investigation of Brik and Shklovsky's theoretical approaches (Pozner 2010, 394–401) and Anke Hennig's study of Brik's screenwriting theory and praxis in the 1930s (Henning 2010, 402–406). Finally, Alastair

[83] By "fabula production" [*fabulnaia produktsia*], Oksana Bulgakova implies the basic formalist distinction between story [fabula] and plot introduced by Viktor Shklovsky. The story is what happens in a text; "the plot is a construction which uses events, people, and landscapes, which shrinks time, extends time or shifts time, and thus creates a phenomenon which is felt, experienced, the way the author wants it" (Berlina and Shklovsky 2017, 24).

Renfrew's seminal survey article "Facts and Life, Osip Brik and the Soviet Film Industry" (2013) offered a summary of Brik's work in cinema (Renfrew 2013, 62–90) that included Brik's produced film-works but expulsed the corpus of his unproduced screen ideas. The aforementioned contradictions between Brik's theoretical views on cinema and the demands of the film industry persist throughout Renfrew's reading (ibid., 62).

This chapter contributes to the existing research on Brik by re-evaluating his screenplays in terms of their connection to LEF's theories and praxis. Building on my definition of the Cinema of LEF as a joint corpus of the group's cinematic output rather than the ill-defined concept of the Cinema of Fact, I use the film-works by Brik as a sounding board to explore the links between the group's general platform and his individual contribution. In particular, I argue that Brik's screenwriting corpus of the 1920s and early 1930s is more closely connected to LEF's ongoing cinematic experimentation than previously acknowledged. To develop my argument, I investigate and answer the following questions: (1) What were Brik's theoretical ideas about screenwriting, and how did they dovetail with the question of the group's participation in cinema, explored in the previous chapter?; (2) How do his writings for the screen correlate with LEF's predicament?; (3) How does his model of authorship relate to those practiced by other members of the group?; (4) How do these findings contribute to my ongoing quest to understand the Cinema of LEF?

To tease out the relationship between Brik's screenwriting and LEF, I begin by summarizing his views on cinema and highlight the specificity of his theory by tracing its diachronic development. My analysis of Brik's praxis is based on select unproduced screen ideas (*Prikliucheniia El'vista, Prem'era, Kleopatra*), his most famous film-works (*Potomok Chingiskhana, Dva-Bul'di-dva, Opium*), as well as the lesser-known screenplay *Liubov' i dolg, ili*

Karmen, which was written by Lilia Brik and worked on by Osip Brik. The aforementioned status quo of his screenwriting oeuvre justifies this selection of texts. While working with the published texts and produced screen ideas, I supplement my analysis with a variety of lesser-known archival sources.

My research design merits a separate explanation. Because Osip Brik subscribed to a specific view that the finite version of a screenplay could be written only after the completion of the film, I separate his cine-texts into two broad groups: extant unproduced screen ideas and produced films. I analyze the items in each group in terms of their structures and search for links to LEF's agenda via three analytical categories: production modalities, ideology, and innovation.[84] Finally, I discuss Brik's model of authorship in cinema in relation to Shklovsky's theoretical concept of *literaturnaia podenshchina*, or literary daily labor. The similarities between their approaches to screenwriting, as well as their professional status in the film industry, warrants the use of this theoretical model. The conclusion will highlight previously overlooked connections between Brik's screenwriting and the Cinema of LEF and explain his contribution to this concept.

Osip Brik's Views on Screenwriting

"My ishchem" [We Are Seeking], the opening article of the 11/12 issue of *Novyi LEF*, described the group's two main functions: "to fix fact and to propagandize."[85] According to LEF's agenda, while a factographic approach was desirable, agitational work justified the use of

[84] My definition of production modalities includes the categories of collectivism, documentarism, and life-building, which I consider to be the markers of the Cinema of LEF. Other markers correspond to the LEFist call to create innovative experimental work and to propagandize the viewer. Hence, I pay close attention to the ideological dimension of Brik's screenplays and their structural and technical innovations.

[85] "Фиксация факта и агит—вот две основные функции" ("My ishchem" 1927, 1).

fictional schemes for popular consumption. Osip Brik's theoretical views on cinema highlight this twofold goal.

In her article, "Osip Brik i Viktor Shklovskii v kinematografe 1920-kh: kritika, praktika, teoriia," Valérie Pozner reconstructs Brik's views on cinema based on the articles the author published in *LEF* and *Novyi LEF,* as well as in the newspapers *Sovetskii ekran*, *Kino*, and *Sovetskoe kino*. In her analysis of these publications, Pozner distinguishes the following critical positions articulated by Brik: (1) general support for non-played cinema, newsreels, and documentaries; (2) support for leftist cinema; and (3) interest in eccentric comedy, burlesque, and satire (Pozner 2010, 394). As this list indicates, Brik's interests ranged from documentary cinema to dramatic genres. All of Brik's commentators, including Bulgakova, Pozner, Antipova, and Renfrew, frame his interest in documentary material as inconsistent with the plot-based films that he made. I suggest an alternative approach to evaluating Brik's theoretical and polemical statements. While discussions on the production of newsreels acquired mainstream status in the 1927,[86] a lack of resources put these conversations on hold.[87] In the 1927 colloquium on "LEF and Cinema," Brik summarized his ideas about the role of facts in film. According to him, the goal of the cinema was to teach people "to appreciate the fact, the document, and not the artistic interpretation of these documents" ("Lef i kino" 1927, 63). In screenwriting, this sensibility manifested itself in Brik's systematic refusal to turn facts into symbols (Antipova 2010, 409), which posed limits on how he understood the function of the cine-language (Pozner 2010, 399).

[86] In her memoirs about LEF's discussions of cinema, Varvara Stepanova described how LEF's general support for newsreel production became a collective obsession in 1927: "The newsreels have really roused a form of mass cine-psychosis. All of a sudden, the only thing that directors of drama films are dreaming of is to shoot newsreels." / "Действительно, 'хроника' принимает характер массового кинопсихоза. Вдруг все режиссеры художественной кинематографии только и мечтают о том, чтобы снимать хронику" (Stepanova 1994, 210).

[87] As a film critic, Brik did not think that Soviet viewers of the 1920s were ready to appreciate LEF's sophisticated experiment in creating the Cinema of Fact. In his 1927 article "Ostaius' veren" [I remain faithful], he points out that ninety-nine percent of the Soviet film industry's production in the 1920s consisted of feature films (Brik 1927b, 4).

That said, his factographic sensibility did not occlude his creation of plot-based screenplays as long as the latter were well researched and grounded in facts. The goal of his work was to prepare his audience and refine the taste of the Soviet people so that they could appreciate watching newsreels in the future. Brik described his work in the film industry with the following motto: "We are impacting [cinema] as much as we can ("Lef i kino" 1927, 69).

The combination of his factographic sensibility and LEF's goal to propagandize with the help of engaging dramatic plots caused Brik to reevaluate his views on the boundaries of the documentary and dramatic genres. During the 1920s, Brik consistently supported the creation of newsreels (Brik 1927b, 4), and pointed out the necessity of a written screenplay for all emerging cinematic forms, including plotless films (Brik 1928a, 27–33). In the 1930s, Brik suggested that documentary cinema finds its stories in real life (ibid.). He continued to advocate for developing screenwriting for documentary films and defended the proliferation of the new format—the so-called *trekhminutki* (three-minute documentary reels) (Brik 1936a, 4; Brik 1937, 2).[88] If in the 1920s he was adamant about the complete incompatibility of drama and documentary cinema (Brik 1927d, 3), by the 1930s, his views on the possibility of combining the two mediums became more complex. He contended that, while the cine-drama could contain elements of newsreel, it was unacceptable for a newsreel or a documentary to contain played elements (Brik 1934b, 18–21).

The particularities of Brik's views on screenwriting in the 1920s can be reconstructed from his articles published in *Kino*, *Kinofront*, *Sovetskoe Kino*, *Sovetskii ekran,* and *Novyi LEF*.

[88] "The three-minute reel is a kind of a short, popular screen conversation on a topic that interests or preoccupies the viewer at a given moment […] The purpose of the three-munute reel is, in its actuality, its operativeness—in its response to a topical issue that people are interested in at a given moment […]" / "Трехминутка—это как бы короткая научно-популярная беседа с экрана на интересующую зрителей тему […] Смысл трехминутки в ее актуальности, в оперативности, в том, что она отвечает на интересующую, волнующую публику в данный момент тему […]" (Brik 1936a, 4).

Brik generally believed that the film script was a means by which to organize already existing footage and which was supposed to be written after the filming was over.[89] In responding to the screenplay crisis of 1926–1927, he suggested two solutions: to educate the new generation of writers and to shift the responsibility from the screenwriting departments to the production in general (Brik 1927c, 11–12). In the 1930s, he changed his views on the role of the screenplay, arguing that the *skhema* [draft] of a script should be written before, not after, the production. This allowed the writer and the director to collaborate on creating the screenplay. It also made the script subservient to the production process. In his article "Iz teorii i praktiki stsenarista" (1936),[90] Brik refused to see the screenplay as a separate literary document:

> The screenplay is written in words, but this does not mean that a screenplay is a separate work of literature or that it is independent. A screenplay is a system of cinematic images and devices, which have to realize on-screen the author, or the authors' creative vision in the form of cinematic art.[91]

All in all, during the 1930s, Brik developed a more sophisticated approach to the intersections of documentary and drama, crystallized his views on the supplementary role of the screenplay in

---

[89] "You should write a screenplay not before the filming, but afterwards. A screenplay is not an imperative to film something but a method of organization of already filmed material. This is why you should inquire not about 'how the screenplay should look,' but 'what should be captured on film.' The treatment of material in a screenplay is the next stage of the work process." / "Сценарий надо писать не до съемки, а после. Сценарий не приказ снять, а метод организации уже заснятого. Поэтому надо спрашивать не 'каким должен быть сценарий', а 'что должно быть заснято'. Сценарная обработка материала—уже последующая стадия работы" (Brik 1926b, 12).

Another article by Brik, titled "100% Braka" [100% of Production Defects] (*Sovetskii ekran* 25, 1926), gives a supporting definition of the screenplay: "The screenplay is a string on which the film's pearls are threaded. You cannot thread without pearls in your hands, even if you are a genius. You cannot, with an air of self-importance, discuss the merits of the string without knowing exactly what you are going to tread on it." / "Сценарий—это нитка, на которую нанизываются кино-бусы. Нельзя нанизывать, не имея в руках бус, хотя бы нанизыватель и был семи пядей во лбу. Нельзя с важным видом рассуждать о достоинствах нитки, не зная, что будет на нее нанизываться" (Brik 1926a, 3).

[90] This article was a part of the collection by I. F. Popov *Kak my rabotaem nad kinostsenariem*. Alastair Renfrew noted that Brik's article focuses on the practical side of screenwriting rather than its theory (Renfrew 2013, 71).

[91] "Сценарий пишется словами, но это никак не значит, что сценарий—литературное произведение, да еще самостоятельное. Сценарий—это система кинообразов, киноприемов, долженствующих в формах киноискусства раскрыть с экрана творческий замысел автора или авторов […]" (Brik 1936b).

the production process, and began raising professional awareness of the rights of screenwriters and their claim to authorship over the final product. In the next decade, and until his death in 1945, his position remained unchanged.[92]

Cine-Praxis, Part I: Unproduced Screen Ideas

Osip Brik's unproduced screen ideas include the following texts: (1) the iron scenario, *Prikliucheniia El'vista* (1923); (2) the librettos of *Kleopatra* (1927); (3) *Prem'era* (1929); (4) and the screenplay of *Liubov' i dolg, ili Karmen*. All four screen ideas belong to plot-based played cinema, which I read as a direct response to LEF's call for "the destruction of the old, and a fight to embrace new culture" (Maiakovskii 1959h, 43). If the first three documents—*Prikliucheniia El'vista*, *Kleopatra*, and *Prem'era*—belong to the aforementioned *traditional* category of cinematic narratives, *Liubov' i dolg* rightfully stands in the *experimental* category, as it remixes four different versions of the same story. The following analysis discusses how additional factors, such as themes, ideology, the collectivist approach to production, and narrative innovation, position these screen ideas under the umbrella of the Cinema of LEF.

Prikliucheniia El'vista (1923)

The script for *Prikliucheniia El'vista* reflects LEF's interest in comedy and relates to its group project through two of its themes—soccer and scientific management—and its formal innovation of the cine-language. Co-written with Sergei Iutkevich, the screenplay adapts eccentric comedy to the realities of the young Soviet State. Iutkevich (who was nineteen at the

[92] In the 1940s, Brik's lectures on cine-dramaturgy solidified previous developments. From January to March of 1941, Brik gave a series of lectures at VGIK to young Soviet directors on the elements of critical analysis of screenplays. For Brik, the screenplay continued to be a supporting document, raw material out of which the director crafted the story. He taught his students to look for dramatic conflicts and stories and to foresee and eliminate potential mistakes. In doing so, Brik's ideological positions remained unaltered. According to him, the goal of cinema was didactic; it needed to change the viewer's mentality and educate future generations. The transcripts of these lectures consistently underscore the role of the film director in interpreting and reworking the screenplay. Osip Brik, "Kritika literaturnogo stsenariia," Kurs lektsii, prochitannyi na rezhisserskom fakul'tete VGIKa. RGALI. *f.* 2825 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.*1, *ed. khr.*128–130).

time) was already a member of another Leftist group known as the Eccentrics, an early Soviet avant-garde movement of the 1920s associated with the Leningrad-based Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS) (1921–1926) and its founders, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. Similar to LEF, FEKS rejected the old forms of cultural production. Instead, they postulated the primacy of popular entertainment, such as the circus, cabaret, music-hall, and carnival. Iutkevich stayed close to the left avant-garde throughout his career; he wrote books, made tribute films, and made animations dedicated to Vladimir Mayakovsky (see chapter 4).

Because Brik and Iutkevich wrote *Prikliucheniia El'vista* at the very beginning of LEF's existence, even before the group's members began participating in the film industry en masse, my analysis focuses on the elements that link this text to the first phase of the journal *LEF*. The first connection is the themes of soccer and scientific management. The script narrates the peripeteia of Semka Gollov, a village youth who comes to Moscow to purchase a soccer ball.[93] Before his departure, Semka enlists himself as an Elvist, a member of The League of Time.[94] Drafted on a piece of paper, Gollov's schedule drives the plot, allowing for rapid-fire action to develop. Gollov's Moscow ordeals satirize daily life during the NEP era, which included shortages of consumer goods and the poor quality of Soviet sports equipment. The screenplay was written specifically for theater director Pavel Ilyin and was supposed to be published in *LEF*, but both initiatives fell through. In Brik's own words, Goskino rejected the film under the

[93] The theme of villagers coming to the "big city" continued in Brik's screenwriting oeuvre. In fact, Brik's RGALI fond features several scripts on this topic, including 1) *Kul'turnye dostizheniia Moskvy* [Cultural Achievements of Moscow] (1929); 2) *Kuzen iz Volyni* [Cousin from Volyn'] (1940); 3) *Kuzen iz Zaporozh'ia* [Cousin from Zaporozh'e] (1940); and 4) *Paren' iz Usol'ia* [Fellow from Usol'e] (1941). [RGALI, *f*. 2852 (Osip Maskimovich Brik), *op.*1, *ed. khr.* 2852.] Co-authored with Leonid Elbert, all three screenplays represent variations on a plot that aimed to reverse stereotypes about villagers. The plot revolves around a group of friends (two men and two women) who are initially annoyed by the idea of entertaining a village cousin who comes to town. The friends eventually change their minds when they learn about the villager's depth of knowledge and good character.

[94] The League of Time was an early Soviet organization that implemented principles of time management for the purposes of building communism.

premise that "Komsomol members should not travel to Moscow to purchase sports equipment but keep themselves busy at home reading Karl Marx" (Valiuzhenich 2003, 84).

If there is any truth to this statement, it should be taken with a grain of salt. An enormously popular game, soccer captured the attention of modernist Russian culture years before the Revolution. For example, Osip Mandelshtam wrote two poems, "Futbol" [Soccer] (1913) and "Vtoroi futbol" [Second Soccer] (1913); the Hylaea group was erroneously advertised as soccer players during their 1914 performance in Kishinev (Kamenskii 1974, 102); and Kazimir Malevich painted *Suprematizm. Zhivopisnyi realizm futbolista. Krasochnye massy v chetvertom izmerenii* [Suprematism. Painterly Realism of a Soccer Player—Color Masses in the 4th Dimension] in 1915. After the Revolution and throughout the 1920s, sports (soccer, in particular) continued to be a source of inspiration for artists such as El Lissitzky (Figure 2.1), Alexander Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Yurii Pimenov, and Alexander Deineka. In 1923, the second issue of *LEF* published Varvara Stepanova's design for a soccer uniform (Figure 2.2) (Stepanova 1923, 65–68); Alexander Rodchenko's photograph captures Osip Brik's second wife, Evgenia Sokolova-Zhemchuzhnaia, posing in this uniform (Figure 2.3). The figure of the soccer player also appeared in *Zavist'* [Envy] (1927), a novel by another experimental author, Yurii Olesha. By the end of the decade, three ballets dedicated to soccer were staged in Kharkiv, Moscow, and Leningrad.[95] Despite the massive popularity of the soccer theme across several art mediums, it was not until the mid-1930s that the very first Soviet film about soccer appeared: *Vratar'* [The Goalkeeper] (1936) by Semyon Timoshenko. Therefore, in writing this screenplay,

[95] In 1929, the Kharkiv State Opera staged a ballet titled *Futbolist* [Soccer Player] with sketches designed by Ukrainian graphic artist Anatol' Petrytskyi (Figure 2.4). A year later, this ballet enjoyed mass popularity in Moscow and was staged by Igor Moiseyev. Simultaneously, the Leningrad State Opera Theater staged their famous "soccer" ballet *Zolotoi vek* [Golden Age] to the music of Dmitry Shostakovich.

Brik and Iutkevich continued the experimental searches of the early avant-garde and foreshadowed the mainstream cultural developments of the 1930s.

The screenplay's second theme is the Elvist movement. Elvists were members of a group called the League of Time [Liga "Vremia"], an offshoot of the section of scientific management [nauchnaia organizatsiia truda or NOT] operated by the Rabkrin, or the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate (1920–1934), from 1923–1925.[96] Dedicated to popularizing the idea of scientific management, its members fought against the waste of working time. LEF made frequent mention of the Elvists; the group appears in Sergei Tretiakov's travelogue, "Moscow–Beijing" [Moskva–Pekin] (Tret'iakov 1923, 32), and in Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem "Rabochim Kurska" [To the Workers of Kursk] (Maiakovskii 1923, 53). Furthermore, in 1925, Alexander Rodchenko created his famous book cover (Figure 2.5) for the Russian translation of Frederick Winslow Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), which was the foundational text of the movement. *Prikliucheniia El'vista* is the core manifestation of LEF's interest in scientific management, while the works of Rodchenko, Mayakovsky, and Tretiakov attest to LEF's fascination with the topic.

In addition to the screenplay's themes (soccer and scientific management), the second factor qualifying *Prikliucheniia El'vista* as an avant-garde screenplay is its innovative cine-language, which is best demonstrated by the following fragment:

> 31. Full shot. A soccer player, who climbed out of the well, marches solemnly in front of a row of soccer players. He is carrying a pitchfork with the remnants of a soccer ball in his hands. The players fall on the ground in desperation, one after another.
> 32. The soccer players have sat down to think. On their shoe soles, we see the letters: SEEKING A WAY OUT.
> 33. **Close-up.** The lips of the team captain, whispering.
> 34. **Close-up**. Dreamy eyes.

[96] For a detailed description of the League of Time, see Finarov 1970.

35. **Close-up**. Captain's forehead. We see a vision superimposed on it: a departing train, train station signage MOSCOW, the signage of the GUM department store, and, finally, a soccer ball.
36. **Close-up.** Joyful eyes.
37. **Close-up.** A mouth shouting.
38. Long shot. The soccer players are sitting down exchanging glances and pointing at Semka Gollov, who is sitting on the side.[97]

This example features a myriad of close-ups that constitute more than fifty percent of the entire composition of the sequence. A similar ratio persists throughout the script, which was unusual for both Soviet and American cinema at the time. It is well-documented that LEF discussed using close-ups as an experimental feature. In her diaries, Varvara Stepanova described how Alexander Rodchenko proposed to shoot the entire movie using close-ups only:

> Rodchenko spoke about the LEFist cinematic approaches: […] He offered to shoot the entire film in close-ups. Even the face had to be shown in parts only, not as a whole. Without even one long shot. So that the viewer would have to imagine the whole person from the parts. The entire human figure should not be shown at all.[98]

Additionally, what we see in this excerpt from *Prikliucheniia El'vista* is the fragmentation of the human face and figure that became an avant-garde device employed by poets and visual artists alike. Velimir Khlebnikov's famous poem—"Bobeobe pelis' guby" (1908–1909)—is one of the

[97]31. Первый план. Перед шеренгой футболистов траурным маршем проходит футболист, вылезший из колодца. В руках у него вилы с остатками мяча. Футболисты в отчаянии падают на землю, один за другим.
32. Футболисты сели. Обдумывают. На подошвах ног, обращенных к аппарату, выскакивают буквы: ИЩУТ ВЫХОДА
33. **Крупно.** Шепчущие губы капитана команды.
34. **Крупно.** Задумчивые глаза.
35. **Крупно**. Лоб капитана. Во лбу видение: идущий поезд, станционная вывеска "МОСКВА", вывеска ГУМа и, наконец, футбольный мяч.
36. **Крупно.** Радостные глаза.
37. **Крупно**. Кричащий рот.
38. Общий план. Сидящие футболисты переглядываются и показывают руками на сидящего крайним Семку Голлова (Valiuzhenich 2003, 86).

[98] "Родченко говорил, что можно лефовское снимать в кино: […] Всю фильму на крупных планах, на очень крупных. Даже лицо целиком не показывать, а только частями. Совершенно ни одного общего плана. Так, чтобы представление о человеке создавалось у зрителя частями. Так до конца и не показать целого человека" (Stepanova 1994, 220).

more famous examples. The aforementioned screenplay fragment demonstrates an attempt to transfer this device to the screen. The abundance of close-ups in this screenplay and their correlation to specific parts of the face resemble both Khlebnikov's poetic experiment and Rodchenko's screen idea.

Prikliucheniia El'vista is the earliest screenplay by Brik, dating back to the beginning of LEF and well before the group's widespread participation in the film industry. It fits with the LEF corpus of this period by virtue of its themes as well as its innovative use of the cinematic language. Additionally, it reflects LEF's early interest in the development of the comedy genre. It would be another year before Lev Kuleshov would make his *Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov* [The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks] (1924). Brik's engagement with comedy continued in another screenplay, *Il'inskii, vozderzhis'* [Abstain, Ilyinsky] (1927), which he co-wrote with Vadim Shershenevich.[99] Brik's work with Lev Kuleshov continued throughout the 1930s, until Brik's death in 1945.[100]

[99] Igor Ilyinsky (1901–1987) was a popular Soviet actor who starred in many important 1920s movies, predominantly comedies, including *Sigaretnitsa iz Mossel'proma* [The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom] (1924) and *Potselui Meri Pikford* [The Kiss of Mary Pickford] (1927). In 1925, Viktor Shklovsky and Lev Kuleshov wrote another screenplay for Ilyinsky, a comedy titled *Funtik*, also known as *Kar'era Il'inskogo* [The Career of Ilyinsky].

[100] For a detailed account of Brik's work with Kuleshov, see Valiuzhenich 2006.

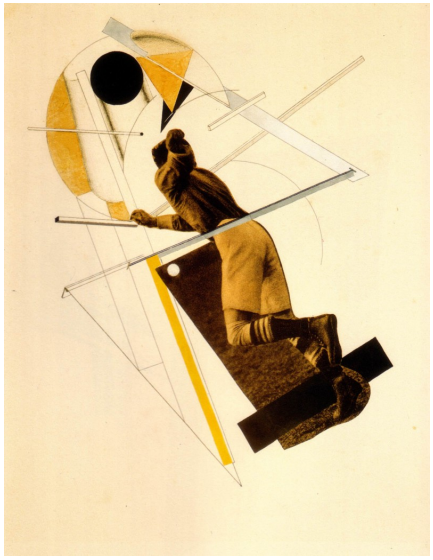


Figure 2.1. *Soccer Player*, collage by El Lissitzky (1922)

Figure 2.2. *Design for a Soccer Uniform*, drawing by Varvara Sepanova (1923)

Figure 2.3. *Evgenia Sokolova-Zhemchuzhnaia*[101] *in Varvara Stepanova's Sports Uniform*, photograph by Alexander Rodchenko (1924)

Figure 2.4. *Soccer Player*, sketch by Anatol' Petritskii (1929)

[101] Evgenia Sokolova-Zhemchuzhnaia (1900–1982) was the second wife of Osip Brik. Their relationship lasted for twenty years, from 1925 to his death in 1945.

Figure 2.5. Frederick Winslow Taylor's
The Principles of Scientific Management (1925),
book cover by Alexander Rodchenko

Prem'era (1929)

The unproduced libretto of *Prem'era* relates to the Cinema of LEF through its ideology. It criticizes the Western theatrical system through an anti-colonial lens. The action takes place in one of Berlin's music halls. A high-society dame, bored with a new jazz performance, commissions a famous writer Leonard Shlikhter to write a compelling play that would "speak" to her. The playwright travels to a popular exotic location and pens a documentary play titled "Young Blood," based on experience from this trip. The plot involves a nameless sixteen-year-old teenager of color who murders an Englishman while protecting his sister from sexual assault. The unnamed teenager is subsequently arrested by the police. At the end of the performance, the actor comes on stage and asks the audience whether or not he is guilty, and the audience clears him of his crime. In Brik's screen idea, however, Shlikhter helps the protagonist escape. The latter makes his way to Berlin, randomly comes across a poster for a play based on his life and

shows up at the opening. The protagonist attempts to claim his identity by going on stage at the end, but he is brushed off by the playwright and taken into police custody.

In *Prem'era*, Brik created a cinematic narrative that resonated with LEF's critique of the capitalist system of entertainment and its treatment of colonial subjects. It deconstructed the genre of the exotic melodrama by pointing out its glaring pitfalls and offering alternative acting scripts for its characters. A cross-over between a parody of an exotic melodrama and an anti-colonial pamphlet, *Prem'era* addressed questions of cultural appropriation. It specifically targeted German fascination with exoticism on stage and on-screen, of which the Soviet cine-press was critical. For example, the weekly newspaper *Kino*, published a letter in 1928 by N. Grinfel'd titled "Loviat na ekzotiku" [They Are Alluring with Exoticism], in which the author described his experience as a viewer:

> On the second day, I went to see the latest trend of German cine-fashion called Zimba. It looks like a real racial film, with black actors who, under the guidance of the German director, have to depict primitive passions. […] It does not look convincing, and, most importantly, it's completely dull. But, it is exotic.[102]

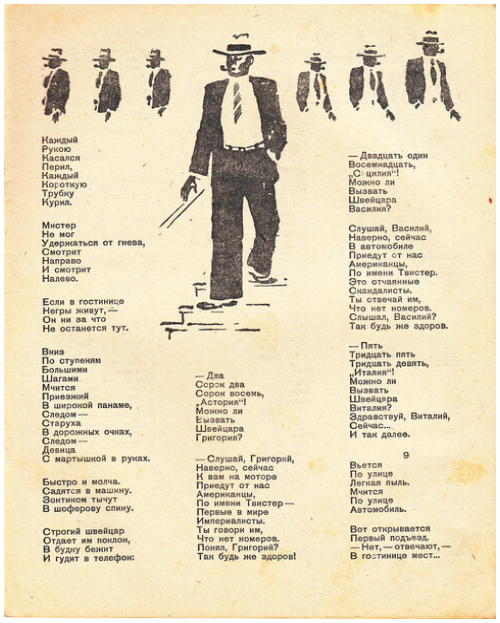
In the screen idea of *Prem'era*, Brik conceived one of the earliest cinematic representations of a black person in Soviet cinema, long before such portraits appeared in the films of the following decade. In the 1930s, the films *Velikii Uteshitel'* [The Great Consoler] (Lev Kuleshov, 1933) (Figure 2.7) and *Tsirk* [Circus] (Grigori Aleksandrov, 1936) (Figure 2.6) both featured black characters. Yet, the lack of characterization of *Prem'era*'s nameless protagonist, makes this particular rendition similar to Vladimir Lebedev's illustrations of the famous race poem by

[102] "На другой день я видел последний крик немецкой кино-моды—Цимба'. Это как будто всамделишная негритянская фильма. Играют негры, правда под указку немецкого режиссера, и должны изображать первобытные страсти. […] В результате—неубедительно и, самое главное,—не интересно. Но зато—экзотика" (Grinfel'd 1928, 2).

Samuel Marshak “Mister-Tvister” [Mister Twister] (1933), which featured nothing more than a simple body contour (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.6. Still from *Tsirk* [Circus] (Grigori Aleksandrov, 1936)

Figure 2.7. Poster for *Velikii uteshitel'* [The Great Consoler] (Lev Kuleshov, 1933)



Каждый
Рукою
Касался
Перил,
Каждый
Коротную
Трубку
Курил.

Мистер
Не мог
Удержаться от гнева,
Смотрит
Направо
И смотрит
Налево.

Если в гостинице
Негры живут,—
Он ни за что
Не останется тут.

Вниз
По ступеням
Большими
Шагами
Мчится
Приезжий
В широкой панаме,
Следом —
Старуха
В дорожных очках,
Следом —
Девица
С мартышкой в руках.

Быстро и молча.
Садятся в машину.
Звонком тычут
В шоферову спину.

Строгий швейцар
Отдает им поклон,
В будку бежит
И гудит в телефон:

— Два
Сорок два
Сорок восемь,
„Астория"!
Можно ли
Вызвать
Швейцара
Григория?

— Слушай, Григорий,
Наверно, сейчас
К вам на моторе
Приедут от нас
Американцы,
По имени Твистер —
Первые в мире
Империалисты.
Ты говори им,
Что нет номеров.
Поняв, Григорий?
Так будь же здоров!

— Двадцать один
Восемнадцать,
„С цилия"!
Можно ли
Вызвать
Швейцара
Василия?

Слушай, Василий,
Наверно, сейчас
В автомобиле
Приедут от нас
Американцы,
По имени Твистер.
Это отчаянные
Скандалисты.
Ты отвечай им,
Что нет номеров.
Слышал, Василий?
Так будь же здоров.

— Пять
Тридцать пять
Тридцать девять,
„Италия"!
Можно ли
Вызвать
Швейцара
Виталия?
Здравствуй, Виталий,
Сейчас...
И так далее.

9

Вьется
По улице
Легкая пыль.
Мчится
По улице
Автомобиль.

Вот открываются
Первый подъезд.
— Нет,— отвечают,—
В гостинице мест...

Figure 2.8. Illustration of Samuel Marshak’s poem, “Mister-Tvister” [Mister Twister] (1933)

Kleopatra (1927)

Osip Brik's unproduced screen idea of *Kleopatra* is, perhaps, one of the most interesting of LEF's unrealized projects. Numerous adaptations of this historical narrative require its contextualization in a matrix of cultural production across several mediums. Early Russian cinema, unlike theater and ballet,[103] did not produce its own film about Cleopatra. The exception was the criminal drama *Sibirskaia Kleopatra / Sibirskaia atamansha*, whose only reference to the Cleopatra myth was the eponymous strong female lead (Ivanova et al. 2002, 351–352). At the same time, the phenomenon of Cleopatramania occupied an important role in the Russian cultural imagination. Going back to *Egipetskie nochi* [Egyptian Nights] (1837), the unfinished novel by Alexander Pushkin, numerous literary adaptations of Cleopatra flourished throughout the nineteenth century and came to full fruition during the Silver Age. Reworked by poets, such as Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont, Mikhail Kuz'min, and Alexander Blok, Cleopatra became a fixture in the form of such decadent topoi as history's prostitute-queen, dark femme fatale, the object of fetishist desire, and erotic spectacle (Matich 2005, 132–142).[104] The surge of interest in gender themes propelled the poet Zinaida Gippius, as well as such prose writers as

[103] During the nineteenth century, Russian theaters frequently staged the Russian translation of William Shakespeare's tragedy *Antonii i Kleopatra* [Antony and Cleopatra] (1623). There were several Egyptian-themed ballets, including Marius Petipa's *Doch' faraona* [The Pharaoh's Daughter], that played throughout the 1860s, as well as the 1908 ballet by Mikhail Fokine titled *Une Nuit d'Egypte* [Egyptian Night], which later became a one-act ballet performance titled *Cleopatra*, the most extravagant and exotic production of the Ballets Russes' 1909 season. Simultaneously, several early films were already in circulation in the Russian Empire, including *Strast' Kleopatry* [Cleopatra's Passion] (1909) and *Kleopatra* (1910). Theatrical performances of *Antonii i Kleopatra* were revived in Leningrad's State Academic Dramatic Theater in 1925. Two years later, the Leningrad Theater of Musical Comedy performed *Zhemchuga Kleopatry* [Die Perlen der Cleopatra / The Pearls of Cleopatra], the operetta by Viennese composer Oscar Straus, during the winter of 1927.

[104] In 1907, Alexander Blok wrote a poem about an effigy of Cleopatra displayed in the Saint Petersburg Wax Museum. The poem broaches Blok's obsession with the wax figurine, which occupies a liminal space between life and death (Matich, 138), and the automated movement of the snake biting the queen's pale bosom; all is set in motion by pressing a button. In his famous 1910 essay, "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma" ["On the Contemporary Condition of Russian Symbolism"], Blok wrote about the effigy of Cleopatra as "a dark female spirit of Russian symbolism" (ibid., 141), a foil to his "Beautiful Lady," and a symbol of this period's macabre demise.

Fedor Sologub, Valerii Briusov, and Ivan Bunin, to use Cleopatramania as a vehicle for life-building strategies (Matich 2005, 171–179; Panova 2016).[105] After the Revolution, the erotic utopia[106] of Russian modernity entered a new phase, whereas the new discourse on women's rights, sexual liberation, and polyamory was discussed at the state level by Alexandra Kollontai, who served as the People's Commissar for Welfare from 1917 to 1918.[107] The polyamorous relationships within LEF are well documented[108] and found their expression in Viktor Shklovsky's screenplay *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* [Bed and Sofa] (Abram Room, 1927).

The Briks conceived their screen idea of *Kleopatra* with two goals in mind: to juxtapose LEF's treatment of this theme with its development in the previous, decadent period; and as a part of a campaign in support of the actress Alexandra Khokhlova. The screen idea originally belonged to Lilia, but the screenplay was written by Osip,[109] for whom working with this rich cultural topos was a continuation of his life-long interest in prostitution, sexuality as a social phenomenon, and advocacy for women's rights. After graduating from Moscow University in 1911, Brik had worked on a dissertation on the legal status of prostitutes in the Russian Empire and, for some time, served as a public defender for this category of the population (Jangfeldt

[105] Among the famous Cleopatras of the Silver Age discussed by Panova, the most prominent are the characters from "Krasnogubaia gost'ia" [The Red-Liped Visitor] (1909) by Feodor Sologub, "Posledniaia stranitsa iz dnevnika zhenshchiny" [The Last Page from a Woman's Diary] (1910) by Valerii Briusov, and "Dela korneta Elagina" [The Case of Cornet Elagin] (1926) by Ivan Bunin (see Panova 2016).

[106] Erotic utopia is a term that Olga Matich borrowed from Evgenii Trubetskoi, which presents a specific view on the relationship between Eros and Thanatos, as love overcoming death (Matich 2005, 4). The broader understanding of erotic utopia implies that it would create new forms of love and corresponding practices and transform family structure and even life itself (ibid.).

[107] For more on Kollontai, see Clements 1979, Porter 2016, Holt 1980, as well as the reader edited by Lind, Masucci, and Warsza 2020.

[108] For example, see Jangfeldt 2009.

[109] See Stepanova 1994, 210.

2009, 57–58).[110] Both Osip and Lilia's sociological interest in various forms of sexuality is further documented by Bengt Jangfeldt, who described their joint visits to a lesbian show in Paris and to a bordello in Samarkand (ibid., 60–61). At the same time, an obscure fact of Osip's biography suggests that his interest in this topic further developed in clear violation of human rights. According to Roman Jakobson, while working at the Cheka, Brik forced young women (possibly informants) "to write down […] their […] intimate journals" and required "complete disclosure."[111] These contradictory stories inform the complexities of Brik's identity as an author and provide the backdrop for his work on the screen idea of *Kleopatra*.

It is difficult to state with absolute certainty if either the 1912 film *Cleopatra*, directed by Charles L. Gaskill, or the 1917 version, directed by J. Gordon Edwards, were distributed after the Revolution, but the cine-press of the 1920s does not feature any ads for these films. In 1925, Soviet film critic Ippolit Sokolov denounced "the pseudo-historical plots from lives of decadent figures of the past" as a mere reflection of "modern bourgeois psychology."[112] In this respect, the

---

[110] In his book *Stavka—Zhizn'. Vladimir Maiakovskii i ego krug*, Bengt Jangfeldt writes that Osip Brik served as a public defender of Moscow's prostitutes and never took money for it. For his activity, Brik received the nickname *bliadskii papasha* [the whores' daddy]. (Jangfeldt 2009, 58). Brik's dissertation remained unfinished.

[111] In his review of the first edition of Bengt Jangfeldt's book, *Iakobson-Budetlianin* (1992), Maksim Shapir notes that Jangfeldt "omitted the details of O. M. Brik's service at the Cheka, in particular about how he had forced some young women to write […] their […] intimate diaries' and that he demanded 'full disclosure.'" / "Б. Янгфельдт изъял подробности о службе О. М. Брика в Чека, в частности о том, 'как он каких-то девчонок заставлял писать ему […] свои […] интимные дневники' и при этом 'требовал полной откровенности'" (Shapir 1994, 114). The 2012 edition of *Iakobson-Budetlianin* did not include this detail either. The original tape of the conversation between Jangfeldt and Jakobson is located at MIT archive: R. O. Jacobson Papers. MC 72. Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, MA.

[112] In his 1925 article about the screenplays, Ippolit Sokolov wrote:

> The screenwriters and directors, nodding to the demand of modern, lowbrow taste, take plots from the lives of the most decadent figures of the past. The plots of these pseudo-historical films necessarily include […] Cleopatra, Nero, Messalina. […] Of course, it is not Ancient Greece or Rome that these screenwriters and directors desire to recreate, […] but modern bourgeois psychology. Modern whores, pimps, and degenerates of large capitalist cities put on tunics, togas, armor, camisoles, and panniers (Sokolov 1925, 23–26).
>
> "Сценаристы и режиссеры, поддакивая спросу современного бульвара, берут сюжеты из жизни самых декадентских фигур прошлого. Сюжеты мнимо-исторических картин, это обязательно […] Клеопатра, Нерон, Мессалина. […] Сценаристы и режиссеры хотят воссоздать, конечно, не древнюю Грецию,

libretto of *Kleopatra* (1927) represents the leftist plight to destroy the old, "bourgeois" narratives. Brik achieved this goal by appropriating the historical narrative of Cleopatra and giving it new meaning. He set the plot of his libretto in the contemporary era and in an indeterminate location. It revolves around the story of a street beggar named Kleopatra. A theater producer is amused by the contrast between the beggar's name and her petty state and attempts to turn her into a theater actress. Once Kleopatra is off the streets, the contrast is mitigated, and the producer resorts to recreating her stage image as the marginalized, underprivileged woman he initially met. Being forced to disguise her identity in her new life, Kleopatra rebels against the producer. She falls in love with the former theater technician and begins going out with him openly, thus destroying her stage image. In the finale, they leave the theater and join the working class.

As an avid reader, Brik was more than aware of the Silver Age's Cleopatramania and wrote its Soviet interpretation. His deconstruction of the conventional melodramatic plot aimed to educate viewers about the corruption of the capitalist theatrical system while simultaneously imbuing them with class-consciousness. In the vein of Brik's early judiciary practice, his *Kleopatra* resisted the exploitation of women, as well as that of men. Instead of disposing of her lover, Kleopatra followed him on his path to building a new model society. The scene of a worker's wedding at the end undermines the difference between the imagined beauty and artificial ugliness.

> Workers' club.
> Workers, mechanics, their wives and girlfriends are sitting at a long table drinking and eating.
> They have come together to congratulate the bride and groom.
> Everyone stands up, lifts their glasses drinking to the bride and groom's health.

древний Рим, […] а дать современную буржуазную психологию. Современные кокотки, альфонсы и дегенераты крупных капиталистических городов надевают туники, тоги, латы, камзолы и фижмы" (Sokolov 1925, 23).

> Among these simple people, Kleopatra does not differ from the rest of the women either by her beauty or by her ugliness. Her simple and kind face is glowing from happiness.[113]

In this respect, Brik's adaptation stands in stark contrast to the texts of the Silver Age's Cleopatramania, as well as to his own interest in the study of sexuality or, for that matter, LEF's polyamorous practices. Ceasing to be an erotic spectacle, his Kleopatra became a part of the collective ethos.

The historical context of *Kleopatra'*s screen idea offers clues to Brik's particular take on this narrative. Brik wrote this libretto specifically for actress Alexandra Khokhlova and her husband, director Lev Kuleshov, as part of a campaign to support Khokhlova after she was unofficially banned.[114] Criticized for her appearance ("excessively skinny and ugly"), Khokhlova was one of the most original actresses of the 1920s and appreciated by such diverse filmmakers as Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, Viktor Shklovsky, Dziga Vertov, Alexander Kurs, and Abram Room. For example, in 1926, two articles by Eisenstein and Room appeared in *Kino*, both of which implored the studios to give Khokhlova a chance (Eisenstein 1926, 2–3; Room 1926, 2). In his article "Kak ni stranno—o Khokhlovoi" [Strangely, About Khokhlova Again] Eisenstein argued that "the artistic councils of the studios look at a woman through the eyes of a primitive cattle-breeder" (Eisenstein 2010, 71; also cited in Alenina 2014).[115]). In 1927, Osip

---

[113] Рабочий клуб.
За длинным столом пьют и едят рабочие, механики, их жены и подруги.
Они собрались сегодня, чтобы поздравить жениха и невесту.
Все встают, поднимают бокалы: 'За здоровье жениха и невесты!'
И среди этих простых людей Клеопатра ничем не отличается от остальных женщин, ни красотой, ни безобразием. Ее простое доброе человеческое лицо светится счастьем (Valiuzhenich 2003, 104).

[114] Prior to 1927, Alexandra Khokhlova starred in *Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov* (Lev Kuleshov, 1924), *Luch Smerti* (Lev Kuleshov and Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926), *Po zakonu* (Lev Kuleshov, 1926), and *Vasha Znakomaia* (Lev Kuleshov, 1927). After *Vasha Znakomaia*, the studios refused to film Khokhlova, prompting her to disappear from the screen for the next five years.

