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Sound Works:
Model Listeners in Soviet Art, 1929-1941

by

Matthew F Kendall

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Slavic Languages and Literatures

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Eric Naiman, Chair
Professor Anne Nesbet
Professor Mark Sandberg
Professor Tom McEnaney

Spring 2019

Sound Works: Model Listeners in Soviet Art, 1929-1941

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the emergence of Soviet sonic culture—a concept I define as a set of practices, expectations, understandings, and preconceptions surrounding audible phenomena—during the early years of the Stalinist era (1929-41). On a global level, twentieth–century sound reproduction technologies enacted a dramatic shift in listeners' conceptions of attention, space, and community, and I contend that these technologies had a distinct impact on Soviet literature and cinema. Unlike their Western counterparts who aimed to capture, commodify, and sell sound, many artists in the USSR saw sound reproduction as a vital tool for the construction of state socialism. In case studies that investigate the work of Dziga Vertov, Valentin Kataev, Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Evgenii Cherviakov, and Andrei Platonov, I suggest that we can interpret these artists' depictions of monumental construction, industrial development, and reformative incarceration as the imagination of new listeners for a new country. Accordingly, this dissertation problematizes an enduring binary in the Slavic academic field that associates official, state-sponsored art with Stalin's repressive censorship, and which charts unofficial, unpublished art as a more legitimate site of artistic innovation. Contrary to a common narrative of the Soviet state's ideological rigidity, sonic culture's enthusiasm for incorporating sound into Soviet art suggests that Stalin's uncompromising push for technological modernity led to officially sanctioned innovations in artistic form and expressivity. Ultimately, I argue that Soviet sonic culture significantly shaped the development of Soviet literature and film.

While critical in its assertions, this work is at its core a cultural history, and I have intentionally based my research on newspapers, rarely-cited technical publications, and memoirs from Soviet sound designers, inventors, critics, filmmakers, and writers. The project integrates a media archaeological approach into its method, but I expand upon the possibilities of media archaeology by exploring how technology is limited or emboldened by ideology. This analysis of Soviet sonic culture and the listeners it produced—both real and imaginary—offers more than a new lens for the Soviet '30s: it is a paradigm for determining how media technologies within non-capitalist modernity both established and overturned the relationships we may expect to find between art, culture, and power.

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Alongside Eric's guidance, I was fortunate to work with a remarkably supportive dissertation committee that provided with me insightful feedback up until the very last days of writing. Anne Nesbet's talent for effortlessly beautiful scholarship, music, and prose was a constant source of inspiration. In addition to learning everything I can claim to know about early Soviet cinema from her, she has taught me to cherish the many joys of intellectual life. Mark Sandberg's infectious enthusiasm taught me that the best projects were those that one could get excited about, and his impressive ability to anticipate the different questions of different audiences makes him one of the most thoughtful readers with whom I have had the opportunity to work. Tom McEnaney's willingness to join the committee as a late addition was instrumental in re-tuning this project, and I only regret that his passion for all things sonic could not have been a part of this dissertation from the very beginning. I am deeply humbled that their brilliance has graced my work.

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a true interlocutor, and he deserves extra commendation for thoughtfully fielding my nagging questions of sound historiography and theory, which he often received—much to his chagrin, I'm sure—entirely over text message.

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Finally, this dissertation and the research behind it would not have been possible without the love and support of Sigrid Luhr. Sigrid is the strongest person I know, and a truly exemplary listener if there ever was one. Were it not for her, I surely would not and could not have seen this project through to the end. Yet even more importantly, Sigrid has allowed me to see that finishing the dissertation is not simply an end point: it is the beginning of what comes next.

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Note on Transliteration & Translations

Transliterations throughout this dissertation follow the Library of Congress system, with some exceptions. When names are particularly well-known (i.e. Shklovsky, Dostoevsky, Chernyshevsky), I revert to common spelling.

Unless I indicate otherwise, all translations are my own.

For Gloria Kendall

(March 25, 1930 – February 12, 2015)

Introduction

In 1924, Mikhail Zoshchenko published the short story *Diktofon*, which tells of a device that dazzles a Soviet city with sound. Like most of Zoshchenko's writing from the '20s, *Diktofon* presents a cross-section of Soviet life within a virtually plotless scene. Departing from the author's tendency to reproduce voices that index recognizable social types, *Diktofon* cedes vocal control to an eponymous machine that "obediently produces faithful recordings of everything."[1] Yet the device's capabilities shock its listeners so much that they struggle to say much at all:

> "Which of you," said Konstantin Ivanovich, "would like to say a few words into this ingenious apparatus?"
> Upon which our esteemed comrade Tykin, Vasily, stepped forward. A thin, long sort of fellow, who gets a salary of the sixty class plus overtime.
> "Permit me," he says, "to try it out."
> They let him.
> He went up to the machine not without a certain agitation, and thought a long time about what he should say, but he couldn't think of anything and with a wave of his hand walked away from the machine, sincerely regretting his low level of literacy. (255)

The punchline to *Diktofon* would be inscrutable if we refused to acknowledge that the emergence of sound reproduction fundamentally changed conceptions of space, attention, and community.[2] Zoshchenko's message to his reader is clear: they were living in a world where sound could be isolated and played back anytime, anywhere, for anyone—listeners were now liable to reach conclusions using only their ears.[3] This new, acoustic imagination left its mark on more texts than *Diktofon*. In Yuri Olesha's *Envy* (1928), the miserable narcissist Ivan Kavalerov is most frustrated that he fails to raise his voice over his competitors in sonic space.[4] Similarly, the

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[1] See Zoshchenko, "The Dictaphone" in *Nervous People and Other Stories,* trans. Maria Gordon and Hugh McLean (Indiana UP: 1963), p. 255.

[2] I use the term "sound reproduction" to refer to an assemblage of devices that includes the radio, the electric loudspeaker, and tape, phonographic, or gramophonic recording devices. My definition is indebted to a variety of scholars whom I cite in the pages that follow, including James Lastra, Douglas Kahn, Rick Altman, Jonathan Sterne, Emily Thompson, and Steven Connor, to name only a few. How these scholars understand and define the processes of sound recording and reproduction cannot be elucidated in a single footnote, but I note they all use the phrase "sound reproduction" to discuss any mediation of sound, and are particularly interested in how this conception changes over time.

[3] Following Douglas Kahn's lead, I use "sound" to refer to "all auditive phenomena, whether this involves actual sonic events that occur within time, or simply ideas, discourses, or debates about sound or listening." (See Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. 3). Kahn is the first in a long line of scholars who offer definitions of "sound" as such (or who, like Kahn, problematize this very definition in the first place), and his work is largely seen as a starting point for recent attempts that question whether or not sound is a phenomenon or object that is rooted in a stable ontology.

[4] In order to be heard over a cacophony of a performing orchestra, various other voices, and the droning of noise of an airfield, Kavalerov explains that he "formed a mouthpiece with my hands and shouted…I rose on my tiptoes…Then I rose up on tiptoe again, and through the same mouthpiece, drowning out the

traumatized poet from Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (1928-40), Ivan Bezdomnyi, finds that no matter where he goes, he cannot escape the blaring din of Tchaikovskii's *Evgenii Onegin,* which plays from open windows throughout the streets of Moscow.[5]

Although it is now commonplace to assert that the 20th century's *visual* ruptures left a distinct imprint on literature, film, and art, this dissertation grew from curiosity about how writers and artists in the Soviet Union responded to major ruptures that impacted the ear.[6] But why has the audible remained so woefully unexplored in scholarly accounts of the USSR? This question is particularly relevant to the Stalinist period—roughly 1928 to 1953—when a massive technological and cultural overhaul provoked these very emotions in Soviet citizens. Literature and art that appeared during Stalin's rule has been studied and theorized in great detail, but making room for sound in these stories offers a new perspective that, as in studies of visual culture, insists upon an intersection of technology, state power, artistic production, and the senses that shaped these artworks.[7] Indeed, how could we properly contextualize or historicize

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soldier, I sent a ringing howl to that inaccessible side: 'Sausage-maker!'" See Olesha, *Envy* (New York: NYRB, 2004), p. 45.

[5] "…from all windows, all doors, all gateways, roofs and attics, cellars and courtyards, came the hoarse blasts of the polonaise from the opera *Evgenii Onegin*…and all along [Ivan's] difficult journey, he was inexpressibly tormented for some reason by the ubiquitous orchestra accompanying a heavy basso who sang of his love for Tatiana." See Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita* (New York: Grove, 1995), pp. 57-58. There is a historical precedent for Bulgakov's depiction of a city overrun by amplified music: it was illegal to place sound reproduction devices (gramophones in particular) close to windows in St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire. Sound historian Jonathan Sterne is the first scholar of whom I am aware that cites this law, initially referenced in an issue of the New York Times published from 1912 (See Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), p. 280). Although we should be initially skeptical of a claim in America about Imperial Russia printed at the height of yellow journalism, ban is confirmed in the August 27th, 1909 edition of *Petrogradskaia gazeta,* where it is written that "В виду того, что игра грамофонов и органов в трактирах, портерных, чайных и т.п. заведениях слышна во дворе и беспокоит обывателей, и.д. СПб. градоначальника г.-м. О.И.Вендорф вчера сделал распоряжение, чтобы участковые приставы обязали подпиской содержателей этих заведений, чтобы игра грамофонов и органов не допускалась при открытых дверях и окнах…"

[6] Studies of modern visual culture are too numerous to count, but Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz's edited volume, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (1995), and Martin Jay's essay "Scopic Regimes of Modernity" all suggest that arts and culture of the modern era are characterized by a fixation with the visual. There have been several attempts to name and define an analogous impact of sonic regimes, ranging from Sam Halliday's coinage of the idea of "sonic modernity" and Emily Thompson's phrase, the "soundscape of modernity" (See Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity* (2003) and Halliday, *Sonic Modernity* (2013)). I will return to the question of whether or not these are precisely the terms that can help us describe the situation of the Soviet Union, but I note now that the "sonic turn" works both in tandem with and against the claims of studies in visual culture. Jonathan Sterne, for example, has proposed the "audio-visual litany" as a form of thinking that has worked to distance the visual from the aural on fallacious grounds—listening is, like watching, just as much of a culturally constructed activity.

[7] Recent work on the role of sensory experience within state socialism has challenged the primarily Foucauldian, discourse-centric historiographical model with nuances from histories of the senses—the operative question asks whether bodily experience is something prior to or product of culture. Exemplary work has been published by Emma Widdis, who offers an account of the Soviet cinema's appeal to a new regime of the senses in *Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject, 1917–1940* (2017).

creative activity without considering the history of *sonic* culture, and without taking into account its intersections, parallels, or divergences from its visual counterpart?[8]

By offering readings that engage with the sonic history of the Soviet Union, this dissertation offers an affirmative answer to the question of sound's role in the humanities, a problem that John Mowitt summarizes as whether or not "sound is the sort of object that can be meaningfully contextualized."[9] In three chapters, I explore how literature and film were shaped by what I call Soviet sonic culture, a set of practices, expectations, understandings, and preconceptions surrounding audible phenomena. Zoshchenko, Olesha, and Bulgakov's texts share a listener who must respond to a sonic world he struggles to understand, and this listener reappears, albeit in several different forms, in the literary and cinematic works of Dziga Vertov, Valentin Kataev, Viktor Shklovsky, Evgenii Cherviakov, and Andrei Platonov, whom I consider in the following pages. I engage with the categories of attention, voice, and fidelity in order to frame sound as a problem for these writers and filmmakers tasked by the Soviet state with representing Soviet reality. All of them were forced to compete with devices that captured and reproduced audible phenomena and that, as Zoshchenko put it, could "obediently produce faithful recordings of everything." Taken as a whole, this project suggests that sound reproduction complicated attempts to represent Soviet life precisely when the state gave this task the name of socialist realism, which quickly became the benchmark and highest priority of creative activity.

I propose two modes of inquiry that can make room for sound in the readings that follow already in the project's title, *Sound Works*.[10] The first asks how we can better describe the formal *work* sound does, thus implying that the audible complicates our understanding of narrative, spectatorship or readership, and mimesis. The second makes the case that certain works are predominantly *about* sound, thus aiming to reposition these texts within Soviet sonic culture. Both assumptions yield new insights into the story of the sudden shift from the utopian '20s to the politically and culturally repressive '30s—arguably *the* central problem with which scholarship on the first half of the USSR has engaged—by pointing to an alternative narrative for this well-trodden path. Indeed, attitudes toward the audible reveal a blurrier distinction between the '20s and the '30s than the clearly-cut borders we typically propose.[11] The sonically

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[8] This attempt to locate the ear's role in culture continues in the present day: in scholarly writing on sound and listening, it is now commonplace to draw attention to those sonic phenomena that drive contemporary news cycles and related regimes of information. A few examples include the analysis of transmissions from NASA spacecraft via Carolyn Abbate's recent research on the history of "microphonics," and the geo-locative chirping of the sunken Malaysian Air Flight 370 that opens John Mowitt's *Sound*s (2015) (Surprisingly, no published studies have yet embarked on the brain-damaging sound waves measured in the US embassies of Cuba and China, but the work has surely been undertaken). These examples typically serve the purpose of asserting that we have not yet reached consensus for how to discuss the audible phenomena that surround us, a theme that motivates this project, as well.

[9] See John Mowitt, *Sounds: The Ambient Humanities* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2015), p. 2.

[10] Importantly, I do not claim that the wide spectrum of examples I draw from allows me access to the immediate, phenomenological experience of hearing and listening within a particular historical moment. Nor would I pursue such a project: claims about accessing sensory experience are not only overly ambitious for the scope of this dissertation, but historically flawed.

[11] Many scholars have drawn our attention to how the Bolsheviks' contradictory attitudes concerning sexuality, ethnicity, and violence often rose to the surface of Soviet discourse. Notable examples of these studies are Yuri Slezkine's "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism"(1994), Eric Naiman's *Sex in Public* (1997), Elliot Borenstein's *Men without*

experimental and path-breaking works that I examine were not avant-garde protests against the expectations of official, state-supported art. On the contrary, they were official experiments that enjoyed funding, publication, and endorsement from the Soviet state, whether through help from the Soviet Writers' Union, the film industry, or party leadership itself. While one narrative of artists and writers who worked throughout the Soviet '30s often tell of a sudden *narrowing* of viable creative outlets, the state's excitement for incorporating sound into its art questions the determinism that guides these accounts. The story of sonic culture, however, suggests that the Soviet Union's uncompromising push for technological progress allowed for creative advancement alongside its restrictions.

Yet the closer we look, the more we can see that putting sound to work was no simple task. As a society that rejected capitalism, the Soviet Union was intent on using the tools of its western counterparts towards different ends. This embrace of a materialist philosophy can explain why Soviet sonic culture was plagued by the recurring association of sound reproduction—an import from the capitalist west—with illusion or deception. One famous warning against sound reproduction's ability to conjure illusions was the 1928 "Statement" on sound, written by the directors Eisenstein, Aleksandrov, and Pudovkin, which I cite in several different places throughout this dissertation:

> Sound recording is a two-edged invention, and it is most probable that its use will proceed along the line of least resistance, i.e. along the line of *satisfying simple curiosity*.
>
> In the first place there will be commercial exploitation of the most salable merchandise, *talking films*. Those in which sound recording will proceed on a naturalistic level, exactly corresponding with the movement on the screen, and providing a certain "illusion" (*illiuzia*) of talking people, of audible objects, etc.[12]

The authors of the "Statement" predicted that sound recording and reproduction would bring only confusion to Soviet life. In a culture founded upon Marx's idea of material forces standing behind the constituent parts of experience, sound was a stubborn arbiter of an ethereality that refused to become reified.[13] To make matters more complex, listeners disagreed over whether

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Women (2000), Keith Livers's *Constructing the Stalinist Body* (2004), and Lilya Kaganovsky's *How the Soviet Man was Unmade* (2008). While a binary between the Soviet '20s and '30s appears in several other works (including those cited above), this division is perhaps most memorable as the operative term of Vladimir Papernyi's *Kul'tura 2* (1985), a major study of Stalinist architecture. Elsewhere, the '20s and '30s have been distinguished as eras of orality and of literacy, respectively, by Yuri Murashov (See Murashov, "*Pis'mo i ustnaia rech' v diskrusakh o iazyke 1930-kh godov*" in *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon.* Ed. Dobrenko and Günter. Saint Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2000).

[12] See Eisenstein, Aleksandrov, and Pudovkin, "Statement on Sound," in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 234–235.

[13] One of the better explanations of this phenomenon appears in Christina Kiaer's *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (2005), where Kiaer asks, "what happens to the individual fantasies and desires organized under capitalism by the commodity fetish and the market after the revolution?" Kiaer's story quickly draws attention, however, to the uneasy tension between the Soviet Union's rejection of commodities and their quick return to Russian life during the institution of the New Economic Policy, a stimulus plan designed to re-introduce the private market to an economically-ravaged country.

these sonic illusions were a beneficial or inimical addition to Soviet life.[14] One proposed solution was to appointed recording as the path for transforming sound into a material object: by 1932, so many recordings had accumulated that Anatolii Lunacharskii, the Soviet People's Commissar, opened a state sound archive. Lunacharskii declared that the gramophone had finally turned sound into a storable object, the ultimate dream of a Marxist society that had, already in the Soviet '20s, dedicated itself towards overcoming death.[15] This vision of an archive of talking tombs echoed from other notable personalities in the same year, when Maksim Gorkii suggested that the radio could connect women to the Bolsheviks' overwhelmingly masculine workforce by broadcasting their successes, which he thought remained sorely *invisible* at the time.[16]

To better contextualize how this characterization of sound as illusory could co-exist, and at times even thrive inside of a materially-minded society, I offer in these chapters a series of different "model listeners" that appeared throughout the 1930s.[17] These depictions of listening offered readers and viewers examples for how to negotiate the intricacies of sonic life, thus momentarily crystallizing the often shifting attitudes of Soviet sonic.[18] While the listener of Zoshchenko, Olesha and Bulgakov is thoroughly overwhelmed by their surroundings, Dziga Vertov's listener suggests that re-orienting the ear could lead to socialist empowerment, whereas Valentin Kataev saw the audible as more closely related to Marx's philosophy of history than the visual. This characterization of listening as a product of cultural and social attitudes is not my own: among others, Jean-Luc Nancy and Peter Szendy have framed the distinction between hearing and listening as analogous to the binaries of nature and culture, and of necessity and contingency. Hearing is thus linked with the immediacy of phenomenological experience, while listening represents a culturally learned practice, always posterior to the workings of culture and the social.[19] Equally sensitive to the cultural structures that precede sonic judgment is Mladen

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[14] The film director Aleksandr Andrievskii, for example, believed that "sonic mystification"—the inability to clearly link a sound back to its source with the *intention* to deceive—would become a major stylistic device in Soviet Cinema. See Andrievskii, *Postroenie tonfil'ma* (1930), p. 80.

[15] Lunacharskii proclaimed that unlike text, "speech recorded on the gramophone will stay with us for as long as we want." Anatolii Lunacharskii, "*Chelovecheskoe slovo moguchee,*" РГАФД, 193_ 4I902–I (Док-3444).

[16] See Maksim Gorkii, "*O sovetskom radioveshchanii"* in *Sobranie Sochinenii*, t. 26, p. 340.

[17] In her work on the preponderance of musical imagery and themes that characterize the Russian and Soviet avant-gardes, Julia Kursell has called literary and visual works from this period a type of *schallkunst* (sound art). It might be even more advantageous to follow the lead of Neil Verma, who gives radio drama the name that Rudolf Arnheim prescribed to it—a *Hörkunst,* both an art of sound *and* of listening. See Kursell, *Schallkunst: Eine Literaturgeschicte der Musik in der frühen russischen Avantgarde* (2003) Verma, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (2012).

[18] I contextualize these listeners in the spirit of the model readers and model viewers that Evgenii Dobrenko has already located in the Soviet '30s. "The new reader, spectator, or listener," Dobrenko writes, "forms the optics of his perception during the very process of 'getting accustomed to culture." Evgenii Dobrenko, *Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP,1997), p. 117. Alongside Dobrenko's work, we have seen a major historiographical movement—the revisionists—attempt to locate that these models were never performative, but sincere: see Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006); Garros, Veronique, Korenevskaya, Natalia, & Lahusen, Thomas, eds. *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s* (New York: The New Press, 1995); Paperno, Irina: *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009).

[19] See Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham UP, 2002), and Szendy, *Listen: A History of our Ears* (New

Dolar, who discusses the semiotic divisions between sound, voice, and noise as governed by a "dividing line…[that is] elusive and uncertain," one that asserts its arbitrariness dependent on the particularities of a singular historical moment.[20] Like Szendy, Dolar, and Nancy, I intend to locate where this dividing line lay (and where it fluctuated) throughout the '30s: it is, after all, the interplay between a culture's *fantasy* of listening and the reality of listening practices, undoubtedly more complex, that offers an insight into what we call ideology.[21]

Sound Proofing: Three Questions of Method

The common absence of sound in narratives about Stalinism, literature, and cinema may offer a motivation to fill this gap, but several methodological hurdles have stood in the way of incorporating the audible into our discussions of these topics. The first hurdle asks which sources we should privilege when we write about sound: physical recordings, the history of technologies that created these recordings, the written (or recorded) testimony of earwitnesses within a particular historical moment, or something else entirely? Because it would seem that, on the surface, sound leaves behind no material trace save for recordings, sound is a vexing problem for cultural historians and philologists who are accustomed to working with primary materials. The historian of sound reproduction, Jonathan Sterne, has suggested that filling this lacuna requires the location of specific "practice[s] associated with sound," which are typically found in discourse *about* sound.[22] Without access to "earwitnesses" from the early Soviet period, I follow Sterne's advice by identifying and working with the discourses and ideas that, as he puts it, were "grafted onto" sound reproduction technologies by their listeners and users.[23]

I have already stated that we can find this evidence in depictions of listening within Soviet literature and film, but attaching ourselves to this proposed anchor introduces new challenges. Literary scholars are understandably skeptical when texts are treated as sonic phenomena, and their suspicion is by and large rooted in the legacy of deconstructionist thought.[24] Jacques Derrida's famous concept of phonocentrism, for example, attacks what Derrida sees as a cultural tendency to elevate the sonic annunciation of language over its written form. Derrida links this elevation of the audible with a fallacious assumption: that voice alone is proof of a subject's presence, a misunderstanding that shortchanges what he sees as the *true* centrality of writing, inscription, and textuality in a culture based on the absence, not presence, of a *written* subject.[25] For those who search for sound in mute materials, the implications of

York: Fordham UP, 2001).

[20] See Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 13.

[21] By using the term "ideology," I follow Terry Eagleton's suggestion that ideology paradoxically has as much to do "with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class," as it "concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects." See Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 5–9.

[22] See Sterne, *The Audible Past,* p. 7.

[23] Ibid., p. 8.

[24] Prior to the appearance of deconstruction, the history of literary theory began with the Russian Formalists' embrace of sound. What they called the sound patterning of prose and poetry—in many of their canonical readings, particularly in such classic essays such as Boris Eikhenbaum's *"How Gogol's Overcoat is Made."*

[25] The act of inscription is, therefore, the continuation of a speaking subject's absence. The assertion that speech is an antipode to writing (and reading) is a particularly prominent in Derrida's work *Of Grammatology* (1967)*,* but also appears in a contemporary work, *Speech and Phenomena* (1967).

Derrida's thinking are clear—deconstruction insists that the performance, recitation, or sonic instantiations of text are wholly separate processes from its inscribed form. Paul de Man built upon this idea by proposing an irreconcilable gap between language's sound and its inscription in his essay, "The Resistance to Theory." De Man writes that the inscribed signifier is disconnected from historical processes due to the material (and phenomenal) differences between the word, light, and sound waves.[26]

On the contrary, I assume that non-sonic inscription *does* tell us something about sound. The deconstructionist position, however, offers an unexpectedly productive point of departure. If we follow Derrida's logic, as Lisa Gitelman has shown, then the differences we can find in *methods* of inscription—writing, sound recording, or typing—invariably lead to different understandings of the inscribed sign.[27] Accordingly, it is the technologies and practices surrounding that inscription that recuperate the role of sound in Soviet art. Thus we can see the importance of drawing from a wide array of primary sources linked with both literature *and* film: alongside an archive of surviving, physical sound recordings of the cinema, I construct a genealogy of various sounds that reappear in different forms via different methods of inscription, which allows me to trace how different media interacted with the often winding and erratic paths of these sonic signatures. Throughout these chapters, I trace the chirping of birdsongs, the whining of construction equipment, the buzzing of telephone static, the jangling of restraints, and the impact of a flogging rod in order to demonstrate the unlikely, recurring role they played in literature, film, and discussions of those media, and how they left their traces as both sonic and non-sonic signs.[28]

The second question: how can the story of sound offer more than a mere continuation of the narratives of Stalinism we have already told? Rather than reiterating a progressive ensnarement of artistic activity by the state's rapidly narrowing tastes, journalistic coverage of listening events in both the Soviet '20s and '30s reveal a rough symmetry towards these cultural forms. In 1927 the musicians Lev Termen' (often transliterated as Theremin) and Arsenii Avraamov appeared before an audience in Moscow to present new acoustic devices and experimental musical works, and in response to this presentation, the state newspaper *Pravda* championed their work as an innovation of utmost importance to the country's future.[29] This enthusiasm for innovation is often assumed to have ended by 1936, when an infamous review of Shostakovich's opera, *Ledi Makbet mtsenskogo uezda,* was published under the title "Muddle instead of Music" (*Sumbur vmesto muzyki*) on page three of *Pravda*.[30] While this article is

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Friedrich Kittler historicizes Derrida's ideas in his *Discourse Networks* (1985)*,* where he claims that the development of a "phonetic method" for alphabet learning in 19th century Germany exploited phonocentrism, and led to the production of a wholly new, parallel system of communication. See Kittler, Friedrich, *Discourse Networks: 1800/1900* (Stanford, Stanford UP: 1990), p. 33.