[115] "На актрису худсоветы фабрик смотрят глазами первобытных скотоводов" (Eisenstein 1926, 2).

Brik joined the chorus of voices in support of Alexandra Khokhlova by writing an article titled "Zhenskaia vidovaia" [The Female Scenic Film] in which he touched on Khokhlova's situation and advocated for assessing film actresses by their professionalism and not their looks.[116]

Although there could be several reasons behind the unofficial ban on filming Khokhlova, including her family origin,[117] the work of Kuleshov's group, as a whole, was also perceived to be a threat by outsiders. In their memoir, Kuleshov and Khokhlova wrote:

> It was not about Khokhlova. It was about NEP and semi-private cinema companies and about their representatives in Goskino being afraid of our united collective as if we were fire. We could disturb the remnants of the private management system in their film factories. Working as a collective, we could organize new, revolutionary approaches to cinema.
>
> Many years have passed since then. It was only before his death that M. N. Aleinikov (the commercial director of Mezhrabprom-Rus) confessed to Obolensky and I that he deliberately tried to break up our collective in order to secure his ideological and artistic leadership in a form convenient for him. He told us that only then did he come to understand that he was deeply wrong […].[118]

Another important subtext of *Kleopatra* is Khokhlova's suicide attempt, which had been provoked by Lilia Brik's love affair with Kuleshov (Katanian 1998, 76). According to Varvara Stepanova, Lilia Brik was the first to insist that Osip write a screenplay for Khokhlova. She praised the screenplay publicly, but later changed her mind and tried to manipulate Kuleshov

---

[116] For in-depth description of the statements by Leftist filmmakers in support of Khokhlova, see Grashchenkova 2014, 124–126.

[117] Alexandra Khokhlova (1897–1985) was the daughter of the doctor and collector Sergei Sergeevich Botkin, and the granddaughter of Pavel Tretiakov, the founder of the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

[118] "Но дело было совсем не в Хохловой. Дело заключалось в том, что нэпмановские или получастные фирмы и их представители в Госкино боялись нашего сплоченного коллектива, как огня. Мы могли нарушить все еще сохранявшуюся систему частного хозяйствования на кинофабриках. Работая коллективом, мы могли организованно проводить новые революционные художественные поиски в кинематографе.

"Прошло много лет с того времени. И только перед смертью М. Н. Алейников (коммерческий директор 'Межрабпром-Русь') сам сознался, сказав мне и Оболенскому, что умышленно пытался разбить наш коллектив, чтобы закрепить за собой идейно-художественное руководство в удобной для него форме. Сказал он нам и о том, что только теперь понял, как был глубоко неправ […]" (Kuleshov and Khokhlova 1975, 115).

into not working with Khokhlova.[119] Other screenwriters of LEF also included suicide episodes in their screenplays meant for Khokhlova: Mayakovsky's *Kak pozhivaete?* [How Are You?] (1926) (see chapter 4) and Kurs' *Vasha znakomaia* [Your Acquaintance] (1927). Although Brik's *Kleopatra* only indirectly implied suicide by virtue of its title, the whole story serves as an illustration of LEF's life-building strategies on-screen. This production fits Dmitrii Bykov's defenition of LEF as a family affair because it reflects the relations between the group members and reassesses the family as a societal unit (see p. 27 above). Thus, both *Kleopatra*'s message—criticism of the exploitative theatrical system—as well as the elements of collective ethos and life-building strategies behind this production rightfully position this libretto within the boundaries of the Cinema of LEF.

Despite several persistent attempts, Kleopatra remained unproduced. In September 1927, Mezhrabprom offered the film to Leonid Obolensky, a young director within LEF's circle (Stepanova 1994, 219), but the screenplay fell victim to studio politics. On November 15, 1927, *Kino* announced that Goskinprom Gruzii had accepted the screenplay of *Kleopatra* for production under the directorship of Lev Kuleshov ("Chto novogo za rubezhom i v Soiuze" 1927, 1). The same year, Lilia Brik tried to pitch *Kleopatra* to German filmmakers, albeit unsuccessfully (Jangfeldt 2009, 432). In 1933, Osip Brik discussed the possibility of turning Kleopatra into a play.[120] Khokhlova returned to screen in 1933 and participated in such productions of Kuleshov as *Velikii uteshitel'* (1933) and *Sibiriaki* (1940).

---

[119] "Лиличка Оське ставила ультиматум, чтобы он написал сценарий для Хохловой; и когда Оська написал 'Клеопатру' по ее заказу, то она рекламировала его и кричала, что это гениальный сценарий. Теперь она кричит: 'Я не позволю Кулешову снимать Хохлову'" (Stepanova 1994, 210).

[120] On January 14, 1933, Osip Brik wrote to Lilia Brik the following news regarding *Kleopatra*: "I spoke to Rikhter about *Kleopatra*. He is offering to make a play out of it for Meltser. I am going to try in case something comes out of it." / "Я говорил с Рихтером о 'Клеопатре'. Он предлагает сделать из нее пьесу для Мельцер. Я попробую, может быть, что и выйдет" (Valiuzhenich 1993, 116).

Other collaborations between Osip Brik and Lev Kuleshov included *Dva-Bul'di-dva* (1929), *Dokhunda* (1936), and *Sluchai v vulkane* (1941), which Khokhlova co-directed. In addition, Brik edited the screenplays for another two films by Kuleshov: *Veselaia kanareika* [Merry Canary] (1928) and *Sibiriaki* [The Siberians] (1940). Once an essential theme of Russian Silver Age culture, Cleopatra did not find its cinematic expression until the era of stagnation [period zastoia], first as a Vakhtangov theater television play entitled *Antonii i Kleopatra* [Antony and Cleopatra] (1971) and then in Mikhail Shveitser's screen adaptation of Pushkin's *Malen'kie tragedii* [Little Tragedies] (1979).

Liubov' i dolg, ili Karmen (1929–1932)

Although the screen idea for *Liubov' i dolg, ili Karmen* [Love and Duty, or Carmen][121] does not belong to Osip Brik, his editorial contribution to the screenplay demonstrates his craft as a screenwriter. Like *Kleopatra*, *Liubov' i dolg* appropriates the Old and assigns new meaning to the popular cinematic narrative of Carmen. The innovative approach of this screenplay, as well as its leftist ideology and collectivist ethos, places this screen idea, albeit unproduced, within the Cinema of LEF. Written by Lilia Brik, *Liubov' i dolg* is a continuation of her film titled *Stekliannyi glaz* [The Glass Eye] (1928), which she co-wrote and co-directed with Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi. Its message criticized foreign melodramas, as well as the practice of re-editing such films for the domestic market. Lilia Brik's new screenplay capitalized on the popularity of films about Carmen, which had swept the market from 1915 to 1926. As one of the most popular operas, *Carmen* enjoyed many iterations since the publication of Prosper Mérimée's novella in 1875. Its Western cinematic adaptations exist in abundance: (1) the 1915 twin productions[122] of

[121] Henceforth, I will refer to this work as *Liubov' i dolg*.

[122] The term twin production refers to two or more movies either on the same topic or adaptations of the same story, produced and released by different film studios simultaneously.

Cecil B. DeMille, based on Bizet's opera (starring Geraldine Farrar), and of Raoul Walsh, which is an adaptation of the novella (starring Theda Bara); (2) Charlie Chaplin's *A Burlesque on Carmen*, which came out the same year and parodied DeMille and Walsh's productions; (3) Ernst Lubitsch's *Carmen / Gypsy Blood* (1918) starring Pola Negri; and (4) Jacques Feyder's *Carmen* (1926). Only the three of these films were released in the Soviet Union: *A Burlesque on Carmen*, the Lubitsch-Negri collaboration (which was re-released in 1925 under the title *Tabachnitsa iz Sevil'i*), and Feyder's French adaptation.

The Soviet popularity of Chaplin's *Burlesque* was unprecedented, while the great comic himself was perceived as an anti-capitalist figure.[123] For example, in 1924, *Kinonedelia* published a note about Komsomol members spontaneously imitating one of its episodes in public:

> We managed to see once how two young men by the park gate were demonstrating their skills to young ladies. One was doing the Charlie Chaplin toes-out gait, and the other was depicting Chaplin's partner by attacking his friend. The girls were laughing heartily, looking at these antics.
>
> Totally carried away by their activity, the young men proceeded to a more structured game. They started to copy Charlie Chaplin's parody of *Carmen*, its episode of the fencing duel. In place of rapiers they were holding sticks, which they had picked up off the ground. They managed just a tad worse than on screen.[124]

As much as Soviet audiences enjoyed Chaplin's parody, the critics retaliated against the 1925 release of *Tabachnitsa iz Sevil'i* by calling it *khaltura* and stating that it had the shortcomings of

[123] For more on Charlie Chaplin's status in the Soviet Union, see the section on Mayakovsky and Americanism in chapter 4.

[124] "Нам однажды удалось заметить, как двое парней у ворот демонстрировали перед девушками свои способности. Один вывертывал носки и расхаживал, копируя Чарли Чаплина. Другой изображал его партнера и набрасывался на него. Девушки искренне хохотали, смотря на эти проделки.

"Увлеченные своей забавой парни перешли затем к организованной игре. Они стали копировать Чаплина и его пародии на 'Кармен'. Стали изображать дуэль на рапирах. В качестве рапир им служили поднятые тут же с земли палки. Все это у них выходило чуть-чуть хуже, чем на экране" (Petryak 1924, 23).

an opera (Il. Tr. 1925, 2). In the Soviet film criticism of the time, calling the film *opernyi* [operatic] was a grave insult, and, in this particular case, the status of Bizet's opera as passéist (Raku 2014, 183–196) only exacerbated the situation.

The most remarkable feature of Lilia Brik's screen idea of *Liubov' i dolg* is its narrative innovation. The first part of the screenplay shows the entire action, while the remaining three parts show its re-edited versions. This manipulation completely transforms the plot from a drama in the first part to a story with a happy ending in the second, revolutionary narrative in the third, and comedy in the fourth.[125] In 1929, she submitted a silent version of *Liubov' i dolg* to Goskino. The role of Hugo was written for Mayakovsky, who was supportive of the project. Veronica Polonskaia was supposed to play Carmen. Other LEF participants, including Lilia and Osip Brik, the Kirsanovs, Nikolai Aseev, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Igor Terentiev, and Lev Kuleshov, agreed to work on the production for free, thus embodying LEF's collectivist ethos. Goskino rejected the application under the pretext that the film was devoid of any social significance and diverged from Soviet themes (Bosenko 1998).

In the beginning of the 1930s, Lilia Brik decided to rework *Liubov' i dolg* for the talkies. Her RGALI fond contains a handwritten draft titled *Sovremennaia Karmen* [A Modern Carmen] and a typewriter manuscript titled *Liubov' i dolg. Komedia v 18 chastiakh s prologom i epilogom*

[125] In the first dramatic part, the young prosecutor Hugo Von Gugenberg falls in love with Carmen, a smuggler from the Les Apaches gang. Hugo forsakes his fiancée, Lucille, and when Carmen cheats on him with another criminal, he stabs her with a knife. In the second, happy ending version, Hugo returns to work and puts Carmen in jail. The third version casts all characters as revolutionaries. Suspicious of Carmen's release from jail, they accuse her of treason. Hugo stabs Carmen with a knife in the finale. The final, comic rendition exploits the trope of mistaken identities. Carmen's lover from the Les Apaches gang pretends to be the prosecutor and frees Carmen from jail while Hugo is absent from work and proposing to Lucille while on the clock. The scene is resolved peacefully, with a recommendation not to confuse work-related issues with love affairs (Lilia Brik, "Liubov' i dolg = Sovremennaia Karmen," Stsenarii khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. Varianty. RGALI, *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 41.

[Love and Duty: A Comedy in 18 Parts with a Prologue and Epilogue].[126] Osip Brik tried to use his connections in the film industry to pitch the screenplay. On September 22, 1932, he wrote to Lilia that he had spoken to Liutkevich concerning *Karmen,* but the result of their negotiations was not recorded.[127] The improved screenplay, located in Osip Brik's RGALI archive, is called *Karmen. Stsenarii zvukovogo fil'ma* [Carmen. Screenplay for Sound Cinema] (RGALI, *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 63). The new draft preserved the same structure (drama—a story with a happy ending—revolutionary tale—comedy), introduced technical notation, and further developed the original animation fragments linking the scenes. It also introduced details that helped to set the mise-en-scène, such as the image of a canary in a cage opening each narrative sequence.[128]

An additional factor that places *Liubov' i dolg* within the Cinema of LEF is its ideology. It is the story about the very nature of the film industry, which mentions the following films: *Variety* (1925), *The Blue Angel* (1930), *The Trousers* (1927), and *The Mark of Zorro* (1920). Its animated fragments also include the most famous cinema personalities of its time. Brik juxtaposes Western actors, such as Marlene Dietrich, Paul Wegener, Emil Jannings, Werner

---

[126] Lilia Brik's RGALI fond includes the manuscript of *Sovremennaia Karmen* (RGALI, *f.* 2577, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 41, *l.* 1–16) and a typescript (RGALI *f.* 2577, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 41, *l.* 17–89). While the handwritten manuscript is clearly intended for sound film (it uses a number of technical terms), its second, printed version could have been intended for theater.

[127] "Москва, 22 сентября, 1932 г. Звонил мне Люткевич, сказал, что прочел 'Кармен', велел достать 'Стеклянный глаз', сказал, что просмотрит его и потом поговорит со мной о 'Кармен'" (Valiuzhenich 1993, 113).

[128] Inserted by Brik, this scene recalls both Kuleshov's 1928 film *Veselaia Kanareika* [Merry Canary], on which Brik worked (RGALI, *f.* 2679, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 930), and the opening of Isaac Babel's literary screenplay, *Kar'era Beni Krika* [The Career of Benya Krik] (1926). The opening scene features a canary: "The room of Sokovich. There is a canary near the windowpane with geraniums oscillating back and forth in its cage, which is tied to the ceiling". / "Комната Соковича. Под потолком у окна с геранью покачивается в клетке канарейка" (Babel). Since Babel's cine-novella was available in print, Brik might have read it and borrowed this detail for *Karmen*, for which he used the bird for his elaborate sound transitions: "The sounds of the march are abating. In the frozen screenshots of the banker and the prosecutor shaking hands, the sounds of the march are changing to the romance sung by a canary in a cage." / "Затихает марш. На планах, застывших в рукопожатиях банкира и прокурора, звучание марша сменяется любовным мотивчиком. Его поет канарейка в клетке" (Brik RGALI, *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 63, *l.* 3).

Krauss, Douglas Fairbanks, Monty Banks, and Harold Lloyd, with the Soviet directors Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin. Similarly, Mayakovsky's 1926 screenplay *Serdtse kino* (see chapter 4) implicitly used the figures of Hollywood filmmakers as an ideological foil to the new Soviet project.

A quote in the screenplay's animated insert, which LEF attributed to Bertolt Brecht, further reinforces the group's criticism of the capitalist film industry:

> We do not know what human tears are
> What joy is
> But we know their price.[129]

A closer investigation reveals that this fragment is not an exact citation but, rather, a loose paraphrase of "The Song of Supply and Demand" from Brecht's play, *Die Maßnahme* (1930) [*Measures Taken / The Decision*]:[130]

> What is Man anyway?
> Do I know what Man is?
> How should I know who should know?
> I don't know what Man is.
> All I know is his price.
> (Brecht and Mueller 2015, 19)

Thus, the animation inserts, which glue the four parodic segments together, use the implicit citation that underscores the film's ideological message.

Like *Kleopatra*, *Liubov' i dolg* reenacted the mechanism of attributing new meanings to old works of art. The suggested collectivist mode of its production fits well with Boris Arvatov's

---

[129] Мы не знаем, что такое человеческие слезы …
Что такое радость …
Но мы знаем им цену.
(RGALI *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 63, *l.* 21)
This quote is present in Lilia Brik's draft only as an oblique reference in German (*Ich Weiss den preiss*) [the original orthography is preserved].

[130] *The Measures Taken* narrates the story of four Soviet agitators returning from a successful mission to China. They had to abandon their comrade, who had compromised the secrecy of their mission and put their group at risk. The betrayal motif of Brecht's play informs the story of Carmen as well, rendering it universal.

sociological definition of leftist cinema. Its experimentation, along with its stark juxtaposition of the capitalist and Soviet systems, make LEF's agenda in *Liubov' i dolg* explicit. As a continuation of *Stekliannyi glaz*, *Liubov' i dolg* represents LEF's achievement in narrative innovation. The device of contradictory perspectives on the same event will find its full realization twenty years later, in Akira Kurasawa's 1950 production of *Rashomon* and, more recently, in Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt* [Run Lola Run] (1998).

Cine-Praxis, Part II: Films

The produced screen ideas of Osip Brik include the following texts: (1) *Potomok Chingiskhana* (1928); (2) *Dva-Bul'di-dva* (1929); and (3) *Opium* (1929). The first two films represent blended narratives that mix played and documentary footage within a plot-based structure. The third film, *Opium*, employs found footage to create a plotless cinematic narrative, but it also uses elements of staged [*instsenirovannyi*] footage. I consider these hybrid works to be a direct response to LEF's call to "embrace the new culture" (Maiakovskii 1959f, 43). The following analysis draws out how additional factors, such as the themes of these films and their ideologies, contribute to the notion of the Cinema of LEF explored in this dissertation.

Potomok Chingiskhana (1928)

Both Lilia Brik and Osip Brik developed an interest in Central Asia and Mongolia after several business trips took them to the region before the Revolution. Viktor Shklovsky, in the published record of his interviews with Viktor Duvakin, tells a story of how Osip Brik's grandmother used to smuggle red corals, which she then sold to the Buryat Buddhists (Duvakin 2017, 35–37). This familial link likely informed Brik's regard for the region; he later wrote *Potomok Chingiskhana* (1928), a film that correlated with LEF's project by virtue of its ideology and blended narrative technique. Also known as *Buria nad Aziei* [Storm Over Asia], it became

the final part of Vsevolod Pudovkin's revolutionary trilogy alongside *Mat'* [Mother] (1926) and *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* [The End of St. Petersburg] (1927). While *Sovetskii ekran* published only a partial version of Pudovkin' screenplay in 1928 (Pudovkin 1928, 12–13), Brik's screenplay was published in full by Anatoly Valiuzhenich in 1993 in his collection of documents for Brik's biography (Valiuzhenich 1993, 63–73). The screen idea had been attributed initially to Ivan Novokshenov, who shared the story with Osip Brik, but Novokshenov finished his novella only after the film's release, presumably in 1933 (ibid., 230–234). The film was banned for distribution after Valerii Inkizhinov—the lead actor, who was of Buryat-Mongol origin—immigrated to Paris in 1930. It was subsequently re-released in 1949 after re-editing and sonorization.

Potomok Chingiskhana is a generically mixed affair, a cross between an anti-imperialist pamphlet, Kulturfilm, Western, and exotic melodrama. It is set in 1918–1919 Mongolia and follows the peripeteia of Sulim (Bair in the movie), a poor fur trapper. Sulim confronts a merchant over the price of a fur pelt, which results in Sulim wounding the white man. Forced to abscond, the protagonist joins Soviet troops in fighting the colonizers. He is captured and sentenced to death by firing squad, but his life is unexpectedly spared. The British discover that the ancient document in his amulet states that he is a direct descendant of Genghis Khan, which galvanizes their attempt to install Sulim as a puppet ruler of Mongolia.

There are two crucial differences between Brik's screenplay and the final film version. In the former, Sulim receives the document from his father, whereas the latter shows a passer-by monk dropping the document by accident. This divergence demonstrates the authorial take on power transfer mechanisms. While Brik's protagonist directly inherits the mythical power of Genghis Khan through his father, Pudovkin's character receives no endorsement from an ancient

document acquired by accident. The film's ending represents a second significant divergence. The screenplay ends with Sulim rebelling against the colonizers, escaping, and seeing the image of Moscow "as if in a reverie" (ibid., 73). Pudovkin, instead, ends his film with the allegorical image of a storm, symbolizing the Revolution.

While the film's critical responses varied from laudatory to skeptical, representatives of the Moscow Mongolian and Tuvan community offered the most optimistic feedback:

> After watching *Storm Over Asia*, we—the Mongols and the Tannu-Tuvans—the students of Comrade Stalin's Communist University of the Toilers of the East, as well as the citizens of the Mongol and the Tannu-Tuva Republics together with A.B.M. SSR who are presently living in Moscow—welcome the decisive shift in Soviet cinematography toward the truthful depiction of the life of people in the East who are enslaved by the Imperialists.
>
> This film will help us improve our culture, open the eyes of the workers of the suppressed East, and arm them in their struggle against Imperialism.[131]

Contemporary critics, for their part, point out the film's genre hybridity and its divergence from LEF's factographic principles. For example, in her analysis of the film, Valérie Pozner remarks on its overall eclecticism and underscores how Pudovkin's production only exacerbated the initial genre hybridity of Brik's screenplay (Pozner 2014, 333).

What classifies *Potomok Chingiskhana* as the Cinema of LEF film? First of all, its documentary footage includes sequences shot in a Mongol yurt, uses non-professional, native actors for the film's crowd scene, and incorporates footage of a Buddhist Tsan ceremony in Gusino-Ozersk Datsan. Filmed with ethnographic precision, this scene serves as a rare document

---

[131] "Посмотрев кино-картину 'Потомок Чингис–Хана' мы—монголы и танну-тувинцы—студенты Ком. Университета Трудящихся Востока им. тов. Сталина, а также находящиеся в данное время в Москве граждане Монгольской и Танну-Тувинской Республики вместе с А.Б.М. ССР—приветствуем решительный сдвиг советской кинематографии в сторону верного отражения жизни народа, порабощенного империалистами Востока.

"Эта картина поможет нам поднять нашу культуру, открыть глаза трудящимся угнетенного Востока, вооружить их на борьбу с империализмом" ("Novosti" 1929, 1).

of its time (Gromov 1980). Moreover, in filming the battle scenes, Pudovkin employed authentic Mongolian partisan fighters [partizany] who had previously fought the Semenov gang in the region (Kaufman 1928, 5). The fact that the story of Sulim/Bair is loosely based on a real-life event only favors, rather than works against, the logic of factography. It is the document that becomes (at least in Brik's screenplay) the basis for the transfer of power. Furthermore, the protagonist is portrayed with quotidian veracity. For example, when he reaches for the fish tank and accidentally breaks it, both Brik and Pudovkin's montage sequences do not draw any symbolic connections. This lack of symbolization prompted criticism of Brik's methods from Eisenstein, who called it "Brik's quotidian approach" [*bytovoi*] (Eisenstein 2004). Additionally, attention to the fur trade as the tool of imperialist exploitation elicits a specifically Marxist reading (Widdis 2017, 189–190). All in all, *Potomok Chingiskhana* relates to LEF's project because it unites the narrative of anti-colonial rebellion with documentary footage of Mongolia, strives for a Marxist analysis of the situation, and depicts its characters in quotidian, realistic settings.

At the same time, how can we explain one of the film's most significant departures from historical veracity—that is, its distortion of Mongolian history? The British never had a significant presence in Mongolia, so why would the filmmakers depict it? Panayota Mini suggests that such distortions reflected the Anglo-Soviet relations at the time:

> Historically, in 1918, some British forces had indeed been sent to Siberia, but their presence was limited compared with the American troops that remained in the area through 1920. However, Pudovkin shows British soldiers in order to allude to his contemporary deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations. During 1925–1926, when the Soviet Union improved relations with Japan and shifted attention to the East, it developed a clearly anti-British attitude in its policy. This attitude intensified in May 1927 when the British government instituted a raid on the premises of the Soviet Trade Delegation in London, and the Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations were broken off, not be resumed until 1930 (Mini 2002, 371).

The film thus combines two conflicting impetuses: to document a regional specificity and to propagandize against British imperialism. In this respect, Alastair Renfrew correctly points out the film's inner contradiction between the factography's rejection of symbolic language and symbolization (Renfrew 2013, 72), which happens, in this case, at the cost of distorting Mongolian history. All other components of Brik's original screen idea resisted the symbolic layer.

Despite these contradictory constituents, the final version of *Potomok Chingiskhana* achieved artistic cohesion. As Siegfried Kracauer, one of the most influential theorists of documentary cinema, explains:

> When it comes to the organization of material, then our masters of Kulturfilm ought to learn from Pudovkin. […] Pudovkin and his camera operator Golovnia teach us how to show the gloominess of the steppe, the magic of the holy site, the codependency of musicians and dancers; how to make the faces of the passers-by talk. Of course, he knows what he wants, and is capable of distinguishing the social significance of each detail which comes his way and which, in turn, determines its depiction on the screen. This is where the inner connection between the episodes comes from.[132]

Osip Brik's screenplay, however, is too schematic to convey this cohesion. According to his screenwriting theory, it served only as a stage in the film's production, a supporting document for Pudovkin's masterpiece. At the same time, it can be rightfully considered Brik's most famous work for cinema. It represents LEF's most successful attempt at applying its agenda to a production by fusing documentary footage with a socio-political plotline. Pudovkin's work on location, his use of non-professional actors, as well as casting a lead actor of Mongol-Buryat origin defies colonial orientalist practices and informs the narrative of national liberation.

---

[132] "А что касается организации материала, то здесь нашим мастерам культурфильма следовало бы поучиться у Пудовкина. […] Пудовкин (и его оператор Головня) учат, как передать неуютность степи, магию святыни, взаимную зависимость музыкантов и танцоров; как заставить говорить лица прохожих. Конечно, он знает, чего хочет, и способен разглядеть в любой детали, попадающейся на пути, ее социальное значение, которое и определяет способ изображения ее в фильме. Отсюда и внутренняя связь между отдельными эпизодами" (Kracauer 2002).

Pudovkin's documentary footage of the Buddhist *datsan* extends its impact from a critique of religion (initially intended by the filmmakers) to documenting and mapping Mongolian life in the late 1920s.

Dva-Bul'di-dva (1929)

The screenplay of *Dva-Bul'di-dva* is another example of a hybrid work, merging as it does a plot with footage of the Civil War. Unlike *Potomok Chingiskhana*, it uses staged [*instsenirovannyi*] footage to reenact the events of the war rather than authentic newsreel footage. The story of its production is convoluted and represents a collaboration of several filmmakers of the LEF circle: Osip Brik, Lev Kuleshov, and Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko. The script was initially commissioned to Viktor Shklovsky and was supposed to be directed by Boris Barnet, yet Brik ended up writing it for the director Kuleshov.[133] Brik's screenplay was based on Phillip Gopp's[134] eponymous story and served only as a blueprint for developing the screen idea. Kuleshov reworked the script and filmed the first version, but it received harsh criticism even before its release. At the direction of the film studio, Agadzhanova-Shutko (the screenwriter of *Bronenosets Potemkin*),[135] who participated in the early stages of its production, replaced Kuleshov. She rewrote the screenplay, re-filmed some of its scenes, and re-edited the film's footage. According to Kuleshov, her version, though it introduced only minor revisions, satisfied the censors even less, and the original version stayed in theaters. The extant copy of the film lists them as co-directors (Ryabchikova 2016).

[133] For more on the history of the film's production, see Renfrew 2013, 72–75.

[134] Phillip Gopp (1906–1978) was born in Odessa and moved to Moscow at the beginning of the 1920s. He published in *Ogonek*, *Ekran*, *Vsemirnyi sledopyt*, *Vokrug sveta*, and other journals. In 1937, he was arrested and imprisoned in the Gulag. After his release and rehabilitation Gopp lived in Tomsk and Rostov-on-Don before moving back to Moscow, where he continued to write and publish (For more, see Nerler 2015).

[135] For more information about Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko, see Ryabchikova 2016.

The plot of *Dva-Bul'di-dva* depicts the peripeteia of a father and son clown duo during the Russian Civil War. When the Whites unexpectedly arrest the communist-leaning Buldi Jr., the woebegone father intercedes on his son's behalf. In trying to please the White colonel, Buldi Sr. alters their act and changes the political message of his performance from pro-communist to anti-communist. Sentenced to death, Buldi Jr. manages to escape from the guards and goes on stage, where he performs his trapeze stunt, breaks free through an opened window, absconds, and joins the Red Army.

The film's release was followed by a unanimously negative critical reception. In 1930, the newspaper *Kino* published an article "Chto dumala direktsiia?" ["What Was the Management Thinking?"]. The article proclaimed *Dva-Bul'di-dva* as ideologically hostile to the working class. It also announced that the film was assigned to the fourth category (on the threshold of being banned) and declared that the money spent on its production was a complete waste (Vord 1930, 2). A scathing review by Boris Alpers accused the film of stylistic eclecticism and logical ruptures, as well as "formalism":

> The time of these fantastic re-edits of unsuccessful films is over. One simply can no longer attach ideology—the social significance of a thing—to flawed material as a formal appendix with the help of intertitles and re-edits. […] An agitational propagandist film can only be made by penetrating the socially significant topics of our times.[136]

Another reviewer found that the film "vulgarized the theme of the Revolution" (Feliks 1930, 6). All critics agreed that *Dva-Bul'di-dva* was a politically sterile piece.

While it is impossible to disagree with Alastair Renfrew's assessment that the film had no bearing on the Cinema of Fact (Renfrew 2013, 74), its ties to the cinematic avant-garde require

[136] "Прошла пора фантастических переделок неудачных фильм, когда с помощью надписей и перемонтажа пристегивалась к порочному материалу в качестве формального привеска идеологическая установка, социальная тема вещи. […] Агитационную пропагандистскую фильму можно сделать только путем проникновения в социальную тематику наших дней" (Alpers 1930, 6).

additional clarification. *Dva-Bul'di-dva* engages with the idea of revolutionary performance as a dangerous circus trick or stunt. In doing so, it continues the avant-garde tradition of experimentation, which used the circus as a meta-model of the performance arts. Before the Revolution, the circus motif informed the ideology of the Futurist movement at both the structural and thematic levels. The circus found its cinematic expression in such pre-Revolutionary film productions as *Molchi, grust', molchi* [Be Silent, Sorrow, Bee Silent] (1918) (a two-part drama about an old clown)[137] and Alexander Guriev's *Ia khochu byt' futuristom* [I Want to be a Futurist] (1914), with Mikhail Larionov and the clown Vitaly Lazarenko[138] in the leading roles. The first film and part two of the second are now considered lost. After the Revolution, cinematic representations of the circus continued to evolve. The futurism-inspired *Eccentrism Manifesto* (1922) proclaimed that the circus was a model of the new art they sought to create (Kozintsev et al. 1988, 58–64).[139] When it comes to LEF, its members also inherited this interest from the Futurists. For example, Eisenstein, in his "Montage of Attractions" (1923), transposed certain principles of the circus (with its notions of danger, risk, difficulty, and

[137] Another title for this film is *Skazka liubvi dorogoi* [A Tale of Precious Love]. For more information, see Ivanova et al. 2002, 450–454.

[138] Vitaly Lazarenko collaborated with Mayakovsky, who wrote two numbers for him: "Sovetskaia azbuka" ["The Soviet Alphabet"] and "Chempionat vsemirnoi klassovoi bor'by" ["Championship of the World Class Struggle"]. For further descriptions, see Dmitriev 1963, 59–63.

[139] In her book *Tsirk v prostranstve kul'tury* (2015), Olga Burenina-Petrova discusses the following films, which, according to her, were influenced by this discourse: *Krasnye d'iavoliata* [The Red Devils] (1923), *Pokhozhdeniia Oktiabriny* [The Adventures of Oktyabrina] (1924), *Mishka protiv Iudenicha* [Mishka Versus Yudenich] (1925), *Chertovo koleso / Moriak s Avrory* [Devil's Wheel / A Sailor From the Aurora] (1926), *Shinel'* [The Overcoat] (1926), *Novyi Vavilon* [New Babylon] (1929) (Burenina-Petrova 2014, 279–325). To this list, we can also add *Veselaia kanareika* [Merry Canary] (1928), *Benefis klouna Dzhordzha* [Clown George's Benefit Performance] (1928), *Poslednii attraktsion* [The Last Attraction] (1929), and *Smertnyi nomer* [The Mortal Stunt] (1929). Even though this list of films is incomplete, it includes major cinematic productions of the period that either were theoretically inspired by the circus or engaged it thematically.

unexpected outcomes) to his notion of montage.[140] His *Dnevnik Glumova* [Glumov's Diary] (1923) draws heavily from circus aesthetics. Eisenstein's interest in circus stayed with him throughout his life.[141]

Given this rich history, it is not surprising that LEF continued to work along these lines. Among the three films dedicated to the circus theme that came out in 1929, the screenplays for two of them were written by members of the group: *Poslednii attraktsion* [The Last Attraction] by Shklovsky and *Dva-Bul'di-dva* by Brik. In these twin productions, Shklovsky and Brik engaged with different visions of the nature of the circus. In *Poslednii attraktsion* (1929) (a screen adaptation of Marietta Shaginian's novella), an initially apolitical circus troupe is pulled into the Civil War. As a result, its performers are forced to make political choices. The protagonist of *Dva-Bul'di-dva* is, on the contrary, politically active from the onset. Buldi Jr. treats his workspace as a revolutionary performance space by writing and reenacting ideological scripts on screen. Set against the backdrop of staged footage of the war, the circus performance collides with the political act. It is precisely this ideological collision that makes *Dva-Bul'di-dva* a LEFist film because, at the end of 1929, the theoretical context informing the film—that is, Eisenstein's montage of attractions—was automatically implied in its production.[142] Additionally, the film's cinematic references to Mayakovsky's poetry in the circus numbers link

[140] "The school of montageour is cinema and, principally, music-hall and circus because (from the point of view of form) putting on a good show means constructing a strong music-hall/circus programme that derives from the situations found in the play that is taken as a basis" (Taylor and Christie 1988, 88).

[141] For more on Eisenstein's interest in the circus, see Ivanov 2010, 405–407.

[142] In his article titled "Montazh attraktsionov" [Montage of Attractions] (1923), Eisenstein classified circus trick as a sub-category of his notion of attraction and suggested that the art of montage should draw from the circus (Eisenstein 1923, 70–75).

this production to the group ethos. In his review of the film, Boris Alpers wrote about the use of the circus topos as an implicit marker of the cinematic avant-garde:

> The demonstration of the class struggle through a circus trick or an acrobatic stunt is a task that can be characterized by the ultimate dead-end into which some of our cinematographers have wandered.[143]

Rejected in the process of its production and severely criticized after its release, *Dva-Bul'di-dva* furnishes an example of the collective narrative experiment reenacted by Osip Brik, Lev Kuleshov, and Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko, the filmmakers of LEF's circle. The group's interest in the circus theme persisted throughout its existence and, thus, serves as a marker of its collective predicament. This theme later resurfaced in *Tsirk* (1936), the famous musical comedy directed by Eisenstein's collaborator, Grigori Aleksandrov. Alexander Rodchenko's famous series of circus photographs from the late 1930s and early 1940s are the last temporal example of LEF's work with this topic.

Opium (1929)

Opium represents an early attempt by Osip Brik to write a screenplay for an experimental newsreel. Inspired by Esfir Shub's 1927 editorial debut, *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* and *Velikii Put'*, Brik continued LEF's experimentation with manipulating pre-existing footage. In the preface, Brik stipulates that the final redaction of the screenplay was only possible after examining the archival films in stock (Brik 1929, 1). Written schematically as an iron scenario with numbered shots, the script draws an explicit association between religion, substance abuse, money, and power. It also advocates for revolutionary violence as a mechanism for fighting religious oppression.

[143] "Задача демонстрации классовой борьбы посредством циркового трюка или акробатического номера являет собой тупик, в который забрела часть наших кинематографистов" (Alpers 1930, 5).

The entire screenplay can be read as a cinematic epitome of the famous Marxist metaphor of religion being "the opium of the people," which was realized via the montage of pre-existing archival footage. The first part of the script combines images of world religions organized on the principle of a catalogue featuring deities and rituals in various cultures.[144] The second part describes scenes of substance abuse by believers. Religion is denounced in part three as the "opium of the masses," while part four demonstrates rituals performed in ecstasy. Part five establishes the connection between religion and the state as a means of oppressing its people. The last two parts reenact the mechanism of revolt by the masses. The image of the destroyed church at the end—with a radio antenna replacing the cross on its cupola (Brik 1929, 7)—represents a radical departure from Brik's previous use of cine-language, namely, his refusal to turn facts into symbols.

The reception of *Opium* was overwhelmingly negative because the audiences, accustomed to agitprop films, neither recognized nor appreciated the more sophisticated contextual interplay of Brik and Zhemchuzhnyi's experiment. For example, in "Antireligioznaia li?" [Is it anti-religious?], published in *Kino i zhizn'* on January 21, 1930, Sergei Beliaev pointed out the following flaws: absence of a cohesive script; absence of anti-religious propaganda expressed through a lack of juxtaposition with contemporary times; over-the-top usage of archival pre-Revolutionary footage; and the aestheticizing of opium smokers (Beliaev 1930, 2). Beliaev's review concluded that the film lacked a social base and needed to be re-edited. All reviewers agreed that the film was not suited for movie theaters or workers' clubs' screenings (ibid.; Shvartsman 1930; Nudov 1930).

[144] This catalogue-style organization of deities is similar to the intellectual montage of religious imagery in Sergei Eisenstein's *Oktiabr'* (1927). In the episode where Kornilov's army enters revolutionary Petrograd, Eisenstein displays religious figures, from Christ to ritual masks and pagan idols, in descending order. Brik's grouping, however, has no particular order: Buddha, stone gods, wooden gods, and various gods (Brik, 1–2).

Beliaev's particular suggestion to represent opium addiction from a realist perspective requires separate contextualization. After the Revolution, the accessibility of drugs like morphine and cocaine became a serious problem, especially among young people. The first Soviet dispensaries treating drug addiction appeared in 1925 (Grachshenkova 2014, 548). The Soviet film industry was tasked with responding to the problem. For example, Mezhrabprom released a Kulturfilm titled *Za vashe zdorov'e* [To Your Health] (1929), which dealt with the problem of alcohol abuse. It featured documentary footage taken at one of the Soviet *narkodispansers.* When it comes to drugs, the Soviet medical system, however, was still working out the language of and treatment methods for drug addiction (Conroy 1990, 447–480). Moreover, the cinematic embodiment of Marx's metaphor required a literary approach rooted in cultural representations of the past. This is why the much-criticized opening sequence of the film featured opium smoke, blooming flowers, and sensual female hands adorned with rings.[145] These images were genealogically related to the previous, decadent era, and denounced its troubled past.

The second critical claim about the excessive usage of pre-Revolutionary footage also needs clarification. In the article "O russkoi interpretatsii ekrannykh tekstov 'Evangeliia'" [On the Russian Interpretation of Gospel Texts on Screen], Rashit Iangirov describes the regulations that the tsarist government imposed on filmmakers before the Revolution. For example, depictions of key Christian figures—Christ, the Virgin Mary, angels, and saints—were strictly banned. The government also forbade filming places of worship of any denomination, interiors of Russian Orthodox cathedrals, open graves in graveyards, mass graves on battlefields, holy

[145] In her book *Kinoantropologiia XX/20* (2014), Irina Grashchenkova writes that the hands in the opening sequence of *Opium* belonged to Lilia Brik (Grashchenkova 2014, 551), and this fact, too, works in favor of including this film within the LEF corpus. That same year, Lilia Brik collaborated with Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi on *Stekliannyi glaz* (1929).

objects used during religious ceremonies, Russian Orthodox religious processions (unless approved by the church), religious sacraments, and actors portraying members of the Russian Orthodox Clergy (Iangirov 2011, 49). Utilizing rare newsreels that portrayed previously tabooed subjects was thus a subversive act.[146] Although *Opium* was initially included in the list of recommended propaganda films during the anti-religious campaign of 1930 (Tsemakhovich 1930, 3), its experimental nature elicited negative reviews from the press and thus predetermined the film's fate.

All in all, *Opium* rightfully belongs to the Cinema of LEF on account of its ideological stance and formal innovation. In terms of its structure, the filmed version represents a significant evolution of Esfir Shub's method of re-editing the found footage. Specifically, it departs from Shub's methods by including staged footage taken both in the Mezhrabprom studio pavilions and on location by cinematographer Alexander Galperin. The abundance of these hybrid document-drama combinations in the productions of *Potomok Chingiskhana*, *Dva-Bul'di-dva*, and *Opium* indicates that genre hybridity was also becaming one of LEF's hallmarks. A director of more than eleven films, Zhemchuzhnyi later became the subject of an anti-formalist campaign and had to denounce *Opium* as a formalist production. Brik and Zhemchuzhnyi collaborated on *Kem byt'?* [Whom to Be?] (1931), which reworked an eponymous poem by Mayakovsky. Brik continued to write screenplays for documentary cinema throughout the 1930s and 1940s.[147] The very first

[146] All in all, *Opium* used pre-Revolutionary footage devoted to the Tsar's family, World War One, and Orthodoxy, as well as footage of the relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh and Tikhon of Zadonsk taken after the Revolution.

[147] The documentary screenplays authored by Osip Brik include the following titles: (1) *Vladimir Mayakovskii*, libretto for documentary films, voiceover, and intertitles (RGALI, *f.* 2852, *op.*1, *ed. khr.* 83), as well as (2) *Moskva literaturnaia* [Literary Moscow] (RGALI, *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 81), and (3) *Narodnyi poet* [People's Poet] (RGALI, *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 82), co-authored with Leonid Elbert.

Russian films about drug addiction appeared only during the Perestroika years, at the very end of the Soviet era.[148]

Brik's Model of Authorship

In the theoretical exposé of this chapter, we mentioned how Osip Brik's approach to screenwriting denied the value of screenplays as separate literary documents which affected the ontological status of his screenwriting oeuvre. Curiously, this position did not weaken Brik's vision of the role of the screenwriter as the film's author but, on the contrary, reinforced it. As a film industry professional, Brik became a vehement advocate for screenwriters' authorial rights at the time when discussions of authorship resounded in the cine-press:

> Authorship is one of the fuzziest areas [of cinema]. Who is the real author of a screenplay?—You are asking this question unwittingly each time that you see the last names of several people—the director, the screenwriter, and, often, a consultant—in the titles or in the poster.[149]

The answer to this question is complicated because it defies the collective nature of film production. Yet, in the case of Osip Brik, his manner of working was well documented. Among Brik's frequent co-authors were Oleg Leonidov, Lev Elbert, Mikhail Kozakov, and Mikhail Rozenfeld. The volume of Brik's collaborative screenplays superseded, by far, his solo film-works, although the exact count is impossible to estimate for reasons Evgenia Sokolova-Zhemchuzhnaia explains. The following excerpt from her memoirs offers a glimpse into the nature of Brik's collaboration with other screenwriters, as well as his work during the production process:

---

[148] *Igla* [Needle] (1988); *Doroga v ad* [Road to Hell] (1988); *Tragediia v stile rok* [Tragedy, Rock Style] (1988); *Pod nebom golubym* [Under the Blue Sky] (1989); *Sledstvie vedut ZnaToKi* [Investigation Held by ZnaToKi] (1989); *Dorian* [Dorian] (1990); *Depressiia* [Depression] (1991); *Kiks* [Kiks] (1991).

[149] "Одним из туманнейших мест является авторство. Кто же настоящий автор сценария—невольно задаешь себе вопрос, когда видишь на титре или на афише фамилии нескольких людей—и режиссера, и сценариста, и часто консультанта […]" (Brik et al.1933, 3).

> They wrote screenplays together with Oleg Leonidovich Leonidov. Commissioned by the screenwriting studio, they used to rework other authors' scripts in large quantities. Leonidov would come to O. M. [Osip Maksimovich Brik], and the latter would invent the situations, re-design everything, and Oleg Leonidovich would write it down. Then he would bring the typed manuscripts the next day. O. M. was not into this kind of work. He used to help the young screenwriters a lot. They came to him seeking advice. Sometimes he would rewrite their screenplays, but he never put his name on such work or took money for it.[150]

Brik's close friends described the same process in a witty epigram: "There are professionals of many types. What Osya dictates, Leonidov types."[151] Furthermore, Lev Kuleshov and Alexandra Khokhlova's memoir provides an insider assessment of Brik's motion picture career:

> The significance of Brik was never limited to being the author of screenplays. He was also interesting as a "soldier of our trade," as a professional cinematographer and connoisseur of the craft of screenwriting. It is probably impossible to enumerate the films and screenplays that Brik helped to produce via consulting, editing, and improving. There is also a great number of screenplays he wrote anonymously or under pseudonyms. He was guided not by selfish interests but by his love for the profession, friendship, discipline, and responsibility for production.
> […]
> Brik has always studied the subject of his screenplays thoroughly. He knew how to "dig" into books and find the most obscure details, facts, and descriptions. He was not afraid to go on location and study the setting where the action would take place. In a number of his screenplays, Osip Maksimovich was not only a litterateur and professional screenwriter, but he also introduced a great deal of directorial input in his works as an experienced master of cinematography. This is why he did not think that his work ended at his writing desk; he systematically went to shootings, participated in the work of the production teams, offered advice and sharp criticism, and talked to the actors, who curiously loved listening to Osip Maksimovich's remarks.
>
> After starting work on a screenplay, he remained the soul of the film until the end of its production.[152]

---

[150] "Над сценариями работал много с Олегом Леонидовичем Леонидовым. В большом количестве они перерабатывали чужие сценарии по просьбе сценарной студии. Леонидов приходил к О.М., и Брик придумывал ситуации, все перекраивал, а Олег Леонидович записывал. На другой день приносил уже напечатанное и т.д. Эта работа не увлекала О.М. Очень много он помогал молодым сценаристам. Они приходили к нему за советом. Случалось, он заново писал сценарии и никогда не ставил имени на таких работах и не брал денег" (Sokolova 1993, 187).

[151] "Спецы бывают разных видов/Строчит за Осю Леонидов" (Valiuzhenich 1993, 247).

[152] "Значение Брика не исчерпывается его авторскими сценарными работами, он интересен как 'солдат нашей профессии', как кинематографист-профессионал, знаток сценарного дела. Вероятно, невозможно перечислить то количество картин и сценариев, которые Брик помог сделать и советами, и переделками, и

From this testimony, emerges a portrait of Osip Brik as a screenwriter who, above all, was dedicated to his profession and worked toward addressing the problems of the film industry, not merely participating in it. In his journalism of the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Brik consistently advocated for increasing the screenwriter's authorial rights. For example, in his 1938 article "O kritike stsenariia," [About Critique of the Screenplay] he wrote:

> As the author of the screenplay, the writer should have full rights. This means that his authorial will must be fixed in the screenplay and reflected on screen through his creative collaboration with the director. The writer has no fewer rights to the product on screen than the director does.[153]

Similarly, in his article "Uchenie—svet, a neuchenie—t'ma" [Learning is Light, and Ignorance is Darkness] (1940), Brik insisted that the writer had to participate in the process of making a movie at all stages of production:

> The relationship between the Soviet film industry and screenwriter cannot be one of owner and worker or client and service provider. The screenwriter is not an executor of some creative task but a creative collaborator in the production process. The exclusion of the screenwriter from the creative process results in the individualistic detachment of the playwright from the production, on the one hand, and to the diminishing of the screenwriter's role to one of a raw materials supplier, on the other. The Soviet film industry needs neither solitary geniuses nor indifferent craftsmen ready to take any work.

улучшениями. А сколько он написал сценариев анонимных или подписанных чужими именами, руководствуясь не корыстными целями, а огромною любовью к своей профессии, чувством дружбы, чувством дисциплины и ответственности перед производством.
[…]
"Брик всегда тщательно изучал материал попавших к нему в обработку сценариев. Он умел 'рыться' в книгах, находить редчайшие детали, факты, описания. Он не боялся выезжать на места, изучать обстановку действий на корню. В ряде своих сценарных работ Осип Максимович был не только литератором или профессиональным сценаристом, но и вносил в свое творчество значительную долю режиссерского начала как знаток своей профессии, как опытный мастер кинематографии. Вот почему он не считал, что его работа кончалась за письменным столом; он систематически бывал на съемках, принимал деятельное участие в работе съемочных групп, помогал советами и острой критикой, беседовал с актерами, необычайно любившими слушать замечания Осипа Максимовича. Он, начав работу со сценария, оставался душой картины до ее конца" (Kuleshov and Khokhlova 1975, 184).

[153] "Писатель должен стать полноправным автором сценария. Это значит, что авторская воля писателя должна быть закреплена в сценарии и выявлена на экране в его творческом сотрудничестве с режиссером. Писатель имеет не меньше права на экран, чем режиссер […]" (Brik 1938, 3).

> The Soviet film industry needs a screenwriter who will contribute his creative force to solving the common task of creating a new movie.[154]

The model of Brik's participation in cinema develops according to Shklovsky's concept of *literaturnaia podenshchina*.[155] Both Shklovsky and Brik understood this model as an active position; an engagement aimed at addressing the pressing needs of the new Soviet society. Preparing and educating the Soviet viewer was one such need which Brik pursued throughout his career as a screenwriter, journalist, and educator, hence the epigraph for this chapter: "We are impacting [cinema] as much as we can."

Although without directly calling it *literaturnaia podenshchina*, Osip Brik framed and theorized this model of authorship while teaching at VGIK. In characterizing Mayakovsky as an author for his 1941 class, Brik touted him as an example of a poet whose creative ideology rested on socially useful work, which, in acute historical and political moments, prevailed over his poetry. Such was Mayakovsky's engagement with ROSTA (Russian Telegraph Agency) poster series:

> Right after the October Revolution, which brought us new social relations […], Mayakovsky, like all of us, faced a question. He formulated this question as to what would be the place of the advanced worker in the country. […] He did not want to place himself as a dependent of the state and society, but as a person who wants to work and who is paid for his work what he deserves. […] Mayakovsky said: there is a civil war going on. The young Soviet republic is fighting its enemies. What should a poet do? Does a poet who calls himself a revolutionary poet have the right not to participate in this struggle with his verse? […] Already a great poet who enjoyed immense popularity

[154] "Отношения советского кинопроизводства с кинодраматургом не могут быть отношениями хозяина и работника или заказчика и исполнителя. Кинодраматург—не исполнитель чужого творческого задания, а творческий соучастник производственного процесса. Выключения драматурга из творческого процесса приводит, с одной стороны, к индивидуалистической оторванности сценариста от производства, с другой—к снижению драматурга до степени поставщика подсобного товара. Советскому кинопроизводству не нужны ни гениальные одиночки, ни равнодушные, готовые на все ремесленники. Советской кинематографии нужен кинодраматург, вносящий свое творческое усилие в решение общей производственной задачи создания нового фильма" (Brik 1940, 57–58).

[155] *Literaturnaia podenshchina* is a new regime of freelance writing in journalism and cinema that emerged in the 1920s as a response to the political and social exigencies of the time which reflected the writer's ethos and social obligation (see chapter 1).

> among the poetic youth, he left his poetic work all of a sudden and joined the propaganda department of ROST where he wrote slogans for posters, which disseminated throughout Russian cities. […] These posters were the work that Mayakovsky deemed necessary for himself because he wanted to consider himself the poet of the Revolution.[156]

Teaching the future generation of directors and screenwriters, Brik conveyed his idea of a socially and civically engaged author for whom daily literary labor was not unpleasant work but rather the very core of his or her existence as a political subject. Scripting these lines about Mayakovsky, Brik was speaking about himself.

Conclusion

The summation of Osip Brik's work in cinema can be extracted and distilled from a caricature drawn by P. Galadzhev (see Figure 2.9). The artist depicted Brik's work at Mezhrabprom-Rus by using the metaphor of a meat grinder. The political slogans being fed into the mouth of a grinder—featuring such words as *party*, *kolkhoz*, *production*, *industrialism*—transform into a canary, an allusion to the much-criticized production of *Veselaia kanareika* (1928). This film united the work of LEF's three filmmakers: Lev Kuleshov—the director, Osip Brik—the screenwriter and editor, and Vsevolod Pudovkin—the actor. It depicts the historic Odessa cabaret during the city's occupation by the Whites, where undercover communists pose

[156] "Перед Маяковским, как и перед всеми нами, конечно, сейчас же после Октябрьской революции, когда наступили совершенно новые социальные отношения […], появился вопрос. Маяковский сформулировал его, как место передового рабочего в стране. […] Он поставил себя в отношении государства и общества не на положении иждивенца, а человека, который хочет работать, и чтобы ему платили за его работу столько, сколько полагается. […] Маяковский сказал: вот сейчас гражданская война. Молодая Советская республика отбивается от врагов. Что должен делать поэт? Имеет ли право поэт, который считается советским революционным поэтом, не принимать участия своими стихами в этой борьбе? […] Маяковский, к тому времени уже крупный поэт, который пользовался большим вниманием среди молодежи поэтической, вдруг бросил эту поэтическую работу и пошел работать в агитационный отдел РОСТа, где писал подписи под плакатами, которые шли по городам и расклеивались там. […] эти плакаты были той работой, которую Маяковский считал необходимой работой для себя, если хотел считать себя поэтом революции" (Brik, RGALI *f.* 2679, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 937, l. 17–20).

all the while as members of the nobility. The film was generally criticized for lacking class consciousness and for using communists as "props" for staging bourgeois cabaret numbers.[157]

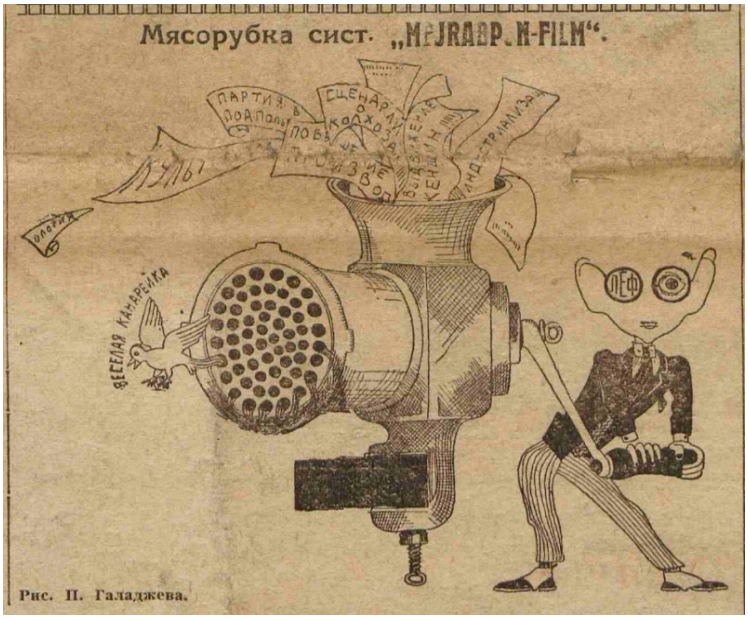


Figure 2.9. *The Meat Grinder System of Mezhrabprom-film*, caricature by P. Galadzhev (1929)

Perhaps, Galadzhev was not entirely misguided when he crafted this satirical image considering that traces of an earlier, futuro-avant-garde strain, which were informed by such themes as the circus and cabaret, surface in Brik's film-works. Traditionally associated with the plight of a poet, the singing bird flying out of the meat grinder acts as a metaphor for LEF's predicament: the release of its creative energy through participation in the Soviet film industry.

At the same time, unlike the canary in Galadzhev's drawing that escapes the muzzle of a film factory grinder unscathed, Brik's cinematic output was subject to many production alterations. This chapter's central argument suggests that the hybrid, polygeneric quality of his

[157] See, for example, Feliks, "Burzhuaznye vliianiia v sovetskom kino" (Feliks 1930, 6–7).

film-works is the innate characteristic of the Cinema of LEF. While the pervasive obsession with newsreels propagated by LEF in cine-press in 1927–1928 acquired the hidebound character of utopian totality, the group's goal to propagandize mitigated their factographic impetus. Meanwhile, the lack of opportunities to make newsreels redirected LEF's talent to a variety of played and transitional formats. All previous readings pigeonholed these film-works as "traditional" or "conventional" productions. A different perspective emerges when we identify the markers of the Cinema of LEF in unproduced screen ideas, archival sources, and extant films, the modalities of production, themes, ideology, and innovative devices. My reading suggests, rather, a holistic view of the Cinema of LEF—a manifold concept that goes beyond the scope of newsreels or plotless experimental films to include both plot-based and hybrid narratives.

That said, what exactly do these findings contribute to an understanding of the Cinema of LEF? It is not by accident that I began my investigation with the modest figure of Osip Brik. As a leading theoretician of the group, Brik was the author of ground-breaking ideas in several fields, from poetic and literary theory to photography and cinema, which were later absorbed and developed by the LEFists and the Formalists alike. Being one of the first LEF members to launch his career in the entertainment industry, Brik freely crossed the boundaries of mediums and genres and contributed to the development of Soviet cinema, opera, ballet, and *estrada*. His search for new platforms of expression developed separately and independently from the journal, yet it also reflected the group's productionist ethos. Brik's use of themes, modalities of production, ideology, and narrative innovation emerge as clear markers of the Cinema of LEF that can be further used as an assembly blueprint for the group's collective cine-praxis. Osip Brik, whose lean figure turned the hand-crank of the Mezhrabprom-Rus in the late 1920s, set in motion LEF's participation in the film industry. In the following decade, Galadzhev's depiction

of this factory as a meat grinder will transform into its uncanny double, the mechanism of political repressions that would swallow the remnants of the group, as well as the avant-garde movement altogether.

Chapter 3: Author as Producer: The Georgian Screenplays of Sergei Tretiakov

I never thought that LEF has to occupy itself only with newsreels.
I consider this position to be one-sided.[158]
- Sergei Tretiakov, 1927

Introduction

Sergei Mikhailovich Tretiakov[159] (1892–1937) was a key player in the Soviet leftist avant-garde circles of the 1920s and 1930s. He is remembered today as a poet, playwright, screenwriter, journalist, essayist, and theorist of the movement of factography. After Mayakovsky's secession from LEF, Tretiakov (one of LEF's original founders) served as editor for the last five issues of *Novyi LEF*. From the moment of his execution in 1937 until his rehabilitation in 1956,[160] Tretiakov's name was removed from official Soviet film history. Although a substantial number of republications and conferences took place beginning in the 1960s,[161] it was only in 2010 that Irina Ratiani published a collection of his writings devoted to

[158] "Я никогда не считал, что Леф должен быть обязательно занят только хроникальными фильмами. Я считаю это несколько однобоким" ("Lef i kino" 1927, 51).

[159] Other variants of this name in English transliteration include Tret'iakov and Tretyakov. In my opinion, the triumphant return of his name to academic circulation warrants the standardized spelling as Tretiakov. Such spelling recognizes Sergei Tretiakov as a major figure of Soviet culture in the 1920s and 1930s, while at the same time distinguishing him from the famous nineteenth-century art collector Pavel Tretyakov.

[160] For details and documentary records on Tretiakov's arrest, death, and rehabilitation, see the author's profile on the website of the virtual Agit Museum: http://www.agitclub.ru/museum/agitart/tret/bio.htm (accessed September 5, 2019).

[161] The first republications emerged in the 1960s: *Den Shi-khua. Liudi odnogo kostra. Strana-perekrestok* (Tret'iakov 1962) and *Slyshish', Moskva?! Protivogazy. Rychi, Kitai!* (Tret'iakov 1966). In 1972, a German conference celebrating the eightieth anniversary of Tretiakov's birth resulted in the publication of a translated collection of his works titled *Lyrik, Dramatik, Prosa* (Tret'iakov and Miernau 1972). In 1985, Tretiakov's correspondence with Brecht and other important members of German artistic circles came out in Berlin under the title *Gesichte der Avantgarde: Porträts, Essays, Briefe* (Tret'iakov 1985). In 1989, the University of Birmingham, UK hosted another international conference dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of Tretiakov's death. In 1991, a collection of Tretiakov's documentary prose was issued under the title *Strana-perekrestok: dokumental'naia proza* (Tret'iakov et al. 1991), with a foreword by his daughter, Tatiana Gomolitskaia-Tret'iakova. In 2006, Tretiakov's name appeared in the issue of the journal *October* dedicated to Soviet Factography, with a foreword by Devine Fore

cinema titled *Sergei Mikhailovich Tret'iakov. Kinematograficheskoe nasledie. Stat'i, ocherki, stenogrammy vystuplenii, doklady. Stsenarii* (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010).[162] The introductory chapter of her book features the most detailed account of Tretiakov's involvement in the film industry. In the years that followed, a number of scholars researched various aspects of Tretiakov's work in the film industry, including Galina Antipova (Antipova 2010), Masha Salazkina (Salazkina 2012), Edward Tyerman (Tyerman 2014), Anthony Anemone (Anemone 2015), and Natalie Ryabchikova (Ryabchikova 2017). Yet no comprehensive study targeting his work specifically as a screenwriter has appeared. Films based on Tretiakov's screenplays have been analyzed by Elena Inshakova (Inshakova 2007), and Galina Antipova (Antipova 2010), Tat'iana Nikol'skaia and Tat'iana Vinogradova (Nikol'skaia 2010; Nikol'skaia and Vinogradova 2008), Oksana Sarkisova (Sarkisova 2017), Emma Widdis (Widdis 2017), Salome Tsopurashvili (Tsopurashvili 2018). In 2017, "Tretiakov.doc," a film festival and conference dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the writer's birth, took place.[163] ASEEES featured a special panel titled "S. M. Tretiakov and the Origins of Soviet Cinema" during its 2017 Annual Convention in Chicago. Finally, the journal *Russian Literature* dedicated issues 103–105 entirely to the writer: "Sergei Tret'iakov: The New Visuality, Art, and Document" (January–April 2019).

(Fore 2006). Another of Devine Fore's articles appearing in the second volume of the *Russkie formalisty* [Russian Formalists] (2016) is possibly the best overview of the author's theoretical writings (Fore 2016).

[162] Irina Ratiani is the stepdaughter of Alexander Fevral'skii (1901–1984), a film scholar, biographer of Mayakovsky, and specialist on Georgian theater who collected Tretiakov's archive. As Ratiani writes in her foreword to this volume, Fevral'skii tried, unsuccessfully, to publish Tretiakov's cinematic collection in the 1970s. Irina Ratiani continued his work and published the book four decades later.

[163] The Tretiakov.doc film festival took place from November 2017 to February 2018. It was held in Moscow along with three other events devoted to Tretiakov: an exhibition at Moscow's Multimedia Art Museum, an academic conference, and a staging of his play, "Khochu rebenka" [I Want a Child] (1926), at the Vsevolod Meyerhold Center. The conference proceedings have not been published.

The corpus of Sergei Tretiakov's screenplays is considerably narrower than that of Viktor Shklovsky or Osip Brik. Tretiakov worked in the film industry as a consultant for *Bronenosets Potemkin* [Battleship Potemkin] (1925), *Krest i mauzer* [Cross and Mauser] (1925), and *Za chernoe serdtse* [For the Dark Heart] (1925). The same year, he became head of the art department of the first Goskinofabrika, although the specific nature of his participation has not been properly documented. His extant writings for the screen are limited to the three parts of *Dzhungo*'s libretto[164] and two authentic scenarios: *Slepaia* [The Blind] (1927) and the text of *Khabarda*, which Tretiakov wrote in collaboration with Georgian director Mikheil Chiaureli.[165] Scholars later recorded and published the scripts for *Sol' Svanetii* [Salt for Svanetia] and *Eliso* as parts of several collections of scripts (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 336-338). The paucity of Tretiakov's screenwriting corpus is compensated by the existing footage of *Eliso* (1928), *Sol' Svanetii* (1930), and *Khabarda* (1931), which allow for a reconstruction of his screen ideas.

Sergei Tretiakov is one of the best-known LEF screenwriters, yet his writings for cinema remain the least understood aspect of his oeuvre. The previous scholarly reception of his film-works tends to interpret them as "traditional" and contradictory to the author's theoretical statements. For example, in her 1993 article "Lef i kino" [LEF and Cinema], Oksana Bulgakova writes:

---

[164] Irina Ratiani published just one part, titled *Zheltaia opasnost'* [Yellow Danger], while the RGALI record also includes additional libretto parts titled *Goluboi ekspress* [Blue Express], *Zhemchuzhnaia reka* [Pearl River], and *Rychi, Kitai!* [Roar, China!] (Tretiakov RGALI, *f.* 2886, *op.* 2, *ed. khr.* 8).

[165] Additional unpublished screenplays located at RGALI include *Muzhelovki* [Husbandtrappers] (RGALI, *f.* 2886, *op.* 2, *ed. khr.* 1), *Poslednii dekanos* [The Last Decanosis] (Tret'iakov RGALI, *f.* 2886, *op.* 2, *ed. khr.* 3), *Chetyre perekopa* [The Four Perekops] (Tret'iakov RGALI, *f.* 2886, *op.* 2, *ed. khr.* 5), and the director's screenplay, *Parovoz B-1000* [Train B-100], which Lev Kuleshov and Aleksandra Khokhlova re-wrote from Tretiakov's screenplay (Kuleshov RGALI, *f.* 2679, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 16). Script records are missing for the following screen ideas: a 1923 script about aviation, the screenplays of *5 minut* [5 Minutes], *Vozvrashchenie men'shevika v Gruziiu* [Return of the Menshevik to Georgia], *Vodovorot* [Vortex], *Geroi nashego vremeni* [Heroes of Our Time], *Iuna*, *Khochu rebenka* [I want a Baby], and *Karl Marks* [Karl Marx] (conceived by Tretiakov in collaboration with Eisenstein and Aleksandrov (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 7–43).

> If we analyze Tretiakov's scripts not from the standpoint of their intended goals but as old "aesthetic products," they turn out to be banal stories "mulled over by drama-makers," as the author himself would have put it.[166]

In her seminal article "Sergei Tret'iakov i Kinematograf," Irina Ratiani echoes this reception: "In his articles and public speeches, Tretiakov forcefully advocated for the 'literature of fact' […] [while] in his creative texts he remained a true artist, a first-class artisan of the word."[167] In other words, the assessments by Bulgakova and Ratiani betray their unwillingness to acknowledge the influence of LEF's ideas on Tretiakov's cine-praxis.

This chapter argues that Tretiakov's writing for the screen had more bearing on LEF's cine-platform than has been previously understood. In particular, I examine how the scripts written by the author during his work in Georgia in 1927 relate to his theoretical views on screenwriting. The choice of 1927 coincides with the year when LEF was actively formulating its own cine-platform.[168] In searching for more tangible connections, I focus on the following set of questions: (1) What were Tretiakov's views on screenwriting, and how did they relate to LEF's discussions?; (2) Why and how is the Georgian locus significant for understanding Tretiakov's film-works?; (3) How do Tretiakov's Georgian films reflect LEF's cinematographic innovation?; (4) How does Tretiakov's model of authorship relate to LEF's ideology, and how does it enrich our understanding of this group?

---

[166] "Если анализировать пьесы Третьякова не исходя из их целевой установки, а рассматривать их как старые 'эстетпродукты', то перед нами окажутся банальнейшие истории, 'промусоленные драмоделами', как сказал бы их автор" (Bulgakova 1993, 177).

[167] "В статьях и выступлениях Третьяков усиленно ратовал за 'литературу факта'. […] А в своих произведениях оставался настоящим художником, первоклассным мастером слова" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 18).

[168] Prior to his trip to Georgia, Tretiakov's work in cinema was limited to consulting. The libretto of *Dzhungo*, which he wrote for Sergei Eisenstein and based on his trip to China from 1924 to 1925, remained unproduced. It was only during his trip to Georgia that Tretiakov fully immersed himself in screenwriting.

Views on Screenwriting

The bulk of criticisms highlighting a contradiction between Tretiakov's theory and praxis stem from a misunderstanding of the author's position on screenwriting. Tretiakov engaged with movies simultaneously as a theorist, critic, and practitioner. His opening and closing remarks for the 1927 colloquium on LEF and cinema mentioned above (see p. 62) articulated his general theoretical position. He separated cinema's function from the viewpoint of the film observer into two broad categories: films that "intellectualize" [intellektualizatory], by which he means films that educate, inform, and document; and films that "emotionalize" [emotsionalizatory], which are designed to affect one's mood and arouse emotions ("Lef i kino" 1927, 70). Within these two categories, Tretiakov classified films based on the "distortion of the material" [iskazhenie materiala] they used. He suggested classifying all films into three narrower sub-categories: (1) *flagrantnyi* [flagrant] (corresponding to Dziga Vertov's concept of "life caught unaware");[169] (2) *instsenirovannyi* [staged] (Eisenstein); (3) *igrovoi* [played] (Khanzhonkov) (ibid., 52–54).[170] It is important to note that Tretiakov's vision of the Cinema of LEF did not exclude narrative-based production. He concluded the colloquium by stating that newsreels and non-played documentaries were not merely "fetishes," and that LEF's first priority was to "bare the device" [obnazhenie priema] regardless of the effective classification of a given film (ibid.) Summoned by the LEFists to delineate between reality and the cinematographic realm, "baring the device" took on social and political—as opposed to aesthetic—functions.

[169] Dziga Vertov's films exemplified the idea of flagrant, while Esfir Shub's films exemplified the sub-category of *podmochenno-flagrantnyi* [compromised-flagrant] wherein the director manipulates recycled documentary material.

[170] Staged material was primarily used by directors who sought to portray documentary events and needed the actor's aid for it. For example, in *Oktiabr'*, Sergei Eisenstein used actor Vasilii Nikandrov to play Lenin on-screen. Played material, on the other hand, describes plot-based dramatic films.

Tretiakov's position on writing for the screen can be reconstructed from the seven articles he published on this topic between 1925 and 1928.[171] Generally classified, they revolve around three main points: (1) Tretiakov's proposal for a new script format he called the production screenplay [proizvodstvennyi stsenarii]; (2) his proposals on how to organize the screenwriting process; and (3) his vision of the screenwriter's role in this process.

What is a production screenplay? In reaction to the dominance of *spetsfabulisty*—screenwriters who spun narrative-based scripts, disregarding the factual side of life (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 69)—Tretiakov proposed a different type of text. In his article "Proizvodstvennyi stsenarii" [Production screenplay] (1928),[172] he describes a text with a "weakened fabula" (ibid., 70) wherein real facts predominate over the story. According to Tretiakov, the production screenplay was a narrative-based script with "fabula put into a position subservient to the material itself" (ibid., 71):

> The technique of writing a production screenplay is different from that of writing a story-based script. First, the screenwriter has to find the production sector he needs and then determine the specific production situations, however, without tying them to the story. When researched well, the material itself should help the screenwriter select one of the possible stories—one conflict that will form the skeleton of the screenplay—so that the meat of the facts speaks out with the utmost expression.
>
> The production scenario is the cinematic representation of the same priority of fact and of journalism that characterizes the type of literature most prevalent today.[173]

---

[171] These articles include: "Gde stsenarist?" [Where is the Screenwriter?] (1925), "Stsenarnoe khishchnichestvo" [The Screenplay Theft] (1925), "Demokratizm bespomoshchnosti" [The Democratism of Helplessness] (1926), "Opiat' konkurs" [The Contest Again] (1926), "Liniia naimen'shego soprotivleniia" [The Line of Least Resistence] (1926), "Proizvodstvennyi stsenarii" [Production Screenplay] (1928), "Konkretnye nositeli zla ili konkretnye kozly otpushcheniia" [The Specific Carriers of Evil or the Specific Scapegoats] (1928). All of the articles were reprinted by Ratiani (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 59-79).

[172] "Proizvodstvennyi stsenarii" was published in the second issue of *Novyi LEF* in 1928. Here and henceforth, I reference its republication in Treti'akov and Ratiani 2010 (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 67-72).

[173] "Сама техника выполнения производственного сценария иная, чем фабульного. Сценарист сперва находит нужный производственный сектор и определяет ряд производственных ситуаций, не связывая их, однако, в фабулу. Материал, будучи как следует изучен, подскажет, какую в нем из возможных фабул, какие из встречающихся в нем конфликтов нужно будет положить в скелетную основу сценария, чтобы мясо фактов заговорило наиболее выразительно.

The main differences between a traditional cinematic narrative and a production screenplay are prior research and truthful, factual depiction. For Tretiakov, this approach represented the cinematic analogue of factography. In developing this format, he thought that it would eventually evolve into a newsreel (ibid., 72). Finally, Tretiakov's vision of the production screenplay excluded the possibility of a publishable literary text, and Tretiakov's own scripts were not published during his lifetime.

Entering the Soviet film industry against the backdrop of the emerging dearth of screenplays suitable for production (see chapter 1), Tretiakov actively looked for solutions. In his article "Stsenarnoe khishchnichestvo" [The Screenplay Theft], Tretiakov regarded the cinema of the 1920s as a transition "from the artisan theatrical artel to industrial production" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 62). In order to organize the film industry better, he proposed introducing four distinct stages of screenplay production: (1) writing a libretto; (2) conducting additional research on the theme of the libretto; (3) writing the actual script; (4) creating the so-called *montazhnye listy* [montage line-up], which should include technical specifications for shooting (ibid.). By presenting research as a unique production stage, Tretiakov revealed LEF's sensibilities. Such an approach to filmmaking is characterized as productionist, where "the choice of material stems from a precise understanding of the task, and where the screenplay itself is built considering specific conditions and possibilities" (ibid., 64–65).[174]

Tretiakov's vision of the production process assigned a specific role to the writer. In 1925, when the press had just started discussing the screenwriting crisis, Tretiakov published the

"Линия производственного сценария—это есть отражение в кино той самой линии приоритета факта и публицистики, которая столь характерна для литературы, стоящей на активнейших позициях сегодняшнего дня" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 71–72).

[174] "Метод, где подбор материала производится исходя из точного представления о задании, а сам сценарий строится в расчете на определенные постановочные условия и возможности" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 64–65).

article “Gde stsenarist?” [Where is the Screenwriter?]. The article pointed out that the responsibility for the low quality of productions was not entirely that of the screenwriters but also of the film directors (ibid., 60). He repeatedly touted professionalization and admonished the dilettantism of screenwriting contests, which were popular at the time. He deemed these contests worthwhile only for supplying qualified screenwriters with raw material (ibid., 64). Countering the “disrespect for the craft of screenwriting” (ibid., 67), Tretiakov advocated for further professionalization. He was skeptical about the role of literature in cinema (ibid., 76) and wanted “to make the screenwriter speak the language of the cinema” (ibid., 60). Albeit not fully developed in his articles, Tretiakov’s idea of the screenwriter was ultimately that of a craftsman who is subservient to the production process.

National Films as LEF’s Marginal Practice: The Case of Georgia

Born in Latvia to a Russian father and a German-Dutch mother, Tretiakov can hardly be called a Muscovite. His extensive travels around the globe make the task of specifying his ethnic identity even more difficult. However, Tretiakov’s work in Georgia provokes the following question: what position did he occupy in a complex set of center-periphery relationships? Sergei Tretiakov’s work as a screenwriter at Goskinprom Gruzii in 1927[175] coincided with LEF’s growing interest in a national cinema. The tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution yielded a high demand for ethnic productions, which resulted in a large exhibition titled The Anniversary Art Exhibition of the People of the USSR,[176] national music and theatrical performances, and

[175] Tretiakov worked at Goskinprom Gruzii from mid-March to the beginning of October 1927 (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 19).

[176] The Anniversary Art Exhibition of the People of the USSR was organized by the State Academy of Arts in commemoration of the decennial of the October Revolution. The exhibition opened in Moscow on October 7, 1927 in three locations: (1) VKHUTEMAS (Higher Art and Technical Studios) hosted fine arts, theater, and cinema; (2) the Central People’s Museum displayed both folk and industrial art; (3) Alexander Herzen’s house showcased literary art. All in all, about two hundred artists participated, displaying the total of nine hundred and twenty works

ethnographic concerts.[177] The interest in ethnographic movies produced by Soviet republic studios such as Chuvashkino, Uzbekino, or Belarusfilm, were discussed in the cine-press of this time.[178] Most of these films were produced either in the center or by filmmakers from the center. Weary of orientalist representations and conventional plots, the LEFists criticized films and scripts that lacked regional specificity and factual knowledge about these regions ("Redaktsiia. Zapisnaia knizhka LEFa" 1928, 42–43). In the case of Georgia in particular, Viktor Shklovsky discussed the disconnect between the Georgian film industry and that of Moscow and Leningrad, as well as the absence of local writers and film technicians (Shklovskii 1927, 3). A select number of LEF filmmakers attempted to make their own movies on ethnic, national, and regional themes. For example, Abram Room directed a documentary titled *Evrei na zemle* [Jews on the Land] (1927), which depicted life in a Crimean Jewish settlement. Viktor Shklovsky and Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote the film's screenplay.[179] Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Potomok Chingiskhana* (1928) (screenplay by Osip Brik and Ivan Novokshenov) dealt with the national liberation movement in neighboring Mongolia (see chapter 2). Eight years later, Brik wrote another screenplay titled *Dokhunda* (directed by Kuleshov in 1936), a screen adaptation of the eponymous 1930 novel by the Tajik writer Sadriddin Ayni about the revolutionary struggle in Central Asia.[180] In other

---

of painting, graphic arts, and theater. For details, see the exhibition catalogue (*Katalog iubileinoi vystavki iskusstva narodov SSSR, organizovannoi Gosudarstvennoi Akademiei khudozhestvennykh nauk*. Moscow, 1927).

[177] For in-depth analysis of LEF in 1927, see Iangirov 2011a.

[178] For examples of newspaper articles on the subject, see Sokolov 1926. The national and ethnic films produced in the second part of the 1920s include *Musul'manka* [The Muslim Woman], *Minaret smerti* [Minaret of Death], *Severnoe siianie* [Northern Lights], *Pesn' na kamne* [Singing on the Stone], *Solnechnoe schast'e* [The Sunny Happiness], *Volzhskie buntari* [The Volga Rebels], *Abrek Zaur* [Abrek Zaur], *Pod vlast'iu Adata* [Under Adat's Rule], *Doroga k schast'iu* [Road to Happiness], and *Shelkovoe proizvodstvo* [The Production of Silk].

[179] For details on LEF's Crimean engagement, see Iangirov 2011a and Shklovskii 1930.

[180] The screen idea was eventually reworked by Viktor Shklovsky (the 1957 film *Dokhunda* was directed by Boris Kimiagarov). Other works by Shklovsky on national topics included his articles on screenwriting in Azerbaijan titled "Khoroshee nachalo. = Kinedramaturgiia Azerbaidzhana" [The Good Beginning = Screenwriting of

words, LEF's interest in national cinema was programmatic and went hand in hand with their contacts with avant-garde groups in the South (Yugo-LEF),[181] as well as those in Georgia and Belarus.

The interaction between Moscow and Georgia's LEF is known to researchers today via Tatiana Nikol'skaia's extensive scholarship on Georgian avant-garde culture. Georgian Futurism appeared rather late, in 1922, and lasted until 1932.[182] Its leading group, H_2SO_4, existed from 1924 to 1928. Influenced by three distinct movements—Futurism, Dadaism, and Constructivism—Georgian Futurists were interested in the film medium from the onset. For example, a significant portion of the journal *H_2SO_4* (they released only one issue, in 1924), addressed the question of cinema and declared cinematography to be the most topical issue.[183] From 1927 onwards, Georgian Futurists made contact with Moscow's LEF, and their initially reserved attitude toward "exports from Moscow" yielded to acceptance.[184] In 1928, members of H_2SO_4 organized their own cinematography group, which included film directors Nikoloz Shengelaia, Mikheil Chiaureli, Georgi Mdivani, and Mikhail Kalatozov (Kalatozishvili). In

---

Azerbaijan] (1940) (Shklovskii RGALI *f.* 562, *op.* 1, *ed. khr*. 170) and his report "O literature Tadzhikistana" [About the Literature of Tajikistan] (1934) (Shklovskii RGALI *f.* 562, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 92) as well as his active participation in organizing a ten month-long celebration of Tajik literature and art in Moscow in April 1957 for which Shklovsky was awarded a Certificate of Honor (Shklovskii RGALI *f.* 562, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 838).

[181] Yugo-LEF was a group of authors and artists that was formed in Odessa and lasted for slightly less than a year, from 1924 to 1925. The five issues of the eponymous journal included articles on leftist literature, theater, art theory, as well as the chronicle of the group's activities. The editorial board of the journal included three writers (editor Leonid Nedolia, Semyon Kirsanov, and Sergey Bondar') and two artists (Nikolay Sokolov and Nikolay Danilov).

[182] Russian Futurism appeared a decade earlier, in 1912. The Futurist group called *41°* existed from 1917 to 1920 in Tbilisi and included only three participants: Russian Futurists Aleksei Kruchenykh, Igor' Terent'iev, and Ilya Zdanevich (a native of Tbilisi). The group organized a series of public lectures on the Futurist university (*Futurvseuchbishche*) where Georgians learned about the developments of Russian Futurism. All in all, Georgian Futurists published three literary journals: *H_2SO_4* (1924), *Literatura da skva* (1924-1925), and *Memartskheneoba* (1927-1928), as well as a newspaper titled *Drouli* (1925-1926) (Nikol'skaia 2003, 319).

[183] For a detailed discussion of the journal, see Nikol'skaia 2003.

[184] For an analysis of the relationship between Moscow and the Georgian LEF, see Nikol'skaia 2003.

August 1928, the second (and final) issue of *Memartskheneoba* (Leftism) featured a cluster of articles dedicated to questions on cinema. The young Georgian filmmakers paid particular attention to the topics surrounding the production of newsreels and discussed their creative methods.[185]

The invitation of Tretiakov, Shklovsky, and Leonidov to work in Georgia for Goskinprom Gruzii's screenwriting commission spurred the development of Georgian cinema. The group's contact with young local directors influenced the thought of this generation of filmmakers, who later played a prominent role in their national cinema (Ratiani 2003, 21). Tretiakov's personal contribution includes consulting on the production of narrative films, several scripts, and projects that resulted from his collaboration with local directors. He is also credited with creating the documentary department of Goskinprom Gruzii in 1927. A year later, his student, Siko Dolidze, founded a separate newsreel department, which would become the Georgian Studio of Documentary and Popular Science Films in 1958.

The development of Georgia's film industry was part and parcel of the Soviet cinema's effort to document this region on screen. The 1920s representations of Georgia included a number of documentary films and *kino-ocherki* (a genre of cinematic sketch), such as Mezhrabprom-produced *Po goram i lednikam Kavkaza* [Through the Mountains and Glaciers of the Caucasus] (1926) and *Svanetia* [Svaneti] (1927), a documentary directed by Iurii Zheliabuzhskii. Additionally, Sovkino and Vostokkino produced *Vorota Kavkaza / Vostochno-gruzinskaia doroga* [The Gate of the Caucasus / East-Georgian Road] (Sovkino and Vostokkino, 1929), and *Kino-ocherk turista* [The Cine-Sketch of a Tourist] (Sovkino, 1930). When it comes

[185] The Russian translation of excerpts from the second issue of *Memartskheneoba* was published in the seventh issue of *ABG* poetry journal (2003) (Nikol'skaia 2010, 240). A full translation of Nikolai Kalatozov's article, "Nash metod pokaza kinomateriala" [Our Method of Showcasing the Film Material], was published by Tatiana Nikol'skaia in her article "Gruzinskie futuristy v kino" [Georgian Futurists in Cinema] (2010).

to Goskinprom Gruzii, its production included the following films: *V strane solntsa* [In the Country of the Sun] (1928), *Ikh tsarstvo* [Their Kingdom] (1928), *Vidy Gruzii* [Georgia's Sights] (1929), and *Iveriia* [Iberia] (1931). In developing its documentary approach, Soviet cinema (and the Georgian film industry in particular) reacted against the Orientalist representational politics that originated in nineteenth-century romantic literature.[186] The following 1926 caricature by Sergei Iutkevich (Figure 3.1), one of LEF's collaborators, highlighted the problem of Orientalism in Soviet cinema of this time.

Figure 3.1. *Oriental Cinematic Mold*, caricature by Sergei Iutkevich (1926)

Iutkevich's caption under the drawing "'Oriental' cinematic mold: daggers are there, but the Orient is not" summed up the problem in a nutshell.

A more detailed commentary on the state of affairs in the Republic of Georgia belongs to Vladimir Mass. In his narrative poem titled "Geroi ne nashego vremeni" ["Heroes Not of Our

[186] For information on imperialist poetic representations of the Caucasus in nineteenth-century Russia, see Ram 2006.

Time"] (1928),[187] published in *Sovetskii ekran*, he criticized Goskinprom Gruzii's previous pseudo-exotic approach which informed the on-screen images of Georgia in the early 1920s. The following fragment contains the parodic amalgamation of its key stereotypes: *i.e.*, pseudo-exoticism, represented by "auls, burkas, and chadors," blood feuds, and gender violence incited by the archaic custom of bride kidnapping, the main target of the emancipatory Soviet rhetoric in the Caucasian and Central Asian republics.