[26] See de Man, "Resistance to Theory" in *Resistance to Theory: Essays* (Minneapolis: UMinn Press, 1986).

[27] See Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999).

[28] A critique of the determinist approached to histories of the materiality of sound can be found in Carolyn Abbate's recent article, "Sound Object Lessons" JAMS 69:3, Fall 2016, pp. 793-829.

[29] See "*Elektrifikatsiia Muzyki,"* in *Pravda*, 08 June 1927.

[30] As Simo Mikkonen has argued, scholars have likely overstated the consequences of this article for Shostakovich's career, and for musical culture more broadly. It was not primarily Shostakovich who was the reviewer's target, but "*formalizm*" within the arts; Shostakovich was back to work in about a year, and other composers continued to write dissonant and challenging pieces for Soviet concert halls. See Mikkonen, "'Muddle instead of Music' in 1936: Cataclysm of Music Administration" in *Shostakovich*

typically cited as evidence for the distinction between the Soviet '20s and '30s, the newspaper *Izvestiia* returned with enthusiasm to the avant-garde's advances only five years later, by highlighting the capabilities of Evgenii Sholpo's new "Variaphone" device, which could produce algorithmically generated, wholly dissonant compositions.[31] Clearly, the press enjoyed a paradoxical embrace of technology's ability to produce new, atypical sounds, coupled with a denigration of "music" that shared similar qualities.

With accusations of the debasement of music still fresh, the relevance and relationship between "music" and my operative term, "sound," must be discussed. The divisions between music (*muzyka*), sound (*zvuk*), and noise (*shum*) are linguistic, and my subjects all share an impulse to destroy the dividing line that separates all three. Whereas Dziga Vertov followed the avant-garde to question this distinction in the first place, Andrei Platonov indexes the performances of noise orchestras to bring music and sound closer together; Valentin Kataev found in the noise of industry a full-blown language, and Viktor Shklovsky decided to describe of the jangling of prisoners' restraints as a "symphony." This tendency for a historical re-definition and evolution of sonic experience is exemplified by James Johnson's classic study, *Listening in Paris* (1995), which asks how 18th and 19th century audiences at musical events fell silent, thus reorienting themselves to the performance taking place in front of them. Relatedly, Theodor Adorno concludes his essays "The Radio Symphony," "The Curves of the Needle," and "The Form of the Phonograph Record" by insisting that our orientation towards sonic material is *always* fluid, and shaped by the technologies and cultural assumptions that precede it.[32] If we use Johnson's study and Adorno's prognostications to assume that the definition and practice of listening is always fluid, and that it is primarily contingent on cultural factors, we can begin to find motivation for more closely examining the Soviet Union's reformulation of the listener in the 1930s.[33]

Although some thinkers have located an "aesthetic dictatorship" within the 1930s, the ever-fluid distinctions between sound, music, and noise provide a more complicated story for how forms evolved within Stalinism. I test this hypothesis by working directly with two field-changing thinkers, Boris Groys and Friedrich Kittler. In his seminal work *The Total Art of Stalinism* (1992), Groys argues that the Russian and Soviet avant-gardes laid the groundwork for both the art of socialist realism and the nightmarish state that gave rise to it, locating a "demiurgical strain" within the avant-garde art of Kazimir Malevich, Velimir Khlebnikov, and many others.[34] In order to better connect the pieces of Groys' story that argue for a commonality

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Studies 2:10, 2010.

[31] See "*Izobretenie Evgeniia Sholpo,*" in *Izvestiia,* 30 March 1941.

[32] See Adorno, *Essays about Music* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002). Jonathan Sterne has echoed this idea in *The Audible Past,* where he suggests that sonic analysis can now shift from music and voice to sound as a phenomenon proper.

[33] See Johnson, *Listening in Paris* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995).

[34] I am sympathetic to Groys's rejection of those arguments (including Papernyi's) that clearly distinguish creative and cultural activities of the 1920s and the 1930s—his implication that the former is contiguous with the latter (thus implying a certain determinism) resembles the story of sound's impact on the Soviet arts. Notably, Evgenii Dobrenko has challenged what he sees as Groys's blurring of politics and aesthetics, and claims that socialist realism (which Groys refers to consistently as one of the several appendages of "Stalinism," a term that Dobrenko calls unreliably unstable) was only focused on political gain; aesthetics were of secondary concern. (See Dobrenko, *The Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), pp 44-45). Groys's characterization of an "aesthetic dictatorship" that structured the avant-garde's uncompleted project could, according to Dobrenko, only be completed by a

between these two periods, we can use the media-theoretical ideas of Friedrich Kittler in his works *Discourse Networks* (1985) and *Film, Gramophone, Typewriter* (1999). Kittler proposes a history of human expression that tells the story of a progressive reduction of our ability to represent ourselves due to the standardizing effects of containment media—the typewriter, for example, would dull the prior expressivity of human handwriting.[35] I bring these thinkers together in order to offer a slightly more nuanced outcome of their equally engaging models. Kittler's demonstration that new technologies lead to new discourses (which are, in fact, older discourses reinvented) can guide us through Groys' insistence that the '20s and '30s are perhaps more related than they may at first seem; if we see their work as the production of new discourses within moments that *insist upon*—but do not necessarily prove—their relation, we can understand the unique case of sound in the Soviet Union. A dividing line between these texts can sometimes be difficult to establish: Zoshchenko's *Diktofon* (1924), for example, has much in common with the treatment of vocal space in Valentin Kataev's *Time, Forward!* (1932), just as it predates arguments concerning sound fidelity in the Soviet cinema by the late '30s.

This leads me to the third question, which concerns the assumptions that stand behind this project's periodization. Why begin in 1929, and why end in 1941? Sound reproduction did not simply appear in 1929, and much had been much recorded prior, such as the voluminous recording experiments of poets and speakers produced in the twenties (in fact, many of these recordings were confiscated in 1930).[36] The twelve years I have chosen as a frame for *Sound Works* correspond with a rapid *evolution* of sound reproduction in the Soviet Union, when the state financed the domestic production of a crown jewel for non-capitalist modernity: devices that were intended to function differently from those manufactured abroad.

But does this temporal frame not imply that *Sound Works* is a study about modernity, or at the very least that it is about modernism? The troublesome distinction between the words "modernity" and "modernism" haunts any study of the first half of the 20th century, a situation further aggravated by the relatively erratic political and technological development of Eastern Europe and Russia (this without even mentioning our frequent use of the periodizing terms "Soviet" and "Stalinist").[37] Famously, the distinction between modernity and modernism has led Peter Osborne to critique the practice of periodization itself, thus associating our proclivity for temporal nominalism with a flawed "politics of time."[38] The impact of this politics is perhaps best on display in the influential work of Marshall Berman, who has argued that the two forces of modernity and modernism are always in conflict with each other, and that a reaction to the

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real dictatorship., Groys's story sometimes reads as a series of correlations rather than a narrative of clear causation: indeed, no artists in Stalin's time went so far as to claim their indebtedness to the avant-garde, and Dobrenko suggest that Groys's model overlooks the forces of politics, thus attributing far too much power to individual artists.

[35] One criticism of Kittler could focus on how he overlooks the abundance of *failed* technologies that appeared throughout the 20th century.

[36] See Lev' Shilov, *Golosa zazvuchashie vnov'* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1977).

[37] Issues of whether Russia's agrarian economy had prepared it for the revolutionary turn to socialism was, of course, of much discussion by Marx and Engels themselves. We should give extra pause to distinguish between variations in geographical modernisms. Russia's 20th-century sonic history was undoubtedly distinct from sound in every country that touched its borders, and thus a blanket "sonic modernity" or "modern soundscape" would prove a difficult concept for bridging any two countries, either temporally or geographically. See Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 11.

[38] Ibid.

totalitarian-like, "imprisoning" models of technological advancement yielded what we now call artistic modernism.[39] In response, Perry Anderson criticized Berman for surreptitiously wielding an anti-Marxist political program, one that insists that modernist art is inherently regenerative, thus building new forms of collectivity on top of social and moral dissolution, not from out of the contradictions of capitalism itself.[40]

There is an equally difficult distinction between modernism and modernity to be made in the Soviet case. The aesthetic, political, economic, industrial, and cultural relationships that the country developed in the 1930s were unlike anything prior to them, but such a judgment could be equally applied to nearly every decade of the Soviet Union. If the "historical turn" in literary and film scholarship has taught us anything, it is that we should take seriously the idea that texts emerge as products of an assemblage of cultural forces.[41] Literary texts and films from this period, however, do not provide a clear blueprint of political history, nor is it always possible to equate artistic practice with the political machinations of Stalinism. In what follows, I suggest that the story of Soviet sound is an example of the asymmetry between forms and culture within non-capitalist modernity, and about a specific Soviet modernism that gestures towards the distinction of the Soviet experience—down to the level of sensory perception and attitudes towards it—within the 20th century.

Model Listeners: Sound Studies and the Slavic Field

Given the inevitable complications that we encounter in studying sound, how can we be sure that the Slavic field will be enriched by engagement with the audible? Although they may at first seem tangential, the revisionist interests of scholars in the Slavic field and "sound studies" have already intersected for some time. The current academic vocabulary for discussing sound materialized at a similar crossroads: originating in the 1970s as a response to Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964), the appearance of musicologist R. Murray Schafer's *The Soundscape* (1977) and literary critic Walter Ong's influential work, *Orality and Literacy* (1982), sparked a newfound interest in the role of sound within literary and social traditions. Similar impulses reverberated in related fields: bridging interest in the sonic to the study of Film & Media were Michel Chion's *Audio-Vision* (1990) and Rick Altman's *Sound Theory: Sound Practice* (1992), which argued for the relevance of formalist and historical discussions of sound to film history. Slightly later, the historian Alain Corbin developed on Schafer's idea in *Village Bells: The Culture of the Senses in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (1994) by using the term "auditory landscape," a move likely rooted in the work of anthropologist Steven Feld, who used his work *Sound and Sentiment: Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (1982) as a rehearsal for his eventual coinage "acoustemology," a term used for describing how attitudes toward sound can become a "way of knowing."[42]

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[39] See Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), pp 35-36.
[40] See Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution," in *New Left Review* 1:144 (Mar-Apr 1984).
[41] In cinema studies, for example, the "modernity thesis" has posited that the emergence of early cinema as the medium that best emulated the "shocks and flows" that belonged to the new tempo of modern life. See Tom Gunning, "Modernity and Cinema: A Culture of Shocks and Flows" in *Cinema and Modernity* ed. Murray Pomerance. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006, pp. 302-303.
[42] See Feld, "Acoustemology," in *Keywords on Sound* (Chapel Hill: Duke UP, 2016).

These revisions of Schafer's soundscape expose its greatest weakness: as a concept, the broad yet highly contingent nature of soundscape is difficult to reliably apply to historical narratives.[43] As I mentioned earlier, the lack of empirical recordings or any kind of data source fails to live up to the totalizing notion of a soundscape, but we should be equally cautious to posit how a single historical moment could have sounded for a single observer. In response to this conundrum, virtually all works in cultural, literary, film studies, or science and technology studies grapple with two landmark books published in 2003, Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) and Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity* (2003). Each work attempts to revise the Schafer's ideas by working with both historical sources and discourse *about* sound rather than evidence for what it may have been.

For Sterne, accounts of the *imagination* of sound reproduction offer the motivation to reassemble practices surrounding sound, whether they are fictional narratives about listening, advertisements for new sound reproduction devices, or studies of the physiology of the ear. Sterne's is a conviction that sounds needs to be turned into a "broad intellectual problem" rather than the driving factor for the accumulation or documentation of various soundscapes.[44] According to Sterne, sound is never a natural phenomenon that is fixed and unchanging—its very existence is separate from the human, a claim he uses to assert, in a Foucauldian sense, that bodily experience is something experienced as a *part* of social life, not prior to it, as the organizing impulse of "soundscape" may incorrectly imply.[45] Thompson takes a divergent but related approach, emphasizing that there *is* such a thing as a distinctly new sound, a moment when the world starts to sound empirically differently, rather than the project of another cultural re-orientation to it.[46] By redefining precisely what the "soundscape" is, however, as both an environment and a way of perceiving that environment (much like Sterne's conception),

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[43] "Soundscape" was, clearly, a proto-environmental conceptions of aesthetic experience, which could now be framed as a major influence on ecocriticism and other environmental approaches to art that concern themselves with aesthetic environments. Schafer's idea of the soundscape progressed through series of ecological metaphors, which rubbed off on adjacent thinkers and critics; indeed, in his own essay on listening, Roland Barthes pulls from Schafer's concern with "pollution": "If the auditive background invades the whole of phonic space (if the ambient noise is too loud), then selection or intelligence of space is no longer possible, listening is inured; the ecological phenomenon which is today called pollution—and which is becoming a black myth of our technological civilization—is precisely the intolerable corruption of human space, insofar as humanity needs to *recognize itself* in that space: pollution damages the senses by which the living being, from animal to man, recognizes its territory, its habitat: sight, smell, hearing. And indeed there is an audio-pollution which everyone, from hippie to pensioner, feels (through certain myths of nature) is deleterious to the living being's very intelligence, which is, *stricto sensu*, its power of communicating effectively with its *Umwelt*: pollution prevents listening." (See Barthes, *"Listening,"* p. 247) Tim Ingold, an anthropologist, has recently critiqued the idea of soundscape by posing three arguments: that it unconvincingly separates the audible from the total ensemble of reality; that the ear may function differently than the eye's relationship to a landscape, from which he assumes "soundscape" is derived; and a focus on the materiality of sound resists the *experience* of sonic encounters. I am somewhat skeptical of Ingold's claims, as my own are based in the materiality (and at times, difficulty in determining that materiality) that was projected onto sonic experience.
[44] For Sterne, it is not enough that we can quote Marx on the senses to start thinking about sound—instead, he argues that there is a reason that sound and the senses appear in Marx in the first place, which thus asserts that there is something vital about the experience of listening for the potentiality and phenomenon of thought in general. See Sterne, p. 5.
[45] Ibid. p. 12.
[46] See Thompson, p. 2.

Thompson explains how the 20th century was the first to grapple with the idea of controlling sound in space. It is thus the *construction* of soundscape itself that characterizes the 20th century as fundamentally modern.

As could be expected, revisions of Sterne and Thompson's impact on the field have appeared with increasing frequency.[47] My account of sound in the Soviet Union draws equally from both of these thinkers, but I frame my contributions predominantly in response to Sterne, who introduces the phrase "auditory culture" to discuss sound as a sensory problem within historical moments. It is the *conscious* conflation of the sensory with the ideological, however, that distinguishes the Soviet context from the canonically researched cases of Anglo-American and other capitalist modernities. I propose that we can more accurately define the Soviet context by using the term "sonic culture, which refers to the Soviet Union's attempts to redirect, redefine, and revise *how sound should be listened to*—an ideal that is figured by my model listeners. If the auditory, as Sterne shows, refers to the experience and practice of listening, then the sonic attempts to give a larger picture of discourses that seek definitions of sound *and* listening, and at the same time describes the interrelationships between them.

Whereas Sterne and other historians of sound technologies have looked at how consumers adapted to the new demands of telephony and phonography in capitalism at the turn of the 20th century, I look at how the two most important art forms in Soviet society, literature and cinema, taught audiences and readers to listen in a socialist state. This version of modernity is founded on the assumption that sound can be *dissociated,* and not constructed in space, that its reception is neither scientific nor calculable, but ideological. In this sense, the illusory nature of sound that the Soviets worried was justified: what they said about it had less in common with what it was than what they wanted to believe about it.

The aims of sound studies and the Slavic field have more in common than it may seem. Asking if the stories we have told about the Soviet Union make adequate room for the audible, Katerina Clark's essay "Aural Hieroglyphics" is one of the first scholarly calls to consider the importance of sound in Russia's cultural history, an observation Clark reached after becoming interested in sound design choices for representing the Soviet past in contemporary Russian film.[48] Clark's essay would prompt Richard Hernandez to argue that Stalin's Five-Year-Plan led to the unplanned goal of a sonic overhaul via radio and the destruction of bell towers in the Russian countryside.[49] We would be almost nowhere, however, without the recent efforts of

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[47] Indeed, the field's inchoate canon cycles through a constant re-definition of its object, and newer works in sound studies from Jennifer Lynn Stoever, Tom McEnaney, Gavin Steingo, and Jim Stykes ask how contexts alternative to the Western European and American experiences of modernity can redefine both Sterne and Thompson's arguments about sound and culture. The case can be made that the impulse to critique Sterne's and Thompson's ideas originates within (and is prompted by) their texts themselves: Sterne, for example, has conjectured that the problem of sound studies does not concern a lack of materials in the face of sound's ubiquitous role in world history; what is missing is a conceptual *framework* that unites these studies and, through that theoretical unity, will prove their inherent value as specific cases. See Sterne, pp. 4-5.

[48] Clark, "Aural Hieroglyphics? Some Reflections on the Role of Sound in Recent Russian Films and its Historical Context," in *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia* (Bloomington, 1995).

[49] Similar statements have appeared in recent publications in the Slavic field. There is an increasingly convincing body of evidence, for example, that the Five-Year-Plan led to originally unplanned goal of a sonic overhaul and conquering of the countryside. See Hernandez, Richard. "Sacred Sound and Sacred Substance: Church Bells and the Auditory Culture of Russian Villages during the Bolshevik *Velikii*

Andrey Smirnov's *Sound in Z* (2013), a translation of the first major volume to offer research on the Soviet Union's unique sonic history. Since then, Stephen Lovell and Lilya Kaganovksy have led the way to unearth the material history of Soviet sound in their respective volumes, *Russia in the Microphone Age: A History of Soviet Radio, 1917-1970* (2015), and *The Voice of Technology* (2018), both of which ask how Soviet conceptions of sound can impact our understanding of the relationship between art, technology, and power in the Soviet Union. While all of these studies propose that we understand Soviet history and art through the lens of a history of the senses, Claire Shaw's *Deaf in the USSR: Marginality, Community, and Soviet Identity 1917-1991* (2017), has pioneered new research into deafness in the Soviet Union, bringing an important focus on disability to studies of hearing.[50]

Using the methodology of these approaches allows us to do more than say that sound has been hiding within plain sight or earshot, as it were. Instead, an analysis of sound can both complicate and better contextualize art of the Soviet '30s. Without exception, one film is cited in virtually every discussion of the Soviet cinema's transition to sound—Kozintsev and Trauberg's *All Alone* (1931)—which, at its heart, is a story all about listening: Elena Aleksandrovna Kuzmina, a schoolteacher and heroine who is assigned to a post in rural Altai, attempts to enter into a conversation with a particularly garrulous loudspeaker (Fig 0.1).[51] With its looming metal mouth, the off-screen loudspeaker addresses Elena, who responds to its call ("*Comrades!")* by searching for the sound's origin. We might say that Elena and the loudspeaker never join each other on screen, which leaves the difference and distance between the two indeterminable. This scene clearly recalls Louis Althusser's figure of the ideological "hail," and Elena is silenced by the loudspeaker's questions —"What have you done so far? What are you doing now? What will you do?"—and unsure to whom (or to what) to respond, Elena looks directly into the camera: "*I'm going to complain!"*

A sonic reading of the scene offers several questions that serve as points of departure in the pages that follow. Elena's confusion after hearing the loudspeaker (it does, after all, shout out towards a group, and not directly to her) reminds us that in Althusser's classic example, a police

Fig 0.1 Stills from Kozintsev and Trauberg's *All Alone* (1931)

Perelom" in *The American Historical Review* (2004) 109 (5): 1475-1504.

[50] For a particularly insightful argument concerning how historical changes in listening can impact both literary form and content, see Gabriella Safran, "The Troubled Frame Narrative: Bad Listening in Late Imperial Russia," in *Russian Review* 72 (October 2013), pp. 556–72.

[51] See Kaganovksy, *The Voice of Technology* and Widdis, *Socialist Senses*.

officer hails the subject, but it is unclear if the hailed ever *sees* precisely who addresses him or her.[52] Does the lack of the ear's directionality, as it is directly opposed to a line of vision, strengthen or inhibit the potency of a hail? Moreover, does Elena know if the loudspeaker is a speaking subject, and not a deceitful recording? Why would it matter if she chooses to engage with it as a speaking subject? Unbeknownst to Elena, her threat of a complaint could become a form of official ventriloquism: forced to enter into the discursive world of the Stalinist bureaucracy, Elena must speak in an acquired voice of Soviet discourse. But are we so certain that Elena would find only a *voice* this arresting? The film uses an array of sound effects to grab her attention at other moments, which raises the question: would sonic culture be vococentric, or, as Dolar suggests earlier, would it blur the line between the voice and other forms of sound? Somewhat unexpectedly, the voice behind the loudspeaker is never fully revealed, as it would be in the situation that Michel Chion has called "acousmatic"—would a Soviet listener ever truly know the source of the sounds they hear?[53]

Outline of Chapters

Despite the formal innovations that sound media facilitated in the Soviet arts, the constant evolution of model listeners thematically unites my three chapters. Chapters One and Two serve as case studies (as does my epilogue), whereas Chapter Three presents the results of archival research.

In Chapter One, "Boisterous Utopia: Models for Listening in Dziga Vertov's *Enthusiasm*," I offer a reading and production history of the first full-length Soviet sound film, Dziga Vertov's documentary, *Enthusiasm* (1930). Soviet critics' rejection of *Enthusiasm* has been well documented, but I use the occasion of its popularity abroad to revisit what, precisely, may have disappointed its domestic viewers. In *Enthusiasm,* I find the negotiation of questions that are uniquely central to Soviet sonic culture: was sound fodder for artistic production, or for technological innovation? Was listening within socialism somehow *different* from listening in other spaces? *Enthusiasm* attempted to answer these questions by depicting a model listener based on Vertov's idiosyncratic conception of listening, which mixed ideas about sound from the Russian avant-garde, the physiological and acoustic experiments of Hermann von Helmholtz, and even the Russian *zaum'* poet, Aleksander Kruchenykh. This listener diverged from critical discourse concerning the USSR's new sound technologies, which were often characterized in the press as deceitful or, at best, distracting. Despite attempts by Vertov and others to cultivate sound's revolutionary potential, *Enthusiasm* struggled to overcome a complex stigma against sound's role in Soviet art during the early '30s. Alongside a reading of the film, this chapter explores the cultural anxieties that surrounded sound reproduction—ranging from recordings of birdsongs, the construction of sound cinemas, the emergence of sound poetry, and the

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[52] Althusser figures ideological interpellation as a moment of misrecognition, when by responding automatically to a signal from the authorities, the hailed subject indoctrinates him or herself into the discursive order.

[53] The scene can be read as an allegory for Chion's later concept of the *acousmêtre*, a sound that comes from no seen origin. The *acousmêtre*, often the human voice in Chion's schema, both controls and seduces the listener, who searches for whom or what emitted it. For Chion, the *acousmêtre* is a device that is unique to the sound cinema, and which wields total power over the listener. See Chion, *The Voice in Cinema,* p. 28.

orchestration of Lenin's funeral—in order to measure their impact on the reception of Vertov's film.

Chapter Two, "*Time, Forward!* Dictaphone, Sound and Socialist Realism in Valentin Kataev's Prose" offers a reading of one of the most influential novels of the early Soviet period, *Time, Forward!* (1932) and explores how Kataev's conception of sound informed his project of forging a literature of socialist realism. Although he is sometimes dismissed as a literary functionary, Kataev was one of the Soviet Union's most accomplished and celebrated writers—the only writer, in fact, to publish in every decade of the USSR. He was also uncommonly interested in sound. Beginning as an apprentice of Ivan Bunin when he was told to "find the sound" of his prose, Kataev became the first Soviet writer to speak over the radio by reading a "radio feuilleton," and quickly followed suit with a children's book themed around radio in the mid-1920s. More than any other Soviet novel, *Time, Forward!* depicts the dawn of a new sonic culture in the Soviet Union, when the emergence of sound cinema, radio networks, and the recording studio dramatically changed techniques and practices of listening. Recuperating Kataev's relationship with sound offers an important case study for the material and sensorial realities that shaped socialist realism's emergence in the Soviet Union. *Time, Forward!* experiments specifically with narrative voice and time, offering a new form of literary voice that I call "dictaphonic." By combining Maksim Voloshinov and Mikhail Bakhtin's writings on free indirect discourse with Jacques Derrida's philosophy of voice (and, specifically, his readings of this voice in literature), I show that Kataev's socialist realist characters speak in a ventriloquized discourse that can be traced back to recordings that state was eager to produce, not unlike the dictaphonic technology developed by Aleksandr Shorin at the time. Alongside these arguments, I offer a rejoinder to a common critical observation about Kataev's novel—that it is a work of "cinematic" prose. Instead of invoking "cinema" as a transhistorical category, I want to more accurately characterize the transmedial nature scholars have correctly identified in *Time, Forward!* by treating it as a novel that emerged specifically within the early Soviet *sound* cinema, and not cinema as a category writ large.

Chapter Three, "Locked in Sync: Incarceration in Early Soviet Sound Film," presents a series of archival and previously unpublished materials in order to excavate the complicated debate over sound fidelity that characterized the remainder of the 1930s. Working with James Lastra's conception of "telephonic" and "phonographic" theories for fidelity, I argue that the socialist realist mode blended two expectations for sound that the west typically strictly delineated. Yet Soviet discourse on sound suffered a crucial ellipsis: several critical and technical publications show no shared word in Russian for the concept of "fidelity," as it was called abroad. The unnamable ideal of sound fidelity, I argue, was a fixation for socialist realist critics, who now relied on the recording studio—a space removed from sonic reality—to manufacture a Soviet acoustics of the present and future. Surprisingly enough, nowhere is the intersection of sound recording and Soviet ideology more palpable than in a series of prison films that appeared throughout the 1930s. I discuss the sonic poetics of prison films hailing from well-known directors and screenwriters—including Viktor Shklovsky's work on *The Dead House* (1932) and Yuri Tynianov's participation on the project *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934)—but I focus particularly on Evgenii Cherviakov's 1936 film *Convicts*, which attempted to represent the reality of Soviet incarceration on a sound stage. In their responses to depictions of prison, critics implicitly proposed a model listener who would be pleased by what some called a sound's "natural" quality, but who would otherwise remain insouciant not only about unrealistic depictions of a Soviet prison, but about how the realities of sonic space: in efforts to avoid critical crackdowns,

Cherviakov and other directors made their worlds selectively acoustic, often omitting sound effects entirely.