Прочней других кавказских скал	The abode of Goskinprom Gruzii
Госкинпром Грузии обитель,	Is stronger than other Caucasus cliffs,
И ни один советский зритель	And not a single Soviet viewer
Ее картин не миновал.	Could by-pass its films.
От славных "Красных дьяволят",	From the glorious *Red Devils*,
Пять долгих лет, пять лет подряд,	During five long years,
Со дня рожденья и поныне,	From its birth and up until this moment,
Не тратя даром ясных дней,	Without sparing one clear day,
Она топила всех в "трясине"	It sank everyone in the "bog"
Псевдо-экзотики своей.	Of its pseudo-exoticism.
И целых пять тяжелых лет	During five difficult years,
Платил покорный зритель дани,	Submissive viewers paid their dues
За то, чтоб видеть на экране	In order to see the same
Все тот же кино-винегрет,	Cine-mishmash on screen,
Что создавал Перестриани.	That Perestriani had created.
Давно не видел он картинки	It's been a while since they saw images
Без сакли, бубна и лезгинки,	Without stone houses, tambourines and
Аулов, бурок и чадры,	*lezginka*,
Всех этих атрибутов вместе,	Mountain auls, burkas, and chadors—
Без родовой, жестокой мести,	All these attributes together—
Без обесчещенной сестры,	Without brutal blood feuds,
Без разных драк в разгуле пьяном,	Without defamed sisters,
Зачем-то снятых крупным планом,	Without drunken brawls—
Без изнасилованных дев,	Shot in close-up, for some reason—
психологически грустящих,	Without raped damsels
Когда герои, онемев,	In psychological distress
Находят вдруг во мраке чащ их,	When their leading men, speechless,
Без заключительной расплаты	Find them in the darkness of the groves,
За взятый силою калым	Without the final act of vengeance
И, наконец, без пышной Наты	For the bride price taken by force,

[187] "Heroes Not of Our Time" is a riff on the title of Mikail Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni* [A Hero of Our Time] (1839–1841).

Вачнадзе, плачущей пред ним. Такой продукцией кормила Грузинская Савур-могила Несчастных зрителей не раз.	And finally, without the corpulent, weeping Nata Vachnadze. Such was the product The Georgian Savur-Mohyla Fed its ill-fated viewers. (Mass 1928, 3)

Tretiakov and Shklovsky came to Tiflis at a time when the city already hosted a vibrant artistic community that was equally influenced by the ideas of the Russian and West-European avant-garde. This cultural contact occurred when a new generation of artists came of age and began working in film. LEF's participation had a liberating effect on them; they began dismantling the Orientalist representational clichés of the Caucasus and creating their own unique language and style. Thus, the "marginal practice of LEF"—a term coined by Rashit Iangirov to describe LEF's engagement with national cinema—came to fruition in Georgia based on the creative strategy of collaboration between the representatives of radical filmmakers from Russian and Georgian cultures. The film analysis that follows will highlight the peculiarities of this process.

Eliso **(1928)**

One of the characterisations of Tretiakov's writing for cinema was that his practice violated his theoretical agenda. In her 2010 article "Problema kinoobraza v iskusstve Lefa" [The Problem of Cinematic Image in LEF's Art], Galina Antipova stated that "in their cine-praxis, LEF screenwriters reproduced the very same plot schemes they were opposing theoretically." She emphasized the similarity between *Eliso*'s plot and action movies starring Douglas Fairbanks and pointed to the fact that the film itself was a cinematic adaptation of the nineteenth-century novel by Alexander Kazbegi.[188] My analysis will extract LEF's previously overlooked

[188] " […] на практике лефовские сценаристы воспроизводили те самые сюжетные схемы, которые отвергали теоретически. В частности, в 'Элисо' герой сражается со множеством врагов в стиле Дугласа Фербенкса

ideology and formal innovation and illustrate how it impacted Tretiakov's methods of working with historical material.

The original script of *Eliso*, co-written by Sergei Tretiakov and Nikoloz Shengelaia, no longer exists. The text currently available was transcribed from a film copy by I. V. Sokolov in the format of a literary scenario, published in *Stsenarii natsional'nykh fil'mov* [Screenplays of National Films] (1939), and reprinted by Irina Ratiani in her book on Tretiakov's cinematic legacy (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 336). Comparing this record to the 1987 film restoration by Eldar Shengelaia and Leila Mikeladze, we see glimpses of Tretiakov's screen idea. A historic "frontier" drama by genre, *Eliso* (1928) can be called an adaptation of the eponymous novella[189] but with some reservations. In his article "Some preliminary remarks about 'Eliso'" [Nekotorye predvaritel'nye zamechaniia o kartine "Eliso"] (1928), Nikoloz Shengelaia emphasized that their intent was to create not a faithful adaptation of Kazbegi's novella but rather an interpretation based on archival facts (Nikol'skaia 2002, 325). Moreover, the choice of Kazbegi as a source text coincides with LEF's interest in national revolutionary movements: as a writer who belonged to the Mountain School, Kazbegi "represented, with great artistic force, the national motif resulting from his interest in the national liberation struggle" (Baramidze and Gamezardashvili 2001, 70). In *Eliso*, Kazbegi tells a love story between Eliso, a Chechen Muslim woman, and Vazhia, a Khevsur Christian man, against the backdrop of the forced relocation of a Chechen village from Georgia to Turkey around 1864.[190] The screen adaptation of *Eliso* altered the plot, incorporating

(вообще этот сценарий—экранизация вполне реалистичной повести классика грузинской литературы Александра Казбеги) […]" (Antipova 2010, 409).

[189] The novella was translated into Russian in installments and published in Russian literary journals. It was first published in book form in 1911 as a part of a collection under the same title it was given in the Pol'za press edition and featured a forward by A. S. Khakhanov. Tretiakov was likely familiar with this version.

[190] As a result of the Caucasian War (1817–1864), Vladikavkaz was granted the status of administrative center of the Terek region, which was created in 1863. Vladikavkaz authorities were responsible for the displacement of

information from new documents found by Tretiakov and Shengelaia in the Tersk regional archive. Their discoveries proved that the deportation of Chechens from Georgia was organized and carried out by the tsarist government. The screenplay propagated the idea of social mobilization through rebellion by removing Kazbegi's original distinction between "individual" and "collective" grief[191] and altering the ending. The novella ends with Eliso and her father staying with the Chechens; in the movie, however, they follow Vazhia back to Georgia, thus reclaiming their land. In other words, Tretiakov alters the narrative to underscore the anti-colonial rhetoric. This specific fusion of Kazbegi's historical narrative with new archival evidence correlates to Tretiakov's idea of the film's story being subservient to factual evidence. Thus, the alterations to the fictional part of Kazbegi's narrative amplified the film's revolutionary message.

Tretiakov's "treatment" of the facts demonstrates how LEF's methods for creating propaganda took the factographic approach to its extreme, turning facts into symbols and influencing their viewers emotionally. Specific to this approach is the *lezginka* dance, which, according to Siko Dolidze, was suggested by Tretiakov (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 109). Historians of cinema are acquainted with this particular scene because of a comment made by Sergei Eisenstein: "There are only two films that properly depict the intoxicating Caucasian

thousands of Chechens who lived in the area. The exodus of Chechens from Georgia was called *mudzhakhirstvo*, and it had a mixed voluntary/forced origin. For additional details about the Russian-Chechen conflict in Georgia, see Ibragimova.

[191] Ruth Gould translates the same distinction from the Georgian as "personal" and "common" grief: "The girl stood apart from the common grief. Her heart was filled with another sorrow. Grief is easier to overcome with friends, but this girl separated herself from the crowd in order to meditate over the misery of her situation (Quazbegi and Gould 2015, 42).

dance, the *lezginka*, and the dance in *Eliso* by Shengelaia did it much better than the one [I did] in *October*."[192]

Russian cinema traveled a long way from the oriental dance scene in *Sten'ka Razin* (1908) to the complex montage of the soldiers' dance in Eisenstein's *October* (1928). Lev Kuleshov's early montage experiment with dance (1921) became particularly instrumental in bringing the technical innovation forward by developing the rhythmized montage choreography. In his article "Dance on Screen" (1927), which was published in *Sovetskii Ekran*, Nikolai Rutkovskii distinguished the following three dance categories: decorative, dramatic, and ethnographic. Decorative dance, according to Rutkovskii, was the most popular variety and did not have any structural impact on the movie. Dramatic dance was used as a device by filmmakers to contrast scenes, introduce parallelism, link episodes, or for character development. He cites Ernst Lubitsch's *Oyster Princess* (1919) as an example of dramatic dance. Ethnographic dance occupied a special role in the new Soviet cinema:

> Ethnographic (folklore) dances stand apart from the rest of cine-dance production. They only began to develop in our cinema during the transition from the ethnographic reels to drama. We already have several such movies that were recently produced: *Zemlia chuvashskaia* [The Land of Chuvashia] shows the Chuvash dances, *Pesn' o kamne* [The Song of the Stone] shows the Tatar dances, *Baby riazanskie* [The Women of Riazan'] shows the ceremonial peasant dances of Ryazan' region. Yet, the dances depicted in the documentary or semi-documentary films display the purest ethnographic character. Take, for example, the ceremonial dances of the Tibetan lamas in *K beregam Tikhogo okeana* [Toward the Pacific Shores]. Another movie— *Put' k sile i krasote* [Road to Power and Beauty]—gives us the original African, Japanese, Hawaiian, and Spanish dances that are all the more beautiful for not having been tainted by extraneous interpretations.[193]

[192] In his canonical 1960 study of the Russian cinema, Jay Leyda cites Sergei Eisenstein's high appraisal of the montage sequence of the oriental dance in *Eliso*, referencing the memoirs of the British filmmaker Ivor Montagu. "[…] только в двух фильмах был хорошо передан возбуждающий кавказский танец—лезгинка и что в 'Элисо' Шенгелая это было сделано лучше, чем в 'Октябре'" (cited in Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 26).

[193] "Совершенно особняком от этой кино-танцевальной продукции стоят этнографические (фольклор) танцы, которые теперь только начинают прививаться в кино, переходя из хроникально-этнографической фильмы в игровую. За последнее время мы имеем уже несколько таких кино-картин: 'Страна Чувашская'—хороводы и танцы Чувашей, 'Песнь на камне'—татарские танцы, 'Бабы Рязанские'—обрядовые пляски крестьян Рязанской губ. Но наиболее чистый этнографический характер носят танцы, заснятые в хроникальных и

Eisenstein's dance montage in *Oktiabr'* belongs to the second category, dramatic dance. The sequence is based on a juxtaposition of dance footage with two rival armies: General Kornilov's army and the Red Army soldiers. Tretiakov, on the other hand, takes this idea of montage choreography one step further by combining the dramatic and ethnographic categories. We see the festive *lezginka* performed at a refugee camp during the funeral of a Chechen widow. The performance of such a dance at a Chechen funeral was implausible. In *Eliso,* Tretiakov not only introduced the fictional element of the widow's funeral as a symbol of the relocated community, but he also invented the community dance as a symbol of rebellion.[194]

At the same time, this final dance does not emerge out of nowhere. The filmmakers carefully orchestrate it by contrasting it to the dance sequence that occurs at the beginning of the film, thus utilizing the dramatic function discussed by Rutkovskii. The first dance takes place in the village, where we see the entire community working together to build a house for a widow whose husband may have perished in the Caucasian War. The rhythmical montage of the dance sequence consists of close-ups of feet kneading clay, clapping hands, and musical instruments playing as the village elders supervise the construction site, with women and children also working. The infant that the widow holds in her arms symbolizes the future of this community. The subject of our inquiry—the dance at the funeral—is a continuation of the same allegory of nation-building, albeit inverted.

полухроникальных картинах. Так—изумительные священные пляски тибетских лам в картине 'К берегам Тихого океана'. 'Путь к силе и красоте' дает нам подлинные негритянские, японские, гавайские, испанские танцы, прекрасные в своей незасоренности посторонними толкованиями" (Rutkovskii 1927, 6–7).

[194] Irina Ratiani has pointed out a possible source for this highly unusual use of dance: the stage adaptation of Vsevolod Ivanov's "Bronenosets 14–69," titled "Anzor," which was staged by Sandro Akhmeteli. The action takes place in Dagestan. Anzor, the leader of a guerilla fighter unit, orders the explosion of a bridge, and when his men fail to carry out his order, he shoots one of them and demands that the rest of the unit dances (Ratiani 2003, 109).

The ritual dimension of the Muslim funeral in *Eliso* likewise requires a separate commentary. Scholars have generally described Tretiakov's practices of national representation as "anti-colonialist in their nature" (Widdis 2017; Tyerman 2014), yet they are also imbued with an ethnographic gaze (Sarkisova 2017). If we compare the portrayal of the dead body in *Eliso* (Figure 3.3) with another funeral which takes place in *Sol' Svanetii* (Figure 3.2),[195] another screenplay written by Tretiakov, it becomes clear that the former is devoid of ethnographic minutiae and religious detail. This neutrality of representation brings the anti-colonial rhetoric to the fore and helps to shift the film's focus away from the critique of religion and toward the anti-colonial theme of the community's struggle against forced resettlement.

Figure 3.2. Still from *Sol' Svanetii* [Salt for Svaneti] (1930)

Figure 3.3. Still from *Eliso* (1928)

Additionally, dancing at a funeral serves as an example of the social expression of emotion through ritual, which is central to our understanding of Tretiakov's creative strategy. In her book *Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject, 1917–1940*, Emma Widdis underscored the visceral nature of emotions in this scene, while Andrian Piotrovskii, the Soviet critic, translator, and scholar of literature and drama, emphasized its "elemental nature" (Widdis

[195] *Sol' Svanetii* is discussed later in the chapter.

2017, 178). At the same time, the ambivalence of the scene is contained in the socially constructed dimension of grief as a mourning ritual. Upon closer examination, we see an obvious social hierarchy at work: the elders make arrangements and give orders, while the female mourners carry out the ritual routine. We also see a similar dynamic in the first dance episode, when the elder is commanding the villagers to build the house. It is this top-down system of community organization that enables the disruption of the colonial hierarchy. The inappropriate group dancing commanded by the elders is seen as a threat by the tsarist officer, who intervenes, to no avail, to stop it.[196]

It is a common trope of post-colonial studies that, in a situation of colonial oppression wherein writing a collective history is impossible, the speaking subject enters the social order through dance, orchestrating and choreographing its history and performing its identity. Yet, to understand what is happening in this sequence, we need to examine the historical context in which this dance occurs. From a historical perspective, *lezginka* is an umbrella term for a variety of movement styles featuring "rapid incendiary dance expressing courage and agility, demonstrating a beautiful body and bearing" (Sokolova 2018, 153). Claimed by about fifty ethnic groups, *lezginka* "expresses certain defining cultural characteristics of the Circumpontic people" (ibid.). With the relocation and disappearance of thousands of Chechens in the nineteenth century, the purely Chechen version of *lezginka* disappeared, while its elements merged with its neighboring versions. With the absence of Chechen consultants on the set, it was impossible to perform the authentic dance or show Chechen culture with ethnographic precision. It is not surprising, then, that this dance footage was often seen as a symbol of other national liberation movements in the region. In her analysis of the movie, Georgian scholar Salome

[196] This detail is absent from the record of the script and was probably added to the film's footage after restoration.

Tsuparashvili concluded that *Eliso*'s character articulates the idea of Georgian nationalism[197] (and not Chechen identity). Orchestrated from the center, this fictional dancing at a funeral, invented by Tretiakov, foreshadowed the 1940s and 1950s trend of using group choreography as a way to articulate ethnic identity in the Soviet republics.[198] It is no coincidence that this film received the Stalin prize in 1928—Stalin's nickname, Koba, even came from a literary text by Alexander Kazbegi. Restored in 1987, *Eliso* was quickly recognized as a masterpiece of world cinema and entered the international circuit of avant-garde retrospectives.

Even though a factographic approach enabled the screenplay's authors to redirect the fictional narrative of *Eliso* toward the history of the masses, it was the use of fictional elements that manipulated the viewer's emotions and enabled the narrative of social mobilization. Like most of the avant-garde trends of the 1920s, factography built its relationship with the spectator on the usurpation and manipulation of the audience. This particular episode of *Eliso* echoes Tretiakov's theoretical ideas:

> Formalist aesthetics, which talk about art as an activity that generates a particular kind of feeling (the aesthetic suspension of disbelief), must be replaced by the study of art as a means of emotion-organizing action of the psyche, in connection with the problem of class struggle (Tret'iakov "Otkuda i kuda," cited in Gurianova 2012, 257–258).

The screenplay of *Eliso* exemplifies how Tretiakov used his ideas about the propagandist function of the cinema to create new content for depicting the history of Georgia's ethnic struggles. By superimposing the new factual evidence on the traditional narrative frame, he altered this frame to fit the new discoveries. The propagandist potential of *Eliso* is amplified by

[197] In analyzing *Eliso*'s words in the unrestored version of the film, "I was living happily with my people, let me be unhappy with my people as well," Salome Tsoparashvili finds the incipient "idea of Georgian nationalism" (Tsopurashvili 2018, 165).

[198] For more on group ethnic choreography in the Soviet Union, see Shay 2002, 2016.

the use of a group *lezginka* dance as a symbol of ethnic rebellion, which subsequently became a well-known scene in film history. Tretiakov and Shengelaia's innovative work deposited *Eliso* into the canonical work of the Soviet cinematic avant-garde. In his work on *Eliso*, Tretiakov paved the way for a factographic approach to the production of historical narratives set in the past. But, how did he then work with the regional material set in the present?

Slepaia (1930)

Tretiakov took two trips to Svaneti, a remote region of Georgia that was undergoing rapid modernization. His first expedition took place in 1927, when this area was still difficult to reach. It resulted in the screenplay and film titled *Slepaia* [The Blind Girl], directed by Mikhail Kalatozov. The film was completed, but the story of its distribution is shrouded in mystery. In her study, Irina Ratiani suggests that the account of the film being banned due to its use of "formalism" should be taken with a grain of salt (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 30).[199] The second trip was in 1929 after the construction of new roads. The goal of this visit was to gather additional footage for *Sol' Svanetii*, a new film that director Kalatozov would make by combining elements of *Slepaia* with additional footage. Sergei Tretiakov published articles about his journeys in the local newspapers. In her collection, Ratiani republished the following items: (1) "Shest' millionov let (Poezdka v Svanetiiu)" [Six Million Years (Trip to Svaneti)] (October 9, 1927); (2) "Tri zapora" [The Three Locks] (October 12, 1927); (4) "Liudi v ushchel'iakh" [People in the Canyons] (April 15, 1928); (5) "V pereulkakh gor" [In the Alleys of the Mountains] (Decemer 31, 1927); "V pereulkakh gor. Ocherk" [In the Alleys of the Mountaints.

[199] Oksana Bulgakova sheds light on this mystery. She asserts that the film was screened in Moscow for LEF members, and Viktor Shklovsky volunteered to help Kalatozov re-edit the film. *Sol' Svanetii* (1930) was the result of their collaboration (Bulgakova 2019, 88). However, Viktor Shklovsky contradicts this version of events. According to him, he helped Kalatozov to re-edit the director's cut of *Sol' Svanetii*, not *Slepaia* (Shklovskii, 1927, 3).

Sketch] (February 1930); (6) "Staraia Svanetiia" [Old Svaneti]; and (7) "Novaia Svanetiia" [New Svaneti] (1931).

The only previous cinematographic representation of the Svaneti region also appeared in a part-fictional and part-documentary format. In 1926, Mezhrabprom-Rus (the film studio where Osip Brik worked from 1926 to 1936) commissioned Iurii Zheliabuzhskii[200] to direct a film about this region. Zheliabuzhskii produced two movies: *Dina-da-dzu* (1926) (the tragic love story of an Abkhasian man and a Svan woman set in the nineteenth century) and the ethnographic documentary titled *Svanetia* [Svaneti] (1926). *Sovetskoe kino* responded by publishing an article criticizing *Dina-da-dzu* for the "saccharine romantic overload of the cheap plot," but it praised *Svanetia* for its cinematographic quality, the composition of the movie frames, and its plotless approach ("Svanetiia" 1926, 30). *Slepaia* departs from the Orientalist topoi of *Dina Da-Dzu* but does not dispose of them completely. It features elements typical of Romantic-era discourse set in the Caucasus: a tragic love story and blood feuds set against the backdrop of the region's famous mountain peaks. Close to the genre of German Kammerspielfilm (drama from life of lower middle class),[201] the script merges this discourse with the vestiges of Kulturfilm. Oksana Sarkisova defines Kulturfilm as "a platform for a variety of discourses—from assuming an indigenous perspective to promoting a 'cultured' version of travel and tourism, or lobbying for an accelerated transformation of the landscape through a communication network" (Sarkisova 2017, 161). In particular, *Slepaia* introduces the following

[200] Iurii Zheliabuzhskii (1888–1955) was a cinematographer**,** film director, and screenwriter who began working in cinema before the Revolution. In 1926, he was known for his work on *Sigaretnitsa iz Mossel'proma* [The Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom] (1924) and *Kollezhskii registrator* [The Stationmaster] (1925), among other movies.

[201] For an analysis of the "traditional" elements in *Slepaia* and *Sol' Svanetii*, see Inshakova 2007 and Antipova 2010.

modern elements: ethnographic material, the transformation of nature by humans, the development of tourism, and medical discourse.

The screenplay narrates the dramatic collision of the Svans' traditional lifestyle with the new Soviet lifestyle via three major plot lines: (1) a man who kills a village doctor for the alleged maltreatment of his son; (2) an impoverished youth named Nestor, who gets injured during a roadworks explosion; (3) a blind woman whom Nestor marries. All three plot lines are united by the figure of Nestor: he witnesses the murder in the first plot, suffers from the road explosion in the second, and murders his wife's doctor in the third. The compactness of the narrative, as well as Tretiakov's characteristically sparse use of intertitles, builds suspense that is resolved in the finale by the death of the three main characters. Nestor shoots the doctor who cured his wife, who, in response, voluntarily blinds herself, stumbles on a rope bridge, and comes crashing down on him.

I will begin my analysis with the third subplot, the story of the blind woman. The fact that the script is titled after the nameless female heroine and not Nestor (the only person with a name in this story) requires some explanation. If we follow the hackneyed trope of women as symbols for the land, then the heroine can be interpreted not merely as a porte-parole of Soviet emancipatory rhetoric but as a symbol of Svaneti itself; she is held back and destroyed by the backwardness of the people. Indeed, the extra-textual evidence points toward such a reading. In his newspaper article published in *Zaria Vostoka* in 1927, Tretiakov noted the chronic ophthalmological problems among the Svans. He also connected excessive smoke in the air to the construction defects of their houses:

> There can be no conversation about literacy and education of any sort while these people are shedding tears day and night in the darkness from their eyes being eaten away by smoke.[202]

Blindness was a fact of life observed by Tretiakov during his expedition. By making his heroine blind and naming the screenplay after her, Tretiakov turns this fact into a symbol of the backwardness of the remote region.

The second subplot—injury from a roadwork explosion—contains a curious scene featuring the presence of the tourists' camera. In addition to building his script on the material collected during ethnographic research, Tretiakov structurally embedded the presence of factographers, represented by modern-day photographers, inside the text. On his way through the mountains, Nestor encounters a group of tourists who attempt to warn him about the dangerous road construction ahead. When the tourists conclude that the Svan does not understand them and is about to be injured by the road work explosions, one of them takes out his camera and attempts to take a picture of Nestor:

> 90. Wide shot. Nestor is walking down the trail. The tourists jump out from around the corner, shout at him. Nestor steps back to let them pass.
> 91. Medium shot. The tourist is yelling; he takes his camera out, stretches his hand toward Nestor trying to stop him from moving […]

This unexpected intrusion of the tourists' camera at the beginning of the story serves as a perfect counterpoint to the loss of eyesight in the ending. Svaneti and its population may be blind to progress and modernization, but modernity itself documents Svaneti through multiple lenses, studying and cataloging the land and its people.

Tretiakov's approach to factographic description produces a specific portrayal of the human body as being fragmented. Informed by medical discourse, this fragmentation differs

[202] "Ни о какой грамотности, ни о каком обучении не может быть и речи, пока люди дни и ночи плачут в темноте глазами, разъедаемыми дымом" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 154).

from the mainstream cinematographic practices of the time, such as representing humans as machines. Inasmuch as medical discourse signifies the modernization of the region, the autochthonous bodies that undergo this treatment are also subject to a center-periphery set of relationships. In this sense, the narrative of a doctor from the center who comes to the remote region to treat his patients is colonial in its essence. In the first subplot of *Slepaia*—the murder of the village doctor for his alleged maltreatment—the reader never learns exactly what happened to the patient other than that he had died in a hospital six months prior. Yet, the fact that, after the autopsy, the father does not inter his son's entire body, only the internal organs, presupposes a tragic context in which the body has disappeared. The glass jar with intestines soaking in formaldehyde represents a canopic jar of sorts, separating the inside from the outside of the screenplay's subject. Such jars were used in ancient Egypt, where it was customary to preserve the inner organs of the dead for the afterlife.[203] Here, medical intervention resulted in the uncertain cause of death and the inability to bid the body farewell, and this causes the blood feud. By murdering the perceived killer, the peripheral subject settles his accounts with the center and thus gains agency.

Slepaia's focus on eyes and the absence of eyesight is part and parcel of the same mechanism of fragmentation. Tretiakov wrote his screenplay at a time when avant-garde movements across Europe were actively inventing a number of visual tropes that drew on eye imagery. To name a few, there are Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Glaz* (1924), George Bataille's *Story of the Eye* (1928), Louis Bunuel's *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), Lilia Brik's *Stekliannyi glaz* (1929),

[203] The private nature of a funeral held with only one witness is typologically reminiscent of the short story by Daniil Kharms titled "Sud'ba zheny professora" ["The Fate of Professor's Wife"] (1936). In the story, a woman receives the cremated remains of her husband in a jar along with a note; she then performs the unsanctioned burial in a botanical garden.

and Benedikt Lifshits' *Polutoroglazyi strelets* (1933). In *Slepaia*, every character appears to suffer from a lack of vision. They interact with the forces of history in isolation, without seeing the larger picture. The absence of panoramic and aerial shots in the technical documentation of the script only reinforces this idea. In other words, it is not only human bodies that are fragmented but also their worldview. This representation of humans structurally and thematically warrants Tretiakov's creative method of cinema "by touch" [naoshchup']. The term itself comes from Tretiakov's essay "Liubit' Kitai" [To Love China] and was discussed by Emma Widdis and Edward Tyerman as "an active and participatory form of perception" where "the eye operates as an organ of touch, allowing a new kind of (affectionate) knowledge" (Widdis 2017, 180). *Slepaia* serves as one of the best illustrations of Tretiakov's idea of "cinema by touch."[204] The fragmentation caused by the inability to see leads Tretiakov to experimentation with the cinematic gaze.

Being the only extant screenplay of Tretiakov's script corpus, the text of *Slepaia* strikes the reader with its experimental quality and the complexity of its narrative technique. Its factographic approach manifests itself through meticulous research of Svaneti during the two expeditions and the prolific use of this material in a screenplay. Blindness as the central metaphor of *Slepaia* and the absence of large panoramic shots connect this screenplay to Tretiakov's idea of "cinema by touch." The ideological message of this work is ultimately pessimistic. The Old gains leverage over the New, and the community descends into darkness.

[204] In her book, *Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject, 1917–1940*, Emma Widdis connects Tretiakov's concept of "cinema by touch" to the idea of haptic visuality. The term refers to the film image that evokes close engagement with surface detail and texture (Widdis 2017, 180). For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Marks 2007.

The following discussion of *Sol' Svanetii*, the result of Tretiakov's second trip to the region, will demonstrate a shift in this dynamic.

***Sol' Svanetii* (1930)**

Tretiakov wrote *Sol' Svanetii* in collaboration with Mikhail Kalatozov after his second trip to Svaneti in 1929. The film was released under the Georgian title *Dzhim Shvante*. Kalatozov recycled some footage from *Slepaia* and incorporated it into this film. Although the script itself did not survive, the record made by the Georgian scholar Natia Amiredzhibi and translated from Georgian into Russian by Irina Ratiani testifies to a change in screenwriting conventions. It alters the format used by Tretiakov in *Slepaia*, moving toward a hybrid form that is closer to the literary scenario but features an inconsistent use of technical terms.[205] The surviving copy of *Sol' Svanetii*, one of the masterpieces of Soviet avant-garde cinema, allows us to reconstruct Tretiakov and Kalatozov's screen idea.

Like the plot of *Slepaia*, *Sol' Svanetii* depicts life in the Ushkun community of Upper Svans, critiquing the old and backward ways of life, locked in place by "roads, houses, and the dead" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 153). The shortage of salt in the region forces its population to search for new ways to connect to the outside world by transforming the nature around them. From a romantic topos, the landscape changes its function, becoming a hostile environment to be mastered. In contrast to *Slepaia*, the screen idea includes vast panoramic and aerial shots that refocus attention from individual actors and ethnographic details to the community at large and its social mobilization. The story culminates in a lavish funeral that is juxtaposed with the expulsion of a new mother and the subsequent death of her newborn child. All customs were

[205] Irina Ratiani does not provide the year when the screenplay of *Sol' Svanetii* was written down or its original location. Natia Amiredzhbi was born in 1937; therefore, the text of the screenplay could not have been recorded earlier than the 1960s. Amiredzibi's version features an inconsistent use of technical terms, such as close-up and cover/establishing shots. It records the entire film omitting detailed technical documentation.

witnessed by the author during his two expeditions to Upper Svaneti and thoroughly described in his journalistic publications.

There is, perhaps, no better proof of Tretiakov's factographic approach to Georgian material than his journalistic reportages. Detailed descriptions of funerals occupy a substantial part of these accounts because the author considered the cult of ancestors to be a significant impediment to progress. Tretiakov mentions funerals in two articles: "Tri zapora" (October 12, 1927) and "Staraia Svanetiia" (1931). The funeral depiction in *Sol' Svanetii*, out of all of his screenplays, represents the quintessence of such descriptions and is rendered with great ethnographic precision, from costume and accessory details to the custom of animal sacrifice. The birthing ritual is mentioned in Tretiakov's account of his trip to Khevi in his article "V alleiakh gor" (December 31, 1927):

> Over there, during menses and in labor, women are expelled to *boseli*—cold stone stables. Women are considered impure in these days, and people are afraid of them as if they were the plague. After giving birth, they bite through the umbilical cord with their own teeth and keep the newborns warm with the heat of their own bodies in the freezing winds of Khevi winter.[206]

The scene of giving birth in *Sol' Svanetii* is almost identical. Its intertitles confirm Tretiakov's ethnographic observations: BIRTH IS A WOE, BIRTH IS CONSIDERED IMPURE. DURING LABOR, THE WOMAN IS EXPELLED.[207]

Another topic Tretiakov mentioned in his journalistic accounts is salt, which he made a title of his work. Its grammatical syncretism—in Russian *Sol' Svanetii* reads both as *Salt for*

---

[206] "Там в дни месячного очищения и в дни родин женщин выгоняют в каменные холодные хлевы—босели. Женщины в эти дни—нечисты, их боятся как чумных. Родильницы своими зубами перегрызают пуповину и выгревают младенцев теплотой своего тела под студеным ветром хевсурской зимы" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 161).

[207] "РОЖДЕНИЕ—ГОРЕ; РОЖДЕНИЕ СЧИТАЕТСЯ НЕЧИСТЫМ. ВО ВРЕМЯ РОДОВ РОЖЕНИЦА ИЗГОНЯЕТСЯ" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 291).

Svanetia and *Salt of Svanetia*—allows for a double interpretation. The first version is congruous with the film's central production-focused theme,[208] a shortage of salt created by the region's isolation, described by Tretiakov in a journalist sketch titled "Tri zapora (Poezdka v Svanetiu)":

> The crystals of salt lay on a special shelf next to the wooden mortar and stone pestle, which was picked up in the vicinity of the river rapids. The salt is a treasure. One could make ring setting with it in place of a gemstone. There is no salt in Svaneti. Its delivery by steam locomotive raises the cost by four rubles per pood.[209]

The second possible interpretation of the title, *Salt of Svanetia*, draws on a Biblical metaphor from the Sermon on the Mount. However, in his sketch titled "V pereulkakh gor," Tretiakov is explicit about his anti-religious rhetoric:

> Maybe we should begin to destroy the candied, saccharine understanding of primitive Christianity that was forged in the minds of philistine readers by such false novels as Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*, by direct descriptions and depictions of these disgusting religious realities.[210]

If the authors intended to use this double entendre, then the extra-textual evidence points to a possibility that the second, biblical meaning of the title was employed as an ironic commentary on the religious dogmas and rituals that govern the community's life.

Sol' Svanetii works as agitation material calling for the transformation of the old ways of life in the region (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 32). In his letter to the cinema workers of Georgia

---

[208] In his article titled "Sem' smertnykh grekhov nashei kinematografii" ["Seven Deadly Sins of Our Cinematography"] (1927), Tretiakov explained his ideas about the production screenplay in the following way: "Georgian cinema should henceforth follow the production line. Margentum, tea, silk, tobacco—it all requires a screenplay conceptualization similar to Gladkov's literary conceptualization in his *Cement*." / "В дальнейшем кино Грузии должно идти по производственной линии. Магранец, чай, шелк, табак – все это требует сценарного оформления, наподобие того, как Гладков литературно оформил 'Цемент'" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 147).

[209] "Каменная соль лежит на приступочке, рядом с деревянной ступкой и камнем пестом, подобранным около речных стремнин. Соль—драгоценность. Ее здесь можно вставлять в перстни вместо драгоценных камней. В Сванетии ее нет, а паровоз ложится четырьмя рублями на пуд" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 154).

[210] "Может быть прямыми описаниями и показами этого отвратительного религиозного быта пора начать истреблять слащавое засусоленное представление о первобытном христианстве, созданное в умах читателя-обывателя такими лживо-сентиментальными романами, как, например, 'Камо грядеши' Сенкевича" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 162).

titled “Ne pomogat' vragu” [Do Not Help the Enemy], Tretiakov characterized this movie as a concrete example of how to build a better future (ibid., 145). When it comes to classifying the screenplay, it is important to situate it against other works by Tretiakov. First, as a production screenplay that upcycled the footage of *Slepaia*, the narrative line in *Sol′ Svanetii* is weaker than that of the first film and includes a larger percentage of documentary footage. Second, *Sol′ Svanetii* follows a different trope. Its focus is no longer the ophthalmological problems of the local population; rather, salt is crucial for survival in this isolated region. Unlike in *Slepaia,* the symbolization, in this case, does not fully take place: the salt remains a vital substance for the region, not its symbol. Building roads and delivering salt ultimately symbolizes life and the ways by which the New in the region will appear. In the next section, we will see how Tretiakov advances this topic.

Khabarda **(1931)**

Continuing with the same theme—the struggle between the Old and the New—the screenplay of *Khabarda* represents the chronological end of LEF’s cinematic corpus. Based on a literary scenario in six parts that Tretiakov wrote in collaboration with Mikheil Chiaureli, the film is described in the subtitle as a “cine-pamphlet,” a genre of political exposé. The New in *Khabarda* is represented by positive characters, the worker Niko and Sever'ian, a young engineer sent to rebuild old Tbilisi as a model socialist city. The Old is represented by the negative characters of Diomid and Luarsab.[211] Georgian historian Natia Ameredzhibi rightfully points out

[211] Diomid is a philistine from the city’s outskirts who takes a stroll to the center. Having witnessed the destruction of a church along his way, Diomid issues a complaint to Luarsab, a bureaucrat from the Society for the Preservation of Architectural Heritage. In her study of *Khabarda*, Irina Ratiani draws a link between this character and the retrograde count Luarsab Taktaridze in a novella by Ilya Chavchavadze. Both Luarsabs “hate innovation, hold on to the past, and impede social progress” (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 34). Based exclusively on the similarity of their names and conservative attitudes, this linkage is hardly convincing.

that this stock portrayal did not stimulate the reader's identification with either positive or negative characters.

> The main shortcoming of this movie manifested itself in the schematic depiction of people who were supposed to build a new life. The representatives of the young socialist country—the technician (actor O. Vachnadze), the worker (actor S. Dzhaliashvili), and others—were painted in colors that were much too drab.[212]

While the positive characters lack individual characteristics, the comedic representation of *Khabarda*'s negative characters is derived from the incongrueties in their appearance. Take, for example, a monumental sculptural portrait of Luarsab displayed against the backdrop of a man with a "tiny face with a sharp little nose and scared eyes," "a skinny man" who "walks out taking tiny footsteps" and "has a thin topknot of graying hair."[213] Even more comically, he makes a famous Napoleonic/Kerenskian gesture (inserting a palm in the frontal fold of a jacket) while wearing his pajamas.

Commentators have also pointed out the similarity of this satire to the satirical plays and screenplays of Vladimir Mayakovsky.[214] In the spirit of Mayakovsky's screenplays, the author uses the narrative device of splitting his protagonist into a set of cinematic doppelgängers.[215]

---

[212] "Основной недостаток фильма проявился в схематическом изображении строителей новой жизни. Представители молодой страны социализма—техник (артист О. Вачнадзе), рабочий (артист С. Джалиашвили) и другие написаны слишком блеклыми красками" (Amiredzhibi 1978, 140).

[213] " […] крохотное личико с остреньким носиком и испуганными глазками," " […] мелкими шажками выходит тощенький человечек," "жиденький хохолок седоватых волос" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 309).

[214]In her book, *U istokov gruzinskogo kino*, Irina Ratiani cites I. M. Manevich, who discussed the similarity between *Khabarda* and Mayakovsky's screenplay *Liubov' Shkafoliubova* (Ratiani 2003, 123). It is worthwhile to note that Mayakovsky had tremendous difficulties with commissioned productions, while *Khabarda* was successfully filmed and has survived to the current day. By contrast, another important predecessor of *Khabarda* was the comedy *Moia babushka* [My Grandmother] (1929) by Kote Mikaberidze, which satirized Soviet bureaucracy in the spirit of Mayakovsky and was subsequently banned in Georgia. After its rediscovery in the 1970s, *Moia babushka* became a classic of Georgian cinema, while the status of *Khabarda* has been attenuated by Chiaureli's connection to Stalinism. Mikheil Chiaureli is the author of the Soviet Staliniana: *Kliatva* [The Vow] (1946), *Padenie Berlina* [The Fall of Berlin] (1949), *Nezabyvaemyi 1919 god* [The Unforgettable Year 1919] (1952), as well as the documentary *Velikoe Proshchanie* [Great Mourning] (1953) and an animated film, *Kak myshi kota khoronili* [How Mice Buried the Cat] (1969).

[215] For in-depth discussion of Mayakovsky's use of doppelgängers, see chapter 4.

Unable to protect the church from destruction, Luarsab descends into psychosomatic illness. After his death (the entire sequence occurs in a dream), Luarsab splits in two: a body in the coffin and a spirit that lingers on, observing the funeral preparations. This use of doppelgängers could be motivated by the influence of Expressionist films, such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) and *Dr. Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, 1922). Additionally, it might be conditioned by the fact that the party leaders at the time made use of doubles for security purposes. Situated within the dream of an unsympathetic character and performed in a satirical key, such a narrative device could bypass censorship without suspicion, masking its unexpectedly subversive ideological content.

Another of *Khabarda*'s links to previous cinematic tradition manifests itself in several referential layers of the film. Like *Eliso*, *Khabarda* features an unlikely funeral scene; in this case, dancing the Charleston. Chiaureli possibly added this dance episode, which is missing from the screenplay, during the later stages of production. Reintroduced at the beginning of the 1930s after being banned in the USSR for nearly half a decade, the Charleston is best described in a famous quote by Commissar for Education Anatoly Lunacharsky: "I saw the Charleston and find it repulsive and harmful to the utmost degree" (Lunacharskii 1927). Portraying the retrograde characters dancing this despicable bourgeois dance at the funeral of a Tbilisi official was a statement about Georgian bureaucrats and their political culture.[216] Similarly, Kote Mikaberidze

[216] Years later, after his ban from working in cinema expired, Chiaureli recycled the idea of dancing at a funeral one more time in his animated adaptation of Zhukovsky's fairytale *Kak myshi kota khoronili* (1969), which he used as a proxy to express his feelings about Stalin's death. The resurrection of the cat in the animated film's finale attests to Chiaureli's political sensibilities. The same idea of the resurrection of a political body would reappear in the narrative of Tengiz Abuladze's *Pokaianie* [Repentance] (1984). Set in a small town, the plot revolves around the funeral of Varlam Aravidze, the local politician whose body is being dug up and returned to the house after the funeral. This happens several times until the perpetrator is discovered. The person behind the exhumation is the daughter of an artist whose family was repressed by the politician when she was eight years old. Upon hearing this story of Varlam Aravidze's misdeeds, his grandson commits suicide, while his son Avel digs up his father's body

used the Charleston in *Moia babushka* (1929) by showing the wife of a bureaucrat dancing while her husband is hanging himself from the ceiling in what turns out to be a failed suicide attempt. Additionally, the funeral dance in *Khabarda* might serve as a direct commentary on, and possibly a subversion of, the dance sequence in *Eliso*.

Figure 3.4. Still from *Vladimir Lenin's Funeral* (1924)

Figure 3.5. Still from *Khabarda* (1931)

Another political connotation of Luarsab's death is the death of Vladimir Lenin. Like Lenin, the Tbilisi official becomes an object of collective grief and a political body to mourn. In 1931, the documentary reel of Lenin's funeral (1924) was a point of reference for all Soviet filmmakers (see Figure 3.4), establishing the canon of political funerals on-screen (Iangirov 2011b, 151-166). The cinematic depiction of Luarsarb's corpse reverses the perspective, signaling the subversion of this canon (Figure 3.5):

> The coffin has been filmed, but in a way that one could see the enlarged feet of the dead in the foreground, and his little smiling face somewhere very far.[217]

This reversed perspective was canonized by the Italian Renaissance artist Andrea Mantegna in his painting *Lamentation of Christ* (c. 1480) (see Figure 3.6). This perspective was previously

---

and throws it off a cliff. Thus, Tengiz Abuladze reverses the previous Stalinist model of the leader's funeral while also denying it a place in history as symbolized by proper burial.

[217] "Гроб заснят, но заснят таким образом, что на переднем плане видны преувеличенно-большие ступни покойника и где-то очень далеко его крохотное, улыбающееся личико" (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 322).

used by Sergei Eisenstein who, in his film *Staroe i novoe / General'naia liniia* [Old and New / General Line] (1926–1929), used a depiction of a sleeping kulak (a wealthy peasant) to look like the dead body of Christ from Mantegna's painting (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.6. Andrea Mantegna, *Lamentation of Christ* (c. 1480).

Figure 3.7. Still from *Staroe i novoe / General'naia liniia* [Old and New / General Line] by Sergei Eisenstein (1929)

The existing tradition of depicting Lenin on screen enabled this frivolous explication. Unlike Stalin, whose cameo appearances in movies of the 1940s signified "History" (André Bazin compared the creation of his cinematic myth to the process of mummification), Lenin, who often played himself in the newsreels, was still a subject of the forces of history, not "History" itself (see Bazin 1978). In the context of this Lenin–Stalin representational dichotomy, *Khabarda* becomes a distant echo of the canon of Lenin funerals, predating Chiaureli's later adventure into Staliniana.

Tretiakov envisioned the struggle between the Old and the New through the collision of the two funeral processions. The first procession consists of the local intelligentsia, literary groups, and even representatives of the League of Nations, all of whom mourn the death of Luarsab. The second carnival group consists of Komsomol members dressed up as priests. An epic battle between the two groups as medieval knights erupts at its denouement, disrupted by

the presence of cinematographers: “Halt! I am documenting this historic fact for our descendants”.[218] The presence here of movie cameras within a film constitutes the quintessential expression of LEF’s understanding of “baring the device.”

Khabarda is best described as a post-LEF screenplay in which Tretiakov reevaluates his prior affiliation with the group. The screenplay represents retrograde social forces by freelance doctors, lawyers, artists, and writers of all literary creeds: LEFs, RAPPs, Fellow Travelers, and Formalists. This assessment closely follows the classification proposed by Georgian critic S. Amaglobeli. In 1931, *Proletarskoie kino* published an article by S. Amaglobeli titled “Klassovaia bor'ba v gruzinskom kino” [The Class Struggle in Georgian Cinema], in which the author distinguished two directions in Georgian cinema: pseudo-revolutionary, represented by experimental cinematographers, and truly-revolutionary. Kalatozov and Shengelaia belonged to the first group, while Chiaureli belonged to the second (Amaglobeli 1931, 36–39). However, in terms of its poetics, *Khabarda* still shows a connection to LEF’s creative principles; primarily, the use of documentary material to represent the New, the discovery of factual evidence of the fabrication of historical narratives, productionism, and the use of formal experimental elements like doppelgängers or the presence of movie cameras within the film.

As a narrative film with a strong fabula and written in a literary scenario format, *Khabarda* successfully portrays the old class through an array of satirical techniques. However, the film can only visualize the new order through the symbolic intrusion of a Soviet zeppelin flying above the burial site.[219] By reversing the perspective, the authors of *Khabarda* dispose of the old values and the piety associated with the funeral ritual by deconstructing history as

[218] “СТОЙТЕ! ФИКСИРУЮ ЭТОТ ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ ФАКТ ДЛЯ ПОТОМСТВА” (Tret'iakov and Ratiani 2010, 329).

[219] Nikita Mikhalkov used this device in *Utomlennye solntsem* [Burnt by the Sun] (1994) to represent Stalinism.

something fabricated and mythologized. They show this past to be a threat to one's life (hence the second title: *Stones Are Falling Here*) and posit the new order in the newsreel montage of socialist construction. It directs LEF's authorial principles of factography toward discrediting the idea of the past. If *Eliso* uses historical facts to advance the correct version of the past, *Khabarda* uses a fact-checking strategy that exposes the fabrications of history and challenges the very idea of the past. *Khabarda* teaches us that our understanding of history cannot be trusted. Not only the churches can be dated incorrectly and have fake genealogies, but historical facts can also be fabricated in the same way that on-screen representations are staged or newsreels re-edited and manipulated. Ironically, the plans for a new, socialist Tbilisi never came to fruition. Yet, the disappearance of LEF (together with the old classes) in the screenplay's finale foreshadowed Tretiakov's own death and temporary oblivion.

Author as Producer

Chapter 2 discussed how Osip Brik's work in the film industry revolved around a concept of authorship that Viktor Shklovsky described as *literaturnaia podenshchina*; that is, daily literary labor.[220] As a professional screenwriter and librettist, Brik was a model author in this category. He contributed to the film industry and advanced LEF's goals, but only when it was possible to do so. In other words, his identity as a filmmaker existed separately from his LEF identity, albeit they occasionally overlapped. The main difference between Sergei Tretiakov and Osip Brik's models of authorship is that Tretiakov's work is characterized by a higher degree of engagement across several mediums: screenwriting, theater, journalism, radio, and photography. In each of these, Tretiakov forewent his legacy as LEF's innovator and experimenter who

[220] By this term, Shklovsky understood the work of a writer in a related professional field (for example, journalism), which he imbued with a positive meaning as socially significant. In this model, writers work for the benefit of society. At the same time, they respond to society's social and political needs without a consistent formulation of their creative assignments.

worked according to the factographic principles he postulated. If Brik was the organizer of the Soviet screenwriting industry, Tretiakov was its mere participant who engaged with it for a limited amount of time. In other words, Tretiakov worked as a LEF professional producer, moving from one project to the next. His example inspired Walter Benjamin's[221] concept of the operative author; he described Tretiakov as a writer "whose mission is not to report, but to struggle; not to play spectator but to intervene" (Benjamin 2003, 88).

The following satirical illustration by Kukryniksy, which accompanied a parodic poem by Alexander Arkhangel'skii, furnishes an example of Benjamin's model of operative author. Both Benjamin's essay and the drawing are inspired by Tretiakov's participation in the 1928 campaign to describe the on-going collectivization in the countryside, which took place under the slogan "Writers to the Kolkhoz [collective farm]!"[222] The same year, Tretiakov went to the "Communist Lighthouse" commune, where he engaged in activities ranging from collecting funds for acquiring tractors to introducing radio and editing kolkhoz newspapers (Benjamin 2003, 88-89). It is not surprising that Kukryniksy depicted him through the cinematic device of doppelgängers (see Figure 3.8), who simultaneously engaged in agitational work, production, and photography, with the intent of rearing the next generation of tractors. Characteristically, the artist deploys the leftist cinematic tropes of the times; that is, the fusion of human with machine (Tretiakov milking an early Soviet model of a tractor to feed a fledgling tractor), the depiction of the production process, and the factography signified through the presence of additional photo lenses in the background. The concomitant poem by Mikhail Arkhangel'skii titled "Rychi,

[221] Walter Benjamin learned about Sergei Tretiakov's work via Bertolt Brecht and encountered LEF during his 1926 trip to Moscow. It has been argued by Igor Chubarov that Benjamin's media theory grew out of Sergei Tretiakov's theoretical writings.

[222] In 1931, Sergei Tretiakov was invited to give lectures in Berlin, where he published, in German, his book of *kolkhoz* sketches: *Feld-Herren: der Kampf um eine Kollektiv-Wirtschaft* (1931). His work on the kolkhoz sketches inspired Water Benjamin to develop his concept of "author as producer."

kolkhoz!" [Roar, Kolkhoz!] references the title of Tretiakov's most famous factographic theatrical play, "Roar, China!" (1926).

Figure 3.8. *Sergei Tretiakov*, caricature by Kukryniksy (1930)

In terms of evaluating creative output, Viktor Shklovsky and Walter Benjamin's concepts of authorship differ from each other. If *literaturnaia podenshchina* presupposes that the writer is doing socially significant work that is only contiguous to his main occupation, the operative author shifts the status of this secondary professional activity. Journalism and propagandist work, according to Benjamin, were predestined to lose their inferior status and become equal to the

traditionally recognized forms of creative output, such as novels, epics, or rhetoric.[223] The development of docufiction in the second half of the twentieth century proved the accuracy of this prediction. Tretiakov's writings stand out from the journalistic prose of the 1920s, including that of Boris Pilnyak, Ilya Erenburg, Ilya Ilf and Evgenii Petrov, precisely because they were already classified within the new genre of *biointerview* or *bioprose*.

The screenplay, however, did not achieve the same mainstream literary recognition in the Soviet Union. As with Brik, Tretiakov's screenwriting was never intended to be included in his oeuvre. Collected and prepared for publication by Alexander Fevral'skii and Irina Ratiani, Tretiakov's corpus of screenplays remains far from complete, systematized, or finalized. Its ontological status is predetermined by the same factor as that of Brik's: as part of the actual film production and undergoing many revisions, these scripts were not intended for publication and are best assessed within a cluster of texts dedicated to a specific screen idea. Although given the collective nature of the film industry, Tretiakov's creative plans underwent considerable permutations, he still had freedom in shaping and formulating these ideas in accordance with his theoretical principles. In this sense, Walter Benjamin was correct in characterizing Sergei Tretiakov as an operative author and theorizing him as a new creative type. This factor of *operativness* equally embodies LEF's principles formulated collectively in a group manifesto

[223] "The tasks he undertook, you may object, are those of a journalist or propagandist; all this has not much to do with literary creation. Yet I quoted Tretyakov's example deliberately in order to point out to you how wide the horizon has to be from which, in the light of the technical realities of our situation today, we must rethink the notions of literary forms or genres if we are to find forms appropriate to the literary energy of our time. Novels did not always exist in the past, nor must they necessarily always exist in the future; nor, always, tragedies; nor great epics; literary forms such as the commentary, the translation, yes, even the pastiche, have not always existed merely as minor exercises in the margin of literature, but have had a place, not only in the philosophical but also the literary traditions of Arabia or China. Rhetoric was not always a trifling form; on the contrary, it left an important mark on large areas of ancient literature. All this to familiarize you with the idea that we are in the midst of a vast process in which literary forms are being melted down, a process in which many of the contrasts in terms of which we have been accustomed to think may lose their relevance" (Benjamin 2003, 89).

and signed by Tretiakov in 1923: to confirm their theories "by actual art, raising it to the highest professional level," and "to fight for the art of life-building."[224]

Conclusion

In 1927, Sergei Tretiakov traveled to Georgia hoping to help reset its film industry. It was one of several projects, which together extended from China and Germany to the Communist Lighthouse Commune in Stavropol' krai of the North Caucasian region. The scope of his activities included journalism, screenwriting, and organizational work. In Georgia, his effort fell on fertile ground: contact with Moscow LEF helped shape a new generation of Georgian filmmakers from the milieu of its avant-garde circles. LEF's engagement with the local culture was deliberately anti-colonialist and focused on the production of national liberation narratives. That said, we are now in a position to discuss the final questions posed in the beginning of this chapter: How do the above-mentioned processes relate to the Cinema of LEF?; How do these processes enrich our understanding of LEF's cine-praxis?

The answer to the first question is straightforward. Tretiakov's Georgian screenplays resulted in three films: *Eliso* (1928), *Sol' Svanetii* (1930), and *Khabarda* (1931). As products of collaboration with young experimental Georgian filmmakers (Nikoloz Shengelia, Mikhail Kalatozov, and Mikheil Chiaureli), these films became an early example of socialist transnational productions that articulated revolutionary emancipatory rhetoric. While not entirely devoid of the orientalist clichés, these films were built on the ethnographic and historical research in the region and grounded their cinematic representations in these newly discovered facts. They also became the foundation of Georgia's cinematic tradition.

[224] "ЛЕФ будет подтверждать наши теории действенным искусством, подняв его до высшей трудовой квалификации. ЛЕФ будет бороться за искусство-строение жизни" (Arvatov et al. 1923, 6).

The answer to the second question contains several components. According to Boris Arvatov's sociological theory, films made with Sergei Tretiakov's participation fit in with other films produced by other members of the group. Thematically, Tretiakov's Georgian scripts channeled the struggle between the Old and the New, one of LEF's chosen topics. In this sense, they do not contradict Tretiakov's views on screenwriting, especially his theorization of the production screenplay. As a writer, Tretiakov found subtle ways to apply the principles of factography to his scripts. Each was a hybrid containing, in various proportions, played and documentary footage. Factography, in this context, was reflected in thoroughly researched material. For example, *Eliso* altered the historical narrative of Alexander Kazbegi's novella based on newly discovered archival evidence. Similarly, *Sol' Svanetii* was a combination of Tretiakov's ethnographic observations and his desire to depict the "biography of a thing," in this case, salt. When it comes to *Khabarda*, this screen idea draws from LEF's creative strategy of "baring the device" and uses elements of documentary material to represent the new order. Discursively, however, it already departs from the group agenda by condemning the LEFists as part of the old class and represents the tail end of Tretiakov's engagement with the group.

While it is clear that Tretiakov's Georgian screenplays rightfully belong to the Cinema of LEF, it is difficult to overestimate the author's impact on this group. Tretiakov, first of all, contributed to creating several masterpieces of world cinema, including his intertitles for Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin,* as well as screenplays for *Eliso* and *Sol' Svanetii*. Secondly, he educated a generation of Georgian filmmakers who, through their ties to the group, learned about the developments in the avant-garde cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. Lastly, by his life-work, Sergei Tretiakov furnished an example of the operative author, a concept at the heart of LEF's ideology. While Osip Brik engaged with cinema through the paradigm of the writer's

professionalization, which required that he served society, Tretiakov worked in film with the same passion that he devoted to journalism, photography, and radio. Even after LEF's dissolution, his work in production embodied the group's ethos, just as "khozhdenie v narod" (the "going to the people" movement) embodied the ethos of the populists (narodniki) in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 4: The Screenwriting Ordeals of Vladimir Mayakovsky: The Movies That Never Were

I think that in terms of production design, my qualification allows me to insist on the necessity of adhering to my screenwriting "principles" as well.[225]

- Vladimir Mayakovsky (Letter to VUFKU; July 25, 1928)

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 suggested that both Osip Brik and Sergei Tretiakov's writings for the screen had a closer connection to LEF's creative ideology than previously understood. Their select film-works became classics of the cinematic avant-garde. Unlike these authors, Vladimir Mayakovsky was less fortunate in the field of filmmaking: only two of the ten screenplays he wrote between 1926 and 1928—*Oktiabriukhov and Dekabriukhov* (1928) and *Troe* [The Three] (1928)—were ultimately turned into films. Both films had survived. However, to the dismay of numerous critics, neither film did justice to the author's innovative potential. Given the discrepancy between the production status of Brik, Tretiakov, and Mayakovsky's oeuvre, this chapter will examine Mayakovsky's screenplays in a subjunctive mode, that is, as a line of development envisioned by LEF's founder that, in the long run, proved unsustainable.

Vladimir Mayakovsky's engagement with the film medium before 1926 occurred during two distinct periods: 1913–1917 and 1918. The first period includes: his libretto *Pogonia za slavoi* [Chase After Glory] (1913), the text of which is considered lost; his work as an actor in *Drama v kabare futuristov No. 13* [Drama in the Futurists' Cabaret No. 13] (Vladimir Kasyanov,

[225] "Думаю, что в отношении художественной части сценариев моя квалификация позволяет мне настаивать на необходимости проведения в картинах и моих сценарных 'принципов'" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 430).

1914); and a series of publications in *Kine-zhurnal* from 1910 to 1917.[226] Immediately after the Revolution, Mayakovsky wrote librettos and starred in *Baryshnia i khuligan* [The Lady and the Hooligan] (1918), *Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia* [Not Born for Money] (1918), and *Zakovannaia fil'moi* [Chained by Film] (1918). Additionally, he worked on the agitational film, *Na front* [To the Front] (1920). Except for *Baryshnia i khuligan*, all of these films are considered lost. During the LEF years, Mayakovsky first mentioned his interest in cinema in a questionnaire conducted by *Novyi zritel'* magazine in August 1926. It related to his desire to showcase the accomplishments of leftist Soviet artists abroad: "[…] frequent travels compel me to take up some international art practice."[227] This development directly corresponded to the beginning of LEF's *kino-podenshchina* years, when many of its authors began working for cinema. Mayakovsky's screenwriting corpus of this period includes the following six scenarios written in 1926: (1) *Deti* [Children];[228] (2) *Slon i spichka* [Elephant and Matchstick]; (3) *Serdtse kino* [The Heart of Cinema]; (4) *Liubov' Shkafoliubova* [The Love of Shkafoliubov]; (5) *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*; and (6) *Kak pozhivaete*? [How Are You?]. There are also four screenplays, completed from 1927 to 1928: (1) *Istoriia odnogo nagana* [The Story of One Nagant]; (2) *Tovarishch Kopytko, ili Doloi zhir!* [Comrade Kopytko, or Down with the Fat!];[229] (3) *Pozabud' pro kamin* [Forget About the Hearth]; and (4) the lost libretto of *Ideal i odeialo* [Ideal and Blanket].

[226] For in-depth discussion of Mayakovsky's pre-Revolutionary articles on cinema and the problem of their attribution, see Duganov and Radzishevsky 1983, as well as Pronin 2019, 21–29.

[227] "Частая езда заставляет меня задуматься о занятии каким-нибудь интернациональным искусством" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 426).

[228] This screenplay was adapted into a film by Alexander Solov'ev under the title *Troe* (1928).

[229] Henceforth, this text will be cited in its abridged form as *Tovarishch Kopytko*.

Vladimir Mayakovsky is, by far, the most researched of LEF's screenwriters. Therefore, an overview of literature dedicated to his film-works requires an extensive bibliographic excursus. The origin of academic interest in Mayakovsky's work in cinema dates back nearly nine decades when Osip Brik wrote an article "Stsenarnye mytarstva" ["Screenplay Ordeals"]. It was published on April 18, 1930, just a few days after Mayakovsky's suicide (Brik 1930). Owing to Brik's effort, this screenwriting corpus was anthologized in the eleventh volume of Mayakovsky's collected works, which came out in 1936 (Maiakovskii 1936) and published as a separate collection in 1940 (Maiakovskii 1940). The first study of Mayakovsky as the playwright and screenwriter came the same year (Fevral'skii 1940). The extensive memoir literature that followed made frequent mentions of cinema. The authors of these texts include Elza Triolet (Triolet 1939), Viktor Pertsov (Pertsov 1940), Viktor Shklovsky (Shklovskii 1940), Vasilii Kamenskii (Kamenskii 1940), Sergei Spasskii (Spasskii 1940), and Vasilii Katanian (Katanian 1948). The first separate monograph about Mayakovsky's work in cinema was written in 1940 by Maks Polianovskii: *Maiakovskii—kinoakter* [Mayakovsky, the Movie Actor] (Polianovskii 1940). Other publications by Polianovskii include his monograph *Poet na ekrane* [The Poet on Screen] (Polianovskii 1958) and the article "Maiakovskii na ekrane" [Mayakovsky on Screen] (Polianovskii 1958). These publications were followed by two volumes of *Teatr i kino* [Theater and Cinema] (1954), under the editorship of Alexander Fevral'skii and with a foreword by Boleslav Rostotskii (Mayakovsky 1954, 1-2). Written in the same decade, William Rudy's Harvard University dissertation, "Mayakovsky and his Film Art" (Rudy 1955), remains unpublished. It contains a wealth of insights from Rudy's professor, Roman Jakobson. The following decade produced the memoir collection *V. Maiakovskii v memuarakh sovremennikov* [Mayakovsky in the Memoires of his Contemporaries] (1963), which frequently addressed

Mayakovsky's interest in cinema (Papernyi and Reformatorskaia 1963). In the 1970s, Edward James Brown's monograph, *Mayakovsky. A Poet in the Revolution* (1973), included a separate section on "The Cinema and the Stage" (Brown 1973, 318-335). Another book chapter by Soviet scholar Manana Andronnikova titled "Poeticheskoe 'ia' Maiakovskogo v kino" [The Poetic 'I' of Mayakovsky on Screen] (1974), used an innovative approach to discuss Mayakovsky's screenwriting as a method of constructing individual subjectivity on-screen (Andronnikova 1974). Sergei Iutkevich's study of Mayakovsky's screenplays and dramatic works came out the next year in his *Modeli politicheskogo kino* [Models of Political Cinema] (Iutkevich 1975). In the 1980s, essential studies continued to appear: Duganov and Radzishevskii's article "Maiakovskii v 'Kine-zhurnale'" [Mayakovsky in *Cine-Journal*] (Duganov and Radzishevskii 1983); Vera Kuznetsova's article "U kino byl drug… (Maiakovskii i sovremennoie kino)" [Cinema Had a Friend… (Mayakovsky and Contemporary Cinema)] in which she described the critical waves of Mayakovsky's reception (Kuznetsova 1988); and the article by American Slavist Jerry Heil titled "Russian Futurism and the Cinema: Majakovskij's Film Work of 1913" (Heil 1986a). In 1993, Nadezhda Mel'nikova defended her dissertation dedicated to the screenplays of Mayakovsky at Moscow State Pedagogical University (Mel'nikova 1993). A chapter of Italian Slavist Angelo Maria Ripellino's monograph *Majakowskij e il teatro russo d'avangardia* [Mayakovsky and Russian Avant-Garde Theater] (Ripellino 2002) addressed Mayakovsky's screenplays. Marina Burke wrote another English-language survey of Mayakovsky's film-works: "Mayakovsky: Film, Futurism" (Burke 2007). The theme of Mayakovsky and cinema in the post-Soviet era is tangentially addressed in the biographical literature by such authors as Bengt Jangfeldt (Jangfeldt 2016) and Dmitrii Bykov (Bykov 2016). Aspects of Mayakovsky's screenwriting in the context of LEF were examined by Oksana Bulgakova (Bulgakova 1993), Galina Antipova (Antipova

2010), and Rashit Iangirov (Iangirov 2011). The newest monograph by Alexander Pronin titled *Bumazhnyi Vertov / Tselluloidnyi Maiakovskii* [Paper Vertov / Celluloid Mayakovsky] contributed to the Mayakovsky studies by elucidating his relationship with Dziga Vertov (Pronin 2019).

In analyzing Mayakovsky's screenplays from 1926–1928, most researchers[230] have focused on select screenplays that, in Edward J. Brown's words, were a continuation of Mayakovsky's "poetic works in various periods, as well as […] his work in the drama" (Brown 1973, 322). In his study, Brown limited his analysis to *Kak pozhivaete?* and *Pozabud' pro kamin* (ibid., 322–325). Similarly, Manana Andronnikova focused exclusively on *Kak pozhivaete?* and *Ideal i odeialo* (Andronnikova 1974, 121–128). In his study of the models of political cinema, Sergei Iutkevich compared *Deti* to the films of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin (Iutkevich 1978, 192–193) and offered an explanation for Mayakovsky's brand of cinema as collage (ibid., 196–225). Vera Kuznetsova tangentially discussed the Crimean screenplays (*Deti* and *Slon i spichka*) in the context of LEF's factographic searches (Kuznetsova 1988, 88–89). In 1993, Oksana Bulgakova explained Mayakovsky's screenplay poetics as a montage combination of fragments and remarked on the influence of Dziga Vertov's aesthetics on his work. Rashit Iangirov dedicated a part of his article "Marginal'nye praktiki v tvorchestve Lefa" to *Evrei na zemle* (1927), for which Mayakovsky wrote the subtitles (Iangirov 2011a). The only exception to these isolated efforts is a chapter by Angelo Maria Ripellino. He evaluated the screenplays of this period within the broader context of international cinema by focusing on *Istoriia odnogo nagana*, *Deti*, *Slon i spichka*, *Serdtse kino*, *Liubov' Shkafoliubova*, *Oktiabriukhov i*

[230] William Rudy is an exception to this description as he gives a complex overview of Mayakovsky's screenplays written from 1926–1928 and features many exciting findings that are based on his conversations with Roman Jakobson.

Dekabriukhov, *Ideal i odeialo*, and *Kak pozhivaete*? (Ripellino 2002, 261–270). Still, the wider conceptual relationship of Mayakovsky's screenplay corpus of 1926–1928 to the Cinema of LEF remains under-researched.

This chapter evaluates the poetics of Mayakovsky's screenplays of the LEF period in connection with the group's cinematic praxis. Except for the lost libretto of *Ideal i odeialo*, all nine screenplays of this period were written in a consistent format, and pose a unique opportunity for contextual assessment.[231] Their analysis will answer the following questions: (1) What were Mayakovsky's theoretical ideas about cinema and writing for the screen, and how did they relate to his work in this medium?; (2) How can we evaluate his screenwriting in the context of LEF's cinematic experiment?; (3) How does Mayakovsky's use of established cinematic devices parallel that of LEF's, and how does it depart from or redefine them?; (4) How did Mayakovsky's exploitation of technological development, namely the representation of the telephony on-screen, reflect LEF practice?; (5) What particular authorship concept does Mayakovsky's cine-work elicit, and how does it compare to the typology of authors discussed in previous chapters?; (6) How does all the above contribute to our understanding of the Cinema of LEF?

Mayakovsky's Views on Screenwriting

Unlike Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, Viktor Shklovsky, and Yuri Tynianov, Vladimir Mayakovsky did not develop any full-length theoretical treatises on the medium of screenwriting. A reconstruction of his point of view on this subject entails three key components:

[231] Even though Mayakovsky described his screenplays as "European," meaning by this qualifier a *montazh* of episodes, the format itself is very similar to an iron screenplay as it features numbered shots and technical specifications. To accomplish the goals of this chapter, it is essential to examine Mayakovsky's screenwriting corpus of 1926–1928 in its entirety. Comparing the usage of creative foundations, themes, and cinematic devices will enable situating these screenplays vis-à-vis LEF's cinematic praxis.

(1) his general views of cinema or his personal preferences; (2) his journalistic writing on the medium; and (3) his practical views on screenwriting, as evident in his correspondence with the film studios.

In her memoirs, Mayakovsky's mother, Alexandra Mayakovskaya, recalls that his interest in cinema developed when he was a teenager (Papernyi and Reformatorskaia 1963, 60). In "Stsenarnye mytarstva," Osip Brik mentioned that Mayakovsky was "attracted, in cinema, to the eccentric and the grotesque. Of the Soviet films, he most of all liked *General'naia liniia* by Sergei Eisenstein, and of foreign films—those by Chaplin."[232] The status of Charlie Chaplin in the Soviet Union during the 1920s was that of an anti-bourgeois filmmaker, and in this role he became a cult figure among young Soviet intellectuals.[233] According to Viktor Shklovsky's memoirs, Mayakovsky loved newsreels and praised Dziga Vertov (Shklovskii 1966, 392). Mayakovsky's sympathy for Eisenstein and Vertov reflected in his desire to publish their theoretical manifestoes—"Montazh attraktsionov" and "Kinoki. Perevorot" respectively—in the third issue of *LEF* in 1923. In discussing the history of this publication, Eisenstein avers that his admittance to LEF was based on the reputation of his first play, even before it was staged. (Eisenstein, 1967, 5: 433-434).[234] Even though both Eisenstein and Vertov fell out with the group and did not participate in *Novyi LEF*, Mayakovsky maintained amicable contact with both

[232] "Маяковского привлекали в кинематографии эксцентрика и гротеск. Из советских фильм ему нравилась больше всего 'Старое и новое' Эйзенштейна, из заграничных—Чаплинские фильмы" (Brik 1930).

[233] For in-depth analysis of Charlie Chaplin's significance to the Soviet film industry, see Yuri Tsivian's article "Charlie Chaplin and His Shadows: On Laws of Fortuity in Art" (Tsivian 2014), Owen Hatherley's *The Chaplin Machine: Slapstick, Fordism and the International Communist Avant-Garde* (Hatherley 2016), and Assia Bulatova's article "Charli nash" (Bulatova 2019).

[234] After LEF's criticism of *Oktiabr'* (1927), Eisenstein did not renew his LEF membership. Additionally, Eisenstein did not think highly of Mayakovsky's screenplays. In 1942, Eisenstein wrote in a draft of his Almaty speech: "They are canonizing his screenplays in vain. He is cinematographic not in his mediocre screenplays, but in his method of thinking." / "Зря канонизируют сценарии. Не в сценариях убогих, а в методе мышления он кинематографичен" (Pronin 2019, 340).

directors.

The publication of Mayakovsky's writing on cinema can be subdivided into pre- and post-Revolutionary periods. Before the Revolution, he published three signed articles in *Kine-Zhurnal* titled: "Teatr, sinema, futurizm" [Theater, Cinema, Futurism], "Unichtozhenie kinematografom 'teatra' kak priznak vozrozhdeniia teatral'nogo iskusstva" [The Destruction of 'Theater' by Cinema as a Sign of the Renaissance of Theatrical Art], and "Otnoshenie segodniashnego teatra i kinematografa k iskusstvu" [Contemporary Theater and Cinema and their Relation to Art] (*Kine-zhurnal* 14, 16, 17). An additional twenty-four theoretical articles were attributed to Mayakovsky and partially republished in 1970.[235] The three signed articles criticized the old forms of theater, especially the naturalist theater by Meyerhold, and proclaimed the rise of cinema as the medium of the future. In his evaluation of this corpus, Alexander Pronin speculates that it was co-authored with David Burliuk as a collective anonymous project (Pronin 2019, 24).

During the post-Revolutionary period, Mayakovsky published another three articles. The first, "Kino i kino" [Cinema and Cinema] (1922), reiterated his condemnation of the "old," capitalist forms of cinema, both domestic Mozzhukhin-style[236] and Western exports. He proclaimed cinema to be the vehicle of the New:

Для вас кино—зрелище.	For you, cinema is a spectacle.
Для меня—почти миросозерцание.	For me almost a *Weltanschauung.*
Кино—проводник движения.	Cinema—purveyor of movement.

[235] For in-depth discussion about Mayakovsky's authorship of articles in *Kine-zhurnal*, see Trenin and Khardzhiev's article "Zabytye stat'i Maiakovskogo 1913–1915 g.g." (1932) and "Neizvestnye stat'i Vladimira Maiakovskogo" by Miliavskii, Duganov, and Radzishevskii 1970.

[236] Ivan Mozzhukhin [or Mosjoukine] (1889–1839) was one of the most popular Russian film actors before the Revolution known for his work in the following films: *Kreitserova sonata* [Kreutzer Sonata] (1911), *Oborona Sevastopolia* [Defence of Sebastopol] (1911), *Domik v Kolomne* [The Little House in Kolomna] (1913), *Zhizn' v smerti* [Life in Death] (1914) *Nikolai Stavrogin* [Nicholas Stavrogin] (1915), *Pikovaia dama* [The Queen of Spades] (1916), and *Otets Sergii* [Father Sergius] (1918).

Кино—новатор литератур.	Cinema—renewer of literature.
Кино—разрушитель эстетики.	Cinema—destroyer of aesthetics.
Кино—бесстрашность.	Cinema—fearlessness.
Кино—спортсмен.	Cinema—a sportsman.
Кино—рассеиватель идей.	Cinema—a sower of ideas.[237]

Mayakovsky concluded that "communism must rescue cinema from its speculating guides" and that "Futurism must steam off the dead water—slowness and morality" (Taylor and Christie 1988, 75). LEF would successively embody this statement in their cine-platform in the following years.

Another two articles—"O kinorabote" [About Film-Work] (1926) and "Karaul!" [Help!] (1927)—were written during the Soviet film industry's "screenplay famine," a time when film studios tried to attract professional authors to write for the screen (see p. 36 above). In the first article, Mayakovsky briefly explained his decision to return to cinema: "I was eager to busy myself with an international art form that did not require translation" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 426). Mayakovsky wrote the second article in response to Sovkino's refusal to produce his screenplay *Kak pozhivaete?*. As much as it focused on practicalities, "Karaul!" also served as a porte-parole for Mayakovsky's theoretical views. The questions he posed in the opening statement fit neatly into the cine-debates of that time. For example, he privileged documentary footage over played [igrovoi], and argued for the organization of newsreel production, which he compared to a newspaper (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 432).[238]

The poet's practical discussions of screenwriting illustrate his theoretical convictions

[237] The poem was first published in *Kino-Fot* (Maiakovskii, 1922: 5) and translated by Taylor and Christie (Taylor and Christie 1988, 75).

[238] "Третий вопрос. Почему нельзя выдержать час хроники?
Ответ. Потому, что наша хроника—случайный набор кадров и событий. Хроника должна быть организована и организовывать сама. Такую хронику выдержат. Такая хроника—газета. Без такой хроники нельзя жить. Прекращать ее—не умнее, чем предлагать закрывать 'Известия' или 'Правду'" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 432).

about the role of a screenplay in film production. In a 1926 letter to the VUFKU functionary Mayakovsky advocated for participation by screenwriters in the production process:

> I will only make changes to the screenplays after discussing it with the director and supply the final version of the intertitles only during the montage of the film. Such work should be done by each screenwriter for each of his screenplays, regardless of these texts' prior literary quality. As you remember, I spoke about it during the commission and submission of my screenplays and even asked you to alter the contract to add a particular clause about reimbursing my travel expenses with the goal of "intervening in production." I consider such an attitude on the part of the screenwriter to be a marker of his scrupulosity, and I mention this fact in my perfectly correct and flattering note to VUFKU; such is my take on this VUFKU project, which I find extremely interesting.[239]

In his negotiations with film functionaries, Mayakovsky appealed to his artistic qualifications, communication skills, and punctuality. His theoretical views echoed those of Osip Brik, who sought to solve the screenwriting crisis by advocating for the augmentation of the screenwriter's role at all stages of the production process (see chapter 2). In assessing his work, Vladimir Mayakovsky insisted that authorial screenwriting "principles" informed his screenplays: "I think that in terms of production design, my qualification allows me to insist on the necessity of adhering to my screenwriting "principles" as well.[240] The analyses that follow will unpack the implicit meaning of this phrase.

---

[239] "Изменения буду производить только в результате обсуждения сценариев с режиссером-постановщиком, а окончательную редакцию надписей дам только при монтаже фильмы. Таковую работу должен производить каждый сценарист над каждым сценарием, вне зависимости от предварительных литературных качеств сценария. Как вы помните, об этом я и говорил при заказе и при сдаче сценариев и даже просил внесения в договор пункта об оплате мне дороги до места постановки с целью 'вмешательства в производство'. Именно такое отношение я считаю добросовестностью сценариста, об этом я и упоминал в своей совершенно правильной и лестной для ВУФКУ заметке; и именно с таким отношением я подхожу к своей весьма интересующей меня работе в ВУФКУ" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 427).

[240] "Думаю, что в отношении художественной части сценариев моя квалификация позволяет мне настаивать на необходимости проведения в картинах и моих сценарных 'принципов'" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 430).

Screenwriting Praxis

The research design of this section necessitates a separate explanation. Chapter 2 organized the discussion of Osip Brik's screenwriting corpus in two clusters: produced vs. unproduced screen ideas. Chapter 3 organized the corpus of Tretiakov's Georgian film-works chronologically, while each reading underscored the correspondences between Tretiakov's cinematic output and his theoretical ideas. Mayakovsky's screenwriting principles, unlike Brik and Tretiakov's, have never been laid out on paper. Therefore, they can only be isolated compared to the cinematic praxis of the era, especially those of LEF. To achieve this goal, I will proceed with a hybrid structure that focuses on the following modules: (1) guiding principles; (2) ideology; (3) Americanism; and (4) cinematic techniques and devices. The guiding principles of Mayakovsky's screenwriting include collectivism, documentarism, and life-building. Their analysis draws from select examples from Mayakovsky's film-works, both pre-Revolutionary and those of the LEF period. The section on ideology covers the first decade after the Revolution. It includes the conflict between the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary order, the Civil War, and post-Civil War realities. Although not directly an ideological entity, Americanism in Soviet cinema of the 1920s played an important role as a foil against which the new Soviet cinema was developing. Therefore, tracing Mayakovsky's relationship with American cinema will underscore the ideological agenda of his film-works. Expanding this comparison to several cinematic techniques and devises of the era—such as trick cinematography, doppelgängers, objects on-screen, and cinematic collage—will help to elucidate the *auteur* aspects of Mayakovsky's work. A separate case-study will expound on the use of telephony in these screenplays by pinpointing Mayakovsky's relationship to technological development in the context of LEF's ongoing cinematic explorations.

Guiding Principles

The members of LEF did not always agree with one another as each demonstrated a highly individualistic approach to questions of cultural theory and practice. Still, like the Futurists, they gravitated toward collective creation. Mayakovsky's film-works serve as an illustration of this tendency. In his memoir *Zhizn' s Maiakovskim* [Life with Mayakovsky] (1940), Vasilii Kamenskii pinpointed the moment when Mayakovsky first spoke of his decision to launch a career in film: "I will write a screenplay all by myself, will act in the film, and will invite you to act with me. Generally, this is the time for us to take up cinema."[241] Then Kamenskii proceeds to describe Mayakovsky's early, unrealized screen idea titled *My—v zverintse* [We Are in the Zoo], which was thematically connected to Velimir Khlebnikov's poem "Zverinets" (1911). Like Khlebnikov's poem, Mayakovsky's idea is realized through the semantic shift between art and life. Walking around the Moscow zoo, Mayakovsky and Kamenskii elatedly pointed out the similarities between specific animals and the members of Hylaea: the kangaroo reminded them of Velimir Khlebnikov, David Burliuk was the elephant, Kamenskii—the pink pelican, and Mayakovsky—the giraffe (Kamenskii 1940, 52).[242]

---

[241] "Сам напишу сценарий, сам стану играть, и приглашу вас сыграть за компанию. И вообще пора взяться нам за кино" (Kamenskii 1940, 52).

[242] For in-depth discussion of animals in Mayakovsky's oeuvre, see Kruchenykh 2006, 158–176, and Lakhti 2015, 398–418. Although animals and comparisons to animals were a consistent motif in Mayakovsky's poetry, drawings, and private correspondence, the zoo as a topos reemerged in Mayakovsky's poem for children titled "Chto ni stranitsa—to slon, to l'vitsa" (1926), which came out in Tiflis in 1928 with illustrations by Ilya Zdanevich (Maiakovskii 1928). Another iteration of the Khlebnikovian topos was realized by Viktor Shklovsky in his "Zoo ili pis'ma ne o liubvi" (1923). Alexander Rodchenko's 1923 photo-montage of "Pro eto"—a poem that used elements of cine-montazh in its composition—features a collage of Lilia Brik's portrait with the zoo animals. For a discussion about the connection between Shklovsky and Khlebnikov's visions of the zoo, see Hansen-Löve 2001, 535, and Iampol'skii 2017, 769–794. Ironically, the metaphor of LEF as a zoo fits the trajectory of the group. An important part of this process was the homonymy of LEF with *lev*, the Russian word for a lion. Mayakovsky's secession was described by the following phrase (attributed to Viacheslav Polonskii): "The free-roaming lion is more dangerous than the lion inside the cage" / "ЛЕФ на свободе—страшнее ЛЕФа в клетке!" (Stepanova 1994, 239). Alexander Rodchenko described the process of LEF's dissolution similarly: "We do not leave LEF, we are being taken out, as animals from a cage. At first, they took V. Mayakovsky out […] (he fled abroad right away), then they took another three—Aseev, Kirsanov, and Brik […]. They might take me out, too, during some new debate… because you can't just open the cage!" / "Мы из ЛЕФа не выходим—нас выводят как зверей из клетки. Вот, сначала вывели В.

Even though nothing came out of this endeavor, Kamenskii's story demonstrates the origin of the Futurists' work in cinema, which, from its beginning in 1914, was part and parcel of the group's collective effort. The Futurists' first film proves this point. Vladimir Kasyanov's *Drama v kabare futuristov No. 13* starred Vladimir Mayakovsky together with Vladimir and David Burliuk, Natalia Goncharova, and Mikhail Larionov. In his 1918 films, Mayakovsky co-starred with Lilia Brik in *Zakovannaia fil'moi* and alongside Vasilii Kamenskii and David Burliuk in *Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia*. Similarly, Lilia Brik specifically intended her experimental screenplay *Liubov' i dolg, ili Karmen* for Mayakovsky and the rest of the group:

> When Mayakovsky was so excited about the screenplay and his role in it, we decided to film it with our entire company—Osip Maksimovich [Brik], the Kirsanovs, Aseev, Kruchenykh, and me. Our artist friends, although I do not remember exactly who, were supposed to help with the sets. The direction was supposed to be done by Igor Terentiev and Kuleshov.[243]

One post-Revolutionary example of this group's collective film-works is *Evrei na zemle* for which Viktor Shklovsky wrote the screenplay, Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote the intertitles, and Lilia Brik organized the production.[244] Thus, cinema, a collective art by definition, provided fertile ground for collaborations at different stages of Mayakovsky's life, first as a Futurist, then as a LEFist. The collective strategy of Mayakovsky's engagement with cinema coincides with Boris Arvatov's sociological definition of LEF's joint cine-platform (see chapter 1).

As a chief ideologue of LEF, Mayakovsky paid particular attention to documentary

---

Маяковского […] (он сразу убежал за границу), потом вывели троих—Асеева, Кирсанова и Брика […]. Вот, будет какой-нибудь диспут и меня выведут… так просто ведь нельзя клетку открывать!" (Stepanova 1994, 240).

[243] "Когда Маяковский так горячо отнесся и к сценарию, и к своей роли в нем, мы решили снимать всей нашей компанией—Осип Максимович, Кирсановы, Асеев, Крученых, я. … Оформлять тоже должен был кто-то из друзей-художников, не помню кто. Поставить помогут Игорь Терентьев и Кулешов" (Lilia Brik 1989, 211–212).

[244] For in-depth analysis of *Evrei na zemle*, see Iangirov 2011.

foundations. In her diary, Varvara Stepanova describes the general attitude toward newsreel production during the 1927–1928: "The newsreels have really roused a form of mass cine-psychosis. All of a sudden, the only thing that directors of drama films are dreaming of is to shoot newsreels."[245] Mayakovsky, too, was a vigorous defender of newsreel and advocated for allocating funds for new footage:

> To organize the newsreel production of today, we need to reject the old form of feature films and leapfrog over it. The question of the newsreel production organization is a question of colossal complexity. It is the question of the artist, director, editor, etc. It is directly related to the issue of raising the quality of feature films.[246]

At the same time, as Viktor Shklovsky discerningly pointed out, "Mayakovsky needed newsreels just as much as he needed to master the cine-medium; to be able to group the objects and not merely show them."[247]

One of the most striking features of Mayakovsky's work in cinema is how he shaped his authorial persona on-screen to be as "documentary" as possible, *i.e.*, as close as possible to the way he saw himself off-screen, in real life. As an actor, Mayakovsky gravitated toward a natural look and insisted on minimal makeup, unlike the actors of that era. Esfir Shub even wanted to use his portrait from *Baryshnia i khuligan* for her *Velikii put'*. Ironically, the attempt was stymied by the direction of Sovkino on the premise that played footage cannot be used for a documentary (Shub 1972, 111).[248]

---

[245] "Действительно, 'хроника' принимает характер массового кинопсихоза. Вдруг все режиссеры художественной кинематографии только и мечтают о том, чтобы снимать хронику" (Stepanova 1994, 210).

[246] "[…] для того, чтобы организовать хронику сегодняшнего дня, нужно откинуть старую художественную картину, перейти через нее. Вопрос организации хроники—это вопрос колоссальной сложности, вопрос художника, режиссера, монтажера и т. д. Это тот же вопрос поднятия художественной картины" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 441).

[247] "Ему нужны были и хроника, и владение предметом, сопоставление предметов, а не только показ их" (Shklovskii 1985, 346).

[248] Esfir Shub also intended to film Mayakovsky in 1930, and they had discussed the details shortly before Mayakovsky died (Shub 1972, 122).