Chapter 1

Boisterous Utopia: Models for Listening in Dziga Vertov's *Enthusiasm*

"You shall sing only when it pleases you;" said the emperor, "and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces.
"No; do not do that," replied the nightingale; "the bird did very well as long as it could."
– Hans Christian Andersen, *The Nightingale*

The Sound of Socialism

Rarely are comparisons made between the experimental filmmaker Dziga Vertov and the religious philosopher and essayist Vasilii Rozanov, but both men clearly believed that socialism would not sound like the past. In his aphoristic prose experiment, *Opavshie list'ia* (1913), Rozanov downplayed the threat of Bolshevism by reaching for metaphors sonic and ecological: "...socialism will pass like disharmony, and all disharmony passes. Socialism is a storm, it is wind, it is rain."[1] This image would have delighted Vertov, one of world cinema's most influential directors, who had long hoped to breathe life into sounds that he believed Russia's old guard simply ignored. In a frequently-cited journal entry from 1918, Vertov writes about the pleasure of hearing shouts, train whistles, and noises on the street, pining for "a piece of equipment that won't describe, but will record, photograph these sounds."[2] His desires were fulfilled: the director's most productive years were spent during the two turbulent decades between 1920 and 1940, when domestic and public spaces were equipped with various audio devices that re-tuned the world by allowing for the capture and reproduction of urban noise and industrial clamor, just as Vertov had dreamed.

But where would recorded sound fit inside of the Soviet artist's toolbox, and how would Vertov make use of his sought-after devices after acquiring them?[3] Few were as determined to answer this question as Vertov—indeed, long before he could make recordings, the director had already tinkered with gramophone records in hopes of developing a new, non-verbal form of communication.[4] While Vertov's theoretical writings on sound cinema have been explored in

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[1] See Vasilli Rozanov, *Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 tomakh.* Tom 30: Listva (Moscow: Respublika, 2010), p. 92.

[2] See Andrey Smirnov, *Sound in Z*: *Experiments in Sound and Electronic Music in Early 20th Century Russia* (London: Koenig, 2013), p. 20.

[3] Although Vertov rejected the moniker of "artist" throughout the 1920s, by the onset of the '30s he acknowledged in public appearances that his *kinok* movement was undergoing a creative evolution, one that was based on a reconceptualization of their identity as makers and artists. By the end of the decade, Vertov publicly complained that his work was as valuable as the *artists* (*khudozhnik*) who surrounded him. Vertov's predominant method of distinguishing himself from rival directors was producing films that were "unplayed" (*neigrovy*), i.e. films without actors, as one of the first credits in his famous *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) attests. See Yuri Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the 1920s* (Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2004), pp. 318-319.

[4] "Dzi-ga," the director's brother later explained, was Vertov's attempt to name himself after the sound that a hand-cranked camera made when engaged. (See "*Poslednee interv'iu Mikhaila Kaufmana*," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* 18 (1993), p. 143) Vertov's experiments in his so-called "Laboratory of Hearing"

detail, the relationship between his own ideas and the conceptions of listening that surrounded him—Soviet sonic culture—remains underexplored.[5] The director's tendency to clash with sonic culture is nowhere more clearly on display than in his first sound film, *Enthusiasm* (1931), a celebration of Stalin's five-year-plan that chronicled the achievements of coal miners who worked in the Donbass region of Ukraine. The film was initially slated to appear in a commemorative program for the revolution, but organizers pulled Vertov's work after it prompted an argument over sound.[6] John Mackay's exhaustive reconstruction of the film's reception shows that critics bristled at *Enthusiasm*, fiercely attacking the film as "primitive," "impossible to sit through," "disorganized," and sonically "overloaded with din."[7] Some viewers, including Viktor Shklovsky, even accused Vertov's experimental soundtrack of being "physiologically impossible" to withstand.[8] And yet, *Enthusiasm* was a success abroad, prompting adoring fans (among them Charlie Chaplin) to write Vertov with fawning accolades.[9]

Why were Soviet critics so unwilling to listen to Vertov's film, and what can their disapproval tell us about sound in the Soviet Union? The asymmetry between domestic responses and those from abroad invites us to re-consider what *Enthusiasm* can illuminate about Soviet sonic culture. *Enthusiasm,* I contend, touched a nerve precisely because sound reproduction in the Soviet Union had *long* been a contentious topic, despite multiple attempts (by Vertov and others) to cultivate its revolutionary potential.[10] In the first section of what follows, I explore how *Enthusiasm*'s soundtrack emerged from a culture that described sound with a

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have been discussed by several scholars, most recently by Lilya Kaganovsky in her excellent volume *The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound 1928-1935* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2018), p. 74.

[5] To some degree, Vertov scholars have identified this lacuna without yet surveying it. Yuri Tsivian has characterized Vertov's sound era as "a separate story, waiting to be told," (25), and Oksana Bulgakowa has specifically asked about Vertov's relationship to his sonic predecessors in her article, "The Ear against the Eye: Vertov's *Symphony"* in *Monatshefte* 98:2 (2006), n. 12. The indispensable work on Vertov's conceptions of sound in *Enthusiasm* from Bulgakowa, Kaganovsky, and especially John Mackay (all of whom I cite throughout this chapter) offer analyses on the particularities of Vertov's writings on sound in far greater detail than I can offer here. Their analyses, however, have mostly shied away from connecting Vertov's ideas to wider cultural practices and phenomena, suggesting instead that his work was insularly motivated.

[6] Because so many critics' displeasure was rooted in responses to the soundtrack, some critics were concerned that the state of Soviet sound theaters prohibited viewers from a "full" listening of *Enthusiasm.* See A. Amasovich, "*Protiv Bestolkovshchiny: Chto proizoshlo s Entuziazmom," Kino,* 01 January 1931.

[7] For an excellent summary of critical reactions to *Enthusiasm,* see John Mackay, "Disorganized Noise: *Enthusiasm* and the Ear of the Collective: Pt. 3, Cacophony of the Donbass," *KinoKultura,* January: 7 (2005).

[8] ibid.

[9] See Dziga Vertov, "*Charli Chaplin, Gamburgskie rabochie i prikazy doktora virta,*" in *Dziga Vertov iz naslediia* (Moskva: Eizenshtein-tsentr, 2008), p. 231. Hereafter, this authoritative collection of Vertov's writings will be abbreviated as "DVN," vols 1 and 2. Chaplin was cited several times calling Vertov "the greatest director in the world" after seeing *Enthusiasm*, although his initial letter is quite laconic; in it, he explains that Vertov produced a film he had never imagined, and even goes so far as to call Vertov a "musician."

[10] For a detailed description of public campaigns to associate gains in sound reproduction with trends in Soviet infrastructural and economic development, see Vincent Bohlinger, "The Development of Sound Technology in the Soviet Film Industry During the First Five-Year-Plan," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema,* 7:2 (2013), pp. 189-205.

haphazard mix of materialist philosophy, avant-garde iconoclasm, and an idiosyncratic understanding of the physiological sciences. As we will see, this muddled amalgam of ideas failed to resolve the question of whether sound was fodder for artistic production or technological innovation, a theme that *Enthusiasm* attempts to reconcile dialectically. In the second half, I reconstruct the film's model listener, who competed with pessimistic models that associated the sense of hearing with distraction, or worse, with a state of political and ideological vulnerability.[11] In a concluding section, I explore the myriad ways in which sound reproduction was vilified, a trend with which Vertov's somewhat utopian image of future Soviet listening competed. Although *Enthusiasm* boldly attempted to force Vertov's model for listening onto the country's population, the film struggled to convince listeners that its director had intelligibly—and correctly—arranged acoustic reality according to the expectations of sonic culture.

The broader narrative of this chapter frames Vertov's film as a sonic turning point in Soviet art, one in which sound reproduction became inextricably linked with the representation of reality. Although I will address this question in much greater detail in Chapters Two and Three, critical rejection of *Enthusiasm* can be read as a transitional moment between the avant-garde and socialist realism, one that is based, fundamentally, upon different approaches to sound and listening. When Jacques Attali writes that "in noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men in musical structure, and more precisely, what is elided from musical structure demonstrates the workings of culture," it is almost as if he had *Enthusiasm* in mind: Vertov's noise would be purged in critical reactions, but constitute and catalyze the first step towards a series of disagreements concerning the potential for sound in Soviet art.[12]

To Catch a Birdsong: Microphones on Elagin Island

It has become commonplace in scholarship on Soviet cinema to observe that no two Soviet sound films from the early period (roughly 1929-1938) looked or sounded alike, and that critical response to them lacked consensus.[13] The nearly unanimous rejection of *Enthusiasm* poses an

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[11] The only work I am aware of that suggests potentially negative associations with sound reproduction in Soviet culture writ large is from Dmitrii Zakharine, who has illustrated the various plots and fantasies that linked radio and other sound technologies in the '20s with threats of mind control, surveillance, or even mass murder in his article, "*Tonfil'ma kak zvukovoe oruzhie: rannii opyt sovetskogo zvukovogo kino"* in *Die Welt Der Slaven* 54.2 (2009), pp. 243-61.

[12] See Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1985), p. 6. Eric Drott has recently challenged Attali's paradigm within musicology by disputing the author's claim toward some kind of futurity that is evident within cultural sonic objects. I find Drott's claims refreshing, but point out that as this dissertation develops, Vertov's *Enthusiasm* will, in fact, serve as a precursor to several debates that would emerge again by the end of the '30s. See Eric Drott, "Rereading Jacques Attali's *Bruits*," *Critical Inquiry* 41:4 (Summer 2015), pp. 721-756

[13] In his outstanding summary of the formal and cultural challenges that beset the Soviets' transition to sound films, Ian Christie has argued that the shift to sound proposed a new challenge in the form of "Outer Speech," which inverted what Boris Eikhenbuam argued was montage cinema's fascination with the category of "Inner Speech." This concept was coined by psychologist Lev Vygotsky, but Eikhenbaum utilized it to describe the presence of an interpreting spectator, who accessed inner speech to make sense of mute images on screen. In the sound era, the arrival of "outer speech" posits that films would become distinctly invested in their use of language—an idea in which, as we will see, Vertov was not at all interested. Before undergoing a relatively stringent process of standardization, all Soviet sound films were remarkably different from each other, which Christie outlines by using the story of Stalin's order to find a

ironic exception. After its first screening for critics, Shklovsky claimed that Vertov's film "murdered" its audience, and given *Enthusiasm's* first section, one can partially understand why he would choose such a violent metaphor.[14] *Enthusiasm's* ten-minute introductory sequence, which Vertov called the "sound march," hurls a combination of music, street noise, oration, and mechanical sound effects at its viewer, a complex, noisy collage.[15] Before the opening credits end, a traditional march cuts to the sound of a "cuckoo" alarm, but this sound is interrupted by the opening words of a radio orator's broadcast. The viewer sees a woman

Fig 1.1 Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

who is seated at a radio set outside, and an even metronome begins to click in tandem with the tune of Shostakovich's first symphony, which may or may not be playing through the radio woman's headphones (Fig. 1.1). Suddenly, a church bell interrupts. While the listener struggles to determine precisely where his or her point of audition is situated (are they inside or outside of the radio broadcast?), the clanging church bells destabilize their position once again when the sound is visually matched to an image of Tsarist-era palace gates.[16] Vertov then shows worshippers who flock to the church at their own tempo, an arrhythmic counterpoint to the even metronome that directed Shostakovich's symphony. Two sonic themes coalesce: an orthodox

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genre that could unite the disparate films he very much enjoyed watching during screenings of Nikolai Ekk's *The Path to Life* (1931)*,* Sergei Yutkevich's *The Golden Mountains* (1931), and Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Alone* (1931). See Christie, "Making Sense of Early Film Sound" in *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 185 and Eikhenbaum, "*Problemy kino-stilistiki*" in *Poetika kino* (1927), p. 24.

[14] Shklovsky changed his mind about the film several years later when he saw it abroad, writing that "the technology of the screening had changed, after we got used to sound and regulated it. I finally heard everything (*uslyshal*) and understood everything." See Shklovsky, "*Dlinnoe zakliuchenie k tomu, chto ne bylo skazano*." In *Za 60 let*: *Raboty o kino,* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985), p. 89.

[15] There is no archival, authoritative print of *Enthusiasm* or its soundtrack; filmmaker Peter Kubelka's (a founding member of New York's Anthology Film Archives) very slight resynchronization of the audio and image tracks has become the standardly cited version.

[16] I take the phrase "point of audition" from the work of Michel Chion, who structures the concept around two key questions: From where do I hear? Which character, at this given moment, is hearing what I hear? Chion argues that "it is the image that always creates the point of audition" in a film, meaning that the listener attempts to connect their own position with some other listener or space on screen. See Chion, *Audio-Vision*: *Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), pp. 90-91.

choir's baritone and the radio's "cuckoo" meld together, and close-ups of the radio woman's ears—now shown without headphones—imply that she hears both sounds simultaneously. After briefly chirping alongside the church bells, the cuckoo signal turns destructive. Its tempo increases, and its sound is visually synced with a set of rhythmically disappearing crucifixes. The crosses disappear, the woman puts on her headphones again, and she listens intently to the radio transmission.[17]

Something has come undone in this sequence, and the theme of sonic disconnect intensifies when a series of severances follows. The broadcaster's voice is the only sound that the viewer can hear, and while the woman's lips appear to move in response, the audience never hears what she says, thus implying (again) that our point of audition is somehow different from this woman's. Acoustic doubles multiply when the symphony's conductor cues a chime from the back of his orchestra, but the cue is unexpectedly answered by a choir of bells that belong to a church, not the musical ensemble. Eventually, an enormous bell whose clapper rocks back and forth in front of the camera replaces both of these chimes. Finally, the shot cuts to peasant women who form a line to kiss the feet of a mosaic of Christ, then to a group of drunks, whose joyousness is matched to a separate recording of music and din overlaid onto the image track.

Vertov's sequence is structured according to a similarly disjointed interchange of scenes where sound and image are sometimes synchronized and sometimes unsynchronized. This introductory sequence is typically read as evidence of the director's disagreement with the "Statement on Sound" that appeared in 1928, and was signed by Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Aleksandrov, and Vsevolod Pudovkin. As I mentioned in the introduction, all three directors pledged to use the new technology of film sound as a contrapuntal force that would be put into conflict against cinematic images, creating an un-synchronized, sonic counterpoint that would create tension between a film's sound and image tracks.[18] Vertov responded with ambivalence,

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[17] This sequence of a woman's morning is the first in a series that filled the Soviet sound cinema for years to come in films like Kozintsev & Trauberg's *Odna* (1931) and Aleksandrov's *Svetlyi put'* (1940). Ironically, they appear to have first appeared in Vertov's silent classic, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Women appears to feature often as the mediated subjects and primary listeners of early Soviet sound film according to Andreas Huyssen's famous pronouncement that mass culture is gendered female. Not only does the association of women with mass culture perpetuate a "male mystique" within arts that claim cultural distinction; it further associates the feminine as *in the position of receiving* the message of mass culture rather than producing it. See Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987).

[18] See Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Aleksandrov, and Vsevolod Pudovkin, "Statement on Sound," in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 234–235, and Bulgakowa's discussion of Vertov's response in "The Ear against the Eye", p. 220. For Eisenstein et al, the abstract nature of music made it a perfect element for illustrating sound counterpoint, as the directors could visualize shifts in tone and rhythm much like the different kinds of rhythmic or geometric conflict that Eisenstein explored in film theoretical essays written concurrently with the statement, like *The Dramaturgy of Film Form* (1929).

One element of the statement that is often not mentioned, however, is its clear critique of the use of sound reproduction in capitalist countries. The authors write: "Sound is a double-edged invention and its most probable application will be along the line of least resistance, i.e. in the field of *satisfaction of simple curiosity.* In the first place there will be commercial exploitation of the most saleable goods [*khodovie tovari*], i.e., of *talking* [*razgovornoe*] *pictures* – and those in which the sound is recorded in a natural manner, synchronizing exactly with the movement on the screen and creating a certain 'illusion' of people talking, objects making a noise, etc." In her book, *Sovetskii Slukhoglaz* (2010), Bulgakowa has

asserting with *Enthusiasm*'s opening sequence that no fixed relationship between sound and image was required to create a cinematic message, thereby framing the generative question of the film, as Devin Fore has put it, as "the problem of how meaning is constituted."[19] I would add that the film more specifically asks how *sound* can convey meaning: a viewer trained to watch Soviet films might assume that in *Enthusiasm*, we are asked to condemn one group's activity (worship and drinking) and to laud the other's (marching, working, and listening). But the images appear in visual parallel, thus failing to synthesize a new idea through their collision. It is the distinction in the *soundtrack,* however, that carries the brunt of the sequence's message. This lack of a clear, visual montage sequence forces Vertov's spectator to make a choice about sound, but critics worried that if they couldn't make sense of how to link the film's images and sounds into a coherent ideological argument*,* no one else would.[20]

Indeed, Soviet cinemagoers were unprepared for such an ambitious experiment with sound and image. Unlike in America, France, Germany, and England, sound cinema in the Soviet Union did not exist as a domestic phenomenon before extensive theorization and debate enshrouded it. As a result, imaginary forms of ideal sound films became the phantoms that haunted real Soviet film output. By the time of *Enthusiasm's* premiere, sound cinema had been called *ton-fil'm*, *zvukovoe* (sound) *kino, govoriashchee* (talking) *kino, razgovornoe* (speech) *kino, shumovoe* (noise) *kino* and *zvuchashchee* (sound-ing) *kino,* and each title introduced slight nuances to the new medium's mission.[21] The question was clear: would a film contain sound,

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characterized this predicament as the central paradox of Soviet popular culture, which aimed to "design an art that is a mass art, but not a commercial one, contrapuntal sound entertained only a handful of endorsements outside of this group of filmmakers. One ally was Vladimir Sol'skii, who prophesied that the sound film would save cinema from its disastrous contamination with the other arts, rather than flatten the form itself (See Sol'skii, Vladimir, *Zvuchashchee kino* (Leningrad: Teakinopechat', 1929), p. 7). Just like Eisenstein, Aleksandrov, and Pudovkin, Sol'skii explicitly staged one of the 5-year-plan's main slogans in book form – with an emphasis on overtaking America. Rather than seeing western films as a threat, he belittled them, arguing that capitalist countries had exhausted their film models. (ibid., p. 10)

[19] See Fore, "Dziga Vertov, the First Shoemaker of Russian Cinema". *Configurations* (18:3), p. 372. Soviet film theory from Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and Vertov was arguably completely invested in answering this question: Eisenstein's assertion that the ultimate abstraction of the intellectual film would be a "SYNTHESIS OF ART AND SCIENCE," as Eisenstein wrote, was always at its heart a project interested in controlling a prospective spectator. Vertov's *Kino-eye* would aim to revolutionize perception, and while he initially hoped to define his own form of montage as distinct from Eisenstein's, Vertov's beholder would have virtually no choice but to accept what the *Kino-eye* showed him or her. As Annette Michelson has summarized this predicament: "[Vertov] shares with [the constructivists] an ideological concern with the role of art as an agent of human perfectibility, a belief in social transformation as the means for producing a transformation of consciousness and a certainty of accession to a "world of naked truth," paradoxically grounding his creed in the acceptance and affirmation of the radically synthetic film technique of montage." See Michelson's introduction to *Kino-Eye: Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1984), p. xxv.

[20] For a detailed example of disagreement amongst early critics of the film, see Bulgakowa, "The Ear against the Eye," p. 224: ""The critics stressed the chaotic nature of the film that failed to give the spectator any political guidelines or any aesthetic (in this case acoustic) organization."

[21]A variety of translations and domestic publications referred to sound film with all of these names seemingly at random. See, for example, See Joe Engl', *Govoriashchaia fil'ma* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1928), E.M. Goldovskii, *Zvukovoe kino* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1930), and Vladimir Sol'skii, *Zvuchashchee kino* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1929). In fact, Vertov would opt for Goldovskii's variant when he called 1936's *Lullaby* his first sound film (*zvukovoe kino*). Nevertheless, at the time of its

noise, or speech? And what to do in Vertov's case, which seemed comprised of all three? Vertov was acutely aware of his failure to sonically connect with his critics, but he chose to rebuke them instead of sympathize with their frustration. In a public appearance, the director read excerpts of nearly fifty positive reviews from foreign viewers following the film's premieres in Kiev and Moscow, and he proceeded to chide his detractors by claiming that "when a critic convicts (*ulichaet*) a horse for its inability to meow, he denounces (*razoblachaet*) himself, not the horse."[22]

Particularly disturbed by critics who perceived *Enthusiasm* as disorganized sonic chaos ("cacophony," a "concert of cats" (*koshach'ii kontsert*) or "castrated music"), Vertov thought it better to simply explain how the overwhelming sonic excess of his film should be interpreted:

> In the film *Enthusiasm,* when the industrial sounds of the All-Union coal mine arrive onto the square, they enter the street, and giant celebratory demonstrations accompany their machinistic music.
>
> When from elsewhere the sounds of the soldiers' orchestras, the sounds of the demonstrations…[Vertov produces a lengthy list of various sounds from the film – *MK*]…merge (*vnedriaiutsia*) with the sounds of machines, with the sounds of the factories (*tsekhi*) competing with each other…
>
> …We should look at this not as a shortcoming, but as a serious experience with promise in the long-term.[23]

An extreme assumption is embedded within Vertov's statement: that by recording the sounds of life, sound reproduction can capture and combine them into something new.[24] Vertov's idea—

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release, Vertov and his viewers treated *Enthusiasm* as an early entry into the sound genre. See Kaganovsky, "The Voice of Technology and the End of Soviet Silent Film: Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg's 'Alone,' *Studies in Russian & Soviet Cinema* 1.3 (2008), pp. 265-81.

[22]*Kritika kritiki (neskol'ko myslei*) in DVN vol 2, p. 231.

[23] I translate "long-term" from the Russian word *perspektyvnyi,* which can mean both "long-term" and a closer idea to its English equivalent, "perspectival". See "*Obsuzhdaem pervuiu zvukovuiu fil'mu 'Ukrainfil'm' – 'Simfoniaia Donbassa'*" in *Dziga Vertov: Stat'i, dvevniki, zavysly*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1966, p. 127.

[24] Most defenses of non-linguistic sound's semiotic fixedness—essentially, claims that sound has a fixed ontology from which can be derived a set meaning—have not aged well. Since Vertov's early advocacy for sound collage as a "serious experience," Mikhail Iampolskii has argued that non-linguistic sound comprises nothing more than a protolanguage, and he has suggested that despite the origins of a fantasy for sound's linguistic potentials in Romantic philosophy, auditory signs are fundamentally different from verbal signs. (Iampolskii, *Mifologiia zvuchashchego mira i kinematograf. Kinovedcheskie zapiski* no. 15: 1992, pp 80-110). Roland Barthes has written that the "realm of the human" in auditory activity only begins when listening begins to resemble how one reads, but precisely *when* this happens remains unclear in Barthes' thought, which is intent to draw an intersection between language and aural experience (whether it be musical or non-musical), a comparison that Theodor Adorno has specifically warned against: "Music is similar to language in that it is a temporal succession of articulated sounds that are more than just sound. They say something, often something humane. The higher the species of music, the more forcefully they say it. The succession of sounds is related to logic; there is a right and a wrong. But what is said cannot be abstracted from the music; it does not form a system of signs." See Adorno, "Music Language and Composition" in *Essays on Music* (Berkeley, UC Press, 2002), p. 113, and Barthes, "Listening" in *The Responsibility of Forms,* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1991).

that *Enthusiasm* was perfectly understandable if it was viewed (and listened to) in a very specific way—often exasperated him while making the confusing defense that there was simply *another way* to understand this "serious experience" of which many could not make any sense.[25] As we will see, Vertov's claims were rooted in a contradiction that was widespread throughout Soviet sonic culture, which muddled theories from the natural sciences and physiology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (a point to which I will return in the following section).

Enthusiasm's reception naturally raises a question: what was Vertov thinking, and where did his ideas come from? Lucy Fischer first summarized Vertov's aesthetic program in her now classic study of *Enthusiasm*, explaining why the director imagined that such a difficult film had appeal for a commemorative program at all.[26] First, Vertov believed that the film's experiments could *teach* socialism to the Soviet population; second, he believed that the population itself was at a severe disadvantage in coming to know what socialism is, and that this new combination of sound and image could help them; and third, he believed that "machines (for example, the camera and the sound recorder) have the capability that humans do not, to perceive life and, furthermore, to organize its chaos into a meaningful whole."[27] Vertov's complicated ideas can be better understood by revisiting his actions on the ground during the film's production. To give shape to his dreams of a new form of sonic communication, Vertov partnered with Aleksandr Shorin, whose device, the *Shorinofon*, became the industry's primary device for sound-on-film recordings by the end of the 1930s.[28] In his memoir, *How the Screen Started Speaking* (1949),

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[25] Bulgakowa has described Vertov's hopes for the film in "The Ear against the Eye," where she writes that he planned to "[educate] the ear to perceive and differentiate among noises that it is not usually trained to hear." He also reveals in more detail a litany of reasons for why the film should have been a critical success in the essay "*Tochka zreniia"* DVN vol. 1, pp. 204-205.