Another instance of Mayakovsky's proclivity for candidness, which speaks volumes about his documentarist principles, extends to his critique of Eisenstein as exemplified by his fierce opposition to *Oktiabr'* (1927) in which actor Vasilii Nikandrov played the role of Lenin:

> One comrade was absolutely correct when he said that Nikandrov looked nothing like Lenin, but like all the statues of Lenin. What we would like to see on-screen is not the Lenin-themed acting, but Lenin himself. He might be captured in just a few shots, but at least he is the one looking at us from the projection screen. This is an aspect of our cinematography that we value. Give us newsreels![249]

Mayakovsky's reception of *Oktiabr'* demonstrates the essence of LEF's documentarist approach, which deemed playing historic figures on-screen as unacceptable.

Mayakovsky's adamant position regarding cinematic depictions of Lenin can be explained by the fact that, when it came to acting, Mayakovsky on-screen was associated with the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky as much as with the role that he played. In other words, Mayakovsky used this medium as a vehicle for his life-building strategy [zhiznestroenie]. In discussing this aspect of his work, it is essential to situate it vis-à-vis the transformation of the Futurist theoretical platform that proclaimed the value of the "Slovo kak takovoe" ["The Word as Such"][250] to LEF's subsequent concept of the "art of life-building." Immediately after the Revolution, Mayakovsky centered his experimental agenda on innovative linguistic material, while the goal of reshaping the society remained secondary (Garzonio and Zalambani 2011,

---

[249] "Совершенно правильно сказал один товарищ, что Никандров похож не на Ленина, а на все статуи с него. Мы хотим видеть на экране не игру актеров на тему Ленина, а самого Ленина, который хотя бы в немногих кадрах, но все же смотрит на нас с кинематографического полотна. Это—ценный облик нашего кинематографа. Давайте хронику!" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 443).

[250] "Slovo kak takovoe" [The Word as Such] was written by Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh and is a theoretical justification of *zaum*, the trans-rational language. The authors insist that "the word" should be treated as material, regardless of its referential meaning.

8).[251] Over time, however, Mayakovsky's basic aesthetic program changed: the word became a tool for "life-building" (ibid.). His specific take on life-building combined the more general aspects of modernist life-creation[252] and self-fashioning[253] with Chuzhak's theory, which understood art as an active vehicle to build life.[254]

In cinema, Mayakovsky's approach to life-building relied, above all, on narrative innovation; that is, the overlap between his authorial mask and the characters he played on-screen or wrote about for the screen. This feature was described as authorization of the hero [avtorizatsiia geroia] by Stella Gurevich (Gurevich 1975, 50–51).[255] In particular, two key motifs informed Mayakovsky's life-building on-screen: the love peripeteia and suicide. Alien to both Futurist and LEFist aesthetics, these motifs occupied a central part of Mayakovsky's poetic

[251] For additional details on Mayakovsky's poetic platform after the Revolution, see his two articles in *Iskusstvo kommuny* [Art of the Commune]—"Dva Chekhova" [The Two Chekhovs] and "Kaplia degtia" [A Drop of Tar]—in which he advocated for privileging lexical innovations over the content. *Iskusstvo kommuny* is a journal that Osip Brik published in Petrograd together with Natan Altman and Nikolai Punin from 1918 to 1919.

[252] Life-creation (*Lebenkunst* in German or *zhiznetvorchestvo* in Russian) was a dynamic cultural phenomenon that blurred the boundaries between the body and text. Dennis Ioffe defines life-creation as the "complex problem of the aesthetic organization of life-activity," which "entered the operational spheres of the 'cultural hero' (or 'icon') and came to its unique realization within the milieu of Russian Silver Age culture." For more on this topic, see Ioffe 2006.

[253] Self-fashioning was a concept introduced and developed by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). It describes a process of constructing one's identity, both public and literary, according to a set of socially acceptable standards. According to Greenblatt, "self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always constraints within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss." (Greenblatt 2005, 12).

[254] Nikolai Chuzhak was a Bolshevik journalist who joined LEF and helped to draft its founding documents. He wrote the following texts explaining his doctrine of the art as life-building: "Pod znakom zhiznestroeniia" [Under the Sign of Life-Building] (1923), *Literatura zhiznestroeniia* [Literature of Life-Building] (1928). Chuzhak reckoned that any form of art that "accompanied" real-life externally, from a bystander position, "even in the most avant-garde manner," was defective and insufficient by default (Kornienko 2011, 31). It is important to note that Chuzhak and Mayakovsky had several disagreements, which resulted in Chuzhak leaving LEF in 1924.

[255] The same idea about "authorization of the hero" was expressed by LEF's author Mikhail Levidov in his article titled "Teatr: ego litso i maski": "By always playing himself in his screenplays and disposing of the 'screenplay' name, Chaplin demonstrates to us the maximal baring of literary and theatrical device." / "Чарли Чаплин, играющий всегда только самого себя—в своих сценариях он не имеет своего 'сценарного' имени—это, конечно, максимальное обнажение и литературного и театрального приема" (Levidov 1923, 181).

complex. In his 1918 productions (*Baryshnia i khuligan*, *Ne dlia deneg rodivshiisia*, and *Serdtse kino*), Mayakovsky's authorial mask overlapped with those of his characters, leading to the development of the cinematic narrative through a combination of the first- and the third-person points of view.

Later examples of LEF's life-building strategy include Mayakovsky and Lilia Brik's work on *Zakovannaia fil'moi*, as well as a cameo appearance by the woman who committed suicide in *Kak pozhivaete?*. While alluding to the tragic episode in Mayakovsky's biography (the suicide of Antonina Gumilina in 1918),[256] it simultaneously references a failed suicide attempt by Alexandra Khokhlova, the wife of Lev Kuleshov, after she learned of the affair between her husband and Lilia Brik. Khokhlova was considered for the role in *Kak pozhivaete?*, while Kuleshov was a prospective director for the screenplay. Simultaneously, Osip Brik wrote *Kleopatra*, where the leading role was also meant for Khokhlova (see chapter 2). The emergence of these parallel suicide motifs in *Kak pozhivaete?* and *Kleopatra* in 1927, written specifically for Lev Kuleshov and Alexandra Khokhlova, exemplifies the life-building strategies of the Cinema of LEF. The actual suicides of Vladimir Mayakovsky in 1930 and Lilia Brik in 1978 demonstrate how this particular approach to life-building played out in shaping their biographies.[257]

All in all, collectivism, documentarism, and life-building emerge as the on-going aesthetic modalities of Mayakovsky's film-works of LEF period. What differentiated Mayakovsky from other filmmakers of the group is that, like several international stars of the

[256] For in-depth discussion of Vladimir Mayakovsky's relationship with Antonina Gumilina, see Terekhina 2018, 89–100.

[257] Among the scholars who have studied the connection between literary and biographical works is Svetlana Boym, whose book *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern* Poet (1991) features a chapter about Vladimir Mayakovsky titled "The Death of the Revolutionary Poet" (Boym 1991).

1920s, he played himself on-screen. Although other members of the LEF circle episodically acted for cinema, Vladimir Mayakovsky's public profile and level of recognition were unparalleled. At the same time, the life-building aspect of his work, with its strong focus on the authorial persona, did not contradict LEF's collectivist ethos. Boris Arvatov's sociological theory of leftist cinema specifically embraced the identity of the filmmakers. Suicide, as one of such stories, was alien to LEF's group ideology, yet it was a fact of their lives and, therefore, found its reflection in their screen ideas.

Ideology

In *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, Boris Groys argues that because LEF's artists "could not directly influence production or determine real social relations, they concentrated above all on propaganda" (Groys 2011, 28). Chapter 2 discussed the ideological constructions in the film-works by Osip Brik, while Chapter 3 examined the struggle between the Old and the New in Sergei Tretiakov's film-works. Similarly, the clash between the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary orders materializes in Vladimir Mayakovsky's scripts: *Liubov' Shkafoliubova* and *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*. In *Istoriia odnogo nagana*, Mayakovsky engages with the theme of the Civil War, while in *Tovarishch Kopytko*, he satirizes the post-Civil War realities. The screenplay of *Deti* reflects the ideology of internationalism and demonstrates the primacy of communism over capitalism.

One of the best illustrations of Mayakovsky's take on the new Soviet ideology is the screenplay of *Liubov' Shkafoliubova*, a propagandist romantic comedy that ridicules the old cultural values. Ioann Shkafoliubov, whose last name literally means closet-lover, is an aggregate image of the Old and its vices. A keeper of an eighteenth-century museum, he dodges socially purposeful work and obsesses over antiques and the past. He unsuccessfully courts Zina,

a typist who comes by his museum during her lunch break. He confesses his love by sending Zina a pigeon post, but the letter never reaches its addressee. However, when Shkafoliubov's rival, a young pilot named Misha, sends Zina a telegram expressing his affection, Zina reciprocates. In the spirit of LEF's manifestoes, the New, represented by technology and aviation, wins over the Old.

William Rudy speculates that Mayakovsky's insertion of the museum topos in *Liubov' Shkafoliubova* might be an intentional parody of Evgenii Zamiatin's anti-utopian novel, *My* [We] (1920):

> Mayakovsky obviously knew the story of Zamiatin's *My* wherein the engineer of the communist future is seduced by the traditions of the past after visiting an old house-museum with a woman curator. This utopian novel, broadly circulated in typescript in Soviet Russia, was not permitted for publication because of the obvious sympathies of the novelist with the anti-Communist revolt of the engineer and his dream for the restoration of the past. These sympathies and dreams are parodied in Mayakovsky's scenario (Rudy 1955, 116).

Thus, the script's intertextual elements reveal even deeper ideological motives hidden behind LEF's agitational impetus.

Another example of the struggle between the Old and the New is the screenplay of *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*, which Mayakovsky wrote for decennial of the October Revolution. An eccentric comedy by genre,[258] the screenplay details the trajectory of the Dekabriukhov brothers. Unlike Sergei Eisenstein, who used Vasilii Nikandrov to play Lenin in *Oktiabr'*, Mayakovsky decided to focus on the fate of mundane characters through the montage of their biographies. The parallel stories of the two brothers—one who stayed in Russia and one who emigrated—was meant to highlight the ills of capitalism and the achievements of socialism.

[258] It is important to note that comedy was a genre that LEF encouraged in 1923–1925. This discourse resulted in the unproduced screenplay of *Prikliucheniia El'vista* (1923) by Osip Brik and Sergei Iutkevich and *Neobychainye prikliucheniia Mistera Vesta v strane bol'shevikov* (1924) by Lev Kuleshov and Nikolai Aseev.

As in *Liubov' Shkafoliubova*, a love triangle informs the screenplay's central conflict. Nikolai Dekabriukhov marries Maria Ivanovna and, shortly after the wedding, abandons her and flees from the Reds. His brother, Ivan, follows him but fails to escape. He gets stuck on a fence, hanging comically by his pants. Ten years later, he marries his brother's former wife and changes his last name from Dekabriukhov to Oktiabriukhov. The finale shows the ideological reeducation of the retrograde character. The name-change, along with the Revolution's anniversary demonstration, marks the intrusion of the symbolic order into the private lives of Mayakovsky's characters. The New wins over the Old.

In *Deti*, Mayakovsky depicts how the children of the 1920s represent the New by forming a collective and sharing Soviet ideological views, but he does not go as far as to make the child a symbol of the Soviet state. As with *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*, the connections between the characters manifest themselves through a horizontal montage of biographies of three children from three different countries: the son of an American functionary; the daughter of a British miner; and the son of Russian working-class parents. All three meet in Artek because their parents engaged with the Soviet state; the American travels for work, and both the daughter of the British socialist worker and the son of Soviet parents come for health rehabilitation. The American boy makes new friends at the nearby Artek pioneer camp and, to the dismay of his parents, undergoes an ideological conversion. Curiously, the screen idea of *Deti* is completely removed from Mayakovsky's poetic complex of infanticide.[259] Unlike the grown-ups of Mayakovsky's screenplays, the children here are already subject to the emerging socialist-realist narrative, which coincided with the ideologization of film discourse of the 1920s wherein the

[259] Infanticide in Mayakovsky's poetry manifests itself in the following texts: "Neskol'ko slov obo mne samom" [A Few Words About Myself] (1913) and "Voina i mir" [The War and the World] (1916/1917).

role of the children became a primary function in the propagation of Soviet ideology.[260] In the spirit of LEF, Mayakovsky does not go as far as to make the child the central metaphor of the screenplay of *Deti*.[261] This, in turn, coincides with Osip Brik's position on symbolization in cinema (see chapter 2), which specifically objected to turning facts into symbols.

In addition to the horizontal montage of biographies executed in *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov* and *Deti*, we see another LEFist screen idea develop in *Istoriia odnogo nagana*. This war action screenplay focuses on the gun as a material object. The weapon's first appearance occurs when the protagonist, Piotr, takes a gun to avenge his brother's murder. Although Piotr intends to join the White Army, he falls in with the Reds while defending his brother's widow, Galia, from the Cossacks. After the war, Piotr leaves Galia and moves to the city where, like many war veterans, he is unable to adjust to a peace-time life; hence he drinks and snorts cocaine. Suspecting that he has contracted syphilis from the landlady, Piotr attempts suicide, albeit unsuccessfully, because his gun is broken. At a gun shop, he meets Galia, who invites him to teach a group of Komsomol members how to shoot. Thus, the gun of the Civil War finds a new social purpose in educating the younger generation. This screenplay's particular focus on guns as tools of revolutionary violence aligned with LEF's concepts of things in cinema, a theme on which Sergei Tretiakov would later expound in his essay "Biografiia veshchi" ["Biography of the Thing"] (1929).[262] Similarly, it echoes Alexander Rodchenko's

[260] For further reading on the emergence of children's cinema in the Soviet Union, see Prokhorov 2008, 129–152.

[261] In his letter to VUFKU (September 29, 1926) discussing this screenplay, Mayakovsky wrote: "I consider this topic, which you suggested not easy to pull off. I think that one cannot draw on the metaphor 'child—USSR.' Even in the work of literature, such prolonged meddling with the metaphor is not convincing." / "Тему, предложенную вами, не считаю удобовыполнимой. Мне кажется, нельзя провести на целый сценарий реализированную метафору 'ребенок—СССР'. Даже в литературном произведении такая длительная возня с метафорой не убеждает" (Maiakovskii 1954, 2: 428).

[262] "Biografiia veshchi" [Biography of the Thing] (1929) is a short essay published by Sergei Tretiakov (1929) wherein he argues against the fictional focus on individual heroes in classical novels. He suggests that in these

discussion of the kind of movies LEF should produce. In her diaries, Varvara Stepanova wrote down a similar screen-idea by Alexander Rodchenko who proposed to film a story about one object (Stepanova 1994, 220). The formal characteristics of this screenplay—a personal drama set against the backdrop of the Civil War—recalls Osip Brik's screenplay *Dva-Bul'di-dva* and Viktor Shklovsky's *Poslednii attraktsion* (see chapter 2).[263]

Another screenplay by Mayakovsky, *Tovarishch Kopytko*, also reflects on the aftermath of the Civil War. It satirizes war heroes who became bureaucrats. A large portion of the text describes the war-themed nightmare of Soviet functionary Kopytko, who is summoned for a military training drill. Like *Potomok Chingiskhana* and *Inzhener D'Arsi*, this screenplay was a reaction to the growing tension between the Soviet Union and Great Britain during the summer of 1927. In his dream, Kopytko defends an unspecified Soviet city from British troops. Written for the decennial of the October Revolution, the screen idea of *Tovarishch Kopytko* was distinctly different from all other anniversary films that appeared at the time.[264] Mayakovsky's

---

novels, the protagonist consumes and subjectifies "reality" by shunning the analysis of political, social, physiological, and economic phenomena. To counter this belletristic idealism, Tretiakov offers to organize narratives around the biographies of things: "Moving along a conveyor belt, the commodity unit is transformed into a useful product by human efforts. People approach a thing on the cross-sections of the conveyor […], they come into contact with this thing precisely because of their social side, their production skills. […] Specific individual moments disappear from people's biographies, personal humps and epilepsies are no longer feasible, but professional diseases of this group and their social neurosis become exaggeratedly distinct" / "[К]онвейер, по которому движется сырьевая единица, под человеческими усилиями превращается в полезный продукт. Люди подходят к вещи на поперечных сечениях конвейера […] они соприкасаются с вещью именно своей социальной стороной, своими производственными навыками. […] Индивидуально специфические моменты у людей в биографии вещи отпадают, личные горбы и эпилепсии неощутимы, но зато необычайно выпуклыми становятся профессиональные заболевания данной группы и социальные неврозы" (Tret'iakov 1929, 71).

[263] Oksana Bulgakova compared the screenplay of *Istoriia odnogo nagana* to Viktor Shklovsky's *Ukhaby* (1928) (Bulgakova 1993, 180) in the sense that this screenplay also explores a triangular relationship. The same motivation informed Shklovsky's screenplays of *Po zakonu* (1926) and *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* (1927) and can be interpreted as his attempt to portray the story of Mayakovsky and the Briks in film.

[264] The list of films commemorating the decennial of the October Revolution includes the following items: *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* [The End of St. Petersburg] (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927), *Moskva v oktiabre* [Moscow in October] (Boris Barnett, 1927), *Odinnadtsatyi* (Dziga Vertov, 1928), *Oktiabr'* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1927), Esfir Shub's *Velikii put'* (1927) and *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* (1927). The lesser-known films in this category include *Dva*

commemorative practice of the Revolution was grounded in the present, not the past, and gravitated toward the comic genre.

It is remarkable how all three screenplays depicting the events of the war (whether real or imaginary)—*Istoriia odnogo nagana*, *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*, and *Tovarishch Kopytko*—focus on a private individual facing the forces of history. Unlike Eisenstein's *Oktiabr'*, which incorporated people into a grand, historical event, Mayakovsky situated his protagonists in small, local histories that would enter the grand narrative through the symbolism of names (*Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*), tools of violence (*Istoriia odnogo nagana*), or militaristic daydreams (*Tovarishch Kopytko*). Whether it is the former aristocrat, the traumatized veteran of the Civil War, or the veteran-turned-bureaucrat, Mayakovsky's characters are products of their time and place—the NEP-era types engaged in their own, isolated struggles. The manifestations of daily life in the 1920s include difficult topics, such as revolutionary violence, exile, trauma, addiction, STDs, and suicide. The author processes these horrors through comedy and satire. These viable examples of Mayakovsky's approach to depicting ideology on-screen stand in stark contrast to the Socialist Realist narratives of the next decade.

Americanism

The Americanism of Vladimir Mayakovsky's screenplays stems from his love of American cinema, which he uses not only to highlight the internationalist paradigm in his work but also as a foil to LEF's cinematic methods. Mayakovsky recognized the technical superiority of Hollywood films and explained LEF's specific take on it. While visiting the United States, Mayakovsky gave an interview to S. Epstein, the editor of the New York Yiddish newspaper *Freiheit*. In the interview, which appeared on August 14, 1925, Mayakovsky commented on the

Bronevika [Two Armored Cars] (Semen Timoshenko, 1928), *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov* (Aleksei Smirnov, 1928), and *Pervyi kornet Streshnev* [First Cornet Streshnev] (Mikheil Chiaurely and Efim Dzigan, 1928).

technological development of Hollywood, but condemned its "disgusting morality" and "sentimental smearing." In the Soviet Union, Mayakovsky said, everything was saturated with "breaking up the old" and "craving for the new" ("Khronika" 1925, 233; cited in Rudy 1955, 73). However, Americanism occupies an essential place in his film-works. "American" elements of Mayakovsky's screenwriting include his use of O'Henry's short story "The Ransom of Red Chief" (1907)[265] in the plot of *Deti*, as well as the portrayal of an American functionary who travels to the Soviet Union for work.[266]

Moreover, researchers, such as Iutkevich, Ripellino, and Rudy, drew parallels between Mayakovsky's screenplays and the works of American filmmakers. In his book on models for political cinema, Sergei Iutkevich meticulously describes the similarity between Mayakovsky's screenplays and the films of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. In particular, Iutkevich argues that Mayakovsky's philosophical meditation on the relationship between the world of cinema and real-life was similar to Buster Keaton's 1924 feature *Sherlock Jr.* (Iutkevich 1978, 192). He also outlines similarities between *Oktiabriukhov and Dekabriukhov* and Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931) (ibid., 193–194), although the latter film appeared after Mayakovsky's death. Ripellino emphasizes two links between Mayakovsky's screenplays and American cinema. Firstly, he compares the screen idea of *Ideal i odeialo* to the American movie *Lonesome* (Paul Fejos, 1928), which narrates a love story between a telephone operator and a factory worker (Ripellino 2002, 266). Secondly, Ripellino establishes a parallel between a scene in *Kak pozhivaete?* and a scene in *The Kid* (Charlie Chaplin, 1921), wherein the squalid room decor

[265] Additionally, it is possible to speak of the Formalists' interest in O'Henry as exemplified by Boris Eikhenbaum's article "O'Genri i teoriia novelly" [O'Henry and the Theory of Novella] (1925).

[266] The cinematic accounts of American engineers in the Soviet Union reflected a real phenomenon of numerous American entrepreneurs and engineers travelling to the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s. Two such examples are Sidney Hillman, who founded the Russian-American Industrial Corporation (RAIC) in 1922, and Hugh Lincoln Cooper, an American civil engineer, who worked on a number of hydroelectric power plants in the USSR.

undergoes a transformation (ibid., 269). In the last case, however, even though some formal elements were partially borrowed from Chaplin, the ideological and structural stuffing of *Kak pozhivaete?* was informed by Mayakovsky's personal poetics and LEF's discoveries alike. The fascinating detail illustrating this premise is the scene of the poet meeting a young woman. Despite the apparent parallel with *The Kid*, their dialogue, as William Rudy brilliantly demonstrates, was primarly inspired by the results of Roman Jakobson's expedition to the village and depicted the peasant rituals reported in Viktor Shklovsky's *Poetika. Sbornik po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka* (1919) (Rudy 1955, 153–155).

Serdtse kino highlights Mayakovsky's take on Americanism in Soviet cinema revealing both a fascination with Hollywood and a rejection of its ideology.[267] Set in Hollywood, it features a film within a film (also titled *Serdtse kino*) in which the actress is shown being chased by Hollywood's celebrities—Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Rudolph Valentino—as she carries a large cut-out heart in her hands. In the finale, the film company declares bankruptcy, and the studio cinematographer decides to quit. Echoing the Vertovian definition of life caught unawares [zhizn' vrasplokh], the cinematographer sets out to film "real life," not popular melodramas.

Unlike Lilia Brik's *Liubov' i dolg*, which juxtaposed Western and Soviet directors, *Serdtse kino* only references Western film figures: the aforementioned Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, as well as Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, and Gloria Swanson (also known as Gloria Swensson). The only oblique Russian allusion is Iakov

[267] Commissioned by VUFKU, *Serdtse kino* represented a new redaction of *Zakovannaia fil'moi* (Nikandr Turkin, 1918). Mayakovsky wrote the libretto and acted in it with Lilia Brik, but only several scenes and an original poster have survived. The text of the libretto available to us was copied from Lilia Brik's account. Considering this screen idea as a part of his *auteur* corpus, Mayakovsky re-wrote the screenplay eight years later, in 1926, as a fantasy-fact in four parts with a prologue and an epilogue. The new script revolved around the relationship of a painter and a novice actress.

Protazanov's film *Zakroishchik iz Torzhka* (1925), which Mayakovsky cited as an example of a dull production by Mezhrabpom-Rus.[268]

Hollywood, in Mayakovsky's rendition, was no less an abstraction than its representation in the simultaneously published *Puteshestvie v stranu kino* [A Trip to the land of Cinema] (1926) by Viktor Shklovsky.[269] In both narratives, Hollywood serves as a fantasy, an abstract entity, to which they only related via the viewer's experience. The juxtaposition of the "real world" and filming "real life" and commercial melodramas in the screenplays became a LEF-style ideological foil to Hollywood's mode of production. Similarly, in his memoirs about Mayakovsky, Viktor Shklovsky underscores the role of American cinema as the model for Soviet montage, while emphasizing that it remained a foreign ideological entity.[270] Thus, Soviet cinema did not copy American films directly, but, using their achievements, it developed a cinematic world of its own.

Techniques and Devices

Chapter 1's section on *kino-podenshchina*, the term introduced by Viktor Shklovsky, described how LEF's work in cinema became a balancing act between the group's avant-garde ethos and the constraints of the Soviet film industry. The production status of Mayakovsky's screenplays does not permit viewing his screenwriting oeuvre in similar terms. Instead, his

[268] On a separate occasion, the director of Sovkino, Konstantin Shvedchikov, touted this film to Mayakovsky as an example of what Mayakovsky should strive for (Maiakovskii 1954, 433).

[269] Viktor Shklovsky wrote *Puteshestviie v stranu kino* for children and young adult audiences. Published as part of the "Detskaia Biblioteka" [Children's Library] series, the book narrates the adventures of Kolya Petrov, a thirteen-year-old Russian orphan, who survives by working odd jobs in Hollywood film studios, with the goal of returning to Russia.

[270] "Монтаж был создан в американском кино, а понят был в советском кино (Shklovskii 1964, 380). Американское кино для них [Кулешова] было образцом, но они его воспринимали как нечто чуждое. То, что в американском кино было создано чисто технологически, у нас было воспринято осознанно, и была создана теория монтажа, теория кинематографической съемки, рожденная потребностями нового общества" (ibid., 381).

unquestionably original experimental texts fully reflect the author's intention. The analysis that follows will discuss how Mayakovsky's screenwriting corpus reflects LEF's practices by focusing on the most striking features of his brand of cinema: trick cinematography, the use of cine-objects, doppelgängers, and cinematic collage.

Trick cinematography

The most recognizable device used by Mayakovsky is trick cinematography or, as described in Russian, *tekhnika volshebnykh prevrashchenii* [the "technique of magic transformations]. With commentary from such scholars as Stella Gurevich (Gurevich 1975, 44), Galina Antipova (Antipova 2010, 414-416), and Oksana Bulgakova (Bulgakova 1993, 180), trick cinematography is associated with the substitution splice or stop trick technique. First used by the French film pioneer Georges Méliès (1861–1938), it consists of altering select aspects of the mise-en-scène between two shots to create an effect of appearance, disappearance, or transformation. This cinematic metamorphosis represents a variety of cinematic metaphors.[271] Méliès used the substitution splice in the short film *Vanishing Lady*, also known as *The Conjuring of a Woman at the House of Robert Houdin* (1896). The device soon became associated with comedy; Charlie Chaplin's transformation into a chicken in *Gold Rush* (1925) is one famous example. By the second half of the 1920s, the use of trick cinematography dwindled and became commonplace.

Vladimir Mayakovsky employed this technique in several screenplays, including *Deti*, *Kak pozhivaete?, Tovarishch Kopytko*, *Pozabud' pro kamin*, and *Inzhener D'Arsi*. As Galina Antipova points out, *Kak pozhivaete?* contains a series of metamorphoses that work as a complex system (Antipova 2010, 415–416). In three out of five screenplays (*Kak pozhivaete?*,

[271] For in-depth discussion of metaphor in Mayakovsky's poetry, see Iakobson 1987, 324–338.

Tovarishch Kopytko, and *Inzhiner D'Arsi*), Mayakovsky applied this device to dream sequences. Take, for example, the following scene in *Tovarishch Kopytko*:

> 276. Kopytko is falling asleep, his head drooping.
> 277. The furniture in the tent becomes blurry. We see his tent furnished according to Kopytko's sketches.
> 278. The empty tin with ink transforms into a real inkstand with a bust of Marx.
> 279. Klara Tsetkin's portrait on the table becomes younger and turns into the actress from *The Red Kiss*.[272]

In the other two screenplays, substitution splices serve a different function. In *Deti*, the Pioneers marching in the finale turn into adults (Maiakovskii 1958, 11: 36). In *Pozabud' pro kamin*, the city of Moscow grows on the pages of a five-year plan book (ibid., 202). Mayakovsky's use of stop trick editing works to expand the authorial imagination and embodies the realization of the poetic image. In this respect, Mayakovsky's creative aesthetics resemble LEF's early experiments by Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. Substitution splices appeared in Sergei Eisenstein's *Dnevnik Glumova* (1923), Dziga Vertov's *Kinoglaz* (1924), and in the works of the FEKS group. The reverse transformation sequences in *Kak pozhivaete?* are particularly reminiscent of select sequences from *Kinoglaz*. However, by LEF's second phase, both Eisenstein and Vertov were no longer associated with the group. Trick cinematography was no longer innovative and found little favor among the LEF's filmmakers except for Mayakovsky.

Objects On-screen[273]

In the cinema of the late 1920s, the experiments with objects on-screen were integral to

---

[272] 276. Копытко засыпает, голова свешивается.
277. Мебель палатки расплывается. Палатка мебилируется по всем копыткинским эскизам.
278. Консервная банка для чернил превращается в настоящую чернильницу с бюстом Маркса.
279. Портрет Клары Цеткин на столе молодеет и превращается в актрису из "Красного поцелуя". (Maiakovskii 1958, 11: 182)

[273] Contemporary film criticism did not work out a single neutral term to refer to the depiction of objects on-screen. In her article "Novyi LEF and *Kinoveshch'*," Oksana Bulgakova uses Sergei Eisenstein's term *kinoveshch'* or "cine-thing" (Bulgakova 2019, 61).

the ongoing multi-vector effort to create a new anthropology of cinema. In the Cinema of LEF, Oksana Bulgakova distinguishes the following concurring and sometimes overlapping trends: Kuleshov's approach to cine-objects, which he borrowed from American cinema; Tretiakov's production scenario, with its Marxist focus on production, together with his essay "Biografiia veshchi" (1929); and the complex use of objects in Eisensteinian and Vertovian montage systems (Bulgakova 2019, 67–75). Mayakovsky's use of cine-objects combines several of these approaches and offers additional categories. The first particular usage of cine-objects is connected to the aforementioned magic transformations, the cine-metaphor. Additionally, Mayakovsky borrowed some elements from American cinema (for example, a bottle of milk carried by a British minor through the riots in *Deti*). The gun in *Istoriia odnogo nagana* typologically connects to Tretiakov's Marxist focus on tools and weapons. However, Mayakovsky's fourth, most distinct use of cine-objects stems from the Futurist myth of the rebellion of things.[274] The author began to explore this myth in his dramatic work, in *Vladimir Maiakovskii* (1913) and *Misteriia-Buff* (1918). In *Kak pozhivaete?*, ready-made clothes leave the Moscow department store and walk down the street. We find the same scene in the mono-drama *Vladimir Maiakovskii*, which was initially titled "Bunt veshchei" [The Rebellion of Things]. This fourth example makes it possible to suggest a separate *auteur* feature, which stemmed from the collective futurist myth and contributed to the on-going LEF experiment. The fifth and final

[274] Ilya Kukui names the following items among the futurist texts dedicated to the rebellion of things: Velimir Khlebnikov's "Zhuravl'" [Crane] in which objects and corpses group together in a shape of a crane and begin to devour humans. Another facet of the same myth is Vladimir Mayakovsky's dramas "Vladimir Mayakovsky" and "Misteria-Buff" [Mystery-Bouffe]. In the 1920s, the theme of the rebellion of things continued to develop. Kornei Chukovskii reworked this myth in a parodic key in his poems for children, "Moidodyr" [Moydodyr] (1923) and "Fedorino gore" [Fedora's Grief] (1926). The same year, Lev Lunts, a writer from the Serapion Brothers group, wrote a screenplay titled *Vosstanie veshchei* [Rebellion of Things] (1926). Other works on this topic include the unfinished short story by Valerii Briusov "Vosstanie mashin" [Rebellion of Machines] (1908), Aleksey Tolstoy's play "Bunt mashin" [Rebellion of Machines] (1924), and Aleksandr Andrievskii's film *Gibel' sensatsii* / *Robot Dzhima Ripl'* [Loss of Sensation / Jim Ripple's Robot] (1935) (Kukui 2006, 405).

feature of Mayakovsky's use of cine-objects is his aggressive rhetoric against Komsomol members' "petty-bourgeois obsession" with things he inserts in *Pozabud' pro kamin* and later *Klop*.

Cine-objects in Mayakovsky's works were part and parcel of LEF's ongoing cinematic experiment and reflected several of its tendencies. What sets Mayakovsky apart from the group, though, is his particular use of the rebellion of things. Part of a broader modernist literary context, this futurist myth entered the Cinema of LEF only via Mayakovsky's work and can be viewed as an *auteur* feature of his screenwriting.

Doppelgängers

Another cinematic device that sets Mayakovsky's screenplays apart from the corpora discussed in chapters 2 and 3 is his proclivity to use doubles or doppelgängers. In Russian literature, the most notable example of a doppelgänger is in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novella, *The Double* (1845-1846). It is not easy to find the exact moment when cinema first employed doppelgängers. This device appears in early cinema in the form of mirror tricks, wherein the reflection in a mirror acts independently from the original. In film scholarship, doppelgängers are often recognized as a prominent feature of German cinema, exemplified by *Der Andere* (Max Mack, 1913) and expressionist films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) and *Dr. Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, 1922). Their use is traditionally associated with the fantasy and horror genres and is connected to the advent and proliferation of modern technology.

Mayakovsky has two different uses of doppelgängers in his screenplays. The first is linked to his creative platform. In the prologue of *Kak pozhivaete?* we see two Mayakovskys who meet in slow motion against the backdrop of a time-lapse video of a bustling urban street. They smile, shake hands, and greet each other. (Hence, the title of the screenplay, *How Are*

You?.) In this case, the doubles negotiate between the authorial masks of the writer.[275] A somewhat similar relationship between the poet and his poetic masks is also present in *Vladimir Maiakovskii*, although it does not feature doppelgängers in the strict sense of the word, but rather a series of men, each of whom represents an aspect of the protagonist's poetic "I": a man without eyes, a man without a foot, a man without an ear, a man without a head, a man with a stretched face, and so on. The second use of doppelgängers emerges in *Tovarishch Kopytko*, in which the protagonist gains a double in his sleep. This particular application resembles the scene from Sergei Tretiakov's script of *Khabarda* (1931) (see chapter 3), in which the petty local official gains a double after his death (also occurring in a dream sequence). This single instance in which Sergei Tretiakov uses doppelgängers is insufficient to evaluate this device as particular to LEF. Mayakovsky's profuse application of doubles should be viewed rather as a peculiar *auteur* feature of his film-works.[276]

Cinematic Collage

Alexander Rodchenko pioneered the technique of constructivist collage in print media, and Mayakovsky later applied it to cinema. Cinematic collage became Mayakovsky's unique contribution to the cinema of the 1920s. According to Sergei Iutkevich, Mayakovsky was the

[275] William Rudy underscores the importance of the handshake in this scene based on the fact that Mayakovsky was notorious for his germaphobia (Rudy 1955, 123). However, it is difficult to determine the relevance of this fact in the overall artistic structure of Mayakovsky's screenplays because, in general, they lack sensory stimuli. In other words, Mayakovsky's scripts tended to be visually stimulating, not viscerally.

[276] The use of doubles in Soviet cinema continued after Mayakovsky, exemplified by two concurrent trends: science fiction and comedic drama narratives. The list of select films featuring doppelgängers includes: *Vesna* [Spring] (1947), *Taina dvukh okeanov* [The Secret of Two Oceans] (1955–1956), *Chelovek niotkuda* [The Man From Nowhere] (1961), *Korolevstvo krivykh zerkal* [Kingdom of Crooked Mirrors] (1963), *Ego zvali Robert* [We Called Him Robert] (1967), *Sem' starikov i odna devushka* [Seven Old Men and a Girl] (1968), *Dzhentel'meny udachi* [Gentelmen of Fortune] (1971), *Soliaris* (1972), *Prints i nishchii* [The Prince and the Pauper] (1972), *Ivan Vasil'ievich meniaet professiiu* [Ivan Vasilievich: Back to the Future] (1973), *Ty—mne, ia—tebe* [You to Me, Me to You] (1976), *Troe v lodke ne schitaia sobaki* [Three Men in a Boat] (1979), *Prikliucheniia Elektronika* [The Adventures of Elektronic] (1979), *Gost'ia iz budushchego* [Guest From the Future] (1985), *Shirli-myrli* [What a Mess!] (1995), *Prezident i ego vnuchka* [The President and His Granddaughter] (1999), and, most recently, *Vnutri Lapenko* [Inside Lapenko] (2019–2020).

first to employ it in film (Iutkevich 1978, 197-225). Stella Gurevich describes the function of this collage technique as an experiment in processing the experience of various documentary genres, with the goal to objectively embody multiple points of view (Gurevich 1975, 51).

The best example of Mayakovsky's cine-collage is the screenplay of *Kak pozhivaete?*, which combined print media, posters, animation, documentary, and photography with played footage. The plot revolves around a day in the life of poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, narrated "in five cine-details [v piati kino–detaliakh], as indicated by the subheading of the scenario. The first part shows the poet's morning routine—reading the newspaper and reflecting on the need to write poems for money.[277] The second part shows the actual process of writing, negotiations with his editor, and a frustrating attempt to receive his publishing advance on time. In the third part, the poet is at home reading the newspaper and drinking tea with bread. In the fourth, he meets a random young woman on the street and courts her. In the fifth, we see Mayakovsky on the phone. Later in the evening, he plays a prank on his annoying evening guests, gets rid of them, goes to a Rabfak poetry reading, and returns home to sleep. The analysis that follows will demonstrate Mayakovsky's distinct use of posters in *Kak pozhivaete?* as elements of cine-collage.[278]

Posters

The use of posters in the screenplay is complex and multi-layered. All in all, there are four identifiable posters: (1) the 1917 posters and banners with the slogan "Khleb i mir" [Bread and Peace] in the third part; (2) a poster for the Battle of the Poets in the second part (Aseev,

[277] For in-depth analysis of the newspaper motiff in *Kak pozhivaete?,* its image and function, see Pronin 2019, 98–108.

[278] Several scholars (Rudy, Andronnikova, Iutkevich, Gurevich, Antipova, and Pronin) have discussed the elements of Mayakovsky's cine-collage technique. Our discussion of posters in Mayakovsky's screenplays exemplifies one previously overlooked aspect of this device.

Kirsanov, Mayakovsky, and Pasternak were the announced participants, although no such battle took place in reality); (3) the newspaper ad slogan "Odevaisia i shei tol'ko v Moskvoshvei" [Buy clothes and get them tailored only at Moskvoshvei] (along with the actual Moskvoshvei shop window); (4) the wall behind the poet's bed featuring a poster-like animated seascape. All of the posters in *Kak pozhivaete?* have a specific function. First of all, they work as advertisements that set in motion the mechanism of consumer desire. For example, after seeing the "Bread and Peace" poster, the character eats bread; having seen the advertisement poster in a newspaper for the *Moskvoshvei* store, the character passes by its shop window.[279] Another function is structural; for example, the insertion of the Battle of the Poets poster foreshadows Mayakovsky's poetic performance in part five. The seaside poster on the wall operates as a landscape of otherness, a non-Moscow space of poetic imagination. As the artist and poet of the ROSTA poster art series (1919-1921), Mayakovsky actively used this medium by inventing ways in which they functioned in the semiotically-saturated urban space of *Kak pozhivaete?*. Merging Rodchenko's collage technique with cinema was a direct continuation of Constructivist aesthetics and, therefore, a part of LEF's collaborative platform.

The last poster from *Kak pozhivaete?* features a curious image of an animated sun. Solar motifs, which appeared in Mayakovsky's screenplays, were not included in LEF's agenda. The image of the sun repeats in the opening sequence of *Slon i spichka*: "An animated sun that emanates lined sun rays. Below is a flowerpot, from which a green sprout grows with a bud that

[279] *Moskvoshvei* was a clothing factory and a store that existed in Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s. In his novel *Sobach'e serdtse* [Heart of a Dog] (1925), Mikhail Bulgakov uses Moskvoshvei as a speech marker of Filipp Filippovich, whose speech disintegrates under Sharikov's influence: "Москвошвея, да… От Севильи до Гренады. Москвошвея, дорогой доктор…" (Bulgakov 2003, 28).

transforms into a red rose."[280] A central element of Mayakovsky's poetics, the solar motif traces back to the early futurist mythology. It appears as early as 1913, namely in Aleksei Kruchenykh's opera, *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory over the Sun] (Figure 4. 1).[281] The same motif then reappears in Mayakovsky's poem, "Neobychainoe prikliuchenie byvshee s Vladimirom Maiakovskim letom na dache" [An Unusual Adventure That Befell Vladimir Mayakovsky One Summer in the Country] (1920), which was published as a separate book under the title *Solntse* [Sun] in 1923, with illustrations by Mikhail Larionov (Figure 4.2). Unlike the abstract solar motifs of 1913 and 1923, wherein the sun disk was depicted as part of a more complex geometric composition, other Futurist depictions of the sun acquired figurative concreteness. See, for example, Vasilii Kamenskii's poem "Solntse" [Sun] (1917) (Figure 4.4), David Burliuk's illustration of Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem "Solntse" (1925) (Figure 4.5), and Mayakovsky's own drawing (Figure 4.6). Although the solar motif occupied a central place in Mayakovsky's poetics,[282] it is also quite possible that he borrowed the idea from the animated logo of Solax Studios, which existed in New York and New Jersey from 1910 to 1919 (Figure 4.7).[283] David Burliuk's drawing made in the 1925 New York (Figure 4.5) showcases a striking

[280] "Рисованное плакатное солнце, из которого линейкой расходятся лучики. Снизу поднимается сначала цветочный горшочек, потом из него вырастает зелень, наконец бутон и из бутона красная роза" (Maiakovskii 1958, 11: 39).

[281] For in-depth study of the parallels between Kruchenykh's opera, *Victory Over the Sun*, and Mayakovsky's drama, "Vladimir Mayakovsky," see Alferova 2014, 148–163.

[282] Solar poetry is an ancient genre that existed during the Hittite and Egyptian cultures. For in-depth discussion see, "K tipologii drevneblizhnevostochnykh gimnov solntsu" ["Toward a Typology of the Ancient Near-Eastern Sun Hymns"] (Ivanov 2004, 296–299). Throughout the modernist period, solar motifs were widely distributed in European and Russian poetry. The best example of Russian symbolist solar poetry is Viacheslav Ivanov's *Cor Ardens* (1911–1912). Later, the Futurists continued this theme. Vasilii Kamenskii, who frequently used solar motifs in his poetry, is most famous for his concrete poem "Solntse" [Sun] (1917) alongside Aleksei Kruchenykh's opera, *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory Over the Sun] (1917).

[283] Gala Minasova, the co-producer of *Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché* (2018) (the founder of Solax) dated this animated fragment circa the 1910s (Minasova).

compositional similarity to the 1910 Solax advertisement (Figure 4.3). Mayakovsky, who visited Burliuk the same year, might have brought this idea back as a souvenir.