[26] See Lucy Fischer, "'Enthusiasm'" From Kino-eye to Radio-eye" in *Film Quarterly* 31:2 (1977-78). Fischer's study is the most exhaustive formal analysis of *Enthusiasm* that I have seen, and has still yet to be surpassed in its ingenuity. My own interpretation relies significantly on her observations of the film's merits, but I attempt to explain Vertov's formal choices for the sound of *Enthusiasm* less as technical achievements springing from Vertov's idiosyncratic approach to sound film (a fundamental assumption of most scholarship on Vertov's films, both silent and sonic), and to instead situate his style within the larger movements of Soviet sonic culture.

[27] Ibid., p. 28. This technophilic approach developed an anti-humanist paradigm that already distinguished Vertov's cinema from his that of his Soviet colleagues. Critics often recall a scene from 1926's *Stride, Soviet!,* when he privileged sound technologies over human subjects: "in place of an orator," (as the intertitles read) Vertov offered a shot of a loudspeaker, and "in place of applause" the film shows a driver's hand that is very eager to honk a car horn. As Yuri Tsivian has shown, Vertov depicted the perfection of humans through technology elsewhere throughout the film. *Stride, Soviet,* was, in fact, quite popular amongst critics and audiences. (See note 3, esp. chapters 9-11 in Tsivian's *Lines of Resistance*). Just as this scene aimed for humor, there is something wistful about Vertov's otherwise lifeless aesthetic goal in *Enthusiasm*: John McKay has written that "In *Enthusiasm*, the worlds of labor (industrial sound) and of cultural production (music and mass spectacle) "converge" in an effort to make the one comprehensible—and even enjoyable—to the other." (See Mackay, pt. 1, p. 12)

[28] Shorin's device beat out alternative celluloid competitors and, most importantly, sound-on-disc technologies that strove for a link between sound and image from as early as 1904. Before they appeared in Russia, sound-on-disc systems flourished in the US and Germany, but these technologies required a projectionist to synchronize the device with a film that was being screened. The US's Vitaphone system was undoubtedly the most successful of these devices, leading to hundreds of films that were specifically engineered to be synced with discs. Sound-on-disc systems, however, led to disastrous problem for synchronization, which commentators would remember for decades after witnessing some of the earliest

Shorin reminisces about the summer of 1930 that he spent with Vertov, who watched the inventor develop a portable device that could both record and reproduce sound. Because Vertov was staunchly opposed to the idea of ever stepping into a recording studio, he was particularly invested in Shorin's aspiration to design a silent camera—with a mute device, he could shoot image and record sound on site without any need for sonic post-production.[29]

Shortly before Vertov left for forty days to film *Enthusiasm,* he made an unusual demand. Vertov insisted that the two produce their first field recording early in the morning by attempting to capture a nightingale's song early in the morning on St. Petersburg's Elagin Island, a small plot of land in the northern outskirts of the city. Shorin complied, but the expedition was not entirely successful:

> We placed a tripod with the recording apparatus on Elagin Island, where away from the shrubs, it turned out that nightingales sing from 3 to 4 in the morning. We decided only to record sound. We stretched three microphones on long wires to different spots. The dew was intense – we were wet through and through while mounting the equipment. At one of the microphones was Vertov. It was a white night in Leningrad…morning was just settling in on us. In the distance, a nightingale began to sing. The ear hears it, but through a microphone, no matter how much you amplify the device, you can't record it – the sound of the microphone itself [feedback – *MK*] interrupts. Quiet, quiet! – Another nightingale began to sing not far from us. All three microphon-ists (*mikrofonisty*) scrambled across the wet field to the feathered "soloist" and surrounded him with microphones. Once we were ready to record and got the motor going, the nightingale stopped singing […] We lost a few days and nights trying to record a nightingale's song.[30]

films that came with a sound-on-disc accompaniment. Vladimir Sol'skii, for example, writes that in 1904, Russia already exhibited a "live singing picture," by placing a gramophone behind the screen. According to Sol'skii, it was almost never synchronized properly. See Sol'skii, Vladimir. *Zvuchashchee kino* (Leningrad: Teakinopechat'), 1929, pp. 12-13.

[29] Like his opposition to acting, Vertov describes the unnatural, "deathly silence" of a recording studio in his essay, *O naruzhnoi kinos''emke* (DVN), and Lilya Kaganovsky has discussed how Vertov was concerned with what he saw as the proliferation of "fake" sound. (See Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology,* p 76)

[30] I include the original for reference: "На Елагином острове, в стороне от кустов, где, оказывается, от 3 до 4 часов утра поют соловьи, поставили треногу с записывающим аппаратом. Решили произвести только запись звука. На длинных шнурах растянули в разные места три микрофона. Роса страшная, мы насквозь мокрые, устанавливаем аппараты, у одного из микрофонов – Вертов. Белая ленинградская ночь…Началось утро. Вдруг вдали запел соловей. Ухо его слышит, но через микрофон, сколько ни усиливай, не запишешь, перебывает шум самого микрофона. Тише, тише! – Недалеко от нас защелкал другой соловей. Все три микрофонщика пополнили по мокрой траве к пернатому "солисту" и охватили его микрофонами. Только собрались записать, пустили мотор, а соловей как нарочно перестал петь (сейчас смешно вспомнить, как группа солидных людей охотилась на соловьев, стараясь записать настоящее, живое "документальное" пение). Мы потеряли несколько дней и ночей, пока нам все же удалось записать пение соловья." See Shorin, Aleksandr. *Kak ekran stal govoriashchim (vospominaniia izobretatelia)* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1949), p. 90.

Although Vertov's obsession with recording birds sing may seem tangential, the relevance of birdsong to experiments in sound was in fact buttressed by a lengthy philosophical pedigree. Long before Vertov and Shorin trudged across Elagin Island, the nightingale's song had served as a rhetorical device for the dilemma that sound posed to any artist's attempts at representation in the writings of Kant, Hegel, and the Russian radical materialist critic, Nikolai Chernyshevski.[31] In his master's thesis, *The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855), Chernyshevsky introduced the nightingale to Russia as an arbiter of inimitable reality, and asked whether or not reproducing sound, specifically, was a worthwhile activity.:

> The boredom and disgust aroused by the conjurer who imitates the song of the nightingale are explained by the very remarks contained in [Hegel]: a man who fails to understand that he ought to sing human songs and not make the trills that have meaning only in the song of the nightingale is deserving only of pity.[32]

Here, Chernyshevsky vaguely cites Hegel's introduction to *Aesthetics* (1835), where the thinker characterizes imitated birdsong as a phantasmagoric specter of aesthetic pleasure, one that fails to reveal the human labor behind any act of reproduction or representation—a prerequisite for any meaningful aesthetic activity. Hegel writes:

> We then recognize in [the imitation] nothing but a trick, neither the free production of nature, nor a work of art, since from the free productive power of man we expect something quite different from such music which interests us only when, as is the case with the nightingale's warbling, it gushes forth purposeless from the bird's own life, like the voice of human feeling…it befits man better to take delight in what he produces out of himself. [33]

Hegel's reading of the nightingale was a response to Kant, who offers imitated birdsong in *Critique of Judgment* as an example of a sensation that should not be considered an aesthetic object.[34] Not all readers were kind to them: Chernyshevsky and Hegel's exclusion of natural

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[31] Birdsongs have also served as a model for exploring the cultural modalities of listening in Steven Feld's classic anthropological study on the sonic culture of the Kaluli people of Papa New Guinea. Feld shows that the Kaluli blend the sounds of weeping with imitated bird songs to emotionally heighten musical rituals, suggesting, as Vertov hoped, that the Kaluli value sound, noise, and music equally within a single ritual. Stephen Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012 (3rd ed.)), p. 128.

[32] Mikhail Chernyshevsky, *Esteticheskaia otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nosti* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 15-kh tomakh, tom 2* (Moscow, 1949), p. 80. Translation from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/chernyshevsky/1853/aesthetics-reality.htm, accessed 10.31.18.

[33] G.W. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975), p. 43.

[34] In *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* Kant takes a similarly anti-reproducibility position, echoing Vertov's sensibilities with regards to the recording studio: "Even the song of the bird, which we cannot bring under any musical rules, seems to contain more freedom and thus more that is entertaining for taste than even a human song that is performed in accordance with all the rules of the art of music: for one grows tired of the latter far more quickly if it is repeated often and for a long time. But here we may well confuse our sympathy with the merriment of a beloved little creature with the beauty of his song, which, when it is exactly imitated by a human being (as is sometimes done with the notes of the nightingale)

sound from the realm of aesthetic activity was eventually mocked, a preview of the critical disagreement that roiled *Enthusiasm*. As Sergei Davydov has pointed out, Vladimir Nabokov reminds readers of *The Gift* (1952) that the nightingale's song was a constitutive element of Afanasii Fet's most influential poems for the Russian tradition, and he even depicts Chernyshevsky's parodic reincarnation, Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, as sincerely *enjoying* the sound of a mechanical nightingale that he owns.[35] Nabokov's literary treatment of the bird was preceded by that of Hans Christian Andersen, whose fairytale, *The Nightingale* (1843), appeared in Russian in 1899, and was the first attempt to transpose Hegel's concerns into narrative form while offering a critique.[36] The story depicts a king who is disappointed to learn that he cannot force a living nightingale to sing on command; in response, he commissions a mechanical bird in its place. The artificial nightingale eventually breaks, and the king, who lives in silence as a result, is visited by the specter of death. To survive, the king makes a deal with the real nightingale: in exchange for his life, he promises to never mimic the bird's song again. The nightingale complies with the king's request, but encourages him to keep the mechanical double as a token of his kingdom's mechanical ingenuity, thus softening the materialists' outright rejection of mechanistic imitation.

Although the genealogy of the nightingale may seem a far cry from the debates and ideas that circulated within the early Soviet Union, a similar conversation about the aesthetic and communicative limits of mechanical reproduction was taking place. By the beginning of the 1930s, the Soviet avant-garde's Tayloristic cult of the machine was shifting towards a new

Fig. 1.2: Caption: "An Experiment or Art?"[37]

cult of depicting the virtues of the individual worker.[38] Critics of *Enthusiasm* were disturbed by the film's tendency to produce what Hegel and Chernyshevsky might see as workers who

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strikes our ear as utterly tasteless." See Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthers (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), p. 126.

[35] Sergei Davydov, "The Gift, Nabokov's Aesthetic Exorcism of Chernyshevsky," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies,* 19:3 (Fall 1985), p. 363.

[36] *Solovei* in *Sobranie sochinenii Andersena v 4-kh tomakh, tom 1* (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. 198.

[37] See *Kino,* 20 August 1929.

[38] For a discussion of the vaulting of humanism over the technophilic in Soviet culture, see the chapter "*Nezhivoe – zhivoe"* in Paperyni, Vladimir, *Kul'tura dva* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1996).

resembled those very mechanical nightingales: the garbled and wavering voices that *Enthusiasm* captured with Shorin's microphone left undeniable traces of the film's central mediator, the sound reproduction apparatus itself, which obfuscated *human* labor.[39] Yet the Soviet press had ironically anticipated the tendencies of Vertov's sound cinema in a series of illustrations that eclipsed the human hand's role in cinematic production. For example, the most popular weekly film newspaper throughout the '20s and '30s, *Kino,* ran a cartoon in 1928 that depicted the sound cinema as an enterprise that situated itself between technical experimentation and aesthetic activity (Fig. 1.2). Beginning in the late '20s, the paper covered every advancement in sound reproduction, and reports tended to treat films less as aesthetic objects than as trophies of the country's advancements in technology. As one journalist wrote of Soviet sound reproduction in 1928, making little mention of the artists on or off-screen who were working towards producing a sound cinema, "this business (*delo*) must be moved from its dead end as soon as possible!"[40] Indeed, from the very beginning sound reproduction was chronicled as a socialist competition: Shorin's gains in the Leningrad lab appeared alongside Pavel Tager's recording experiments in Moscow.[41] While *Kino* was wont to celebrate Tager's achievements in the Soviet capital before Shorin's, it was Shorin's Leningrad studio that quickly broke ahead of the pack and kept

Fig 1.3 Caption: "The All-Union Derby in Honor of Silent Cinema"
Depicted: directors Vsevolod Pudovkin (in front), Abram Room[42]

momentum. Recognition of individual directors would only begin near the end of 1929, but even then, their efforts were depicted as a technical competition instead of aesthetically nuanced contributions. (Fig. 1.3)

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[39] Vocal clarity was of particular importance to the critic Ippolit Sokolov, who was particularly frustrated that the new technologies highlighted in an early sound film program made severe alterations to the electrified human voice. He recalled at the "second" program that he was bothered by the "affected voice of the narrator off-screen," and wrote that "…the words are enunciated in a completely disembodied voice with no notation, in a shout." See Sokolov, "The Second Sound Film Programme" in Christie, Ian and Taylor, Richard, eds. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), p. 309.

[40] "*Nemoi zagovoril"* in *Kino,* 28 March 1928.

[41] The race was framed in the spirit of Socialist competition (*sorevnovanie*), a cultural ideal that aimed to boost worker productivity.

[42] See *Kino,* 10 September 1929.

As these drawings attest, the early sound period was structured by competing visions. Sound films premiered at two competing moments, but historians and audiences have recalled one more frequently than the other. What is typically called the "first" program was in reality the second, and boasted the inclusion of Abram Room's *Plan of Great Works*, a five-part documentary structured by the overt symbolism of Stalin's five-year economic overhaul.[43] Although it is now lost, the film was an audiovisual chronicle of early gains in the Soviet countryside's industrialization, an image quite similar to what Vertov imagined for *Enthusiasm*. Vertov did not respond to what he perceived as plagiarism lightly: he claimed that Room's film was a rip-off of his own international success, *The Eleventh Year* (1928), and wrote that his archived film stock had been "cut up," put in a "prison cell," and had a soundtrack "tattooed onto it" (the rich consequences of this metaphor will be revisited in Chapter Three).[44]

Vertov's interest in birdsong was vindicated when a questionnaire appeared in *Kino* in 1930, which asked readers what they expected to hear in future sound films. A first-grade teacher unknowingly resurrected the nightingale debate by responding that sound should be recorded "outside…in the forest, so we can hear the birds sing."[45] Answering the same question, a Moscow printing press worker wrote that "it would be interesting to shoot films that recorded sound with the same direction as Dziga Vertov's films, something similar to the *kino-glaz*. In our everyday lives, you often come into contact with sound effects unexpectedly— this could turn into an interesting idea in a film."[46] A reader of *Kino*, Vertov cited both respondents when he rebuked critics of *Enthusiasm,* suggesting that his film catered to the true interests of Soviet listeners.[47]

He did not seem to notice, however, that these responses contradict each other. As the first suggests, would the artist's microphone simply reproduce the natural world—the meritless reproduction that plagued Chernyshevsky and Hegel—or, as the second respondent found in Vertov's method, would it translate this recorded world into a new object entirely? Most importantly, why *Enthusiasm* did *not* include warbling from Vertov's sought-after nightingales, especially after Vertov acknowledged what amounted to Soviet fan mail? In the film's opening scene, it is the sound of the mechanical "cuckoo" alarm—a clearly artificial imitation of the

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[43] See Kaganovsky, *Voice of Technology,* p. 77.

[44] This was not Vertov's only accusation of piracy in his career. When visiting Germany in 1929, he was shocked to discover his own footage included in a screening of Walter Ruttman's *Im Schatten der Maschine* (*In the Shadows of Machines*) (1929), and quickly wrote to the editor of Frankfurter Zeitung. Vertov had been compared to Ruttman frequently by the end of the '20s, but the Soviet director was horrified to see his own footage attributed to a different director. He worked directly with Siegfried Kracauer to publish a letter accusing Ruttman of intellectual property theft, which Ruttman both admitted but absolved himself: "…I tried to make my sources known in the programme at the Tauentzienpalastes––where the premiere took place—but was prevented, since the law does not allow one to use a single metre of foreign material in a short submitted as a German production. My honest intent to grant the creator of this montage his intellectual property failed as a result of existing category quotas." Vertov did not take to the argument of "it was illegal, but I did it anyway" particularly kindly. See Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* pp. 378-380.

[45] See "*Otvety,*" in *Kino* 25 January 1930.

[46] Ibid. The concept of the *kino-glaz* (Cine-eye) is Vertov's most well-known contribution to world cinema, and as a result has been theorized in a variety of ways. Bulgakowa cites Vertov's own insistence, that the *kino-glaz* "sees what remains inaccessible to the human eye." See Bulgakowa, "The Ear against the Eye."

[47] See "*O naruzhnoi kinos''emke"* in DVN vol 2, p 199.

natural world—that first grabs the radio woman's attention.[48] Fischer notes that for *Enthusiasm,* Vertov pursued his passion for conjoining technology with the natural world, and the mechanical cuckoo can surely be read as a transformation of this principle into a sonic symbol.[49] Indeed, we can read this artificial bird as an answer to the question that opened this chapter: what role would sound play in the new, sounded medium of the cinema? By dialectically pitting the denouement of Andersen's fairytale against Chernyshevsky and Hegel's embrace of human labor, Vertov offers a recording of an *already imitated* birdsong that is both a deviation from nature *and* a celebration of what Hegel would call that which "man produces out of himself," a sound that is wholly dissimilar and twice-removed from its phenomenal equivalent in the natural world. Vertov once described the aim of the film a "negation of the negation," and if we read the latter negation as the field recordings that led to the film (themselves not yet a soundtrack), the nightingale could only result as a recording of an *imitation.*[50]

Indeed, there is a difference between the mechanical nightingale of 19th century aesthetic theory and Vertov's attempt to record a nightingale on Elagin island. While a mechanical copy of a bird could be seen as a triumph over nature, the recorded nightingale is nature as raw material. For Vertov, to replicate the world as such would destroy his novel approach to listening at the cinema—it would need to be rearranged, edited, and organized.[51]Vertov's embrace of the transformative power of recording technology thus transforms the director into an organizer of reality, who must pit different sound sources against each other while paradoxically uniting them: it is only *after* the artist's hand graces the artificial cuckoo's song with sound recording

Fig. 1.4 Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

equipment that it becomes worthy of inclusion into the final product. A brief moment in the film's second part emblematizes Vertov's understanding of how artists should work with sound, when a member of the sound team unwittingly enters the camera's frame (fig. 1.4). Apparently

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[48] To be sure, there could be a material explanation for this substitution: we know from Mackay that VUFKU initially asked Vertov to produce artificial sound effects for *Enthusiasm* (he passionately declined), and Shorin's memoir all but admits that the task of recording birds was much more difficult than Vertov expected. Mackay pt 2, 6, n. 24.

[49] See Fischer, p. 26.

[50] See *Pervyi Shagi* in DVN vol 2, p. 213.

[51] See Fischer, p. 26.

responding to calls that instruct him to leave the camera's view, the microphone technician ducks down, drawing his device closer to the train tracks. Close listening reveals that the soundtrack has no relationship to what happens on screen—we do not hear any call for him to move, and the soundtrack's timbre remains even throughout, failing to correspond with the sound of a microphone inching closer to train wheels in motion. Indeed, despite Fischer's reminder of Vertov's insistence that any machine can organize chaos, Vertov remains in control of the affair, often showcasing his *own* ability to catch subjects off guard and to mismatch sound and image.[52] Much like the real and artificial birdsongs that motivate *Enthusiasm,* this mismatching is an index of the human labor behind Vertov's documentary project, an appearance of the human hand despite Vertov's praise for the cinematic apparatus' mechanical objectivity.[53]

In the wake of Walter Benjamin's insistence that sound technology, in particular, facilitates the alienating qualities of mechanically reproducible art, we should note that for Vertov—and Soviet culture at large—sound recording was not a technological innovation that stripped film of a prior aura or retrograde aesthetic function.[54] Instead, sound cinema enabled

Fig 1.5: Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

Vertov to manipulate and rearrange what he recorded, but he presented it to a sonic culture that had yet to determine whether sound film would fulfill aesthetic or functional aims.[55] Mackay has

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[52] See Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 76.
[53] Fischer, Kaganovsky and Hicks have noted Vertov's penchant for mismatching sound and image, which intentionally severs the link between the images on screen and the sounds that he recorded. As a work that is invested in revealing the self-reflexive acknowledgment of its own construction, the film becomes something more than a "documentary" artifact. For a particularly illuminating discussion of this Vertovian principle, see Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology,* p. 80.
[54] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. Vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2006).
[55] Finally, we can better understand the consequences of Vertov's choice to omit the nightingale by comparing his vision with what many critics called the "first Soviet talkie," Nikolai Ekk's 1931 film, *Path to Life*. Ekk's film, a musical comedy wholly opposite to *Enthusiasm* in nearly every way, is set during the NEP period in 1923, and it depicts the ideological reform of a group of several orphans, concluding with their successful completion of a railway line in the countryside. Because it was arguably one of the first Soviet "feel good" stories (despite its dramatic conclusion with a death of one of the children), Karl Radek was initially critical of the film, and he characterized its opening as a "lyrical appellation to the

pointed out that in *Enthusiasm*'s third and final section, viewers watch as the coal yields of the Donbass are transported to the countryside, where they are used to power trains, and a device that appears to increase the speed of hay bale preparation (Fig. 1.6). How confusing for this story, however, that the machine emits different sounds whenever it is on camera, as if it were a completely different apparatus in each appearance. Indeed, *Enthusiasm* makes objects wholly malleable: they are shrunk, doubled, re-shaped, and re-purposed. In one transitional scene, miniatures showcase the tools required for achieving socialism, when Vertov transports his viewer to a conveyer belt that is lined with diminutive coal carts, tractors, and objects that

Fig 1.6: Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

re-appear as life-sized later in the film (fig. 1.6). A similar maneuver impacts a church bell that appears in an earlier sequence, which shrinks in size and signals a worker to lower a coal shipment into an arriving train. As if the original sonic power of the church is smuggled into the industrial world, the sounds of *Enthusiasm* absorb different effects in different contexts, a continuation of the idea that immaterial sensations can be repurposed by how an artist (Vertov) decides to arrange them.

The conflict was clear: to simply hear recorded sound would be the opposite of dialectically negotiating a new kind of attention—this way, there would be no new listening, only an old relationship to the mechanical nightingale's song. But how could viewers learn to master Vertov's new technique of attention, and why might this endeavor have failed?

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heart of the viewer"— not to the mind. (Radek's review from the newspaper *Izvestiia* is quoted in A. Mikhailov's review, *"Putevka v zhizn'"* in *Proletarskoe kino* no. 5-6 (June 1931), p. 29.) Contrary to Vertov's plan for capturing the industrial noise of Ukraine, Ekk's model won out: according to the critic Nikolai Iezuitov, by the mid-30s the importance was to design a "cinema of feelings," not necessarily to valorize or self-reflexively show off the sound technology itself. Near the end of the film, one of the main characters of *Path to Life*, Mustafa, is killed by an assassin who would come to be known as a wrecker in Socialist Realist art – a character whose allegiances point only to disrupting the otherwise inevitable progress of Soviet projects. After the two tumble in a knife fight and the wrecker delivers the final blow, Ekk's cinematography shows where the murder occurs: outside, while the birds are singing.

Strikingly, *Path to Life* offers what, as far as I am aware, the earliest recording of the natural world to appear in Soviet cinema, the *only* birdsong from a film in the early sound period. Ekk's camera hovers over a group of birds for several seconds.[55] As Jana Klenhová has written, Ekk worked closely with Shorin's rival, Pavel Tager, and believed in a philosophy of synchronicity, hoping that "the spectator was allowed to rejoice in the mere audibility and physicality of the word as he knew it from his personal experience…the spectator was to be entertained." (See Jana Klenova, "The Road to Life – Detour of Synchrony," *Die Welt der Slaven* 54.2 (2009): pp. 381-393.)

Fig 1.7: Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

Helmholtz in Moscow: *Enthusiasm*'s Model Listener

Given Vertov's rather complicated understanding of how sound reproduction could change the cinema, who or what did he imagine as his film's ideal listener? Fischer insightfully identifies Vertov's goal to teach Socialism through film, but we have seen that the disharmony between *Enthusiasm* and its critics may have sprung from the film's confusing link between listening and political ideology. Vertov's decision to open *Enthusiasm* with a scene of auditory absorption, a depiction of the radio woman who navigates multiple sonic stimuli, introduces a central theme of the film: the insistence that sound reproduction could encourage new techniques

Fig. 1.8 Dziga Vertov, *Enthusiasm*

of attention, which would develop in tandem with a new politics. By the end of the "sound march" sequence, we eventually find the radio woman, now without headphones, bravely sculpting a bust of Lenin amidst the film's acoustic debris. Her pose is later compared to a more familiar monumental figure of Soviet triumph, also perched next to a loudspeaker (Fig. 1.8). In this sense, the film displays a new form of ideal listening for its viewer—a model listener.

Before Vertov completed *Enthusiasm*, the Soviet Union was busy using other media to change attitudes and orientations: as many scholars have shown, the enterprise of ideologically re-training readers through literature imagined that citizens would emulate the model forms of writing, speaking, and personal reflection that they encountered in the very novels they consumed.[56] In his memoirs, Shorin reminisces about the *actual* first sound film program, which presented a special screening of short films in a small sound theater that his team built on Leningrad's Nevskii Prospekt. Shorin most clearly remembers that the audience reacted vocally with shouts and laughs, just as it was reported to have happened at screenings of silent films in the 1920s. After they realized that the soundtrack would not stop, however, they fell silent.[57] They were, as his account suggests, beginning to listen in a new way.

Vertov's film may have modeled a specific kind of listening, but the experience of watching another person, does not necessarily lead an observer to model the observed. Writing on the appearance of the human body in early cinema, Jonathan Crary has argued that widespread images of a body looking away from its viewer actually fractured notions of vision's connection to truth: watching while another watched implied the contingency of a viewer's singular position, and did not suggest or encourage any kind of modeling.[58] Crary's conception builds upon Michael Fried's analyses of scenes of absorption in 18th century French painting that depicted absorbing activities, such as listening, reading, or watching, invited beholders to consider a depicted moment of contemplation as a state that was fundamentally other to their own perspective.[59] Unlike Crary's seeing body, Vertov offers his audience a listener who lacks the individual contingency of a personal line of sight, and thus hears, we could assume, what we

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[56] See Introduction, n. 18.

[57] In a set of notes kept regarding a screening of *Battleship Potemkin*, the incognito critic notes how garrulous and boisterous the audience becomes when they see agreeable material onscreen. See "*Matros s 'Potemkina' smotrit 'Bronenosets'. Nabliudenie za zritelem*" in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski,* № 110, 2015, pp. 17-122. Because Shorin had designed and installed Moscow's city-wide system of loudspeakers, and because he was solely responsible for amplifying the musical accompaniment to Lenin's funeral in 1924, there were few people more qualified for the technical aspects of the job. See (Shorin, *Kak ekran,* p. 21) In his review for the second sound film program, Messman reminded readers that Lenin's funeral was one of the most revisited sound events of the '20s, if not the entire early Soviet period. In 1919, Viacheslav Ivanov had already praised Beethoven, Wagner, and Scriabin with more gusto than ever as indispensible masters, and when Lenin died, Ivanov's feelings unexpectedly appeared to be mutual among the Bolsheviks: Beethoven and Wagner were played at Lenin's funeral (alongside the more conservative choice of Mozart's requiem) all before the Internationale was played to conclude the ceremony. See the exchange between various parties (and their lack of agreement) in *Muzyka vmesto sumbura*: *Kompozitory i muzykanty v strane sovetov*, 1917-1991 (Moskva: Demokratiia, 2003), pp.50-54

[58] See Jonathan Crary, "Unbinding Vision: Manet and the Attentive Observer in the Late Nineteenth Century" in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: UC Press), 1996.

[59] See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: UC Press), 1988.

hear.[60] The radio woman's triumph in achieving literally monumental status is achieved thanks to her ability to cipher through what at first sound like *too many* auditory signals to pay attention to—by the film's second and third parts, sounds rarely compete as they do in the "sound march," thus signaling the initiation of a new mode of listening that organizes the chaos. Yet despite Vertov's pedagogical intentions, this overwhelming onslaught of noise had more in common with

Fig. 1.9[61] Title: "Joys of the Future"; Caption: "I like to relax alone"

negative models of attention than with any kind of ideological training. On New Year's Day in 1929, a cartoonist for *Kino* suggested that coping with multiple sound sources could be quite difficult, even potentially subversive (Fig 1.9). This satirical illustration imagined new, private sound reproduction technologies, such as a home sound cinema, which implied that listeners in private spaces were less likely to develop the skills to negotiate modern sonic space. Vertov and *Kino'*s readership, of course, were likely to have reached only one conclusion from this cartoon: sonic chaos was a feature of the bourgeois lifestyle that incubates the cartoon's subject. Surrounded by a private stock of sound technologies, the listener is overwhelmed by his surplus of sound media. According to Crary, knowing how and what to observe are hallmarks of modern attention, an epistemological position shaped by an interchange of forces both industrial and scientific—for *Kino's c*artoonist, they were also economic.[62]

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[60] Fried writes: "Furthermore, and this is the heart of my argument, underlying both the pursuit of absorption and the renewal of interest in the sister doctrines is the demand that the artist bring about a paradoxical relationship between painting and beholder-specifically, that he find a way to neutralize or negate the beholder's presence, to establish the fiction that no one is standing before the canvas. (The paradox is that only if this is done can the beholder be stopped and held precisely there.) See Fried, Michael. *Absorption and Theatricality*, p. 108.

[61] *Kino*, 01 January, 1929

[62] "It was a problem whose centrality was directly related to the emergence of a social, urban, psychic, industrial field increasingly saturated with sensory input. Inattention, especially within the context of new forms of industrialized production, began to be seen as a danger and a serious problem, even though it was often the very modernized arrangements of labor that produced inattention." (Crary, "Unbinding Vision" in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (1995), p. 47) Elsewhere, Crary has asked, "how is

Other scholars have argued that our modern connection between listening and attention in the modern world originates in the acoustic sciences, specifically in the conclusions of the physiology of Hermann von Helmholtz, a German physicist who studied the physiology of vision, hearing, and touch, and who set the standard for scientific research on hearing that came after him. Helmholtz's major contribution connected the physiology of the human ear to the phenomenon of music itself, and he argues in his treatise, *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (1863), that sound was a sensation separate from and undetectable by the other senses. The link between Helmholtz's positivistic outlook and modern conceptions of attention, Benjamin Steege writes, is Helmholtz's insistence that "through a rigorous discipline of attention, [he] sought to produce a listener who could choose and analyze its objects at will and thereby make its perceptions its own."[63] The ear was, Helmholtz argued, a powerful tool: it played a dual role of both defining the faculty of hearing according to its particular physiology, and giving rise to social forms, such as the distinction between noise and music.[64] Without directly calling for it, Helmholtz's paradigm shift in the acoustic sciences had created a new, modern understanding of the listener.

Although his findings concerning the ear's physiology are by now considered virtually incontrovertible, Helmholtz's difficult reception within Russia and the Soviet Union has been largely overlooked, and an investigation of how his experiments refuted Vertov's ideas concerning sound in the film can illuminate the motivations of *Enthusiasm*'s detractors.[65] Helmhotz's research had a central and problematic thesis for Marxist readers: if sound is *not* a material phenomenon in the world (as Vertov may have hoped), then its sensation is *ipso facto* a product of the ear and the mind.[66] According to Helmholtz, what Hegel called the "thing of perception" was contingent only on the ear, thus removing that "thing" from the political or economic conditions that Marxist readers saw as its central mediator.[67] In response, Lenin published a chapter-length attack on Helmholtz in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1909), his own treatise on perception, where he accused the scientist of mixing up materialism (the

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the body, including the observing body, becoming a component of new machines, economies, apparatuses, whether social, libidinal, or technological?" (Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*: *Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 2)

[63] See Benjamin Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2012, p. 81.

[64] "Hence it follows, first, that many different trains of waves of sound can be propagated at the same time through the same mass of air, without mutual disturbance; and, secondly, that the human ear is capable of again analyzing into its constituent elements that composite motion of the air which is produced by the simultaneous action of several musical instruments" See von Helmholtz, Hermann. *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1885), pg 25.

[65] The only scholar I am aware of who has explored Helmholtz's reception in Russia is Julia Kursell, and who has named him as the prime antagonist of avant-garde conceptions of sound. See Kursell, *Schallkunst: Eine Literaturgeschicte der Musik in der frühen russischen Avantgarde* (München, 2003),

[66] For a history of the striving towards materializing sound that defined the work of both Vertov and filmmaker Esfir Shub, see Lilya Kaganovsky, "*Material'nost' zvuka*: *Kinokasania Esfiri Shub" Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie,* № 120, 2013.

[67] There was, to be sure, always room for blurring the lines between idealistic and materialistic perception in Hegel's writing on perception in the first place: "…but the Thing is a One, and we are conscious that this diversity by which it would cease to be a One falls in us. So in point of fact, the Thing is white only to *our eyes, also* tart to *our* tongue, *also* cubical to *our* touch, and so on." See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), p. 72.

quantifiable world) with idealism (the world as data from sense organs): "Helmholtz harbors an insuperable prejudice against straightforward, clear, and open materialism."[68] This rejection colored Helmholtz's reputation in official Soviet publications for decades to come, and while the pre-revolutionary Russian encyclopedia lauds Helmholtz's scientific contributions, the Soviet Union's official state encyclopedia acknowledged Lenin's critique in all three editions of Helmholtz's entry.

Alongside Lenin, several creative figures in Russia also dismissed Helmholtz. Spurred less by politics than by distaste for the scientist's positivism, the Russian Symbolists characterized music as the purest art of feeling that was borne of a divine truth, not a quantifiable phenomenon.[69] Both Nikolai Kul'bin and the avant-garde composer Artur Lur'e turned their backs on Helmholtz, insisting that sound existed independently from perception, and explaining instead that it sprung from "objects" that were, as they put it, more powerful than spoken language and music.[70] In an essay from 1909 titled *Liberated Music,* Kul'bin proposed that nature and music should be merged, in contradiction to one of Helmholtz's major distinctions between musical tones and noise:

> The music of nature – light, thunder, the whistle of the wind, the splash of water, the songs of birds – is liberated by its choice of sounds. The nightingale sings not only in the notes of modern music, but in any notes available to him.
>
> Liberated music follows the very same laws of nature that music and all nature's arts follow.[71]

Liberated Music was published by the art group *Der Blaue Reiter* in support of Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions, but the essay clearly raises questions concerning the ontology of sound itself.[72] The artists inspired by Kul'bin pledged to abolish the boundaries between music, sound, and noise, a mission later epitomized by the outrageous compositions of Arsenii Avraamov, whose *Symphony of Sirens* (1922) challenged tonality by incorporating the sound of machinery, factory whistles, machine guns, naval fleets, and explosions during public performances in the cities of Baku and Moscow.[73] Kul'bin's sonic philosophy and Avraamov's

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[68] See V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy,* Chapter 4.6, "The Theory of Symbols (Hieroglyphs) and the Criticism of Helmholtz (trans. Abraham Fineberg, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/four6.htm)

[69] Rebecca Mitchell, *Nietzsche's Orphans: Music, Metaphysics, and the Twilight of the Russian Empire* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2016).

[70] I take several of these examples from Julia Kursell, See Kursell, *Schallkunst: Eine Literaturgeschicte der Musik in der frühen russischen Avantgarde* (München, 2003), p. 79, 136.

[71] See Wolfgang Mende, *Musik und Kunst in der sowjetischen Revolutionskultur* (Köln: Böhlau, 2009), p. 80.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Luigi Russolo's noise orchestra experiments in Italy are the genetic predecessor to Avraamov's *Symphony of Sirens* — both artists saw sound as a universal, transcendent language, similar to what Russian *Zaum'* poets would eventually call *ptichii iazyk* ("bird language"). In 1923, when Avraamov staged the symphony in Moscow, critics suggested that it may have benefitted from a more formal performance space: many of the piece's listeners—nearby residents of Moscow—did not realize that the symphony was taking place. . In the early '20s, Avraamov wrote for *Muzykal'naia nov'* that the Futurists were the group that "atonalists" like himself organized themselves around, thus associating himself (by

compositions may have impacted Vertov, who hired the avant-garde composer Nikolai Timofeev to compose an industrial score for *Enthusiasm* that, like the recorded mechanical cuckoo, would counteract the film's field recordings, a dialectical transformation of the film's music itself into liberated sound.[74] Indeed, the avant-garde's embrace of *all* sound encouraged Vertov to pursue his central philosophy of creativity in *Enthusiasm*: any sound had the potential to acquire meaning in the hands of an artist.[75]

This anti-Helmholtz strain within the Russian avant-garde led to a utopian aspiration towards sound and listening throughout the '20s, which left a definite impact on Soviet sonic culture. Vertov once wrote that the cinema's *kino-glaz* (Cine-eye) could see everything that the eye could not, but by the end of the '20s, the new *radio-glaz*, which expanded consciousness through listening, had replaced the *kino-glaz* in his thought. According to Vertov, the *radio-glaz* would increase the proximity between different people, breaking down the barriers between them, framing the radio-eye as "the destruction of distance between people, as the possibility for workers of the entire world not only to see, but to *simultaneously* hear each other."[76]

But what can we learn from Helmholtz about the expectations for *Enthusiasm's* listeners? Marxist detractors of Helmholtz's theory of the senses would make similar, but competing arguments about the role of sound in harnessing and directing attention: although the film opens with the radio woman, the film's second part takes a sharp turn when she cedes her role as the film's star to the noise of this interrupting whistle. While it may strike the contemporary listener as jarring, this sound had appeared and even been called for by critics in earlier sound films: it was most actively discussed when Vladimir Messman critiqued a factory whistle as *not well-executed enough* in Abram Room's film, *The Plan of Great Works*.[77] It would also appear as if

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force) with the movement. Whereas Luigi Russolo raided the concert hall, Avraamov had a grander vision: he would stage his noise works in public spaces, and his infamous *Symphony,* performed only twice, and most successfully in Baku in 1922, incorporated the sound of machinery, factory whistles, machine guns, naval fleets, and explosions *en plein air*. When Avraamov staged the symphony in Moscow the following year, it was seen as an ambitious attempt, but one that would have benefitted from a change of space that was easier to control: "Московский пролеткульт предпринимает шаги к повторению опыта гудковой симфонии в одну из ночей (когда затихает городской шум), чтобы специалисты могли всесторонне исследовать все возможности для организации музыки этого рода.") By the end of the '20s, Avraamov was appearing beside Lev' Theremin to endorse concerts performed on the *Termenvox,* Theremin's futuristic instrument; by the mid-'30s, he was a sound engineer at a Moscow cinema studio. See Gerald Janecek, *Zaum: The Transrational Poety of Russian Futurism* (San Diego: SDS UP, 1996) pp. 15-18, April Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia.* (University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 2004), p. 27, and *Muzyka vmesto sumbura*: *Kompozitory i muzykanty v strane sovetov*, 1917-1991 (Moskva: Demokratiia, 2003), pp. 50-54.

[74] See Kursell, p. 136 and Mende, p. 217. Many avant-garde artists were fond of forming noise orchestras, but like Vertov's film, these experimental concerts often puzzled workers and critics, who were more likely to embrace folk songs that were based on recognizable harmonic structures. See Konstantin Dudakov–Kashuro, "Noise Music in Russian Futurism" in *International Yearbook of Futurist Studies* (Berlin, 2016)

[75] The reception of music for more radical initiates of the avant-garde was quite different from their pre-Revolutionary counterparts. Prokofiev, for example, publicly rejected Luigi Russolo's Futurist noise instruments from Italy on the pages of *Muzyka,* a journal closely associated with Imperial tastes, while Lur'e welcomed them. See Kursell, pp. 47-48.

[76] See "*o kino-glaz*" in DVN vol. 2., p. 163.

[77] Не оправдан в смысле художественного воздействия заводской-гудок, обухом по голове бьющий в момент начала фильмы. Самый принцип использования гула заводских гудков на фоне

Vertov read this review carefully before editing *Enthusiasm*–Messman communicates the necessity of inducing the viewer into a certain kind of attentive state ("*uvesti slushatelia v druguiu storonu"*) within a field of otherwise distracting sounds. In a textbook that became extremely important for the Soviet film industry, the director Aleksandr Andrievskii's textbook specifically named *Enthusiasm* as an incorrect approach to sound, claiming that the machinery of the future would be silent, not raucous: "it would be difficult for even a person with healthy nerves to listen to these films until the end, because of the incomparable surplus of tractors' roaring, the whining of steel, screeching, and various sonic excesses in the "industrial" style."[78] Not everyone agreed: the constructivist architect and critic, Boris Arvatov, wrote in 1923 that factory whistles ("the materials of everyday life") were a sonic index of proletarian culture, and they could themselves generate a new aesthetic form.[79] Unlike the anti-noise leagues that cropped up in Western Europe and North America, many early Soviet artists embraced and encouraged noise, but there was, of course, a pushback against their boisterous utopia.[80]

This element of quantification amongst the utopian urge appeared in other pro-Helmholtz statements across Soviet sonic culture, which were always in an uneasy contradiction with Vertov's ideas.[81] Like Soviet sonic culture itself, *Enthusiasm* is predicated upon a complicated, simultaneous embrace and rejection of Helmholtz's argument about listening. This was, indeed, one of Vertov's main convictions concerning the film: Mackay has shown that in Kiev, Vertov announced that "The music you hear in the mines, the music that mixes with the noise of machines, with the noise of unfurled banners, and the banners themselves—they are all one and

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похорон Ленина – принцип вполне уместный, правильный. Более того: он мог бы быть использован как *лейт-мотив во всей фильме.* Этого нет. *Внезапность* же гудка (как прием – вполне закономерный) не может дать полного эффекта лишь потому, что зритель-слушатель *не подготовлен* (мы имеем в виду не подготовленность к внезапность, – это чепуха, которая уничтожила бы прием – а подготовленность *в обратном направлений*). Надо было дать небольшую увертюру, интродукцию, в которой *увести слушателя в другую сторону* (повествовательная музыка, песня, марш) и здесь-то со всей внезапностью обрушиться на него стоном гудков, всем ветра… *Kino,* 01 May 1930

[78] See Andrievskii, *Postroenie tonfil'ma* (1931).

[79] These very sounds, according to Boris Arvatov, would signal a new kind of proletarian language. (See Arvatov, *Iskusstvo i klassy*. Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo: Moskva, 1923, p. 84: "For the first time, musicians don't want to organize sound material unrelated to life, but instead, they wanted to organize the material of life itself (the noise of the streets, of the factory, and so on), the noises of metals, of wood, of glass, of everything that is possible to sound in our life, such as whistles, sirens, and so on.".The creation of a new, special language interested Vertov, who planned to explore and ultimately learn to speak it. See Nelson, *Music for the Revolution,* p. 27.

[80] See Konstantin Dudakov–Kashuro, "Noise Music in Russian Futurism."

[81] A leading Bolshevik music journal, *Muzykal'naia nov',* appears to have agreed with one of Helmholtz's major conclusions. regarding the frequency of sound waves as uncontroversial fact when, in one issue, they quantified the wavelengths of different notes in order to promote the construction of automated, electronic instruments. (See A. Anod, *"K voprosu o reforme kino-muzyky*" in *Muzykal'naia nov'*: Moskva. 23 October, 1923, p. 30.) A leading Bolshevik music journal, *Muzykal'naia nov',* appears to have agreed with one of Helmholtz's major conclusions. regarding the frequency of sound waves as uncontroversial fact when, in one issue, they quantified the wavelengths of different notes in order to promote the construction of automated, electronic instruments See Dasmanov, B.A. *"Zvuk i tsvet*" in *Muzykal'naia nov'*: Moskva, № 10, 1924

the same thing, and it's impossible to consider any of them apart from one another."[82] However, Vertov quickly contradicts himself in the question and answer session:

> We must acknowledge that we began [in cinema] like literary people, that we're not sufficiently literate in existing sounds and don't distinguish among them. If [...] you go to the Donbass, then all you'll hear [at first] is one uninterrupted roar and noise—that's the first impression. But this wasn't my first time in the Donbass…I studied these sounds and saw that, yes, we really are domestic, and for us these sounds are "noise"—but for the worker in the Donbass every sound has a specific meaning; for him there are no "noises." (Trans. John Mackay)[83]

If perception for Lenin (and for that matter, Chernyshevsky and Hegel) required revealing the material conditions that compose an object the world, then Vertov's indirect reliance on a quasi-idealist, quasi-materialist system like Helmholtz's prevents him from satisfying an orthodox requirement of Bolshevik ideology.

Aleksei Kruchenykh as Model Listener

Vertov's place-bound practice of listening further complicates the role listening in *Enthusiasm*. Sound theaters were the only spaces where ambitious, cinematic experiments in listening could be exhibited, but few people had set foot in one by the time Vertov finished the film. The bridge between *Enthusiasm*'s first and second sections is constructed as a self-reflexive

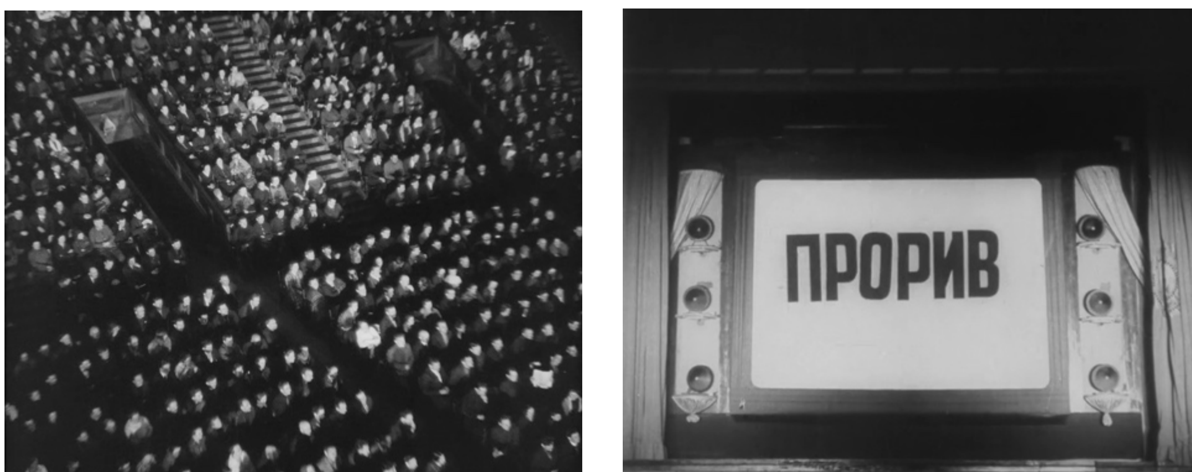

Fig. 1.10: Dziga Vertov*, Enthusiasm*

scene that depicts a sound theater and its audience (Fig 1.10), which introduces another parallelism that is similar to the structure of the "sound march": audience members file in to watch the film (which turns out to be *Enthusiasm* itself, adding another twist of reflexivity), and their queue is matched to a line of workers who are headed into the mine. Both the cinemagoers and shockworkers (highly productive laborers of Stalin's Five-Year-Plan) organize around the

[82] See Mackay, pt. 4, p.1.
[83] Ibid., p. 3

sound of the train whistle, and the film audience responds to the rhythmic whistles by standing and joining in collective song.

Debates surrounding Soviet sonic culture had spilled over into plans for the architecture that would facilitate it. In an article in *Kino* from 1928, the architecture critic M. Boitler

Fig. 1.11: Tatlin, *The Third International* & Lavinskii, *The City of the Future*

suggested that the movie theater was the third in a line of evolving, ideal spaces for the future Soviet Union (Fig 1.11), placing it in a lineage with constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin's famous *Third International*, and architect Anton Lavinskii's "city of the future.[84] Yet very few architects had thought through how a sound theater could and should be built, thus staging a conflict between architectural idealists and those who understood the difficulties of accomplishing such a gargantuan task. Boitler chastised an earlier, utopian proponent of renewing theater architecture, Ladovskii, when he wrote that:

> The project of new cinemas should anticipate a place for the apparatuses of "talking cinema" (*govoriashchee kino*) (while they are being built, talking cinema will start being shown)…What kind of a booth does Ladovskii want to pack four apparatuses and their personnel into? Where does he get this despicable (*sobach'e*) understanding of actual film technology from?[85]

For Shorin, the debate had an easy answer: architecture was something that sound reproduction's quality could simply overcome. Having been hired to wire loudspeakers around the city of Moscow, a task that he specifically framed as a break between private headphones and public listening:

> There was little of humanity that remained undisturbed: suddenly a new demand arose – to listen to broadcasts without headsets. Well, they invented a loudspeaker in place of headphones…And then they decided to pull the loudspeakers out into the streets, in the squares, at the stadiums – let the wide masses of the people listen to radio![86]

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[84] "*Kakim zhe dolzhen byt' ideal'nyi kinoteatr?" Kino*, 02 October, 1928.
[85] Ibid.
[86] See Shorin, *Kak Ekran,* p. 21.

After this experience with acoustic engineering, Shorin believed that sound events would draw as little attention as possible to the space where they took place, overpowering listeners to the point of making surrounding materials disappear. In April of 1930, he ran an ad in the magazine *Cinema and Life* (*Kino i zhizn'*) which promised that the *Shorinfon'*s listeners would feel "as if they were not in a theater, but on the street, at the factory, or at the train station, even feeling the air or depth."[87]

One model listener Vertov may have based his own listener on comes from an unexpected source that predated sonic culture's fixation on the sound theater. A 1927 demonstration of the German *Tri Ergon* sound-on-film system in Moscow inspired and embarrassed the Soviet film industry, which compensated by calling for brisk development of their own technology (in reality, they were nearly ten years away from fully transitioning to sound film).[88] More optimistic in his response was Aleksandr Kruchenykh, a premiere poet of the Russian avant-garde, who was present at the *Tri-Ergon* screening. Kruchenykh was so moved by what he saw that in 1928, he composed a book of poetry titled *Talking Cinema* (*Govoriashchee kino*) to commemorate it. At the very end of the book's introduction, the poet

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[87] See Roshal', L. *Dziga Vertov,* 1982. Despite Shorin's aims for perfection, it was unclear if spaces in the Soviet Union were prepared for a seamless shift to the loudly amplified sound spectacles that *Enthusiasm* aspired to, and which the film portrayed. In late 1928, a fire tore through a movie theater in Voronezh, shocking moviegoers and receiving front-page treatment in *Kino* for weeks: twenty people were killed, but many more suffered serious burns.[87] Eyewitness accounts varied: some thought that a nearby kerosene lamp in the projectionist's booth was the cause of the blaze, but many others blamed the projector itself.[87] Those who escaped claimed to have seen a blazing film strip that spun from reel to reel, an image that, unfortunately, characterized a difficult year that had been marked by a slew of infighting and indecision. Indeed, the film industry seemed too feeble to act on the changes it had promised: a massive amount of silent theaters remained to be built, and as the theater in Voronezh showed, many were simply too dangerous even consider outfitting with speakers. In Moscow, only one theater in the entire city was deemed adequate for sound cinema: in an article in *Kino*, a journalist named Garbuzov said of the *Koloss* theater that it was "considered the most suitable location for sound film…because its strong reverberations (a sound's delivery into the hall) have been discovered" (*Kino* 24 September, 1929). Reverb may have been a good thing in Moscow (the opposite was thought to be true of American theaters), but it was not the theater's acoustic qualities that would save it: a surge in ticket sale to the hit 1931 sound film *Path to Life* was the only thing that saved *Koloss* from being closed down thanks to flocks of viewers who arrived at the theater.[87] When *Enthusiasm* premiered in London, Vertov infuriated the theater's sound technician after he demanded to sit near the volume knob, and after having been sternly instructed not to do so, he turned the knob as far as it could go during the screening, nearly deafening the audience and surely damaging the sound equipment.[87] If we recall when Vertov writes: that "for us these sounds are "noise," but that workers found in them "specific meaning," we should note that he was not alone in imagining that the sound theater would become a site that could transform sonic experiences into new and unfamiliar aesthetic encounters. ("*Pozhar v kino-teatre*" *Kino*: Moskva. 27 Novermber, 1928., *Zvukovoe kino v Moskve*. *Kino*: Moskva. 09.24.29) . See Emily Ann Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008.)