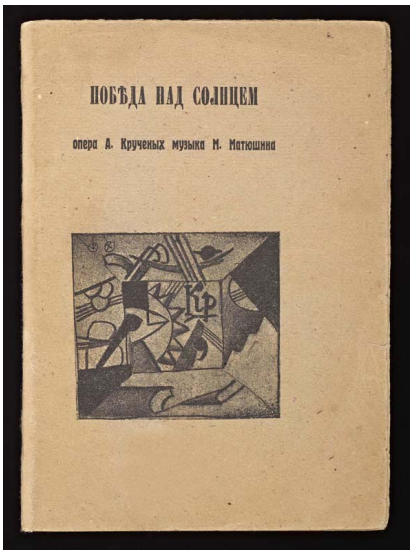


Figure 4.1. "Pobeda nad solntsem" [Victory Over the Sun], book cover (1913)

Figure 4.2. Vladimir Mayakovsky's "Solntse" [Sun], illustration by Mikhail Larionov

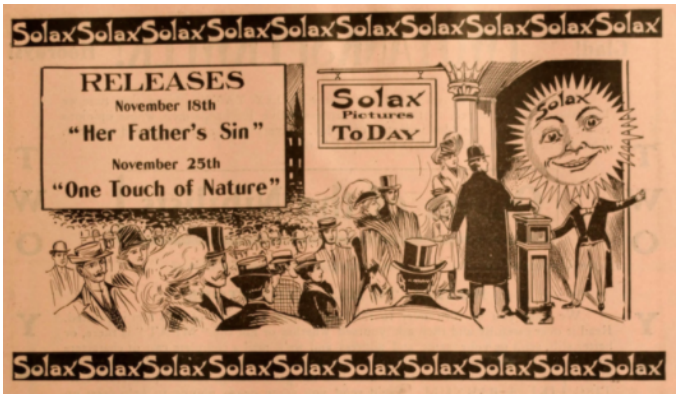


Figure 4.3. *Solax advertisement* (1910)

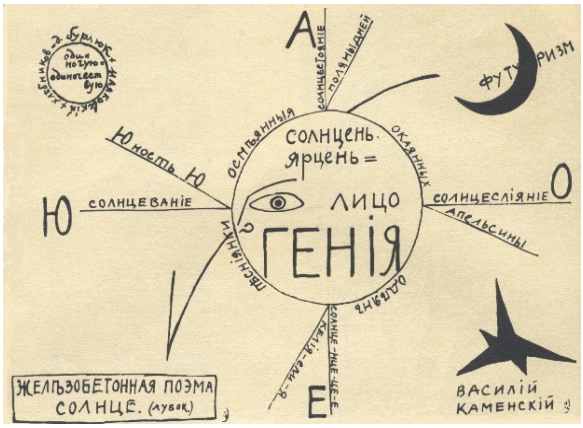


Figure 4.4. “Solntse” [Sun], concrete poem by Vasilii Kamenskii (1917)

Figure 4.5. “Solntse v gostiakh u Maiakovskogo” [Sun is Visiting Mayakovsky], drawing by David Burliuk (1925)

Figure 4.6. *Man Following the Setting Sun*, last drawing by Vladimir Mayakovsky (1927–1928)

[Holding of The Mayakovsky Museum]

Figure 4.7. Still from Solax reels (c. the 1910s).

Case-Study: Telephony in Mayakovsky’s Screenplays

The study of telephony in Mayakovsky’s screenplays highlights the author’s particular take on technology and its function in the cinematic development of the era. By the 1920s, the telephone in the Soviet Union was no longer a novelty: Russia’s first telephone line, which connected Moscow and Saint Petersburg, appeared in 1898. With roots in the cinema of the pre-classical era, telephony had been used widely by various national cinematic schools throughout

film history.[284] The filmmakers of the 1900s and 1910s employed telephone conversations as a narrative device to connect dispersed spaces and motivate the plot. In Russia, the pre-Revolutionary understanding of telephony as an instrumental technology is best illustrated by Iakov Protazanov's *Drama u telefona* [Phone Drama] (1914), which adapted the plot of D. W. Griffith's *The Lonely Villa* (1909). Protazanov's film depicted the story of a man who, despite warning his wife on the telephone, could not prevent her violent death. The film focused on the limits of technology in saving human life. The Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, by contrast, worked out a new approach by focusing on the electrically powered technology of the avant-garde. Featuring images of telephone operators, films like Dziga Vertov's *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (1929) (see Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.10), as well as the sound film *Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa* (1931) and Esfir Shub's *K. Sh. E.* [Komsomol—shef elekrifikatsii] (1932) (Figure 4.9) illustrate the new avant-garde view of telephony as a vehicle of technological progress that made the sound transmission possible.

As with his poetry,[285] Vladimir Mayakovsky made frequent use of telephony in his screenplays: *Deti*, *Slon i spichka*, *Tovarishch Kopytko*, *Kak pozhivaete?*, and *Serdtse kino.* But only two screen ideas—*Kak pozhivaete?* and *Ideal i odeialo*—feature the structural integration of this topic. Both screenplays offer distinctly different applications and visions of this means of communication. The first use of telephony in *Kak pozhivaete?* follows the avant-garde trajectory of imaginative technology of the future. At the center of the screenplay stands the telephone company station:

19-27. The enormous building of the telephone station. The non-stop work of the

[284] For in-depth comparative analysis of the use of telephony in the silent era, see Olsson 2004.

[285] For more on telephone imagery in Mayakovsky's poetry, see Bobilevich 2014, 385–397.

telephone girls. The tangle of telephone veins.[286]

As Galina Antipova discerningly points out, Mayakovsky shows the invisible, but Vertov only depicts what he sees (Antipova 2010, 416). Shub, on the other hand, situates telephons within classes of similar objects. The famous constructivist building of the Taganskaya automatic station was completed in 1929 (see Figure 4.11), and Mayakovsky likely knew of the project back in 1926.

Figure 4.8. Still from *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (Dziga Vertov, 1929).

Figure 4.9. Still from *Komsomol—Shef Elektrifikatsii* (K. Sh. E.) (Esfir' Shub, 1932).

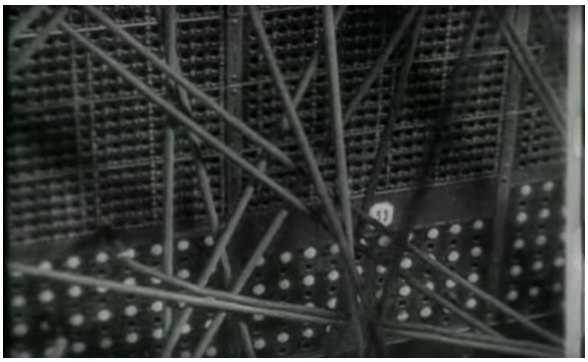


Figure 4.10. Still from *Chelovek s kinoapparatom*; detail (Dziga Vertov, 1929).

Figure 4.11. Constructivist Building of Taganskaya Telephone Station (1929) by architect Vasilii Martynovich.

[286] 19–27. Необъятный дом телефонной станции. Непрекращающаяся работа телефонисток. Путаница телефонных жил (Maiakovskii 1958, 11: 146).

Emerging technological aesthetics, which focused on the production process, compelled Mayakovsky to meditate on the nature of this medium. In a draft of *Kak pozhivaete?,* he mentions the telephone-telegraph industry as a single informational complex, albeit invisible to the human eye. In select moments, the viewer discerns its animated threads:

> 26. A man rinsing his razor is given the newspaper through a crack in the door. Cables make their way inside following the newspaper. They quickly weave a web around the room. Antennas rise from the sides of the table, telephones. Chairs and stools turn into telephones.
> 27. The man rushes to the table and spreads the newspaper open. The room is back to normal. The telephone-telegraph industry has melted away.[287]

In *Kak pozhivaete?*, the mechanism of sound reproduction in this fragment becomes part of a larger informational complex that also encompasses the circulation of print news. In the finale of *Pozabud' pro kamin*, Mayakovsky's imagination reaches out to the technological horizon even further. Waking up in the future—roughly in 1952—his protagonist sees the technological achievements of socialism: the radiotelephone and radio-newspapers.

The screen idea of *Ideal i odeialo* exemplifies the second use of telephony in Mayakovsky's work. What would be his last libretto, *Ideal i odeialo*, uses telephony to develop a love intrigue. The existing summary of the screenplay (its the text is considered lost)[288] allows us

---

[287] 26. Моющему бритву человеку просовывают в дверную щель газету. За газетой тянутся провода, в момент заткавшие комнату, с боков стола антенные вышки, телефонами, поднимающими трубки, стали табуреты и стулья.
27. Человек быстро подходит к столу, расстилает газету во весь рост. Комната обычна. Растаяла телефонно-телеграфная индустрия (Maiakovskii 1958, 497).

[288] A description of the screenplay, written in French, was found among Mayakovsky's newspapers. The screenplay may have been intended for the French filmmaker René Clair, but if Mayakovsky ever pitched this idea to Clair, the result of their negotiations is unknown. In 1957, during a visit to Moscow, Clair was approached about Mayakovsky's screenplay. He knew nothing of the negotiations that took place, which signifies that if Mayakovsky indeed made this pitch, he probably communicated with one of Clair's employees (Katanian 1985, 582). This description paragraph in Russian was first printed in Alexander Fevral'skii's book *Maiakovskii—dramaturg* (1940); the French text appeared in Mayakovsky's collection titled *Kino* (1940).

to discern the authorial intent. Its dramatic collision reveals the impossibility of reconciling ideal love with lived experience. The protagonist's relationship with two women develops simultaneously. The first woman embodies carnal love, the second—ideal love. The second relationship happens exclusively over the telephone and via correspondence. Burdened by the first relationship, the protagonist leaves his lover to reunite with his telephone love, only to discover that he has been duped: he was in communication with the same woman the entire time. Given that the protagonist never saw the object of his affection, the film's cinematic solution would have had to depart from the traditional devices used to depict phone conversations on-screen (split-screen, parallel, and cross-cut editing). Such a screen idea could only be realized via the sound medium and the new possibilities that it offered. In assessing the impact of technology on Mayakovsky's screenwriting, Manana Andronnikova states:

> Mayakovsky's idea reached out far and foreshadowed the development of film technology: because the dramaturgy was based on the phone conversations of its characters, it was meant for sound cinema. Although it is true that the first experiments with sound were already being carried out at that time, for the production of this particular screen idea, one needed to have not so much the sound on-screen as such, but a highly-developed sound technology that could transmit the intonation and the pitch of the characters' voices who were deciding their fate, not chatting casually.[289]

At the same time, grounding the screen idea of *Ideal i odeialo* in a traditional comedic narrative undermines the function of the technology. The possibility of communicating with the object of his adoration via telephone fuels the protagonist's feelings. His final disappointment, however, communicates the limits of technology, not its all-encompassing possibilities.

Roughly two decades later, Aleksei Kruchenykh took Mayakovsky's idea of the

[289] "Маяковский смотрел далеко—его замысел обогнал развитие кинотехники: он был предназначен кинематографу звуковому, ибо драматургия действия строилась на разговорах героев по телефону. Правда, в это время уже велись первые киноэксперименты со звуком, но для осуществления замысла Маяковского нужен был не просто экранный звук как таковой, а высокая техника звука, которая смогла бы передать интонации, тембр голоса героев, не просто болтающих, а решающих по телефону свою судьбу" (Andronnikova 1974, 126–127).

telephone romance one step further in his poem “Roman po telefonu” [“Telephone Romance”] (1950–1953):

Роман по телефону	Telephone Romance
После встречи	After a meeting with
с о д н и м в и д е н и е м	*one apparition*
в ресторане	in a restaurant
(огни столбом, залпы – в лоб!):	(aim and fire straight in the forehead):
– Давайте будем с Вами жить	– Let’s live together
по телефону!	by phone!
Потому что всё мне известно	Because I know everything
заранее:	in advance:
линючесть ангелов,	how angels fade,
круговорот улыбок,	how smiles turn,
позоры расставаний,	how sordidly people part,
и не хочу таскать страданий тонну,	and I don’t care to lug around a ton of anguish,
прощальной кровью	*to intoxicate my throat*
д у р - м а н и т ь г о р - л о.	with the blood of farewell.
И тысячи миль и миллионы	Unfettered magnetic love
веков	has stretched out
тянулся магнитный роман	for thousands of miles and millions
без оков.	of years.
Не пил я водки матёрой,	I didn’t drink any rugged vodka,
и проклял очко,	and cursed the score, the thousand mahjong
тысячу драконов маджонга,	dragons,
без конца по ночам	as I wandered the outskirts
на окраинах,	at night,
в пустырях	muttering
имя твоё л е т у ч е е,	your *volatile*
ПРОЩАЛЬНОЕ	FAREWELL
л и х о р а д о ч н о бормоча.	name *deliriously* in vacant lots.

Aleksei Kruchenykh (1950-1953)

The sole motivation of Kruchenykh’s lyrical hero, unlike that in *Ideal i Odeialo*, is his ability to communicate over the phone. A meeting with a stranger in a restaurant serves as a point of departure and exploration. The subject of Kruchenykh’s poem leaps from the promise of a love affair to “unchained magnetic love,”—stretching “through thousands of miles and millions of years”—an unbound space wherein neither temporality nor spatiality is crucial. Kruchenykh’s

mention of the mahjong game—"the thousand mahjong dragons"—is a direct reference to LEF, as it is a well-known fact that mahjong was the group's favorite game. Written in the 1950s, Kruchenykh's poem takes Mayakovsky's idea of the telephone romance to its extreme by returning the technology to its avant-garde potential. We see a similar use of technology emerge in the films by Dziga Vertov and Esfir Shub, who were close to the group at different points in their careers.

The Screenwriting Ordeals of Vladimir Mayakovsky

Two previous chapters described the models of authorship of both Osip Brik and Sergei Tretiakov. Brik, like Shklovsky, was a practitioner of *literaturnaia podenshchina*, which he saw as a socially useful tool. Tretiakov, on the contrary, was an operative author who was interested, above all, in developing his projects in the spirit of the left avant-garde. Vladimir Mayakovsky defies both of these categories, as his work shows markers of *auteurism*.[290] His modus operandi as a LEF screenwriter, therefore, requires additional theoretical grounding.

Mayakovsky's movement toward an *auteur* practice manifests itself in his screenplays, *Kak pozhivaete?, Serdtse kino*, and *Ideal i odeialo*, which underscore themes like the rebellion of things, suicide, and romance. While central to his oeuvre, these themes had no bearing on LEF's ideological agenda. Nevertheless, Brik and Shklovsky praised and endorsed *Kak pozhivaete?* as an example of cinematic innovation. This took place because LEF's collaborative platform

[290] The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory gives the following definition of Auteur Theory:

> Traditional auteur criticism, developed in the journal *Cahiers du cinema* in the 1950s-60s by Andrew Sarris (1962, 1968). It privileged the director's individual subjectivity: their intuition, spontaneous creativity, and personal expression. The distinctive properties that define an auteurist's films are thought to be located in a purely personal or subjective vision, ineffable 'sensibility,' and obscure 'interior' meaning. Auteur critics also value the unity of style and themes that a director is able to impose on his or her films (Buckland 2015, 50).

In the case of Mayakovsky, we see the thematic unity between his auteur screenplays and the rest of his corpus, *i.e*., the themes of suicide, love peripeteia, negotiation of the poetic 'I,' and the rebellion of things. At the same time, just as his poetic output operates at the fissure between the personal and the ideological or stately rhetoric, his screenwriting corpus is subject to the same divide and therefore has to be evaluated in its entirety.

presupposed creative pluralism, inasmuch as the work reflected a commitment to innovation and the new Soviet ideology. Mayakovsky's film-works indeed featured both, albeit their ratio varied. *Liubov' Shkafoliubova*, *Oktiabriukhov i Dekabriukhov*, *Istoriia odnogo nagana*, *Tovarishch Kopytko, ili Doloi zhir!*, *Deti*, and *Pozabud' pro kamin* demonstrate Mayakovsky's ideological commitment. In *Kak pozhivaete?, Serdtse kino*, and *Ideal i odeialo*, Mayakovsky's innovative ethos overshadowes their ideological constituency. These *auteur* screenplays remain linked to the group's nexus via Boris Arvatov's sociological approach to the cinematic arts, but they are far removed from the LEF's core premises.

Speculating on the possible reasons why Vladimir Mayakovsky was unsuccessful in cinema, Osip Brik pointed out that Mayakovsky "did not have enough time," alluding to his untimely death and to the fact that his relationship with the cinematic establishment was "a series of misunderstandings" (Brik 1930). However, is this so?

Screenwriting in the second half of the 1920s was the domain of a highly regulated bureaucratic establishment and was not conducive to accepting outside authors. Mayakovsky made his third entrance into film in 1926 by signing a contract with VUFKU and successfully submitting two screenplays (*Deti* and *Slon i spichka*), all the while making a pitch for a third-anniversary screenplay—*Oktiabriukhov and Dekabriukhov*. The rest of his submissions—the screenplays of *Liubov' Shkafoliubova*, *Tovarishch Kopytko*, *Istoriia odnogo nagana*, *Kak pozhivaete?*, and *Serdtse kino*—were neither commissioned nor included in the studio's plans and, therefore, could not be accepted for production. Hypothetically, an exception could have been made in accordance with a recommendation "from above" or the sponsorship of an important cinema functionary. The lack of such sponsors resulted in VUFKU's dismissal of this material without a coherent explanation. Neither Mayakovsky's literary standing nor his

assertive epistolary style prevented his work from being rejected and shelved. Finally, his masterpiece *Kak pozhivaete?* did not fit production parameters, as it appeared too experimental to be understood by the mass viewer.

The following question remains to be answered: How did Mayakovsky's vocation as a screenwriter compare to his work on ROSTA posters or to his dramaturgy? Mayakovsky ultimately viewed cinema as a platform for disseminating his ideas, and in this respect, his screenplays share similarities with his work at ROSTA during the Civil War. Just as his engagement with cinema in 1918 was followed by a transition to his work as a graphic artist in 1919, Mayakovsky's failure to get his 1926–1928 screenplays into production propelled him to turn to theater and rewrite *Pozabud' pro kamin* into "Klop" [The Bedbug] (1928–1929). The cartoon by the Kukryniksy (see Figure 4.11) depicting Mayakovsky's exodus from LEF via another theatrical play titled "Bania" [The Bathhouse] serves as an illustration of this process.

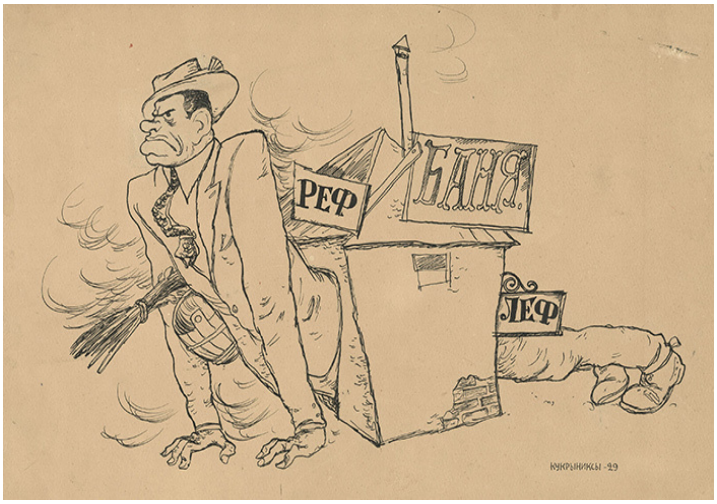


Figure. 4.12. *From LEF to REF*, caricature by Kukryniksy (1929)
[Holding of the State Museum of the History of Russian Literature named after V. I. Dal']

During his lifetime, the cine-press was quick to scrutinize Mayakovsky's self-declared calling to speak to the masses. In 1926, *Sovetskii ekran* published a parody of Mayakovsky's

"Cloud in Trousers"—the poem that compositionally resembles a screenplay. It framed the poet's participation in the film industry as a random tantrum of a grown-up who "wants to catch a flick":

Маяковский в кино
(ПАРОДИЯ)
"Это было в Одессе.
—Приду в четыре, сказала Мария.
Восемь.
Девять.
Десять".
В. Маяковский

Меня не узнать ни сбоку, ни сзади:

Животастая обормотина
Стонет
И корчится.
Что может хотеться такому дяде?
А дяде—
В кинушку
Хочется.
Вы думаете—это из-за киносценария?
Это было—в буфете.
—Приду на "Первый", сказала кухарка Марья.
Первый.
Второй!
Третий!!
Наконец, вошла.
И огромный
бешеный
Заорал я, как небо, меняя тона:
—Хотите
Буду
Удивительно нежный,
Не мужчина—
А… Мери Пикфорд в штанах!

Mayakovsky in the Cinema
(Parody)
"This was in Odessa.
—I'll come at four, said Maria.
Eight.
Nine.
Ten."
V. Mayakovsky

You won't recognize me, neither in profile, nor from the back:
The bellied beast
Moans
And twists.
What does an oldie like me want?
The oldie—
Wants to
Catch a flick.
You think it's on account of the screenplay?
This was—in the cafeteria.
—I'll come to the first screening, said Mar'ia the cook.
The first.
The second!
The third!!
She shows up at last.
And I, gigantic
and wild,
Shouted, changing my tones like the sky:
—If you like,
I'll be
Unexpectedly gentle,
Not a man—
But … Mary Pickford in trousers?!
(Malakhov 1926, 7)[291]

[291] American movie stars Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks traveled to the USSR during the summer of 1926. Their arrival caused a sensation and was widely publicized. A year later, a comedy about their four-day visit came out. It was titled *Potselui Mery Pikford* [Mary Pickford's Kiss] (Sergei Komarov, 1927). The screenplay was co-written by imaginist poet Vadim Shershenevich. It satirized the psychotic behavior of Pickford's Soviet fans.

The poet's death and his status as one of the most important creative figures of the Revolution prompted a substantial archiving effort to preserve his writing for screen and, ultimately, a reassessment of its broader cultural significance. The entire collection of Mayakovsky's screenplays was anthologized and appeared in the eleventh volume of the poet's complete set of works published in 1936. The memory of Mayakovsky as a filmmaker was extensively recorded in the memoir literature of Elza Triolet, Viktor Shklovskii, Viktor Pertsov, Vasilii Kamenskii, Sergei Spasskii, Lev Kassil', and Vasilii Katanian. Other commemorative efforts emerged in poetic texts and film scripts about Mayakovsky that remain unpublished.[292] The plethora of films about Mayakovsky and the screen adaptations of his work testify to his relevance as a preeminent figure of early twentieth-century culture.[293] Film scholars sometimes compare Mayakovsky to directors of the later period, such as Ingmar Bergman, Luchino Visconti, Frederico Fellini, and Andrei Tarkovskii (Antipova 2010, 415). Underappreciated in his lifetime, Mayakovsky represents the *auteur* filmmaker in the typology of screenwriters

---

Malakhov's parody of Mayakovsky's work in cinema fits the pattern of satirical responses to Pickford's popularity. It also makes a jab at Mayakovsky's love of American cinema.

[292] The RGALI records commemorating Vladimir Mayakovsky include the following entires: (1) Nikolai Aseev's novel in verse, *Maiakovskii nachinaetsia* [Mayakovsky Starts Out] (1940); (2) Aseev also applied to write a screenplay for a film about young Mayakovsky titled *Sploshnaia nevidal'*, but his effort was unrealized (RGALI *f.* 28, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 93); (3) Osip Brik's libretto for the documentary film *Vladimir Maiakovskii* (RGALI *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 93); (4) Osip Brik's literary screenplay based on Mayakovsky's poem drama, *Kem byt'?* [Whom to be?] (RGALI *f.* 2851, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 67); (5) Osip Brik and Vasilii Katanian's drama libretto titled *Ia znal Maiakovskogo* [I Knew Mayakovsky] (RGALI *f.* 2852, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 77); (6) Lilia Brik's screenplay of a documentary titled *Kak rabotal Maiakovskii* [How Mayakovsky worked] (RGALI *f.* 2577, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 707); (7) Lilia Brik's literary drama screenplay, *Vo ves' golos* [At the Top of My Voice] (RGALI *f.* 2577, *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 712).

[293] The list of Soviet and Russian films based on Mayakovsky's texts includes the following works: *Blek end uait* [Black and white] (1932); *Kem byt'?* [Whom to be?] (1948); *Oni znali Maiakovskogo* [They Knew Mayakovsky] (Nikolai Cherkassov, 1955); *Maiakovskii nachinalsia tak* [This is how Mayakovsky Was Beginning] (Konstantin Pepenashvili, 1958); *Prochti i katai v Parizh i Kitai* [Read and Go to Paris and China] (1960); *Bania* [The Bathhouse] (1962); *Letaiushchii proletarii* [Flying Proletariat] (1962); *Chto takoe khorosho i chto takoe plokho* [What is Good and What is Bad?] (1969); *Baryshnia i khuligan* [The Lady and the Hooligan] (1970/1976); *Maiakovskii smeetsia* [Mayakovsky is Laughing] (1975); *Vpered, vremia!* [Ahead, Time!] (1977); *Tebe—attakuiushchii klass* [To You, the Attacking Class!] (1977); *V. V. Maiakovskii* (2018).

examined in this dissertation. Had the historical circumstances of Mayakovsky's work in cinema been different, he likely would have become the first Soviet filmmaker simultaneously writing, acting in, and directing his movies. Despite the overwhelming belief that Mayakovsky's cinematic lineage was interrupted, his screen ideas continued to live in the film-works of Sergei Iutkevich, who was close to the LEF circle and later directed the animated film *Bania* (1962) and *Maiakovskii smeetsia* (1975). Although there is little hope that the missing footage of Mayakovsky's work will surface, the preserved records serve as testimony to the pathos and potential of his film-works.

In the end, the following question arises: What does this unrealized cinematic project by Mayakovsky contribute to our understanding of the Cinema of LEF? Unlike other LEF screenwriters, whose corpora has not been systematized and anthologized, Mayakovsky's status as one of the leading poets of the Soviet state, along with the *auteur* quality of his texts, warranted the immediate inclusion of his cinematic writing in the author's canon. Written by LEF's founder, editor, and chief ideologue, these screenplays not only grew out of the cinematic sensibility championed by the group but also introduced a certain continuity between pre-revolutionary futurism and LEF, between Mayakovsky's poetry, and his cinematic and dramatic texts. Among the poet's most notable achievements in cinema are his experiments with the cinematic first-person narrative, also known as the authorization of the hero, and his implementation of the constructivist collage technique. Although Mayakovsky's film-works remained unrealized, the totality of his creative output, together with his poignant life trajectory, exude a cinematographic vividness of their own.

Conclusion: LEFs Used to Live on the Soviet Street

- *Cover your tracks in cinema on the Soviet street.*
Varvara Stepanova, 1927

The productionist doctrine of the Left Front of the Arts presupposed active participation in the industry. Their goal, according to the journal's last editor, Sergei Tretiakov, was to "empty into the sea of mass culture."[294] The 1927 poem by Constructivist artist Varvara Stepanova echoes this sentiment:

[…]	[…]
Разровняй в кино	Cover your tracks
свой след	in cinema
по советской улице,	on the Soviet street,
ЛЕФы были—	LEF used to live—
больше нет:	they are no more:
фильмы делать учатся.	they are learning to make films.

Varvara Stepanova (Stepanova 1994, 214)

The rationale behind this study is, on the contrary, to uncover those tracks and show how deeply embedded they are in the cinematic landscape of the 1920s and early 1930s. Our objective has been to explore how the screenwriting of LEF's editors reflected the group's collective, theoretical, aesthetic, and ideological agenda. Based on an examination of over twenty screen ideas and eight extant films produced from 1923 to 1931 by Osip Brik, Sergei Tretiakov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, this dissertation reevaluates the many previously understudied connections between their cinematic theory and praxis, unearthing a cohesion, which scholars have, thus far, overlooked.

[294] "We would be worthless if we do not empty ourselves into the sea—the sea of mass culture."/ "А грош нам цена, если мы не впадем в море—в море массовости" (Tretiakov 1928a, 4).

We have done so in a number of ways. First, we have created a cohesive timeline of the group's activity in the film industry, which in turn has served as a canvas for tracing the trajectories of its members. Second, we have reconstructed and collated the individual authors' views on cinema and screenwriting. Rather than applying a specific theoretical approach to examine the screenwriting corpus, we have approached the group's joint output as a theory-forming momentum. This approach furnishes a more nuanced and stereoscopic view of the group's ongoing theoretical debates and takes into consideration the divergences in the individual platforms of its members. It also suggests new characteristics of the Cinema of LEF. In particular, it expands the boundaries of LEF's corpus to include both played and hybrid productions and makes the argument that their hybridity constitutes an integral part of the group's ethos. Additionally, it suggests that specific themes serve as the markers of the Cinema of LEF that are genealogically connected to the pre-Revolutionary avant-garde movement. LEF's ideological framework contains the struggle between the Old and the New, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, creating new socialist narratives out of old cultural texts, and juxtaposing American and Soviet Leftist cinema within the meta-cinematic matrix. LEF's production modalities include collectivism, documentary aesthetics, and life-building. The group's innovations reside in its exploration of new documentary genres, loosening narrative structures, the use of hybrid plots, making these plots subservient to facts, as well as the collage technique pioneered by Mayakovsky.

What remains to be done? Does our concept of the Cinema of LEF add instrumental—not just intrinsic—value to Soviet film studies? Although there are several possible approaches, a definitive answer necessitates the evaluation of additional materials. In particular, one would have to review the screenwriting corpus of other filmmakers of the group: Viktor Shklovsky,

Yuri Tynianov, Nikolai Aseev, Vasilii Kamenskii, Lilia Brik, and, to certain extent, Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko. Among the film directors of the LEF circle, one would need to examine the corpus by Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Esfir Shub, and Vitalii Zhemchuzhnyi. Furthermore, broader analytical categories are necessary for examining the entire spectrum of the group's activity in the film industry. Despite the limitations of the corpus, these categories are already sufficiently established in this research and can be extrapolated to other case-studies in the future: screenwriting theory, production modalities, innovation, ideology, as well as the question of authorship. Examining a wider scope of screen ideas will enable reorganization around emerging clusters. Although it is still early to ponder the degree to which LEF, as a group, influenced the cinema of its period, our preliminary findings make such future research directions all the more compelling. In other words, the Cinema of LEF might prove to be a helpful tool for understanding the patterns of film development in the 1920s in both its theory and praxis.

By uncovering the tracks of this group's screenwriters and learning about the choices they made, we learn about our own time too. For we can pinpoint striking parallels between the LEF momentum of the 1920s and our contemporary situation. One century apart, both periods are characterized by burgeoning technological innovation within radicalized political environments. In the Soviet Union, the development of the cinema and radio led to the proliferation of its propagandist machine. The New Media has led to the rise of the global phenomenon of Post-Truth in our own time. What are the predicaments of radical writers in such transitional moments? How do these writers engage with the new creative platforms? How do they respond to the emerging criteria of professionalization and censorship restrictions? What stories do they choose to tell their audiences? Finally, which literary and cinematic lineages

thrive and continue to develop, and which fall into oblivion? Who made the better choice: Osip Brik, who became an honest daily laborer; Sergei Tretiakov, who traveled the globe launching new visionary projects; or Vladimir Mayakovsky, who took his screen ideas to the theater, a medium he had shunned? Our investigation of these three trajectories corresponds to a more significant movement of media archeology. Uncovering the media forms of the past has the potential to inform the development of media today. By unearthing the screenwriting of the Left Front of the Arts, we gain deeper insights into the production of new stories written for contemporary audiences. After all, what is the rise of such phenomena as non-fiction, docudrama, or the new drama movement if not a continuation of the factographic impetus of the 1920s?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Citations from all archival material employ the following abbreviations: RGALI: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive of Art and Literature); *f.*: fond (archival unit); *op.*: *opis'* (archival subunit); *ed. khr.*: *edinitsa khraneniia* (storage unit); *l.*: *list* (leaf).

Alekseeva, O. I. "V. P. Polonskii i *Novyi LEF* (po materialam periodicheskoi pechati)." In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 2*, edited by V. N. Terekhina, 343–443. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo instituta mirovoi literatury, 2014.

Alferova, S. V. "Tragediia 'Vladimir Maiakovskii' i opera A. Kruchenykh 'Pobeda nad solntsem': opyt sopostavleniia." In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 2*, edited by V. N. Terekhina, 149–163. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo instituta mirovoi literatury, 2014.

Alpers, Boris. "2 Bul'di 2." *Kino i zhizn'*, no. 32–33 (December 1930): 5–6.

Amaglobeli, S. "Klassovaia bor'ba v gruzinskom kino." *Proletarskoie kino*, no. 4 (1931): 36–39.

Amiredzhibi, Natia. *Na zare gruzinskogo kino*. Tbilisi: Khelovneba, 1978.

Andronnikova, Manana. "Poeticheskoe 'ia' Maiakovskogo v kino." In *Ot prototipa k obrazu*, 102–128. Moscow: Nauka, 1974.

Anemone, Anthony. "The Polemic around Mikhail Kalatozov's 'A Nail in the Boot.'" *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 9, no. 2 (2015): 126–133.

Antipova, Galina. "Problema kinoobraza v iskusstve Lefa." In *Poetika i fonostilistika. Brikovskii sbornik. Vypusk 1: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii "I-e Brikovskie chteniia: Poetika i fonostilistika" (Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet Pechati, Moskva, 10-12 fevralia 2010 goda)*, edited by Grigorii Vekshin, 407–416. Moscow: MGUP, 2010.

Arkhangel'skii, A. "Krugovorot," *Kino* (Moscow), no. 8 (February 23, 1926): 2.

Arkhangel'skii, Aleksandr Grigor'evich, and Kukryniksy. *O Babele, Gladkove, Zharove, Zoriche, Zoshchenko, Inber, Klychkove, Krest'ianskom poete, Lugovskom, Nikiforove, Oleshe, Oreshine, Romanove, Radimove, Svetlove, Sel'vinskom, Tret'iakove, Utkine, Shklovskom*. Moscow: ZIF, 1930.

Arvatov, Boris. "Kinoplatforma: (Ne smogshii prisutstvovat' na kinodiskussii LEFa, t. Arvatov, imeet slovo)." *Novyi LEF*, no. 3 (1928): 34–37.

Arvatov, Boris, Nikolai Aseev, Osip Brik, Boris Kushner, Sergei Tret'iakov, and Nikolai Chuzhak. "Za chto boretsia Lef?" *LEF*, no. 1 (1923): 3–7.

Aseev, Nikolai. *Maiakovskii nachinaetsia; povest' v stikhakh v 17 glavakh s epilogom*. Moscow:

Sovetskii pisatel', 1940.

———. *Sploshnaia nevidal'*. Screenplay. RGALI, *f.* 28 (Nikolai Nikolaevich Aseev), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 93.

Babel', Isaak. "Benia Krik. Kinopovest'," *Krasnaia nov'*, no. 6 (1926). Proekt Chapaev. https://chapaev.media/articles/5535.

Baramidze, A. G., and D. M. Gamezardashvili. *Georgian Literature*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001.

Bazin, André, Georgia Gurrieri, and Dudley Andrew. "The Stalin Myth in Soviet Cinema." *Film Criticism* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 17–26.

Beliaev, Sergei. "Antireligioznaia li?" *Kino i zhizn'*, no. 3 (January 21, 1930): 2.

Belodubrovskaya, Maria, "The Literary Scenario and the Soviet Screenwriting Tradition." In *A Companion to Russian Cinema*, edited by Birgit Beumers, 251–268. Maiden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

———. *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking Under Stalin*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.

Belova, Liudmila. "Istoriia nerealizovannykh vozmozhnostei." In *Skvoz' vremia. Ocherki po istorii sovetskoi kinodramaturgii*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978a. Proekt Chapaev. https://chapaev.media/articles/5389.

———. *Skvoz' vremia. Ocherki istorii sovetskoi kinodramaturgii.* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978b.

Benjamin, Walter. *Understanding Brecht*. London: Verso, 2003.

Berlina, Alexandra. *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Bobilewisz, Grażyna, "Telefon kak ob'ekt i sredstvo kommunikatsii v iskusstve XX veka i v tvorchestve Maiakovskogo…" In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 2*, edited by V. N. Terekhina, 149–163. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo instituta mirovoi literatury, 2014.

Boon, Kevin Alexander. *Script Culture and the American Screenplay.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008.

Bosenko, Valerii. "Lilia Brik: 'Liubov' i dolg.'" *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 10 (October 1998). http://old.kinoart.ru/archive/1998/10/n10-article25.

Brecht, Bertolt, and Carl Richard Mueller. "Measures Taken." In *The measures taken, and other Lehrstücke*, 2–29. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Brik, Lilia. “Iz vospominanii.” *Druzhba narodov*, no. 3 (1989): 211–212.

———. “Kak rabotal Maiakovskii [How Mayakovsky worked].” Screenplay. RGALI *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.*1, *ed. khr.* 707.

———. “Kinopovest' o Maiakovskom.” RGALI, *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 720.

———. “Leila i Sergei.” Libretto stsenariia. RGALI, *f.* 2679 (Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 929.

———. “Liubov' i dolg = Sovremennaia Karmen.” Stsenarii khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. Varianty. RGALI, *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 41.

———. “Patentovannaia kraska.” Libretto kinostsenariia po rasskazu N. A. Nekrasova “Novoizobretennaia privilegirovannaia kraska brat'ev Dirling i Ko.” RGALI, *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 40.

———. “Stekliannyi glaz.” Stsenarii khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. RGALI*, f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 39.

———. “Vo ves' golos [At the Top of My Voice].” Literary Screenplay. RGALI, *f.* 2577 (Lilia Iur'evna Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 712.

Brik, Osip. “100% braka.” *Sovetskii ekran*, June 22, 1926a.

———. “Blek and uait,” “Vladimir Maiakovskii,” “Marsh vremeni,” “Maiakovskaia galereia.” Libretto estradnykh predstavlenii po proizvedeniiam V. V. Maiakovskogo. RGALI*, f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op*.1, *ed. khr.* 90.

———. “Dovol'no rabotat' ‘vglukhonemuiu.’” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 14 (March 22, 1934a): 2.

———. “Fiksatsiia fakta.” *Novyi Lef*, no. 11/12 (1927a): 44–50.

———. “Gde trekhminutki?” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 5 (January 26, 1936a): 4.

———. “Iz teorii i praktiki stsenarista.” In *Kak my rabotaem nad kinostsenariem*, 41–53. Moscow: Kinofotofront, 1936b.

———. “Karmen.” Literaturnyi stsenarii khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. [Carmen. Literary Screenplay of Feature Film] RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 63.

———. “Kem byt'? [Whom to be?].” Literary screenplay. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 67.

———. “Kinodramaturgia.” Lektsii dlia studentov VGIK. RGALI, *f.* 2679 (Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov), *op.* 1, ed. *khr.* 937.

———. “Khoziain i rabochii.” Literaturnyi stsenarii khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 62.

———. “Kritika literaturnogo stsenaria.” Kurs lektsii, prochitannykh na rezhisserskom fakul'tete VGIKa.” Nachalo. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.*1, *ed. khr.* 128.

———. “Kritika literaturnogo stsenaria.” Kurs lektsii, prochitannykh na rezhisserskom fakul'tete VGIKa.” Prodolzhenie. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 129.

———. “Kritika literaturnogo stsenaria.” Kurs lektsii, prochitannykh na rezhisserskom fakul'tete VGIKa.” Okonchanie. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 130.

———. “O. Brik—L. Brik, Moscow, January 14, 1933.” In *Osip Maksimovich Brik. Materialy k biografii*, edited by Anatolii Valiuzhenich, 116. Akmola: Niva, 1993a.

———. “O. Brik – L. Brik. Moscow, April 6, 1933.” In *Osip Maksimovich Brik: Materialy k biografii*, edited by Anatolii Valiuzhenich, 119. Akmola: Niva, 1993b.

———. “‘Odinnadtsatyi’ Vertova (i) ‘Oktiabr'’ Eizenshteina (Ring Lefa).” *Novyi Lef*, no. 4 (April 1928a): 27–33.

———. “O kritike stsenariia,” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 23 (May 17, 1938): 3.

———. “Opium.” In Brik, O. M. “Vory,” “Kliatva,” “Mashen'ka,” “Paren' iz Usol'ia” i dr. Libretto literaturnykh stsenariev khudozhestvennykh fil'mov. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 59, *l.*56–63.

———. “Ostaius' veren!” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 45 (November 8, 1927b): 4.

———. “Ostanovilis' na polputi.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 1 (January 4, 1937): 2.

———. “Otvet na anketu ‘Mastera o stsenarii.’” *Kino-front*, no. 9–10 (1926b): 12.

———. “Po sushchestvu stsenarnogo krizisa.” *Sovetskoe kino*, no. 8/9, (1927c): 11–12.

———. “Potomok Chingiskhana.” In *Osip Maksimovich Brik. Materialy k biografii*, edited by Anatolii Valiuzhenich, 63–73. Akmola: Niva, 1993b.

———. “Potomok Chingiskhana.” *Sovetskii ekran*, no. 46 (November 13, 1928b): 12–13.

———. “Protiv zhanrovykh kartinok.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 27 (July 5, 1927d): 3.

———. “Stsenarnyie mytarstva.” *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, no. 19 (April 18, 1930).

https://chapaev.media/articles/5502.

———. “Uchen'e—svet, a neuchen'e—t'ma.” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 10 (October 1940): 57–58.

———. “Vladimir Maiakovskii.” Libretto literaturnogo stsenaria khudozhestvennogo fil'ma. Diktorskii tekst i nadpisi k fil'mu. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 93.

———. “Za kinodramaturgiiu.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 32 (June 4, 1933): 1.

———. “Zametki o kinokhronike.” *Sovetskoe kino*, no. 4 (April 1934b): 18–21.

———. “Zvukovye povtory (analiz zvukovoi struktury stikha).” In *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka. Vypusk 2*, edited by O. Brik, E. Polivanov, V. Shklovskii, B. Eikhenbaum, and L. Iakubinskii, 58–98. Petrograd: Tip. 3. Sokolinskogo, 1917.

Brik, Osip, and Agadzhanova-Shutko, N., Arnshtam, L., Zarkhi, N., Macheret, A., Pudovkin, V., Room, A., Chiaureli, M., Shengelaia, H., Shub, E., Eisenstein, S., Esakia, L., Iutkevich, S. “Kto avtor?” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 12 (March 4, 1933): 3.

Brik, Osip, and Leonid Elbert. “Moskva literaturnaia.” Literaturnyi stsenarii dokumental'nogo fil'ma. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 81.

Brik, Osip, and Leonid Elbert. “Narodnyi poet.” Literaturnyi stsenarii dokumental'nogo fil'ma. Varianty. RGALI, *f.* 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 82.

Brik, Osip, and Vasilii Katanian. “Ia znal Maiakovskogo” [I Knew Mayakovsky]. Film libretto. RGALI, f. 2852 (Osip Maksimovich Brik), *op. 1, ed. khr. 77.*

Brik, Osip, Viktor Pertsov, and Viktor Shklovskii. “Ring LEFa.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 4 (1928): 27–36.