[88] See "*Kniga o tri*-ergone," Kino: Moskva 01.01.29, a review of a book detailing the device's creation, which had recently been translated into Russian. Despite the excitement at home, the first sound technologies came from abroad, and engineers struggled to compete with major gains made outside of the USSR. Feeling eclipsed by the German team, film critic Vladimir Sol'skii published a book in which he revisited how audiences in Berlin laughed and walked out of an earlier *Tri-Ergon* demonstration because the machinery failed to perfectly synchronize with the images on screen.

signs off with a barbed taunt to detractors of his experimental writing both potential and known, which claimed for itself the title of "the first book of poetry about the cinema":

> In these lines, instead of purely cinematic moments (images from the audience), there are moments that are purely literary — tone painting (*zvukopis')*, quick shifts of rhythm and others (exactly what is in the sound cinema).
>
> On the contrary, some say these lines are impossible. On the contrary, some say that the first book of poetry about the cinema is unthinkable, but *I just wrote it* – who's next?![89]

Incendiary rhetoric was commonplace for Kruchenykh, who spent fifteen years as Russia's leading poet of *"zaum',"* a sound poetry movement that flourished in the 1910s. Often translated as "trans-rational poetry" or quite literally as "*beyonsense,*" *zaum's* transition to the movie theater stirred up an entirely new kind of standoffish posturing in Kruchenykh.[90] Although he called himself the "wild man" of Russian literature, by 1928 his attitude and output had caused him to fall significantly out of fashion.[91] According to those who were close to him, he had enjoyed brief but explosive moments of popularity only during his 1921 return to Moscow after the Russian Civil War, a city just emerging from the grip of civil war that he took by storm with his aggressive, experimental poetry.[92]

Talking Cinema is presented as a diary of trips to an imaginary sound cinema between 1926 and 1927, in which the poet offers soundtracks to the silent images in verse. Kruchenykh often speaks as a lone lyrical subject who is a singular listener, but the poet's voice intermittently conjoins with a plural "we," marking a transition to collective audience. If it can be said that the avant-garde's relationship to noise most closely resembled the Romantics' notion of the world as a coded sonic space—in which sounds had meaning that could only be revealed by an artist, the great mediator—then with *Talking Cinema,* Kruchenykh blurs this distinction, becoming both a mediating artist and passively listening spectator at once. Kruchenykh's dreams for *zaum'* implied that poetry could create a pure signifier of a connected sound-image and its referent, one that neither written nor spoken language had yet seen. [93] Indeed, sound poetry aspires towards a seemingly impossible series of effects over language: it explodes the form that contains its message (language), but by appearing in print, it is the simultaneous effacement and inscription of meaning.

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[89] See Kruchenykh, *Govoriashchee kino: 1-aia kniga stikhov o kino : Stsenarii, kadry, libretto*. Moskva: Izd. Avtora, 1928, p. 4.
[90] Janecek, *Zaum'*, p. 1.
[91] See Groys, *Going public*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, (2010) p. 74-75.
[92] See Katerine Ciepela, "Cvetaeva's Lyricism and Kruchenykh's *Zaum*'" *Russian Literature* 65.1-3 (2009): 321-38, p. 324. After the rise of proletarian art and the state's tightening grip around "Formalism" and its artistic brethren, however, there was no longer space for *zaum'* (See Erlich, Victor, "Russian Formalism" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34.4 (1989): p. 635).
[93] See Shklovksy, "On Poetry and Trans-Sense Language" *October* 34 (Autumn, 1985), p. 5. For Kruchenykh, Kittler's theories could seem appealing: Kittler's new media reinvigorate the senses, but they also wear out the media that they appropriate, an ultimate replacement of both the body and memory. Kittler writes: "…with language…one has merely the choice of remembering the words and losing the meaning or, vice versa, or remembering the meaning and losing the words in doing so. As soon as optical and acoustical data can be put into some kind of media storage, people no longer need their memory."[93]

This paradox surely explains the popularity of *zaum'* performances over *zaum'* publications. Kruchenykh's 1921 public readings were the initial catalyst that was responsible for moving *zaum*' indoors: sensing that the publication of his poetry had lost the force of his presence, by 1923 he was advocating for a *zaum'* takeover of the played theater, and by the end of the decade he named the movies as *zaum'*s final frontier.[94] Earlier, he had called for the public importance of *zaum'*, stating that it would "refresh the ear and throat"—now, going to the sound cinema would replace this experience.[95] The book fittingly begins with the poem *"Tri Ergon,"* an account of a how the poet's senses were fostered inside of a sonic landscape that shaped *zaum's* sound poetry:

<table>
<tr><td>В "Доме Союзов"
кинематографа новая эра -
во всеуслышанье
заговорили
Три Эргон.</td><td>In the house of Soviets
there is a new era of cinematography —
in the utmost state of being heard
(vseuslsyshan'e)
Tri-Ergon began to speak.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Звук течет по капле
глуховатыи, тяжелыи,
но все же захватывают
Три Эргон,
Три Эргон!</td><td>Sound flows drop by drop
Muffled and dense
But Tri-Ergon
Grips everything,
Tri-Ergon!</td></tr>
<tr><td>Дрозды, канарейки,
свиньи, гуси, —
визг и свист.
На сегодня переполнены
наши уши, —
так родились
мои неполнозвучия[96]</td><td>Thrushes, canaries
pigs, geese, —
a squeal and a whistle.
Today our ears
Are overloaded, —
This is how
my lack of orotundity (nepolnozvuchie) came about</td></tr>
</table>

Here, Kruchenykh gives an explanation for the conditions that led to *zaum'* itself: a modern "overloading" of the ears.[97] Several years after *Talking Cinema*'s publication, Vertov filled the mouths of his filmed subjects with strange sounds that did not resemble the word or the world as his viewers may have known them: at one point in *Enthusiasm,* the sound of a telegraph relay replaces an agitator's speech, swapping his tongue for the beeping of a machine. This decision is particularly remarkable given that they appear alongside *Enthusiasm's* numerous scenes of oral agitators' political speeches, which are then compared with the language of *zaum'*. Most importantly, navigating the "overloading" of the ears became a pathos for the radio woman in Vertov's film.

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[94] In 1925, Kruchenykh travestied all arts except for the cinema in an insert in his self-published text, *4 Phonetic Novels.*

[95] See Janecek, p. 304.

[96] *Govoriaschee kino,* p. 174

[97] As with many works of *zaum',* there is no fixed meter in Kruchenykh's poems, but several neologisms appear: *"vseuslsyshan'e"* and "*nepolnozvuchiia*" create compound nouns unheard of in the Russian language.

Before *Enthusiasm's* premier, Vertov had already combined the architectural ambitions of the sound theater and the goals of *zaum'* poetry. In his libretto for the film, a second draft of a quasi-screenplay originally titled the "sound march" that he wrote in 1929, he proposed a synaesthetic extravaganza for the film's conclusion. The text proposes a scene of conversion in which "the sounds of lathes blend with the sounds of the 'Internationale, 'and special machines measure the enthusiasm of the Donbass workers, which is transformed into numbers:"[98]

> Radiotelegraph lines run along in the blaze of a magnetic domain. Socialist sirens wail and run in the future. The night is unendingly shot through with the blinding steel sparks of fireworks. Bessemer vessels make sunrise after sunrise, the sounds of lathes blend with the sounds of the "Internationale," and special machines measure the enthusiasm of the Donbass workers, which is transformed into numbers.[99]

It would be difficult to find a text more reminiscent of Friedrich Kittler's theory of mediation, which Steven Connor has fortuitously called "conversion hysteria": "…[Kittler shows] that the later years of the nineteenth century are also characterised by a kind of conversion mania, as inventors and engineers sought more and more ways in which different kinds of energy and sensory form could be translated into each other."[100] For Kittler, the most revealing text from the early age of sound reproduction is Rilke's "the primal gramophone," which imagines a measurable human skull, over which passes a gramophone's needle.[101] Everything, according to Rilke, must somehow be measurable by this fantastic stylus that converts physical grooves into sounds otherwise unimaginable. In the libretto, Vertov replicates this idea by depicting labor as quantifiable, somehow translated and mediated by a machine into a new quotient. While the translating machine has been explained elsewhere as evidence of Vertov's interest in mechanical reproduction, his conviction that listeners of new sound technologies could understand *zaum'*-like sounds echoes a similar conviction, and he specifically associates this listening with a kind of training of his on-screen subjects.[102] Such positivistic ideas about sound, however, surely resurrected the ghost of Helmholtz that Vertov's forerunners may have been eager to keep buried: the mathematical definition of sound that informs Vertov's "special machines," would reassert the clash between the material and idealistic dimensions of listening that Lenin had once rejected.

To be clear, I am suggesting that Vertov's model listener draws from variety of potential sources—both physiological and poetic—but that its conflict with the various camps of Soviet

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[98] *Entuziazm: Kratkoe libretto* in *DNV* vol. 1, 2004, p. 138.

[99] Responding to *Enthusiasm's* often confusing use of sound – and to this libretto in particular – Devin Fore has insightfully proposed that the film's sound collages should be interpreted according to Vertov's peculiar understanding of politics as a system based on relationships amongst objects, and not as a system that is crafted within the sphere of logos. Fore has called Vertov's attitude Hegelian, and while we should certainly notice how closely his films mirror some of Hegel's ideas, but Vertov had more in common with Helmholtz than with Hegel, and his grasp of philosophical and scientific debates about perception was elementary at best; more often, he endorsed approaches that made the workings of nature clear through technology, an experimental approach analogous to Helmholtz's pioneering work.

[100] See Steven Connor, "Photophonics" in *Sound Effects*, 3.1 (2013): pp. 132-48.

[101] See Kittler, pp. 43-45.

[102] See Devin Fore, "Dziga Vertov, the First Shoemaker of Russian Cinema," in *Configurations* 18:3, pp 362-388.

sonic culture led to *Enthusiasm's* less than excited reception. As we will see, Vertov's (perhaps unintentional) intersection with Helmholtz's project opened the door for a sensory solipsism that Marxists like Lenin had already identified in the scientist's findings, and which had already significantly shaped the contradictions at the heart of Soviet sonic culture.

Soviet Sonic Culture and the Deceit of Sound Reproduction

Just as the conveyer belt in *Enthusiasm* is overseen by an engineer before its objects re-appear at the film's conclusion, *Enthusiasm*'s listener must make sense of isolated pieces of sonic evidence in order to understand the film's ultimate goals. *Enthusiasm* itself could read as a kind of miniature, a smaller glimpse of the five-year-plan that audiences were to look to for inspiration and education. Indeed, *Enthusiasm* aims to equate the training of cinemagoers and laborers, while the audience of the Donbass may stand in collective song, their theater never quite disappears, despite Shorin's hope that it might.

While Mackay has argued that an implied "sensory collectivity" at the heart of *Enthusiasm* disturbed the film's censors, its opposite—sensory solipsism, such as a radio listener with an individual set of headphones—should have been a much more disturbing conclusion to a film slated to depict the budding Socialist state.[103] What Helmholtz claimed to discover about the ear was precisely the poison that could damage a Socialist society in pursuit of the material reality of objects: hearing was subjective, and relied upon a singular *body,* not some kind of material or collective that was prior to it. It is by now well known that the appearance of sound-on-film technology prompted a reflection on the cinema's relationship to reality, and how it might manipulate the sensory isolation that Helmholtz discovered concerning the ear.[104] While the future sound theater promise a resolution to the tension of an individual listener in *Enthusiasm's* first part, the second part brings another crucial challenge: is the audience being taught, or tricked?

Michael North has used the example of Hollywood to poignantly paraphrase the question that followed the global shift to an all-in-one, celluloid sound-on-film strip: "is a movie with sound more realistic than one without, or is it merely the producer of newer and more powerful illusions?"[105] This anxiety followed sound technology in its various forms throughout the 20th century, and before *Enthusiasm*, Vertov appears to have believed in the potential for a mismatch between media and messages. He depicted this very problem in the form of two identical gramophones that vie for different ends in *A Sixth Part of the World* (1927): in the film, one gramophone plays foxtrot records to frenzied dancers, and another relays the recorded speeches

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[103] See Mackay, pt 2, p. 13.

[104] Of course, talking machines existed prior to the sound cinema – radio and gramophone are the most well-known examples of them, and they frequently appeared in Vertov's silent films. A device to record and rearrange sounds didn't appear until the end of the '20s: prior to this, recording was associated with cylinders and discs of the gramophone, which had for over a decade been the most popular device in Russia for private sound reproduction. Those who did attempt to capture sound and reproduce it on the gramophone were constrained to fitting their products onto its discs, which could only record in set intervals, and could never re-arrange or vary the sound's placements in relation to each other. In 1923, the Hungarian artist Laszlo Moholy-Nage had already voiced his dream for the advent of a gramophone record whose pieces could be segmented and re-arranged. (See Kittler, Friedrich. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1999), p. 46)

[105] See Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), p. 15.

of Lenin to native inhabitants of the far north. Thus, the technology itself fails to prevent when it is used destructively and when it is used for good—the human hand guides it. By 1931, an article

Fig. 1.12: Manipulators of sound technology: film executives, priests, and the police[106]

by N. Grinfel'd built on this hunch by showing three possibilities that a talking screen could enable: sound film might personally enrich its capitalist producers; it may advertise to and manipulate listeners with an ideological message of reaction (as in the case of a foreign priest); or, it could promote militaristic avenues of social control (Fig 1.12).

In reality, the device that Grinfel'd appeared to fear most had been operating around him successfully for some time under the guise of Soviet radio. Figures like Vertov's radio woman, who connects to a network through a set of headphones, posed a conundrum for those who rejected the solipsism of Helmholtz in favor of a collective philosophy of listening. Yet a personal listening device implied that the radio listener, like the bourgeois listener from *Kino*'s satirical illustration, was situated inside of a private aural space. Despite this tension, depictions of a singular radio listener had a long history throughout the '20s during the rollout of radio, *radiofikatsiia* ("radiofication"), which fundamentally changed the life of the average Soviet citizen (Fig 1.16).

The state used radio to break into rural spaces that were still being absorbed into the growing network of politics and technology that Soviet electrification aimed to create.[107] Very often, the Soviets arrived bearing acoustic arms: the war on religious holidays and traditions in the countryside, like the scene that depicts the destruction of a church in *Enthusiasm,* quickly became an aural battle when the Red Army developed a popular tactic of using loudspeakers to

[106] See Grinfel'd, "*Puti zvukovogo kino u nas i za granitsei*" *Proletarskoe Kino*: Moskva, №7, July 1931, pp. 43-48.
[107] In recent scholarship, Emma Widdis has linked *radiofikatsiia* to *elektrifikatsiia*. Widdis, Emma. *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), p. 22.

drown out Easter celebrations.[108] In the countryside, Soviet inventors and rural agitators noticed that the radio could silence an audience easily, and mass listening events were organized in which peasants and rural workers gathered around a single loudspeaker. In Moscow, however, it was daunting to determine how to keep those whose allegiances were unclear off the air. Radio's lack of an editing table unleashed the ultimate, unscripted, and uncut alterity of a faceless human voice into a series of private headphone sets.

Radio had nearly spiraled out of control in the city by 1926, when an estimated 100,000 radio hackers listened in and sent out signals as they pleased.[109] The predicament was captured in a range of literary and cinematic narratives: In 1921, radio inspired the avant-garde poet, Velimir

Fig. 1.13: Title: "The Latest Films"[110] (An ad for *Aelita* stands out in sharp relief)

Khlebnikov, to write of a future world ruled by a phantom radio creature that would offer a benevolent dictatorship based on "uniting all people."[111] After seeing Moscow absorbed by radio sets, Aleksandr Beliaev, the most popular science fiction author in the Soviet '20s, depicted the post-apocalyptic city of "Radiopolis" in *Battle in the Air,* a novel about a world ruined by radio waves, and one in which listeners are constantly worried that they had missed an important message. But it was Yakov Protazanov's 1924 film, *Aelita*, that most famously prophesied the dangers of an individual's singular engagement with the radio. In the film, the engineer Los' fantasies of life on Mars are provoked by a seductively esoteric groan ("*ANTA…ODELI…UTA"*) before learning that the utterance is a guerilla marketing campaign for an American tire ad. These three *zaum'*-like words, delivered to Los' over the radio, evoke utopian visions for the engineer—which become the plot of the film itself—that are drastically different from their

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[108] See Stephen Lovell, "How Russia Learned to Listen: Radio and the Making of Soviet Culture" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12:3 (Summer 2011), p. 611.
[109] Ibid., p. 600.
[110] *Kino*, 25 January, 1930.
[111] See Khlebnikov, "Radio budushchego," *Sobranie sochinenii v 6-i tomakh,* p. 191.

original aim to market tires.[112] This narrative of sound technology's trickery persisted, and by the end of the twenties, *Aelita* was still fresh in viewers' minds, as evidenced by another cartoon in *Kino* that lambasted the film industry's meager output of new features in the early '30s (see Fig. 1.13).

Los's fantasies are rooted in a more common strain of radio's depiction from the '20s, which established a union between a private listening device and fantastical, potentially frightening scenarios of power. Certainly, Vertov's model listener would need to avoid Los' fate, but his choice to not explicitly depict this liberation may have left critics disappointed. Worry often counteracted excitement: a few months after Kruchenykh visited the Tri-Ergon demonstration, a cartoonist in *Kino* gave shape to concerns about the cinema's illusions that North describes above. A feuilleton masquerading as a news report suggested that, in hopes of

Fig. 1.14: Caption: "The Talking Cinema project of the Samara 'Inventors'"[113]

transitioning to sound as quickly as possible, a theater in Samara discovered how to cut costs: they employed two men behind a curtain to add the "soundtrack" for a film adapted from Chekhov's short story, *Surgery*. The feuilleton's punch line, a revival of the discourse of class war that characterized the early '20s, shows that it is as much a referendum on the sound film as it as a coda to the era of the New Economic Policy, when an early Socialist economy reluctantly reintroduced open markets to boost stimulus:

> Then it became clear, that the enterprising con-artists had acquired the old "picture" somewhere and started a tour across all of the cities and villages, collecting money.

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[112] See Vaingurt, *Wonderlands of the Avant-Garde,* pp. 196-197. Vaingurt has commented on how the film, which condemned the American advertisement's deceptive techniques, nevertheless employed them to sell tickets to Soviet cinema-goers by plastering the mysterious message around Moscow.
[113] *Kino*, 07 August 1928

> And who was it that allowed for this "talking" garbage? (*govoriashcaia khaltura)* They must be held responsible![114]

The joke explicitly associates the sound cinema's trickery with the open market itself – by foregrounding cards, con artists, and Chekhov's pre-revolutionary prose, the cartoon folds these elements into the sound cinema's arrival, thus figuring it as little more than an elaborate, spectacular hoax (Fig 1.14).[115]

This link between sound, illusion, and capitalism became the site of intense debate in the Soviet press, and it was not entirely unwarranted. By the end of *Enthusiasm*'s "sound march", the audience feasts upon a series of optical effects that raze several churches, but the churches can only be toppled thanks to special effects: converging double exposures. In the next sequence, Vertov constructs a fallen worker's club by using reversed footage of a demolition, adding no sound other than the revolutionaries' march. That this production relies on one of Vertov's camera tricks (at its worst, it inverts footage of an *actual* demolition) appears to have gone overlooked by contemporary viewers of the film, who fixated on misleading *sound* instead. These viewers include the philosopher Jacques Ranciére, who has offered another political explanation for *Enthusiasm's* critical and ideological flop:

> No doubt Vertov knew how to adapt to the novelty of sound cinema and proclaim that the combined language of sound and images was the fulfillment of the search for a new language. *Enthusiasm* made the slogans of the Five-Year Plan and the pledges of elite workers resonate through images. *The noise of felled steeples and radio voices drowning out liturgical chants* [italics mine -M.K.] clearly affirmed the conflict between two worlds, thus erasing any trace of the unanimism of which *A Sixth Part of the World* was accused. But the medium of recorded sound was primarily used, naturally, by those who demanded that the 'formalist' exercise of belated constructivists and surrealists be replaced by films capable of showing the condition and the problems of real, living people who were building the new country, and of distracting them from their efforts.[116]

I cite Ranciére in his entirety because my interpretation of Vertov's film is quite the opposite. There is little conflict between the two worlds at face value—their distinction is not a result of its form, but of an ideological implication that hovers over *Enthusiasm* as a film, which treats each world equally until the Bolsheviks physically destroy the church. Most importantly, Ranciére

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[114] ibid.

[115] The cartoon's artist depicted the sound film in the same way that Michel Chion made famous sixty years later: Chion implied that all of sound's relation to image in film is questionable, or, as he bluntly put it, that there "is no soundtrack."[115] This characterization (and many others) points to a central trend in Chion's thinking, which argues that nearly all *acousmêtres* must fail by ultimately revealing themselves: it is their very failure that exposes the smoke and mirrors of the sound cinema's illusion, which is founded upon a fallacious implication that the visual somehow has an indissoluble link with the acoustic. The historical dimension of Chion's work has insisted that the sound film eventually discovered itself by developing self-reflexivity, and that its acousmatic treatment of the voice built an allegory for the medium's formal gymnastics that trick audiences. We see in this cartoon, however, that these ideas were essentially born amongst the earliest theorists of the sound cinema, all in a country that had yet to produce its own films with audio accompaniment.

[116]See Ranciére, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (New York: Verso, 2013), p. 243.

appears to mishear the "noise of felled steeples": as far as I am aware, this sound is heard nowhere throughout the film—gunshots are overdubbed, as Fischer first observed. Yet the necessity for Ranciére to imagine the felled steeples in order for his reading to cohere connects with a deeper problem that Vertov's soundtrack poses to the film. Ranciére's identification of the "unanimism" in Vertov's earlier films is a phenomenon that is by no means avoided in *Enthusiasm*. Indeed, we may be listening to one of *A Sixth Part of the World's* deceitful gramophones without ever knowing the truth. Perhaps it was not Vertov's intention, but *Enthusiasm*'s penchant to reveal that sound technology was not imbued with the utopian and liberating potentials that members of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde foresaw quite significantly distinguishes the film from the version that Ranciére imagines.

"Show us *Enthusiasm!*" demanded M. Amosovich in an editorial from *Kino*, months after Vertov's film had been finished and screened in Kiev and Moscow.[117] After his wish was granted, Amosovich left a laconic review that said virtually nothing about the film: his earlier plea to see the film was nearly twice as long as his follow-up review. He appeared too baffled to make sense of it, and concluded by insisting that it was still important for workers to see and discuss *Enthusiasm*, thus passing his task off to other viewers with hope that they could come up with a more coherent position.[118] Despite critics' disappointment, the seeds that this cinematic experiment sowed continued to germinate after the film's production. Writing from Prague in 1933, Roman Jakobson published a lesser-known essay in Czech, "*Upadek filmu*?" ("Is the Cinema in Decline?"), in which he argued that cinema was "leaving all the other arts behind."[119] His theory relies on a claim from St. Augustine, which argues that certain objects may transform into signs at any moment, the ultimate move to abstraction: "it is precisely things (visual and auditory), transformed into signs, that are the specific material of cinematic art."[120] Jakobson's eagerness for alchemical semiotics should remind us of Kul'bin's "liberated music," of Lur'e's rejection of Helmholtz, and of Arvatov's love for the factory siren: to easily find meaning in a non-narrative sound film requires a kind of magical thinking, one that is impervious to the listener on the other end of a theater's sound equipment. Later in his essay, when Jakobson compares "speech on screen" with "the buzzing of a fly or the babbling of a brook, the clamor of machines, and so forth," one can sense that he would happily stand at the end of a microphone wire alongside Vertov on Elagin Island.[121]

For artists like Vertov, who brushed elbows with acoustic engineers such as Shorin, reproducible sound was not a physical phenomenon that could be explained by the ear's structure alone, as Helmholtz would imply—it was a source with which once could make the world mean anew. While Vertov's critics can be seen as a harbinger of further state control over how films should look and sound, *Enthusiasm* is indicative of a disconnect between Soviet ideology's plans for sound reproduction and the fruits of its most dedicated filmmakers. It was, after all, the Soviet press and its readers who made repeated calls for a film that sounds identical to Vertov's, which would become one of the major cinematic failures of the '30s.

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[117] See "*Pokazhite Entuziazm!"* in *Kino*, 16 February, 1931.
[118] See "*Novaia zvukovaia fil'ma 'Entuziazm'*" in *Kino*, 05 April, 1931.
[119] See Jakobson, "Is the Cinema in Decline?" in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), p. 145.
[120] ibid., p. 146.
[121] ibid., p. 148.

Chapter 2

Time, Forward! Dictaphone: Sound and Socialist Realism in Valentin Kataev's Prose

Взвивайся, песня,	*Whirl up,*
рей, моя,	*my song,*
над маршем	*soar above the march*
красных рот!	*of the reds!*
Впе-	*For-*
ред,	*ward,*
вре-	*Time!*
мя!	*Time,*
Вре-	*for-*
мя,	*ward!*
вперед!	

–Vladimir Maiakovski, *The Bathhouse* (1929)

The Promise of Sound

Roughly midway through Valentin Kataev's 1932 novel, *Time, Forward! (Vremia, vpered!*), two characters have a conversation about sound in the city of Magnitogorsk. They speak in what is no ordinary city—Magnitogorsk was the urban jewel of Stalin's five-year industrialization and agriculture collectivization plan, an iron-smelting Babylon that remains the most ambitious planned community in the history of the Soviet Union.[1] Kataev's scene presents the reader with Georgii Vasil'evich, an elderly writer who has been sent to chronicle the building of Magnitogorsk, and his interlocutor, Vinkich, a reporter from the state news agency *ROSTA* who has covered the city's construction over the course of a year. Their conversation at first seems banal, but like the remainder of *Time, Forward!*, a closer reading shows that it offers an optimistic understanding of how sound can positively impact Soviet development. Vinkich tells Georgii Vasil'evich how difficult he has found adjusting to and understanding life in Magnitogorsk, and the journalist's response could serve as a review for *Enthusiasm* that Dziga Vertov would be delighted to read:

> Ten times the scoop opened over each flat car. Then the excavator blew a siren. Immediately it was echoed by the thin whistle of the donkey engine of the train. The machines were talking to each other. The excavator demanded that the

[1] More than just a planned community, the construction of Magnitogorsk was, as many scholars have argued, a process aimed towards creating a new way of life in the Soviet Union. As Stephen Kotkin writes: "Whatever form it eventually took, Magnitogorsk would house an urban population, but it would not do so "passively." Just as the physical environment could be remade, it was thought that the social and political milieu of the city could remake people. The socialist city, therefore, was not simply a place where an urban population was located, but a device for inculcating a new set of attitudes as well as new kinds of behavior in its urbanized inhabitants—in a word, an instrument for creating socialist people." See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995), p. 34.

> next flat car be brought up. The little steam engine replied: "Good! Wait! Right away!" The train jerked. The buffer plates knocked noisily, tapping signals to each other. The train moved up one flat car. "Stop!" cried the excavator. "Here!" replied the little steam engine.
>
> "Look!" Georgi Vasilyevich exclaimed admiringly. "I am already beginning to understand the bird language (*ptichii iazyk*) of the machines!"
>
> "I have been speaking it for a year and a half," Vinkich replied.[2]

In this moment of simultaneous translation and ventriloquism of these machines, the novel's narrator transforms their sounds into recognizable signs—a shift from "bird language," reminiscent of Kruchenykh's *zaum'* poetry, into a meaningful idea. Even more importantly, Vinkich's testimony becomes a kind of litmus test for each character's attempts to prove him or herself worthy in the young city: like the listener of Vertov's *Enthusiasm,* learning to listen to the complex language of Magnitogorsk helps the city's builders navigate the labyrinthine and chaotic construction site.

Time, Forward! is by now considered one of the most influential novels of the early Soviet period, and it is often framed as an inaugural text for the reformative phenomenon of socialist realism, the Soviet Union's mandated aesthetic mode from 1934 until the country's collapse.[3] This new literature of socialist realism, a term coined in 1932 just before *Time, Forward!* was published, was slated to depict reality "in its revolutionary development," and was intended to be easily intelligible for all citizens.[4] Since then, the term has acquired affinity with parallel concepts (such as Susan Suleiman's *roman à these*) and attracted a plethora of definitions, nearly all of them revisionist in nature.[5] Andrei Sinyavsky, for example, has called socialist realism a Neo-classicism of "supreme purpose"; per Evgenii Dobrenko, socialist realism simulates and replaces reality itself; or, as Katerina Clark has written, socialist realism is "modally schizophrenic" artwork that depicts both what is and what ought to be.[6]

Using Kataev's path-breaking text as a case study, this chapter will suggest that reading the text alongside the history of Soviet sonic culture can offer an alternative narrative to the development of the socialist realist mode—the literary project of "constructing Socialism itself,"

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[2] See Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1995), pp. 148-149. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the translation by Charles Malamuth, noting where I make edits and critiques where necessary.

[3] As a representative of a state-sponsored literature that Vladimir Nabokov called "hopelessly monotonous," *Time, Forward!* tends to fulfill a largely symbolic role in arguments concerning the Soviet novel. As a canonical title synonymous with Kataev's career, *Time, Forward!* is a book that scholars are generally not eager to read, and appears in a list of what is now considered the canonical study of the socialist realist mode in Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 1981), p. 262.

[4] As Clark explains, the Soviet Novel was *intended* to be formulaic, recognizable, and easily digestible as a "popular" form of literature. Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

[5] Suleiman's concept of the *roman à thèse* is one way of framing the specific type of text that emerged in the early socialist realist period. Suleiman argues that the text must be realistic (for her, this means a work based on the interplay between verisimilitude and representation), and that an outside authority interprets for the reader, thus making novel's argument known "in capital letters." Remarkably, this guiding hand of the author *does* hover over the novel's action in the form of the denouement, but refuses to offer a single interpretation of what transpires in Magnitogorsk. See Suleiman, Susan Rubin, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as Literary Genre* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), pp. 7-10.

[6] See Sinyavsky (Abram Tertz), *On Socialist Realism,* (New York: Pantheon, 2006), Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism.* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), p. vxiii and Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* p. 36.

as Dobrenko has framed it.[7] In my discussion of Vertov's *Enthusiasm,* I showed how the film's reception was impacted by both techniques for perception and technologies for sound that were undergoing great transition at the beginning of the 1930s.[8] Building on this discussion, I demonstrate how *Time, Forward!* responded to this transition by sonically redefining two central, formal aspects of the novel—voice and novelistic time. Discussions of voice and time appear frequently in theories and criticism of the novel as a form, and I accordingly divide my analysis into two respective sections in order to give each ample space. In each section, I aim to offer the ear as an alternative source for interpreting Kataev's novel. As was the case in Vertov's film, so is *Time, Forward* an artifact of how Soviet sonic culture left noticeable impacts on Soviet creative activity. Spanning from the habits of an engineer's ear stubbornly pressed against a cement mixer to the ubiquity of the city's buzzing and ringing telephones, to the shouted, printed, and recorded slogans that distract, engage, and ventriloquize those who try to make sense of life in Magnitogorsk, listening in the Stalinist city is a source of aesthetic, industrial, and cultural capital.

To build a case for the role of sound, I respond to *Time, Forward!*'s denigration of visuality, which results in a peculiar embrace of the contingency of vision, a far more modernist disposition than Sinyavsky's neo-classical characterization of socialist realism would lead us to believe.[9] This lack of faith in the eye is exemplified in an early scene, when the visiting novelist, Georgii Vasil'evich, looks out of his hotel window at the panorama of Magnitogorsk under construction, and finds himself shocked by limitations of his own sight. His myopia prompts a meditation on the difficulty of representing an individual within an intertwined, collective community: unable to see the project in its totality, Georgii Ivanovich notes that "the general yielded to the particular" (100).[10] Worse, Georgii Ivanovich grapples with a visual riddle that he cannot solve: "Who are they, these people, each one separately?...Where was he going—this small barefooted man in the shirt, the back of which was soaked with sweat? Who was he? What was he looking for?...What was he thinking about? Who knew? (*neizvestno*)" (100).[11] I take a

[7] Working with simulation and Baudrillard in mind, Dobrenko writes: "what Socialist Realism produced was not "lies" but *images of socialism* that perception transformed into *reality*—namely, *socialism.*" See Dobrenko, *Political Economy,* p. 6.

[8] By now, we know from one of Dobrenko's other works that the aesthetic ideology of socialist realism had taken root much earlier than in this one speech, and that its philosophy had already germinated in Soviet discourse by as early as 1930, when Gorkii proclaimed in his own speech that: "I personally think 'realism' could cope with its difficult task if it, in examining personality in the process of 'formation' by the path from ancient philistine and animal individualism to socialism, would portray a person not only as he is today, but as he should be—and will be—tomorrow." See Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001), p. 364.

[9] Several studies have attempted to demonstrate how the novel discriminates against vision, such as Rolf Hellebust's "Suffering and Seeing in Kataev's *Vremia, vpered!"* in *The Slavonic and East European Review* (91:4, October 2013) pp. 703-730, Boris Gasparov's "*Sotsialisticheskii realizm v metafizicheskom izmerenii: vozmozhno li lozh' khudozhestvennogo vysmysla?"* in *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* №1, 2017, and Boris Maslov's "*Zrelishche nachal i knotsov: Tragediia v teoreticheskoi optike O.M. Freidenberg*" in Vestnik RGGU 3:1 (2018), pp. 98-137.

[10] This nearly Archimedean position of looking down from a great height had become a theme in Kataev's work in the early '30s. Looking out from a higher position onto the horizontal landscape had already appeared in the 1930 play, *Avangard,* which Kataev's critics (the editors of the Soviet literary encyclopedia) called his first work associated with production.

[11] Malamuth's translation renders this final statement, "*neizvestno*" as "who knew?", thus artificially

cue from this scene's focus on *how* Georgii Vasilivich watches to offer the parallel, but related example of how he listens. Linking Kataev's depictions of listening with images of a future city for socialism that was, much like sound, still invisible.

But why would sound matter for this text? Writing the novel in near isolation during a trip to Magnitogorsk, Kataev did not yet know what socialist realism *was,* let alone the other works that would compose it. Given the Soviet novel's relatively transitional state at this time, Kataev's earliest readers allowed for the text's amenability to other interpretations: "who would be surprised that when considered in light of bourgeois theory, Kataev's revolutionary novel would not receive—and couldn't receive—*at its heart* the evaluation that the Soviet reader must give to it."[12] True enough, but the germination of theories that the state had not yet articulated can give us a complex portrait of the role that sound played in the remaking of the word at this time, far from the "minor" status that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have associated with the sonic mode in literature.[13] Indeed, Soviet artists had no intention of occupying a minor space—Kataev's sound would help construct Soviet society itself.

Because Kataev is an under-researched writer, in the first part of what follows I offer a brief account of his background and critical accounts about the first half of his career. I then proceed to discuss the representation of voice in Kataev's novel, showing how it was impacted by advances in sound reproduction, which severed the voice from the body. This reproducible voice became closely connected with the status of psychological interiority in socialist realist literature, a phenomenon I call the dictaphonic logic of Kataev's prose. As a result, this section will partially deconstruct Kataev's novel about construction, by taking seriously its gestures towards the importance of Soviet sonic culture for literary writing. In a shorter, second section, I discuss how Kataev's construction team learns to alter their cyclical understanding of both lived and world-historical time. They eventually adopt a Marxist-Leninist idea of time's progressive and triumphant ascent by specifically conceiving of temporality in sonic terms. Alongside these arguments in both sections, I offer a rejoinder to a common critical observation about Kataev's novel—that it is a work of "cinematic" prose.[14] Instead of invoking "cinema" as a transhistorical category, I want to more accurately characterize the transmedial nature scholars have correctly

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prolonging the narration's definitive, defeatist answer—"it was unknown"—into further questioning.

[12] See Ivan Anisimov, "*Kniga o pafose novogo stroitel'stva*," in *Literaturnaia gazeta* 6 (234), 05 February, 1933.

[13] This relationship to noise directly contradicts what is perhaps the most famous explanation for the role of sonic excess in literature: Deleuze and Guattari's figure of Franz Kafka's "minor literature," a text that is facilitated by the repetition sound itself, the phenomenon of "deterritorialized" words that take after meaningless waves of noise. In their insightful analysis of the role of sound in Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari write that "What interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material that is always connected to its own abolition—a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words—a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying. In sound, intensity alone matters, and such sound is generally monotone and always nonsignifying; thus, in *The Trial*, the monotone cry of a warder who is being punished "did not seem to come from a human being but from some martyred instrument." Later, Deleuze and Guattari argue for the relevance of "deterritorialization," a state in which signs fail to signify: "Kafka, too, is a minor music, a different one, but always made up of deterritorialized sounds, a language that moves head over heels and away." See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1986) p. 6, 26.

[14] This categorization is especially noticeable in Dodona Kiziria's "Four Demons of Valentin Kataev". *Slavic Review* 44.4 (Winter 1985), pp 647-662.

identified in *Time, Forward!* by treating it as a novel that emerged specifically within the early Soviet *sound* cinema, and not cinema as a category writ large.

"Finding the Sound" of Socialist Realism

The conversation between Georgii Vasil'evich and Vinkich that I cite at the beginning of this chapter is, in fact, a motif that Kataev's readers would likely recognize. In the years following the premiere of Vertov's *Enthusiasm*, depictions of various sounds in arts and literature tied together sonic excess with the theme of industrial progress, flourishing as a common feature of popular state-sponsored films, prose, and plays. For example, Andrei Platonov's never-staged play, *Sharmanka* (1930), featured Kuzma, a sentient machine that buzzes along with the revolutionary speeches of the comrades who surround him.[15] These strange noises were not a feature of only Platonov's famously experimental writing: to great praise, Platonov eventually placed two trains into conversation with each other in his published 1935 story, *Immortality*, much like the machinery that foregrounds Vinkich and Georgii Vasil'evich's conversation. On the opposite side of the political spectrum, the poet Osip Mandel'shtam reimagined St. Petersburg (his muse equal parts classical and artificial) as Leningrad in 1930, depicting the city as a space that wields power over its inhabitants by possessing the key to the poet's new identity: his various telephone numbers.[16] In the popular cinema, Aleksandr Macheret's *Men and Jobs* (1932) culminates with a worker who learns how to adeptly pilot a steam shovel from a small command post while he listens closely to the machine's sounds, thus turning a control board into a music box. When the worksite gets going, it erupts into rhythmic cacophony.

But how could Kataev's prosaic language incorporate sound that Soviet cinema, radio broadcasts, and the live theater had the technological advantage of being able to record and reproduce?[17] The conversation between Vinkich and Georgii Vasil'evich demonstrates Kataev's belief in the novel's ability to accommodate these new sounds, elevating what at first seems like a meaningless signal to the status of a communicative message. Moreover, there is a biographical precedent for taking seriously Kataev's interest in sonic culture: more than any other Soviet writer of his generation, Kataev immersed himself in the world of Soviet sound technology in the '20s and '30s. In 1924, he became one of the first Soviet writers to speak on the radio after he read a "radio feuilleton" for the journal *Radiogazeta ROSTA* (the same publisher Vinkich writes for in Magnitogorsk), a print attempt to popularize radio among Soviet readers. Here, Kataev reconceptualizes authorship as a sonic phenomenon, writing that readers would soon begin to listen to—and not read—the products of the Soviet literary establishment.[18] "Until now," he

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[15] Kuzma's speech is always described as nearly human, but not quite – he makes sounds that resemble "breathing," but normally makes "unintelligible" (*nevniatnoe*) utterances. See Platonov, *Fourteen Little Red Huts and Other Plays,* trans. Robert Chandler (New York: Columbia UP), 2017.

[16] See Mandel'shtam, "Leningrad" (1930).

[17] Andrey Smirnov investigates the *shumoviki* as a phenomenon of the 1930s, a group of sound effects experts who aspired to perfectly reproduce the sounds they mimicked. See Smirnov, *Sound in Z,* pp. 170-174.

[18] Kataev's aspiration to overcome the literary text has been described by Richard Borden, one of the field's only major Kataev scholars, as the author's fundamental creative goal. See Borden, *The Art of Writing Badly: Valentin Kataev's Mauvism and the Rebirth of Russian Modernism* (Evanston Northwestern UP, 1999) pp. 39-40. Notably, Kataev does not use sound patterning (as far as I have observed) as a feature of his prose or poetry.

wrote (and read over the air), "I have had readers and admirers (*pochitateli*). Now, I will have listeners (*slushateli*) and "admiring listeners" (*poslushivateli*)." [19] In 1928, Kataev followed suit with a children's book that was themed around radio and its liberating potentials, which follows a group of zoo animals that use the radio to create a communications network between their cages.[20]

Richard Borden traces Kataev's interest in sound to an even earlier point in his career, suggesting that the author extracted an oft-repeated phrase—"finding the sound"—from his formative apprenticeship under Ivan Bunin, a member of the literary old guard who fled Russia nearly immediately following the revolution."[21] Kataev's relationship with Bunin was not entirely unexpected given the circumstances of his upbringing: he grew up in Odessa at the end of the 19th century in a relatively well-off family, and had known few hardships before his mother's untimely death in 1903.[22] It was not only Bunin, however, who interested Kataev's ears. Nearly a decade before writing *Time, Forward!*, Kataev was fascinated by the relationships he found between sound and meaning in Russian poetry, and he wrote excitedly to Aleksei Kruchenykh, the *zaum'* poet whom he most admired, about what he called the "*phonetic associations*" of the former's poetry:

> If you will — "phonetic associations" has a certain quality of punning to it, but this is no problem at all, because when heightened to the status of a poetic device, its writerly sharpness and unexpended splendor obtains the value of a wonderful weapon…but to use this weapon requires great tact, knowing that a purely mechanical application (without a genuine sense of language) aims its sharpness directly into the chest of the tactless fighter.[23]

Kruchenykh (who, I remind the reader, was the author of 1928's poem about sound film, *Talking Cinema*) published Kataev's letter in his classic 1922 work of lyric theory, *Sdvigologiia Russkogo stikha,* which offered aspiring sound poets instructions for conjoining new meanings to new, unexpected sounds. Kataev agreed that the rhythms of *zaum'* poetry were "solidifying," as Kruchenykh called them, but he insisted that they also carried with them a clear potential for weaponization. Kruchenykh's attempts to produce a total signifier would, for Kataev, later be linked to a phenomenon he called the "effect of presence," the ultimate goal of any literary text.[24]

Contemporary readers of Kataev may find it surprising that his name once appeared in the most radical of avant-garde poetry publications, yet he had experimented with poetry since the beginning of his career, often reaching for sonic imagery or sonic themes. The concluding stanza of his 1915 poem, *"Silence"* (*Tishina*) introduced an image he would eventually revisit:

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[19] The only scholarship I am aware of that addresses Kataev's writing for *Radiogazeta ROSTA* in detail is V.V. Smirnov's published dissertation, *Zhanry Radiozhurnalistiki*. It is also from where I draw the citation of the full text that Smirnov reproduces. See V.V. Smirnov, *Zhanry Radiozhurnalistiki* (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2002), p. 164. This neologism for "admiring listeners," *poslushivateli,* plays with the Russian word for admirer, which places the prefix *po-* ahead of the word for "reader," suggesting that audible literature could chart a new course for language itself.

[20] See Kataev, *Radio-zhiraff* (Moscow: Raduga, 1926).

[21] See Borden, *The Art of Writing Badly,* p. 38.

[22] See Sergei Shargunov, *Kataev: Pogonia za vechnoi vesnoi* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia: 2016), p. 13.

[23] See Kruchenykh, *Sdvigologiia Russkogo stikha* (Moscow: Tip. TsIT, 1922), p. 33.

[24] See Borden, *The Art of Writing Badly,* p. 38.

Зацепивши листьев ворох Легкой тростью на ходу, Стал. И слышу нежный шорох В умирающем саду.	Having latched onto a pile of leaves with my nimble walking stick I stop. And I hear a soft rustling In the dying garden.
[…]	[…]
А на вымокшей дороже, Где ледок светлей слюды, Чьи-то маленькие ножки Отпечатали следы.[25]	And on the road soaked through, where the ice shines bright like mica, someone's tiny footprints have printed their traces.

The poem is formally and stylistically conservative (often bordering on the banal), but it plays with the image of traces (*sledy*) as a visual and sonic phenomenon; each successive stanza concludes with a sound ("the soft rustling," the "sound of frost"), thus creating a structural rhyme suggesting that ultimately frames these "traces" (*sledy*) of the final stanza as a physical and sonic mark. This distinction between vision and hearing also motivates one of Kataev's very first short stories, 1919's "*Muzyka,*" which features a plot that culminates with a recalcitrant child who insists that she can draw sound. The girl chooses to draw music as lines and spots—reminiscent of musical notation itself—and although she can give shape to an otherwise invisible phenomenon, the scene ends when the narrator associates the sound of footsteps with the wrong figure.[26] Both our eyes and our ears, as it turns out, can deceive us.

Kataev enjoyed extraordinary success as a popular writer throughout his career, and he was gifted with what many have characterized as a chameleon-like ability to refashion himself both politically and aesthetically when the climate called for it. By the end of the 1910s, it was rumored that he professed his allegiance to the white guard; by the '30s, he had become a darling of the Soviet writing establishment (thanks in no small part to *Time, Forward!*); and in the '60s, he became the lead editor of *Iunost',* a major "thick" journal that influenced the Soviet Union's new crop of unofficial youth writers.[27]Although he is often dismissed as a literary functionary, Kataev's role within the Soviet canon has more recently come under review. Scholars typically ask whether the writer is an overlooked gem of 20th century Russian prose, or if he is no more than a conformist hardly worthy of praise, whose political and aesthetic obsequiousness recall the worst pressures of writing under Stalin.[28] The Soviet intelligentsia's aversion to Kataev was

[25] Kataev, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* tom 9, p. 551. Citations from Kataev's collected works will, from this point on, be referred to by their volume number (IX).
[26] See Borden, *The Art of Writing Badly*, p. 39.
[27] See Irina Lukianova, "*Poltsarstvo za pokoi: iz knigi o Kataeve*" in *Oktiabr* № 9, 2016.
[28] Two major projects concerning Kataev have emerged in recent years. The first, Sergei Shargunov's *Kataev: Pogonia za vechnoi vesnoi* ("The Hunt for Eternal Spring"), argues for Kataev's dominance in the establishment and talent as "the brightest and most spectacular" Soviet writer. The second, Irina Lukianova's still untitled project, has only been published as fragments, but takes quite the opposite stance: Lukianova accuses Kataev of finding literary motivation solely out of "fear for his own hide." See Shargunov, , p. 5, and Lukianova "*Poltsarstvo za pokoi: iz knigi o Kataeve*". Siding more closely with Shargunov, Dodona Kizira writes: "in the West, however, the happy alliance between [Kataev] and the state cast a shadow upon his talent and undeservedly excluded him from the range of interest of the American reader." See Kiziria, "Four Demons of Valentin Kataev," p. 648.

most famously encapsulated by the poet David Samoilov, who wrote that, "everything with his phrasing seems in order. In general, everything is in order – the structure, the plot, and the characters. But it's as if a mouse kicked the bucket inside all of it—it brings about something strangely vile (*podlovatina*)."[29]

Nevertheless, it is clear that in 1932, when *Time, Forward!* was first serialized in *Red Virgin Soil*, the novel was an early foray into a still inchoate literary genre that had already been named the "production novel" (*proizvodstvennyi roman*). Mary Nicholas, who has written the only lengthy study of the genre, argues that it was "crucial to the construction of Soviet culture at the end of the '20s and beginning of the '30s," but also is "powerful evidence of the complex and gradual development of an only seemingly monolithic totalitarian aesthetic," thus drawing symmetry between the flexible qualities of the production novel and the transitional society that produced it.[30] In contradistinction to works of the avant-garde, the production novel takes epochal change, and not political or social millenarianism, as its historical philosophy. Judging by Kataev's assessment of the literary scene, he felt this temporary shift, too: by the end of the '30s, Kataev told Nadezhda Mandel'shtam that "one must write like Walter Scott now," suggesting the importance of the production novel's engagement with intermediary phases of time.[31] On the ground, however, the projects of Soviet development were still deeply stuck in intermediary phases. For example, the veneer of a highly developed space lured some of Magnitogorsk's earliest inhabitants to the city, but when they arrived, they found only a system of tents with no modern plumbing, after having been promised a spot in the world's greatest industrial triumph.[32]

Kataev's propensity to evolve in quick bursts is reflected in his prose style more than scholars have noted. In *Time, Forward!*, the author's style is equally erratic, and falls somewhere between Symbolist ornamentalism and technocratic iconoclasm. Throughout *Time, Forward!*, a team of dedicated laborers seeks to overturn a record recently set in Kharkov for the quantity of cement produced in one 24-hour period (the competitor's record is said to produce cement at "unseen" (*nevidannye*) tempos).[33] The narrative follows over a dozen characters during a single day in Magnitogorsk (often feeling like a *commedia dell'arte* for the early Soviet novel) and a commitment to kinesis above all drives the crew assigned to one of the site's lead engineers, Margulies.[34] Like many heroes of Soviet literature who would follow him, a secondary crewmember, Smetana, goes so far as to sacrifice his hand to the concrete mixing process.[35] But his amputation is hardly framed as a tragedy: Kataev saves the novel's most tender relationships for those between characters and machines, especially in the case of the site's lead engineer. At

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[29] "У него с фразой все в порядке. И вообще все в порядке – и построение, и сюжет, и лица. Но как будто внутри всего этого подохла мышь – так и несет непонятной подловатиной"

[30] See Mary Nicholas, *Writers at Work: Russian Production Novels and the Construction of Soviet Culture* (Bucknell UP, 2010), pp. 18-20.

[31] See Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, *Vospominaniia* (Saint Petersburg: Soglasia, 1999), p. 333.

[32] See Kotkin, pp. 81-82.

[33] See Shklovsky, "*Siuzhet i obraz*" in *Literaturnaia gazeta* 37 (206), 17 August, 1932, and *T,F!,* p. 34. Curiously, Malamuth translates *nevidannye* (literally, "unseen") as "unheard of."

[34] This excitement for speed may recall the Proletkul't poet, Aleksei Gastev, who sought to mechanize the human body in order to prime it for ultra-efficient labor. See Hellebust, "Alexei Gastev and the Metallization of the Revolutuionary Body," in *Slavic Review* (56:3), Autumn 1997, pp. 500-518.

[35] For a particularly productive discussion of the violence against the Soviet body that became commonplace in literature and film of the 1930s, see Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 2008).

one weak moment, Margulies envies (and nearly lusts after) an American-made calculator that appears at the worksite (240).