Brown, Edward J. *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Buckland, Warren. “Auteur Theory.” In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, edited by Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland, 50–55. London: Routledge, 2015.

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *Sobach'e serdtse*. Moscow-Ausburg: ImWerden Verlag, 2003.

Bulgakova, Oksana. “LEF i kino.” *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 18 (1993): 165–196.

———. “*Novyi LEF* i kinoveshch'.” *Russian Literature* 103–105 (January–April 2019): 61–94.

———. “The Socialist Hybrid.” In *Genre Hybridization. Global Cinematic Flows*, edited by Ivo Ritcher and Peter W. Schultze, 337–350. Marburg: Schuren Verlag GmbH, 2013.

Burenina, Olga. *Tsirk v prostranstve kul'tury*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2014.

Burke, Marina. "Mayakovsky: Film: Futurism." In *Avant-garde film*, edited by Alexander Graf and Dietrich Scheunemann, 133–151. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.

Bykov, Dmitrii. *Trinadtsatyi apostol. Maiakovskii: Tragediia-buff v shesti deistviiakh*. Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2016.

"Chto novogo za rubezhom i v Soiuze." *Kino* (Moscow), no.46 (November 15, 1927): 1.

Chubarov, Igor. "Teoriia media Val'tera Ben'iamina i russkii levyi avangard: gazeta, radio, kino." *Logos* 28, no. 1 (2018): 233–260.

Chuzhak, Nikolai. "Literatura zhiznestroeniia (istoricheskii probeg)." In *Literatura fakta. Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov LEFa*, edited by Nikolai Chuzhak and Osip Brik, 34–67. Moscow: Zaharov, 2000a.

———. "Pisatel'skaia pamiatka." In *Literatura fakta. Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov LEFa*, edited by Nikolai Chuzhak and Osip Brik, 9–28. Moscow: Zaharov, 2000b.

Chuzhak, Nikolai, and Osip Brik, eds. *Literatura fakta. Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov LEFa*. Moscow: Zakharov, 2000.

Clements, Barbara Evans. *Bolshevik Feminist: The Life of Alexandra Kollontai*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Conroy, Mary Schaeffer. "Abuse of drugs other than alcohol and tobacco in the Soviet Union." *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 3 (1990): 447–480.

Diadichev, V. N. "'Okna ROSTA' Maiakovskogo v kritike i svidetel'stvakh sovremennikov." In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 3: Tekst i biografiia. Slovo i izobrazhenie*, edited by V. N. Diadichev, A. P. Zimenkov, T. A. Kupchenko, V. N. Terekhina, and A. M. Ushakov, 360–378. Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2015.

Dmitriev, I. *Sovetskii tsirk. Ocherki istorii 1917–1941*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963.

Duganov, R. "Maiakovskii v 'Kine-zhurnale.'" *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 7 (1983): 119–125.

Duvakin, Viktor. "'Okna Rosta' V. V. Maiakovskogo." In *V. V. Maiakovskii: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 12 tomakh*, Vol. 4, edited by N. N. Aseev, L. V. Maiakovskaia, V. O. Pertsov, and M. I. Serebrianskii, 29–57. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo "Khudozhestvennaia literatura," 1949.

Duvakin, Viktor, Viktor Shklovskii, and Vladimir Radzishevskii. *Besedy s Viktorom Shklovskim: vospominaniia o Maiakovskom*. Moscow: Common Place, 2017.

Eizenshtein, Sergei. “Bella zabyvaet nozhnitsy.” In *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, Vol. 2, edited by Sergei Iutkevich, 274–279. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964a.

———. “Dve lektsii Sergeia Eizenshteina o fil'me ‘Potomok Chingiskhana.’” *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 68 (2004). Chapaev.media. https://chapaev.media/articles/2228.

———. “Kak ni stranno, o Khokhlovoi.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 13 (March 30, 1926): 2–3.

———. “Montazh attraktsyonov: (K postanovke ‘Na vsiakogo mudretsa dovol'no prostoty’ A. N. Ostrovskogo v Moskovskom Proletkul'te).” *LEF*, no. 3 (June to July 1923): 70–75.

———. “The Montazh of Attractions.” In *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, 87–89. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “O forme kinostsenariia” (1929). In *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, Vol. 2, edited by Sergei Iutkevich, 297–99. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964b.

———. “O literature i kino” (1928). In *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, Vol. 6, edited by Sergei Iutkevich, 525–29. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971.

———. “O Maiakovskom,” In *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, Vol. 5, edited by Sergei Iutkevich, 432–437. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967.

Eizenshtein, Sergei, and Viktor Shklovskii. *Khokhlova*. Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926.

Erdman, Nikolai, and Anna Kovalova. *Kinostsenarii*. Saint Petersburg: Masterskaia SEANS, 2010.

Evangulov, Georgii. *Baron v zaplatannykh shtanakh: tragicheskaia poema*. Tiflis: Kol'chuga, 1918.

Feliks. “Burzhuaznye vliianiia v sovetskom kino.” *Kino i zhizn'*, no. 2 (January 10, 1930): 6–7.

Fevral′skii, Aleksandr. *Maiakovskii—dramaturg*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1940.

Finarov, A. P. “Fakty, sobytiia, liudi. Liga ‘Vremia’” (1923–1925 gg.). *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (1970): 205–206.

Fore, Devin. “Introduction.” *October* 118 (2006a): 3–10.

———. “Sergei Tret'iakov: Fakt.” In *Formal'nyi metod: Antologiia russkogo modernizma*, Vol. 2, edited by Sergei Ushakin, 203–218. Ekaterinburg; Moscow: Kabinetnyi uchenyi, 2016.

———. *Soviet Factography*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006b.

Freilikh, Semen. Teoriia kino: ot Eizenshteina do Tarkovskogo: uchebnik dlia vuzov. Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 2015.

Galadzhev, P. "Miasorubka 'Mezhrabprom-Film.'" Drawing. *Kino* (Moscow), no. 13 (March 26, 1929): 1.

Garzonio, Stefano, and Maria Zalambani. "Futurist Criticism." In *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov, 7–8. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2011.

Glisic, Iva. *The Futurist Files: Avant-Garde, Politics, and Ideology in Russia, 1905–1930.* Dekalb, Illinois: NIU Press, 2018.

Goldobin, A. V. *Kak pisat' stsenarii dlia kino-kartin: prakticheskoe rukovodstvo*. Moscow: Moskovskoe teatral'noe izd-vo, 1925.

Gornitskaia, Natalia. "Problemy kinodramaturgii v periodike 20-x godov." In *Iz istrorii Lenfil'ma: stat'i, vospominaniia, dokumenty: 1920-1930-e gody. Vypusk 3*, edited by Natalia Gornitskaia, 11–28. Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1973.

Gornitskaia, Natalia, ed. *Iz istorii Lenfil'ma. Stat'i, vospominaniia, dokumenty. 1920-1930-e gody. Vypusk 3*. Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1973.

"G. rezh. 'Muz. Komedii' D. F. Dzhusto—o sezone v operette." *Kino* (Leningrad), no. 46 (November 15, 1927): 4.

Grashchenkova, Irina. *Kinoantropologiia XX/20*. Moscow: Chelovek, 2014.

Gratchev, Slav. N., and Irina Evdokimova, eds. *Dialogues with Shklovsky: The Duvakin Interviews 1967-1968*. Translated by Slav N. Gratchev. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Grinfel'd, N. "Loviat na ekzotiku (Pis'ma iz Germanii)." *Kino* (Leningrad), no. 23 (June 3, 1928): 2.

Grojs, Boris. *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* [*The Total Art of Stalinism*]. Munich: Wein Hanser, 1988.

Gromov, Evgenii. "Minimal'noe kolichestvo dublei." In *Kinooperator Anatolii Golovnia*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980. Proekt Chapaev. https://chapaev.media/articles/2993.

Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. London, New York: Verso, 2011.

Gurevich, Stella. *Sovetskie pisateli v kinematografe, 20—30-e gody: uchebnoe posobie dlia fakul'tetov i fakul'tativnykh kursov istorii i teorii kino*. Leningrad: LGITMiK, 1975.

Gurianova, N. A. *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Russian Avant-Garde*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Hansen-Löve, Oge. *Russkii formalizm. Metodologicheskaia rekonstruktsiia razvitiia na osnove printsipa ostraneniia*. Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2001.

Harvey, Brian. "Evgenii Zamiatin—stsenarist." *Kinovedcheskiie zapiski*, no. 53 (2001). http://www.kinozapiski.ru/ru/article/sendvalues/739/.

———. "Whose Artists in Uniform? Boris Pil'njak and American Writers in the Early 1930s." *Russian Literature* 62, no. 3 (2007): 293–322.

Hatherley, Owen. *The Chaplin Machine: Slapstick, Fordism and the Communist Avant-Garde*. London: Pluto Press, 2016.

Heil, Jerry. "Isaak Babel and His Film-Work." *Russian Literature* 27, no. 3 (April 1990): 289–416.

———. "Jurij Tynjanov's Film-Work. Two Filmscripts: 'Lieutenant Kiže' (1927, 1933–34) and 'The Monkey and the Bell' (1932)." *Russian Literature* 21, no. 4 (May 1987): 347–553.

———. *No List of Political Assets: The Collaboration of Iurii Olesha and Abram Room on "Strogii Iunosha" ["A Strict Youth" (1936)]*. Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1989.

———. "Russian Futurism and the Cinema: Majakovskij's Film Work of 1913." *Russian Literature* 19, no. 2 (February 1986a): 175–191.

———. "The Russian Literary Avant-Garde and the Cinema (the 1920s and 1930s): The Film-Work of Isaak Babel' and Jurij Tynjanov." PhD diss, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

———. "Russian Writers and the Cinema in the Early 20th Century—A Survey." *Russian Literature* 19, no. 2 (February 1986b): 143–174.

Hennig, Anke. "'Kak my rabotaem nad kinostsenariem': vzgliady O. Brika v kontekste kinodramaturgii 1930-x godov." In *Poetika i fonostilistika. Brikovskii sbornik. Vypusk 1: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii "I-e Brikovskie chteniia: Poetika i fonostilistika" (Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet pechati, Moskva, 10-12 fevralia 2010 goda)*, edited by Grigorii Vekshin, 402–406. Moscow: MGUP, 2010.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Form*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Huttunen, Tomi. “Imazhinisty i kino. Po povodu kinodramaturgii A. B. Mariengofa.” In *Asta Slavica Estonica X. Studia Russica Helsengientsia et Tartusiensia XVI. Serebriannyi vek v russkoi kul'ture kontsa XIX—pervoi poloviny XX vv. K 90-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Z. G. Mits,* 240–253. Tartu, 2018.

Iakobson, Roman. “Zametki o proze poeta-Pasternaka.” In *Raboty po poetike*, 324–338. Moscow: Progress, 1987.

Iamaika. Dvulikii Ianus. Drawing. *Kino* (Moscow), no. 43 (October 25, 1927): 2.

Iangirov, Rashit. “Marginal'nyie temy v tvorcheskoi praktike Lefa.” In *Drugoe kino: stat'i po istorii otechestvennogo kino pervoi treti XX veka*, edited by R. M. Iangirov and A. I. Reitblat, 179–197. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011a.

———. “O russkoi retseptsii ekrannykh interpretatsii ‘Evangeliia.’” In *Drugoe kino: stat'i po istorii otechestvennogo kino pervoi treti XX veka*, edited by Rashit Iangirov and Abram Reitblat, 45–46. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011b.

———. “Osip Brik i kino. Materialy k teme.” *Kinovedcheskiie zapiski* 63 (2003): 111–114.

———. “Proshchaniie s mertvym telom. Ob odnom siuzhete rossiiskogo ekrannogo ofitsioza i ego podtekstakh.” In *Drugoe kino: stat'i po istorii otechestvennogo kino pervoi treti XX veka*, edited by Rashit Iangirov and Abram Reitblat, 151–166. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2011c.

Ibragimova, Zarema. *Chechenskii narod v Rossiiskoi imperii: adaptatsionnyi period*. Moscow: Probel-200, 2006.

In'shakova, Elena. “Kollektsiia ‘Okon ROSTA i GPP’ v sobranii Gosudastvennogo muzeia V. V. Maiakovskogo.” In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 3. Tekst i biografiia. Slovo i izobrazhenie*, edited by V. N. Terekhina, 379–386. Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2015.

———. “Mezhdu ekspressionizmom i konstruktivizmom: pisatel' Sergei Tret'iakov.” In *Russkii avangard 1910-1920-x godov i problema ekspressionizma*, edited by Grigorii Kovalenko, 440–447. Moscow: Nauka, 2007.

Ioffe, Dennis. “Modernism in the Context of Russian ‘Life-Creation’: ‘Lebenkunst’ and the Theory of ‘Life—Text’ Sign Systems.” *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* 40 (2006): 22–55.

Iutkevich, Sergei. “Maiakovskii na ekrane (Opyt mul'tiplikatsionnoi ekranizatsii p'esy ‘Bania’).” In *Voprosy kinoiskusstva. Ezhegodnyi istoriko-teoreticheskii sbornik. Vypusk 8*, edited by S. Freilikh, Neya Zorkaia, L. Kozlov, and R. Iurenev, 86–114. Moscow: Nauka, 1964.

———. *Modeli politicheskogo kino*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978.

———. “Vostochnyi kinotrafaret.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 2 (January 12, 1926): 4.

Ivanov, Viacheslav Vsevolodovich. *Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kul'tury. Tom VII, kniga 2*. Moscow: Znak, 2010.

———. "K tipologii drevneblizhnevostochnykh gimnov solntsu." In *Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kul'tury. Tom 3: Sravnitel'noe literaturovedenie. Vsemirnaia literatura. Stikhovedenie*, 296–299. Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2004.

Ivanova, V. *Velikii kinemo: katalog sokhranivshikhsia igrovykh fil'mov Rossii, 1908–1919*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002.

Jangfeldt, Bengt. *Liubov'—eto serdtse vsego. V. V. Maiakovskii i L. Iu. Brik. Perepiska 1915–1930*. Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell International, 1982.

———. *Stavka—zhizn'. Vladimir Maiakovskii i ego krug*. Translated by Asia Lavrusha and Bengt Jangfeldt. Moscow: Kolibri, 2009.

Jangfeldt, Bengt, and Asia Lavrusha. *Stavka—zhizn': Vladimir Maiakovskii i ego krug*. Moscow: AST, 2016.

Kaganovsky, Lilya. *The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1928–1935*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018.

Kaganovsky, Lilya, and Masha Salazkina. *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Kalinin, Ilya. "Viktor Shklovskii, ili prevrashchenie poeticheskogo priema v literaturnyi fakt." *Zvezda* 7 (2014). Accessed September 5, 2019. http://magazines.russ.ru/zvezda/2014/7/11k.html.

Kamenskii, Vasilii. *Zhizn' s Maiakovskim*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1940.

———. *Zhizn' s Maiakovskim = Ein leben mit Majakovskij*. Munich: Fink, 1974.

Kassil', Lev. *Maiakovskii—sam: ocherk zhizni i raboty poeta*. Moscow: TSK BLKSM, Izd-vo detskoi literatury, 1940.

Katanian, V. V. *Lilia Brik, Vladimir Maiakovskii i drugie muzhchiny*. Moscow: Zakharov, 1998.

———. *Maiakovskii—khronika zhizni i deiatel'nosti*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985.

Katsis, Leonid. *Vladimir Maikovskii: Rokovoi vystrel. Dokumenty, svidetel'stva, issledovaniia*. Moscow: AST, 2018.

Kaufman, N. "'Edut-edut partizany.' Potomok Chingiskhana: s'emki v Tarbakhtae." *Kino* (Moscow), no. 28 (August 28, 1928): 5.

Kirillov, Nikolai. “Zhurnaly ‘LEF’ i ‘Novyi LEF’: Stanovlenie iazyka russkoi literaturnoi i kino–kritiki.” PhD diss., Institut mirovoi literatury im. A. M. Gor'kogo RAN, 2006.

Kolchevska, Natasha. “The ‘Faktoviki’ at the Movies: ‘Novyi LEF’s’ Critique of Ejzenštejn and Vertov.” *Russian Language Journal* 41, no. 138–139 (Winter-Spring 1987): 139–151.

———. “Lef and Developments in Russian Futurism in the 1920s.” PhD. diss, The University of California, Berkeley, 1980.

Kollontai, Aleksandra Mikhailovna, and Alix Holt. *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1980.

Kornienko, Natalia. “The Avant-Garde in Literary Criticism.” In *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov, 30–33. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2011.

Kovalova, Anna. “Iurii Olesha: Zavist'. Zagovor Chuvstv. Strogii Iunosha.” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 11, no. 3 (2017): 267–269.

———. “Stsenarii v russkom kino v 1910–1920-e gody: k istorii voprosa.” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta*, no. 3 (2013): 33–46.

———. “Stsenarii N. R. Erdmana: problematika i poetika.” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta*, no. 9 (2010): 60–68.

Kozintsev, Grigory, Leonid Trauberg, Sergei Iutkevich, and Georgii Kryzhitskii. “Eccentrism.” In *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, 58–64. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

Kracauer, Siegfried. “Buria nad Aziei.” *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 28, (2002). Proekt Chapaev. https://chapaev.media/articles/2223.

———. “The Film of Fact.” *In Documentary Film: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, edited by Ian Aiken, 99–119. Vol. 2 of *Film Theory/History/Documentary in General*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Krasnova, Maria. “Nedruzheskii sharzh. Kak voevali s Maiakovskim.” *Theory & Practice*. https://science.theoryandpractice.ru/videos/1416-nedruzheskiy-sharzh-kak-voevali-s-mayakovskim.

Kruchenykh, Aleksei. *Govoriashchee kino. Stsenarii, kadry, libretto*. Moscow: published by the author, 1928.

Kukryniksy. “Sergei Tret'iakov.” In Arkhangel'skii, Aleksandr and Kukryniksy, 17. Moscow: ZIF, 1930

———. “Viktor Shklovskii,” In Arkhangel'skii, Aleksandr and Kukryniksy, 19. Moscow, ZIF, 1930

Kuleshov, Lev. “Americanism.” In Taylor, Richard, and Ian Christie. *Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, 72–73. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

———. “Ekran segodnia” *Novyi LEF*, no. 4 (1927): 31–34.

Kuleshov, Lev, and Lilia Brik. “Zelenaia kraska.” Literaturnyi stsenarii po rasskazu N. A. Nekrasova “Novoizobretennaia privelegirovannaia kraska.” RGALI, *f.* 2679 (Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov), *op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 91.

Kuleshov, Lev, and Aleksandra Khokhlova. *50 let v kino*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975.

Kuleshov, Lev, and Viktor Shklovskii. “Funtik = Chelovek svobodnyi ot professii.” Stsenarii, varianty, otryvki, chernovyie nabroski. RGALI, *f.* 2679 (Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov), *op.*1, *ed. khr.* 8.

Kuznetsova, Vera. “U kino byl drug… (Maiakovskii i sovremennoe kino).” In *Klassicheskoe nasledie i sovremennyi kinematograf: sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, edited by S. D. Gurevich, M. L. Zhezhelenko, and A. L. Kazin, 83–99. Leningrad: LGITMiK, 1988.

Lakhti, Katrin. “Zver'e v tvorchestve Maiakovskogo.” In *Tvorchestvo V. V. Maiakovskogo. Vypusk 3: Tekst i biografiia. Slovo i izobrazhenie*, edited by V. N. Diadichev, A. P. Zimenkov, T. A. Kupchenko, V. N. Terekhina, and A. M. Ushakov, 398–418. Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2015.

Lebedev, Nikolai. *Ocherk istorii kino SSSR*. Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1947.

LEF. “Lef i kino. Stenogramma soveshchaniia.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 11–12 (December 1927): 50–70.

Levidov, Mikhail. “Teatr: ego litso i ego maski.” *LEF*, no. 4 (August to December 1923): 172–186.

Lewis, Sinclair. “Mister Bebbit—amerikanets.” *LEF*, no. 2 (April to May 1923): 55–64.

Lind, Maria, Michele Masucci, Joanna Warsza, Jiri Adamik-Novak, and Harald Hille. *Red Love: A Reader on Alexandra Kollontai*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020.

Lunacharskii, Anatolii. “Parizhskiie pis'ma.” *Vecherniaia Moskva*, September 26, 1927.

Macdonald, Ian W. *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Mackay, Jon. *Dziga Vertov. Life and Work. Volume 1. 1896–1921*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018.

McCauley, Karen Ann. "The Aesthetics of Production: The Russian Avant-Garde and the Rise of Socialist Realism." PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1995.

Maiakovskii, Vladimir. "Chitatel'!" *Novyi LEF*, no. 1 (January 1927): 1–2.

———. "Doklad "Levee Lefa." In *Stat'i, zametki i vystupleniia. Noiabr' 1917–1930,* 503–504. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959a.

———. "Kino i kino." *Kino-Fot*, no. 4 (October 5–12, 1922): 5.

———. "Kino i kino." In *Stat'i, zametki i vystupleniia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 29. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959b.

———. *Kinostsenarii i p'esy*. Vol. 11 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958a.

———. "Lef ili blef." In *Pis'ma i drugie materialy*, 165–166. Vol. 13 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961a.

———. *Mart-dekabr' 1923*. Vol. 5 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1957.

———. "O kinorabote." In *Stat'i, zametki i vystuplenia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 125. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959c.

———. "O LEFE." In *Stat'i, zametki i vystuplenia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 183–184. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959d.

———. "Pop ili master?" In *Pis'ma i drugie materialy*, 163–164. Vol. 13 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961c.

———. "Rastsvet LEFa." In *Pis'ma i drugie materialy*, 157–158. Vol. 13 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961d.

———. Teatr i kino. Volume 1. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954a.

———. Teatr i kino. Volume 2. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954b.

———. “Ustroiteliam soveshchaniia levogo fronta isskustv. Moskva, 17 ianvaria, 1925 g.” In *Pis'ma i drugie materialy*, 70–71. Vol. 13 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961e.

———. “V Rossiiskuiu Assotsiatsiiu Proletarskikh Pisatelei (Moskva, 3 ianvaria 1930 g.).” In *Pis'ma i drugie materialy*, 134. Vol. 13 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1961f.

———. *Vtoraia polovina 1925–1926*. Vol. 7 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958b.

———. “Vystuplenie na dispute po dokladu Lunacharskogo ‘Pervye kamni novoi kul'tury’ 9 fevralia 1925 g.” In *Stat'i, zametki i vystuplenia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 284–291. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959f.

———. “Vystupleniia na pervom moskovskom soveshchanii rabotnnikov levogo fronta iskusstv. 16 i 17 ianvaria 1925 g.” In *Stat'i, zametki i vystupleniia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 275–283. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959g.

———. “Vystuplenie na ‘Vechere zhurnalov’ 20 dekabria 1927 goda.” In *Stat'i, zametki i vystupleniia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 501–502. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959h.

———. “Za chto boretsia LEF?” In *Stat'i, zametki i vystupleniia. Noiabr' 1917–1930*, 40–44. Vol. 12 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoie izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959i.

Maiakovskii, Vladimir, and Aleksandr Fevral'skii, eds. *Kino: stsenarii, stat'i, pis'ma, rechi, stikhi*. Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1940.

Maiakovskii, Vladimir, and Vasilii Katanian. *Mayakovskii ob Amerike: stikhi, ocherki, gazetnye interv'iu*. Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1948.

Makharadze, Iraklii. *The History of Georgian Silent Cinema*. Tbilisi: Bakur Sulakauri, 2014.

Malakhov, S. “Maiakovskii v kino. (Parodiia).” *Sovetskii ekran*, no. 40 (October 5, 1926): 7.

Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Mass, Vladimir. “Geroi ne nashego vremeni.” *Sovetskii ekran,* no. 38 (September 18, 1928): 3.

Marzukho and Pakhomov. “V plenu veshchei.” In *Litso khudozhkorovskogo dvizheniia*, edited by V. Kostin. Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1930.

Matich, Olga. *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination of Russia’s Fin de Siècle*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Mel'nikova, Nadezhda. “Kinostsenarii V. V. Maiakovskogo. Problematika i poetika.” PhD diss., Moscow State Pedagogical University im. V. I. Lenina, Moscow, 1993.

Mikhalenko, N. V. “Plakaty V. V. Maiakovskogo—edinstvo vizual'nogo i verbal'nogo: ot ‘Segodniashnego lubka’ k ‘Oknam ROSTA.’” *Rusistica Latviensis*, no. 5 (2015): 20–28. Riga: LU Akademiskais apgads. Latvijas Universitate.

Miliavskii, B., R. Duganov, and V. Radzishevskii. “Neizvestnye stat'i Vladimira Maiakovskogo.” *Voprosy literatury*, no. 8 (1970): 141-203.

Mini, Panayiota. “Pudovkin’s Cinema of the 1920s.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

“My ishchem.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 11/12 (December 1927): 1–2.

Nannicelli, Ted. *A Philosophy of the Screenplay*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Nelmes, Jill. *Analyzing the Screenplay*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Nerler, Pavel. “Poslantsy s togo sveta: Solagerniki Osipa Mandel'shtama. Publikatsiia pervaia.” *Sem' iskusstv* 5, no. 62 (May 2015). http://7iskusstv.com/2015/Nomer5/Nerler1.php.

Neuberger, Joan, and Antonio Somaini, eds. *The flying carpet: studies on Eisenstein and Russian cinema in honor of Naum Kleiman*. Paris: Éditions Mimésis, 2017.

Nikol'skaia, Tatiana. “Gruzinskiie futuristy v kino.” In *Ot slov k telu: sbornik statei k 60-letiiu Iuriia Tsiv'iana*, edited by Iury Tsivian, Aleksandr Lavrov, Aleksandr Ospovat, and Roman Timenchik, 238–242. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010.

———. “Levizna “Levizny.” (Zhurnal gruzinskikh futuristov “Memartskheneoba”).” *Voprosy literatury*, no. 3 (July 2003): 319–330.

Nikol'skaia, Tatiana, and Tatiana Vinogradova. “Kitaisko-gruzinskiie paralleli v tvorchestve S. M. Tret'iakova.” In *Natales grate numerales? Sbornik statei k 60-letiiu Georgiia Akhillovicha Levintona*, edited by Albert Baiburin and Aleksandr Ospovat, 421–426. Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo Universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2008.

“Novosti,” *Kino* (Leningrad), no. 5 (January 29, 1929): 1.

Nudov. “Rabkory ob “Opiume.” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 5 (January 29, 1930): 6.

Olenina, Ana. “Aleksandra Khokhlova.” In *Women Film Pioneers Project*, edited by Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta. New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2014. https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-20ff-2c08.

———. “Zametki zhurnalista: Lef ili blef?” *Izvestiia*, February 27, 1927.

Packer, Sharon. *Movies and the Modern Psyche*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.

Panova, Lada. “Three Cleopatra Reincarnations in Silver Age Prose. Essay 1. The Pushkinian Prototype. (With a New Addendum).” In *Ostrov lyubvi BorFeda: sbornik k 90-letiiu Borisa Fedorovicha Egorova*, edited by Boris Fedorovich Egorov, A. P. Dmitriev, and Pavel Glushakov, 678–691. Saint Petersburg: Rostok, 2016.

Papernyi, Zinovii Samoilovich. *O masterstve Maiakovskogo*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1953.

Papernyi, Zinovii Samoilovich, and N. V. Reformatskaia. *V. Maiakovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*. Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1963.

Pasternak, Boris. “S. P. Bobrovu. August 2-8, 1913, Molodi.” In Pasternak, Boris. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii s prilozheniiami v odinnadtsati tomakh*, 150–151. Tom VII. Moscow: Slovo, 2005.

Pertsov, Viktor. “Grafik sovremennogo Lefa.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 1 (January 1927): 13–15.

———. *Reviziia levogo fronta v sovremennom russkom iskusstve*. Moscow: Vserossiiskii Proletkul't, 1925.

Pertsov, Viktor, and M. I. Serebryanskii. *Maiakovskii: materialy i issledovaniia*. Moscow: Khudozh. literatura, 1940.

Petryak, V. “Ugolok kino-molodniaka. Elementy kino sredi molodezhi (Moskovskie zarisovki).” *Kinonedelia*, no. 23 (July 1924): 4.

Polianovskii, M. “Maiakovskii na ekrane.” *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 5 (May 1958a): 140–148.

———. *Maiakovskii—kinoakter*. Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1940.

———. *Poet na ekrane: Maiakovskii—kinoakter*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1958b.

Polonskii, Viacheslav. “Kriticheskiie zametki. Blef prodolzhaetsia.” *Novyi mir*, no. 5 (1927): 147–167.

Popov, I. F., ed. *Kak my rabotaem nad kinostsenariem*. Moscow: Kinofotoizdat, 1936.

Porter, Cathy. *Alexandra Kollontai: A Biography*. Delhi: Aakar Books, 2016.

Pozner, Valérie. "'Joué' versus 'non-joué': la notion de 'fait' dans les débats cinématographiques des années 1920 en URSS." *Communications* 79, no. 1 (2006): 91–104.

———. "Osip Brik i Viktor Shklovskii v kinematografe 1920-x: kritika, praktika, teoriia." In *Poetika i fonostilistika. Brikovskii sbornik. Vypusk 1: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii "I-e Brikovskie chteniia: Poetika i fonostilistika" (Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet pechati, Moskva, 10-12 fevralia 2010 goda)*, edited by Grigorii Vekshin, 394–401. Moscow: MGUP, 2010.

———. "'Potomok Chingiskhana' (Brik, Pudovkin, 1928) kak obrazets sovetskogo 'kinokentavra.'" In *"Brikovskie chteniia." Metodologiia i praktika russkogo formalizma: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii "II Brikovskie chteniia: Metodologiia i praktika russkogo formalizma." Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet pechati imeni Ivana Fedorova. Moskva, 20-23 marta 2013 goda = Methodology and Practices of Russian Formalism: Papers of the 2nd Osip Brik International Colloquium—a Linguistic and Interdisciplinary Conference held at the Ivan Fedorov Moscow State University of Printing Arts. March 20-23, 2013*, edited by Grigorii Vekshin, 323–327. Moscow: MGUP, 2014.

Price, Steven. *A History of the Screenplay*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Prokhorov, Alexander. "Arresting Development. A Brief History of Soviet Cinema for Children and Adolescents." In *Russian Children's Literature and Culture*, edited by Marina Balina and Larissa Rudova, 129–152. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Pronin, Aleksandr. *Bumazhnyi Vertov / Tselluloidnyi Maiakovskii*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2019.

Pudovkin, Vsevolod. "Potomok Chingiskhana." *Sovetskii ekran*, no. 46, (November 1928): 12–13.

Qazbegi, Aleksandre. *The Prose of the Mountains: Three Tales of the Caucasus*. Translated by Rebecca Ruth Gould. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015.

Ram, Harsha. *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

Ratiani, Irina. *Sintez iskusstv v kul'ture Gruzii 1920-1980-kh godov: vzaimosviaz' i vzaimovliianie*. Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2012.

———. *U istokov gruzinskogo kino. Vzaimosziaz' literatury, teatra i kino v iskusstve Gruzii*. Moscow: Ministerstvo kul'tury RF. Rossiiskii institut kul'turologii, 2003.

"Redaktsiia. Zapisnaia knizhka LEFa." *Novyi LEF* 2 (1928): 39–46.

Renfrew, Alastair. “Facts and Life: Osip Brik in the Soviet Film Industry.” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 7, no. 2 (2013a): 165–188.

———. “Fakty i zhizn'. Osip Brik i sovetskaia kinoindustriia.” *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 104 (2013b): 62–90.

Ripellino, Angelo Maria. *Majakovskij e il teatro russo d’avanguardia*. Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2002 (1959).

Romberg, Kristin. *Gan’s Constructivism: Aesthetic Theory for an Embedded Modernism.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

Room, Abram. “Pochemu ne rabotaet Khokhlova?” *Kino* (Moscow), no. 11 (March 16, 1926): 2.

Rudy, William. “Majakovskij and Film Art.” PhD diss., Harvard University, 1955. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Rutkovskii, Nikolai. “Tanets na ekrane.” *Sovetskii ekran* 51, December 21, 1927: 6–7.

Ryabchikova, Natalie. “Nina Agadzhanova-Shutko.” In *Women Film Pioneers Project*, edited by Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta. New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2016. https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-rswd-9k23.

———. “Sergei Mikhailovich: Treti'akov and Eisenstein as a Double Act.” In *The Flying Carpet. Studies on Eisenstein and Russian Cinema in Honor of Naum Kleiman*, edited by Joan Neuberger and Antonio Somaini, 325–342. Paris: Éditions Mimésis, 2017.

———. “Mezhrabprom Between Experiment and Censorship: The Case of ‘The Glass Eye.’” *Teatr, Zhivopis', Kino, Muzyka / Theater, Art, Cinema, Music*, no. 3 (2019): 71–90.

Salazkina, Masha. “Introduction to Sergei Tretiakov: The Industry Production Screenplay.” *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 130–132.

Sarkisova, Oksana. *Screening Soviet Nationalities: Kulturfilms from the Far North to Central Asia*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2017.

Seiber, Gruido. *Tekhnika kino-triuka.* Moscow: Tea-Kino-Pechat', 1929.

Selezneva, Tamara. *Kino-mysl' 20-kh godov*. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Iskusstvo, Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1972.

Shapir, Maksim. “Iakobson—budetlianin: sbornik materialov. / Sost., podgot. teksta, predial. i komment. BY Langfeldt. Stockholm, 1992,” 185 p. [16 p. ill] (Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature; Vol. 26).” *Slavianovedenie* 4 (July–August 1994): 114–119.

Shay, Anthony. *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Companies, Representation and Power.* Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

Shay, Anthony, and Barbara Sellers-Young, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Ethnicity.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Shcherbenok, Andrei. "Dziga Vertov. Dialektika kinoveshchi." *Iskusstvo kino*, January 1, 2012. http://old.kinoart.ru/archive/2012/01/dziga-vertov-dialektika-kinoveshi.

Shcherbin, Vladimir, ed. *Iz istorii sovetskoi literatury 1920-30-kh godov: novye materialy i issledovaniia*. Moscow: Nauka, 1983.

Shklovskii, Viktor. "Veter iz Tiflisa." *Kino* (Moscow), no. 35 (August 30, 1927): 2.

———. "Beregites' muzyki." In *Za 60 let*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985. Proekt Chapaev. https://chapaev.media/articles/2227.

———. *Kak pisat' stsenarii: posobie dlia nachinaiushchikh stsenaristov s obraztsami stsenariev raznogo tipa*. Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozh. lit-ry, 1931.

———. *O Maiakovskom*. Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1940.

———. "O Maiakovskom." In *Zhili-byli. Vospominaniia, memuarnye zapisi, povesti o vremeni: s kontsa XIX v. po 1962 g*., 209–364. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1964.

———. "Pogranichnaia liniia." In *Podenshchina*, 100–104. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo pisatelei v Leningrade, 1930.

———. *Puteshestviie v stranu kino*. Moscow: Zemlia i fabrika, 1926.

———. "Zhili-byli…" In *Osip Maksimovich Brik, Materialy k biografii*, edited by Anatolii Valiuzhenich, 147–157. Akmola: Niva, 1993.

Shklovskii, Viktor. *Revolution*. Vol. 1 of *Sobranie sochinenii*, edited by I. Kalinin. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2018.

Shub, Esfir. *Moia zhizn'—kinematograf*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972.

Shvartsman (rabkor). "Rabochie ob 'Opiume.'" *Kino* (Moscow), no. 1 (January 7, 1930) 1930: 2.

Sokolov, I. V. *Kinostsenarii: teoriia i tekhnika*. Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926.

Sokolov, Ippolit. "Etnograficheskaia fil'ma." *Kino* (Moscow), no. 14, January 5, 1926: 3.

———. "O kino-stsenariiakh." *Sovetskoe kino* 4–5 (September–October 1925): 23–26.

Sokolova, Alla. “The Circompontic Lezginka Dance as a Cultural Phenomenon.” In *Turkic Soundscapes: From Shamanic Voices to Hip-Hop*, edited by Razia Sultanova and Megan Rancier, 153–162. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Sokolova, Evgenia. “Dvadtsat' let riadom.” In *Osip Maksimovich Brik. Materialy k biografii*, edited by Anatolii Valiuzhenich, 186–188. Akmola: Niva, 1993.

“Sovetskaia fil'ma.” *Sovetskoe kino*, no. 6/7 (1926): 30.

“Stenogramma soveshchaniia kommunistov ‘Sovkino’ po voprosu ‘O formal'nykh napravleniiakh v kino.’” RGALI, *f.* 2496 [Vserossijskoe fotokinematograficheskoe obshchestvo “Sovkino” (Moskva 1924–1930)]; *op.* 1, *ed. khr*. 22.

Spasskii, Sergei Dmitrievich. *Maiakovskii i ego sputniki. Vospominaniia*. Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1940.

Stepanova, Varvara. “Kostium segodniashnego dnia—prozodezhda.” *LEF*, no. 2 (1923): 65–68.

Stephan, Halina. *“Lef” and the Left Front of the Arts*. Munich: Sagner, 1981.

Strollery, Martin. “Eisenstein, Shub and the Gender of Author as Producer” *Film History* 14, no. 1 (2002): 87–99.

“Svanetiia.” *Sovetskoe kino*, no. 6/7 (1926): 30.

Taylor, Richard, and Ian Christie. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Terekhina, Vera. *Ot zheltoi kofty do krasnogo Lefa. Maiakovskii sredi khudozhnikov*. Saint Petersburg: Rodnik, 2018.

———. *“Piatnami krasok, zvonom lozungov…”: Knizhno-plakatnoe tvorchestvo Maiakovskogo.* Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2016.

Terekhina, Vera, and Natalia Stritzhkova. *Vladimir V. Mayakovsky*. ROSTA Windows / Okna ROSTA. Amsterdam: Schilt Publishing, 2018.

Tr. Il. “Tabachnitsa iz Sevil'i.” *Kino* (Leningrad), no. 23 (August 25, 1925): 2.

Tret'iakov, Sergei. “Bol'shaia oshibka.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 11 (November 1928a): 1–2.

———. *Den Shi-khua. Liudi odnogo kostra. Strana-perekrestok*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1962.

———. “Chem zhivo kino.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 5 (May 1928b): 23–28.

———. *Gesichter der Avantgarde: Porträts, Essays, Briefe*. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1985.

———. “Kino k iubileiu.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 10 (1927): 27–31.

———. “Moskva—Pekin.” *LEF*, no. 3 (1925): 33–58.

———. “Our Cinema.” *October*, no. 118 (2006): 27–44. https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2006.118.1.27.

———. “Prodolzhenie sleduet.” *Novyi LEF*, no. 12 (December 1928c): 1–4.

———. *Slyshish', Moskva?! Protivogazy. Rychi, Kitai!* Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1966.

Tret'iakov, Sergei Mikhailovich, T. S. Gomolitskaia-Tret'iakova, and Richard Taylor. *Strana-perekrestok: dokumental'naia proza*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991.

Tret'iakov, Sergei Mikhailovich, and Irina Ivanovna Ratiani. *Sergei Mikhailovich Tret'iakov. Kinematograficheskoe nasledie. Stat'i, ocherki, stenogrammy vystuplenii, doklady, stsenarii*. Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2010.

Tretjakov, Sergej Mihajlovic, and Fritz Mierau. *Lyrik, Dramatik, Prosa*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1972.

Triolet, Elsa. *Maïakovski, poète russe, souvenirs. [Suivi d’un poème de Maïakovski: “À pleine voix,” traduit par Elsa Triolet et Aragon, et d’une notice de V. Katanian.]*. Paris: Éditions sociales internationales, 1939.

Triolet, Elsa, and John Rodker. *Mayakovsky, Poet of Russia: Reminiscences from a Longer Work*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1939.

Tsemakhovich, B. “V Leningrade. Kino v anti-religioznyie dni.” *Kino-front* 14 (April 11, 1930): 3.

Tsivian, Yuri. “Charlie Chaplin and His Shadows: On Laws of Fortuity in Art.” *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 3 (2014): 71–84.

———. “O Chapline v russkom avangarde i o zakonakh sluchainogo v iskusstve.” *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, no. 81 (2006): 99–142.

Tsivian, Yuri, ed. *Lines of Resistance. Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*. Udine: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2004.

Tsopurashvili, Salome. “Images of the New Woman in Soviet Georgian Film.” In *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation, and History in the South Caucasus*, edited by Maia Barkaia and Alisse Waterston, 155–171. New York: Berghahn Books, 2018.

Turkin, Valentin. *Dramaturgiia kino: ocherki po teorii i praktike kinostsenariia*. Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1938.

———. *Dramaturgiia kino. Ocherki po istorii i praktike kinostsenariia*. Moscow: VGIK, 2007.

Tyerman, Edward. *The Search for an Internationalist Aesthetics: Soviet Images of China, 1920-1935*. 2014. PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Tynianov, Iurii. "O literaturnom fakte," *LEF*, no. 6 (1924a): 101–116.

———. "Slovar' Lenina—polemista." LEF, no. 5 (1924b): 81–110.

———. "O stsenarii." In Tynianov, Iurii. *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, 323-324. Moscow: Nauka, 1977.

Tynianov, Iurii, and Roman Iakobson. "Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka." *Novyi LEF*, no. 12 (1928): 35–37.

Valiuzhenich, Anatolii. "Neizvestnye stsenarii Osipa Brika." *Kinovedcheskiie zapiski*, no. 63 (2003): 81–110.

———. "Osip Brik." *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 78, 2006. Kinozapiski.ru. http://www.kinozapiski.ru/ru/print/sendvalues/851/.

———. *Osip Maksimovich Brik. Materialy k biografii*. Akmola: Niva, 1993.

Vekshin, Grigorii, ed., *Poetika i fonostilistika. Brikovskii sbornik. Vypusk 1: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii "I-e Brikovskie chteniia: Poetika i fonostilistika" (Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet pechati, Moskva, 10-12 fevralia 2010 goda).* Moscow: MGUP, 2010.

Ver-nef, "Charli Chaplin—militsioner." *Krysodav*, no. 3 (October 1923): 9–10.

Vertov, Dziga, Aleksandr Deriabin, and Richard Taylor. *Iz naslediia. T. 1.* Moscow: Eizenshtein-tsentr, 2004.

———. "Kinoki. Perevorot." *LEF*, no. 3 (June–July 1923): 135–143.

———. "We. A Version of a Manifesto." In *The Film Factory. Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*, edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, 69–71. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Vord, Kross. "Zametki o poteriakh. O chem dumala direktsiia?" *Kino* (Moscow), no 57 (October 20, 1930): 2.

Widdis, Emma. *Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject, 1917-1940*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

"Zapisnaia knizhka Lefa." Figure. *Novyi LEF*, no. 2 (February 1928): 39–46.