As the novel's plot spirals upwards towards its inevitable climax, readers learn that success is achieved in large part because of Margulies' esoteric habit—he counts the sonic emissions of a cement mixer to mark time instead of looking at his watch:

> Time flickered and drizzled (*morosilo*) in seconds, and Margulies *did not have to see* [edited –MK] the work in all this detail in order to know just how it was progressing.
>
> He determined all its phases by a multitude of the tiniest sounds which reached him distinctly from the outside [italics mine –MK] (224).[36]

Given his close attention to sound throughout the novel, it is clear that Kataev fashioned himself the Margulies of the Soviet writing establishment. Kataev's novel was commissioned by the state, and he thus inherited the task against the background of the looming mandate of socialist realism, which aimed to represent the reality, development, and future of a Soviet community simultaneously. But what space, if any, would be left for the state's new literature to develop a relationship to the acoustic features of the socialist world? Indeed, it is difficult to tell in which era of literary history the novel envisions itself. A propaganda poster at the construction site, for example, is said to depict one of the workers riding what is described as a nearly gilded tortoise (it dons "supernatural" armor)—a symbol that is intimately linked with Joris-Karl Huysmans' decadent novel, *À rebours* (1884), despite the narrator's insistence that the image originates in the Russian fabulist, Ivan Krylov. (26) Suddenly placed in a novel wholly unrelated to the construction of socialism, the characters of *Time, Forward!* struggle to understand the provenance of the regal turtle: "Why a tortoise? How could it be a tortoise?" (28) Veering closer to the modernist style that the Soviet Union was beginning to reject, the text's unevenness—a lack of synchrony, if we could call it that—is a point of departure for the analysis that follows.

The production novel as a form also grew out of larger movements of state-endorsed writing prior to the official appearance of socialist realism, most closely associated with Andrei Zhdanov's inaugural speech for the mode at the 1934 writer's conference. We should note, however, that Kataev's novel was clearly a major influence on Zhdanov's frequently-cited speech, and not the other way around—the latter made reference to *Time, Forward!* in his speech that is said to have inaugurated the aesthetic mode: "Our Soviet writer derives the material for his works of art, his subject-matter, images, artistic language and speech, from the life and experience of the men and women of Dnieprostroy, of [the construction of Magnitogorsk]"[37] Partially an "aestheticization of labor," as Evgenii Dobrenko has called it, and partially an exploration of how that labor gives shape to a novel's central hero, the socialist realist novel has been attributed a "totally different function" from the novel in the west by Katerina Clark.[38]

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[36] Curiously, Malamuth seriously mistranslates the meaning of the passage. Kataev writes that Margulies "*ne nuzhno bylo*" (*did not have to*), a crucial difference from Malamuth's initial "had to see the work."
[37] Zhdanov uses the term *"magnitostroi,"* which refers to both the location of the city, and to its construction project. See Zhdanov's lecture, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature."
[38] See Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, p. vxiii and Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, p. xi. Generations of literary critics have also labeled the Soviet novel as unreadable, but recent scholarship attempts to better define the various theoretical and aesthetic projects that took shape under the umbrella

Clark's term "modal schizophrenia" has become the most famous formula for socialist realism's aims, in that they pursue both the prescription and representation of reality simultaneously.[39] This looseness in the novel's mimetic relationship to Soviet reality has resulted in an elliptical set of definitions for what socialist realism actually *is*.[40] This is to say that our common use of the term downplays the material conditions that constructed this very understanding of "realism," and thus tends to ignore the reality of the mode's praxis, which paints a more complicated picture. If we understand the "realism" half of this term as the practice of determining and depicting what is "real," we should look no further than a monologue from Georgii Vasilievich, which frames this negotiation as one between perception and knowledge, characterized by his paradox of "to believe and not to see!" The question remains, however, about how sound fits into that belief.

Dictaphonic Voices

After returning from a brief trip to Magnitogorsk in late 1930, Kataev learned in spring of 1931 that RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, planned to send him back to the city for full year with an assignment: to produce a novel.[41] When he returned with the text in hand, critics found a promising kernel for a new Soviet writing in *Time, Forward!'s* narrative style, which mixed elements of fiction and reportage. After the journal *Red Virgin Soil* serialized the novel at the beginning of 1932, the critic Ivan Anisimov wrote in the journal *Literaturnaia gazeta* that Kataev's text was "a monumental work of socialist realism."[42] Having circulated in the pages of *Pravda* and around the newly-formed Writers' Union, the term had yet to forge a clear direction, but *Time, Forward!* offered one path: as a result, Kataev became a premier writer of the Soviet literary establishment overnight, who stood, as Zhdanov put it, with "both feet firmly planted in the basis of real life."

Part of the novel's distinction from its contemporaries came in Kataev's ability to weave together an enormous cast of characters by endowing each with a distinct style of speech. Steven Connor gives the name "vocalic space" to "the ways in which differing conceptions of the voice and its powers are linked historically to different conceptions of the body's form, measure, and susceptibility," but *Time, Forward!* constructs a vocalic space oriented towards the proliferation of a new Soviet *discourse,* which transforms these bodies into vessels for new speech.[43] We can see an example of this space's shape when a young worker, Mosia, is described as unable to

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of socialist realism, instead of reducing its merits to a single "master plot." See, in particular, Thomas Lahusen's charitable re-reading of Vasilii Azhaev's socialist realist classic, *Far from Moscow* in Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia* (Cornell: Cornell UP, 1997).

[39] See Clark, pp. 37-42.

[40] Dobrenko's more recent declaration of socialist realism a "social institution" comes closest to asserting that this aesthetic mandate was borne of, and created, a new way of life.

[41] See Shargunov, p. 297.

[42] See Anisimov.

[43] See Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism.* Oxford UP, 2000, p. 12. Studies of the emergence of a specific kind of Soviet language have proliferated since the appearance of this discourse itself. A.M. Selishchev's classic work, for example, focused on the appearance of new forms of Soviet speech and writing (See Selishchev, A.M. *Iazyk revoliutsionnoi epokhi: iz nabliudenii nad russkim iazykom* (1917-1926)).

"manage his voice." As a result, he parrots incongruous newspaper headlines in place of a stirring speech:

> Comrades!
> Mosia could not manage his voice. He should have begun with reserve and importance, but suddenly he shouted exultantly and his voice broke…
> …He would answer for the rest. Tensely and passionately, he had awaited this moment. He had prepared a speech. Now the moment had arrived.
> And words failed him.
> …Odds and ends of unsuitable newspaper slogans occurred to him:
> "The country is waiting for cheap vegetables." …No! No! "The system of the state bank is a powerful lever of cost counting." …That wasn't it! "The main thing now is…rabbit breeding."…No! No!...
> …Mosia swore frightfully and lewdly, made a beastly face, but immediately flung a sly, apologetic smile towards the journalists.
> "Of course, I am very sorry for these expressions." (199-201)

Stephen Kotkin has called this phenomenon the process of learning to "speak Bolshevik," a technique of compelled speech that required the historical inhabitants of Magnitogorsk to linguistically perform their belonging to the discursive and cultural principles of Stalinism.[44] Kotkin's vision of ideological transmission in Magnitogorsk (and in Stalinist society more broadly) posits that the success of the Soviets' linguistic contagion owes itself to a plethora of "instructional messages emanating from reading matter, radio, and, especially, films [that were] paralleled by training received in schools, including obligatory courses in Marxism-Leninism, beginning at an early age."[45] The linguistic filtration evident in this process, of turning those utterances that do nothing into speech acts that *do,* becomes particularly noticeable when Kataev's narrator refuses to reproduce the vulgarities that Mosia instinctually blurts out instead of a speech ("Of course, I am very sorry for these expressions.")

Yet there is something more complex taking place here. Fundamentally, we learn in this passage that Mosia has something the narrator calls a voice (*golos*), which will continue to be called so throughout the text.[46] Elsewhere, we find out that this voice is identifiable by its sonic qualities, "a rude, child-like voice, capable of arousing the dead." (22) In fact, almost every character in *Time, Forward!* is recognized by the timbre of his or her voice—in the very first chapter, a telephone operator immediately identifies the team's lead engineer, Margulies, upon hearing him. Although Mosia's voice is nearly Christ-like in its resuscitative qualities, its recognizable timbre has little to do with a set of certain words or evaluative positions, and like many other voices in *Time Forward!,* it is prone to easily modulate: an American visitor to the site, Foma Egorovich, revels in his ability to perfectly ape Russian phonetics, just like Margulies'

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[44] See Kotkin, p. 226.
[45] Ibid.
[46] I acknowledge the difficulty of employing a stable definition of the word "voice" within literary criticism, as Mladen Dolar has shown in his work, *A Voice and Nothing More.* Indeed, the seemingly stable idea of "voice" is in fact a construct of linguistic, physiological, and psychoanalytic discourses, which are themselves often at odds with each other. Nevertheless, Kataev's operative term, *golos,* makes direct use of the idea of a biological "voice," and invites all metaphors associated with it in our interpretation.

rival engineer, Nalbandov, who prides himself for switching back and forth between perfect English and Russian, sometimes even bizarrely pronouncing the word for "mixture" (*zames'*) with a Spanish accent. Several characters even hear their voices transform into something wholly "unnatural," as the narrative describes it, speaking "*ne svoim golosom,*" literally "with a voice that is not one's own."[47] This is a common idiom to denote anger in Russian, but it is invoked five times in the novel to describe the vocal shifts of five different characters.[48] If we read this phrase literally, we would understand that these characters are suddenly possessed by vocal abilities that are alien to them, having exchanged their voices for a kind of "borrowed existence," as Connor has characterized the vocalic space of ventriloquism, which brings new beings into the world by means of vocal possession.[49] In his review of *Time, Forward!,* Viktor Shklovsky drew attention to the implication that a character's modulating voice has little connection to an independent interiority, and observed how the novel deviates from depictions of psychology that appeared in other contemporary texts: "Kataev does not believe in grabbing his readers' interest with simple matters (*priaymym delom*) in his novel. He doubles each character's psychology, each one has an ulterior motive (*vtoroe delo*)."[50] Not all readers agreed that Kataev had created some sort of secondary psychological space for his characters: the reviewer Anisimov, who called the novel a prime example of socialist realism, was curiously disturbed by the *lack* of interiority he found in *Time, Forward!*, hoping to find a more thorough depiction of the interior struggle of a counterrevolutionary character.[51]

These reviews prompt us to ask if the socialist realist novel could truly distance itself from the formal history of the novel prior to it, which Zhdanov described in his speech as an aesthetic travesty of "non-existent life" filled with "non-existent heroes." If it can be said that one distinction of the novel as a form is its eagerness to provide readers with access to other peoples' thoughts—a tendency that Dorrit Cohn has called the unmistakable stamp of fiction—Soviet critics vouched for abandoning this marker altogether.[52] As the editors of the Soviet literary encyclopedia expressed in their article about the work of French writer Pierre Amp, who is widely seen as the major forerunner to the "production novel" in Russia:

> Despite the absence of any kind of personal, psychological topic and plot in the traditional sense…Pierre Amp's novels are still complete works of art, real objects of creativity (their content is untraditional, and their construction is based on completely new circumstances – all of this makes these unique novels representatives of a new genre, tightly connected with the industrial age.)[53]

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[47] When tied up in the furor of cement mixing, Margulies resists the identifying bonds of the voice that are placed over him: "'Right away!' Margulies cried in an unnatural voice (*ne svoim golosom*)." (260)
[48] Malamuth does not render the phrase consistently, writing "unnatural" or "not belonging to them" interchangeably when the phrase appears.
[49] See Connor, *Dumbstruck*.
[50] "Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities." See Bakhtin, Mikhail "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialectic Imagination,* p. 36.
[51] See Anisimov.
[52] See Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), p. 5.
[53] See *Literaturnaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Izd. Komm. Akademii, 1929), pp. 113-114.

The editors insist here that Soviet writers—who were expected to look to Amp for inspiration—should resist the probing nature of novelistic realism's interior focalization, as Cohn and Gerard Genette would call the phenomenon.[54] The reason for this was primarily political: in 1932, Georg Lukács famously called psychologism a prominent feature of "bourgeois" literary culture, writing that "psychologism, as one form of the apologetic tendency, a special and 'superior' form, must therefore be grasped in terms of the social being of the bourgeois class, in terms of the capitalist division of labour and the commodity fetishism that arises on this basis the 'reification' of consciousness."[55] The Soviet novel was thus required to shift attention away from the thoughts of individual characters, and instead place it on the achievement of a collective futurity; the narrative's aspirational "field of attention", as Alex Woloch calls it, is then dedicated to the achievements of groups (like those who pursue the construction of Magnitogorsk) over the minutiae of a singular hero's mind.[56] As a result, state-supported Soviet writing has sometimes been said to resemble a literature of surfaces, one that is similar Georgii Vasil'evich's surrender to the epistemological limits of vision when he looks out from his hotel window ("Who knew?").[57]

The Soviet writing establishment's campaign against psychologism yielded uneasiness from those within the literary establishment: as Anisimov's review shows, Kataev and his colleagues faced a difficult balancing act when navigating this new literature. Despite theoretical prescriptions from critics like Lukacs, writers were applauded when they depicted the personal struggles of those who built socialism, which necessitated some interaction with interiority. We should note, however, that the representation of interiority in Kataev's work—and to some extent, in other socialist realist novels at this time—is greatly dissimilar from the literature that preceded it; different from a modernist flood of subjective thoughts, as Eric Auerbach describes early 20th century prose, and different from Mikhail Bakhtin's description of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, which aimed for the "accommodation of the autonomous consciousness of others." This point should be uncontroversial: socialist realist novels are rarely celebrated for the complexity of their narrative voice, but I suggest below that Kataev's socialist realist narrator substitutes this function by becoming an organizer of sounds, a specific kind of *listener* instead of a specific kind of *observer*. Bourgeois "literary details," as Kataev himself puts it in *Time, Forward!*, had become passé—literature would instead become a space for ideas and the senses to take hold, a medium that would overcome the monotony of mere visual description.[58]

To get at the distinction that Mosia's recitation of newspaper headlines can provide us, we should recall that at roughly the same time that Kataev was writing *Time, Forward!,* Maksim Voloshinov and Mikhail Bakhtin attempted to catalogue and describe the variety of literary

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[54] See Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, p. 5.

[55] See Georg Lukács,, "Reportage or Portayal?" in *Essays on Realism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), p. 47.

[56] See Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009), p. 17.

[57] Petre Petrov has gone so far as to imply that Soviet novels are "authorless," associating the phenomenon with Barthes and Foucault's notion of the "death of the author": "at the beginning of the 20th century, the death of the author did not have merely cognitive significance; it was also a symbolic act performed in the specific historical context of the time…authors pretended *to not be authors*" (See Petrov, *Automatic for the Masses,* 8)

[58] "The bicycle was as antediluvian as a literary detail carried over from a novelette by Paul Morand and into a lithograph of an old encyclopedia, representing the flora of the coal period." (27)

techniques they found for representing speech in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929). Their most famous phrase in this work is analogous to the English as "free indirect discourse" (*nesobstvenno-priamaia rech'*), a translation from the French term (le style indirect libre) that denotes a representation of speech that can only be achieved in writing, and that has shaped decades of literary criticism to follow it.[59] "Free indirect discourse" occurs when the evaluative purview associated with a specific character's *voice,* Voloshinov's operative term, interferes with the purview of a separate, narrative voice, a phenomenon he illustrates with a passage from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*.[60] Here, the questions of Dostoevsky's narrator's are indistinguishable from those that the character of Prince Myshkin may be asking himself; this was the condition that Bakhtin believed made texts novelistic—when conflict between the inner and outer worlds of characters was transferred onto the plane of a novel's narration itself.

It has yet to be asked, however, how free indirect discourse manifests itself in socialist realism. *Time, Forward!* is filled with *direct* quotes from characters's private thoughts and dreams, but rarely do they resemble the indirect narration of psychology. For example, the reader learns that the engineer Nalbandov, Margulies' rival, privately likes to spend time with an American visitor to the site, Ray Roupe:

> "Here, [i.e. in Magnitogorsk—MK]" [Ray Roupe said] there were no legends, no conjectures. "Here were cities without the "noise of time," without the copper language of history. This seemed incredible (*neveroiatnym*). This disillusioned – even affronted (*oskorblialo*) one.
>
> He is right, Nalbandov thought to himself, but he said:
>
> "You are mistaken, Mr. Ray Roupe. I do not agree with you." (158)

Nalbandov's words, "unbelievable" and "affronted," are marked with an initial judgment that acquiesces into a tacit agreement, but the tension between his inner and outer feelings towards Ray Roupe's prognosticating reveals disconnect between the variety of *voices* that only Kataev's narrator can hear. This passage is structured similarly to Mosia's recitation of the newspaper headlines, in that we learn that Mosia's audible voice is disconnected from what he *thinks* he will say, judging by the interference of the phrases "No! No!" and "That wasn't it!" Although it comes close, Kataev's description of Mosia's gaffe and Nalbandov's thoughts are *not*, in fact, examples of free indirect discourse. It is instead what Voloshinov calls "substituted direct discourse," when reported speech lacks "interference" and subsumes the narrative entirely.[61] The evaluative quality of the phrases "No! No!" and "That wasn't it!" can only be heard as Mosia's

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[59] "Free Indirect Discourse" is perhaps one of the most discussed terms in literary studies, and it would truly do it injustice to attempt to condense discussions of free indirect discourse into a single footnote. Suffice to say, the topic is not *created* by Bakhtin and Voloshinov, but likely imported from Charles Bally's work from Geneva, published in 1912 ("le style indirect libre") Bally himself was likely not the first to observe this phenomenon, but he is often credited as the first to put it to print. See Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977), p. 8.

[60] "And why did he [Prince Myshkin] avoid going straight up to him and turn away as if he didn't notice anything, although their eyes had met…Didn't he himself, after all, want not long ago to take him by the arm and go with him there? Didn't he himself, after all, want to go to him tomorrow and say that he had been to see her?" See Bakthin, Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* trans. Matejka and Titunik, (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), p. 153.

[61] See Bakhtin / Voloshinov, p. 139.

words, but they are not situated alongside an otherwise distinct narrative perspective—instead, they directly substitute that perspective.

Kataev is not the only Soviet writer to work around free indirect discourse by transforming it into its related, "substituted direct" phenomenon. Marietta Shaginyan infrequently put her characters' thoughts in parentheses or quotation marks throughout *Hydrocentral* (1931) sometimes drawing attention to their ideas by marking utterances as foreign, Armenian speech, but often quoting them directly and in no conflict with the narrative voice.[62] In Il'ya Ehrenburg's *The Second Day* (1932), the narrator's "psycho-narration," as Dorrit Cohn would call it, impedes upon characters by driving their actions, an authority that Smirnov argues is indicative of socialist realism ("She had the capacity to love deeply and beautiful, but for that she just didn't have the time…").[63] Although I offer only two examples here, we can tentatively observe that free indirect discourse is a phenomenon mostly absent from the socialist realist novel, where the purviews of character and narrator appear to resist blending.

One explanation for the formal ramifications of this psychological reduction comes in Katerina Clark's characterization of the socialist realist novel as a "parable" in form, which requires characters to undergo a phenomenon of "depersonalization." This "depersonalization," as Clark calls it, produces recognizable types of socialist realist heroes through repeated actions and recognizable patterns of thought.[64] The irony of achieving revolutionary consciousness, a central task of the socialist realist hero, is best characterized in Igor Smirnov's observation that these heroes actually undergo a kenosis of coercion: "…the hero of the narrative is inspired by another person's ideas, or is entrusted with a job to be done, finds himself a mission, becomes an active agent in the realization of a plan dictated by some higher authority, subordinates himself to the will of someone of greater power or authority."[65] In *Time, Forward!,* there is a simpler way to get at this idea: the utterances that structure the interior and exterior lives of Kataev's characters sound as if they do not belong to them.[66] Despite their stubborn belief that their voices *do* define them, some characters in Magnitogorsk even become suspicious of what may be happening with their words: "How can I speak for myself alone?" a character named Saenko asks in what the text describes as an "irate" ("*zhlobskii"*) voice, presenting the adjective in quotation marks as if to sow even more doubt (205). Reviewers were concerned about this tendency: "We do not reproach the author for his attribution of false, commonplace thoughts to his heroes," Anisimov wrote, "but he often makes them something complete (*sploshnyi*), something so deeply false that

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[62] See Shaginyan, *Gidrotsentral,* p. 22: "Но резкости не вышло. С каждым новым словом странного человека обмякала ее душа. "Проницательный какой, догадался, что педагог",—подвилась она мысленно."

[63] See Ehrenburg, *Den' Vtoroi*: Она могла бы любить столь же глубоко и красиво, но у нее нет для этого нет времени…Он еще выходил каждое утро на работу, но его преследовала одна мысль: уехать! Может быть, распростившись с этими родными ему местами, он освободится от сердечной пустоты"

[64] See Clark, *Polozhitel'nyi geroi kak verbal'naia ikona.*

[65] See Igor Smirnov, "Scriptum sub specie sovietica, p. 2" in *Ideology in Russian Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 157.

[66] Avital Ronell reads this phenomenon through the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, giving name to *dictation* as a form of intertextuality tinged with the phenomenon of "before-ness;" Ronell thus builds upon both Derrida's ideas of "arche-writing" and "hauntology," which posit an utterance or inscription that it always prior to one made in the present moment. See Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986)

the best moments of his novel are often overturned."[67] Nevertheless, Kataev is relentless in reinforcing the idea of vocal instability: at one point, we learn of a theater rehearsal in which actors impersonate class enemies by parroting their voices (72).

The detachment between voice and interiority is mirrored in a divorce between voice and body performed by the sound reproduction technologies that fill Magnitogorsk, particularly the telephone. Although it connects distant locales, the telephone is a problematic device for the construction team, in that it separates characters from their collective labor and even suspends novelistic time, creating a kind of atemporal non-space for listening:

> Margulies went into the felt-lined booth and shut the door behind him tightly. Immediately he was in utter silence, as if, on shutting the door, he had shut out time. Time became a thick, impenetrable matrix around him.
>
> But no sooner did he apply the special telephone receiver to his ear than, instead of the time that had stopped, space began to speak.
>
> It spoke with the near and distant voices of telephone operators, with the weak rattle of atmospheric devices, which the din of flying kilometers, with the mosquito-like singing of signals, with the calling of cities to each other. (177)

This decoupling of matter and sound leads to an inconveniently mystical disposition for Magnitogorsk's central communications technology. Moreover, Magnitogorsk's telephone is saturated with decadent and Symbolist imagery throughout *Time, Forward!*; at one point, lilac-colored smoke billows out from the telephone booth, and characters feel like they fall into metaphorical abysses that the receiver opens. One character, Filonov, has a particularly difficult time responding to an onslaught of "alien voices" that greet him in the communicative ether:

> Their connection was continually being broken. Other (*chuzhie*) voices kept interrupting. Strange (*chuzhie*) voices pleaded for the delivery of rubble as soon as possible, swore, demanded the mill-office switchboard, demanded carriers, called superintendents, dictated figures…
>
> It was hell. (16)

This unfiltered torrent of noise has led scholars like Friedrich Kittler to associate techniques of early sound reproduction with the creation of a kind of acoustic Real in the Lacanian sense, a chaotic sonic world that is collected and played back by an indiscriminate machine instead of by the filtering ear.[68]

And yet, this spiritual connection redeems the telephone, allowing the Bolsheviks to embrace it while they would otherwise reject the booth's decadent sensibility.[69] Roughly midway through the plot, the lead engineer Margulies receives a phone call from his sister in Moscow,

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[67] See Anisimov.

[68] See Kittler, *Gramohpone, Film, Typewriter,* p. 82, where Kittler describes the practice of sound recording as "the impossible desire to reduce the real (the physiology of the voice) to the symbolic."

[69] Like the progressive tempos of time that Kataev sought to depict, reproduced sound recuperatively links two spaces in different times, a phenomenon that John Durham Peters has described as "communication without embodiment, contact achieved by the sharing of spiritual (electrical) fluids."[69] See John Durham Peters, *Speaking in to the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 1999), p. 137.

Katya, who promises to dictate to him an article about speeding up concrete production. The text has already been published in Moscow, but is not due to appear in Magnitogorsk for at least another day. During the phone call, Margulies listens intently to Katya's voice and scribbles down every word she speaks to him, a filtration of the interference that quickly leads to a symbolic recording. "Five times a coarse, dispassionate voice severed them," explains the narrative, "reminding them that their time was up. And five times David's irritable voice insisted that they not be interrupted." The ability to shield oneself from this disorienting assemblage of noise becomes an important task for the characters of *Time, Forward!*, and after Margulies receives the particularly important telephone call from Moscow, the novel celebrates the siblings' wired connection:

> And so, on this splendid summer morning, at ten o'clock Moscow time, and at twelve o'clock by the other time, at a distance of several thousand kilometers from each other, a brother and a sister talked to each other, and their voices flew from Europe to Asia, and from Asia to Europe, drowning the stubborn roar of time that lagged too far behind, and of space that was too cumbersome. (141)

In the following chapter, Kataev's narrative reproduces what is scrawled on the slip of paper inside of Margulies' pocket, giving the reader access to an externalized piece of Margulies' innermost thoughts, a device that quickly becomes a habit:

> Margulies was already standing at the door, politely awaiting the end of the conversation. He was prepared for Nalbandov's final argument: quality.
>
> For that, he had in his pocket the article transmitted to him by Katya from Moscow over the telephone. So far as quality was concerned, everything was in order. (241)

We can find an analog of this *recording* in the form of the note in Margulies' pocket, the results of a dictation, within the Soviet sound cinema. Margulies' intuition to record has much in common with trends in Soviet sonic culture, and particularly with the design of technology that had appeared in the Soviet cinema, which had begun to capture and reproduce sound via dictaphonic recording apparatuses such as the *Shorinofon* or Pavel Tager's *Tagefon*. In his review of *Time, Forward!*, Shklovsky dismissed the works of a younger Kataev as satires that were filled with characters who had more in common with "film characters" than with fleshed-out heroes. Indeed, Kataev's more recent critics often call him a "cinematic" writer, and *Time, Forward* has been nominated as a cinematic work *par excellence*.[70] But how could a cinematic text routinely denigrate the abilities of vision?[71]In the case of *Time, Forward!,* we could

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[70] Kataev's cinematicity is raised by Hellebust, Nichols, and Kiziria, particularly by Kiziria.

[71] Kataev was undoubtedly interested in cinematography—he wrote several articles about it throughout his career ranging from subjects like Eduard Tisse, Eisenstein's cameraman, to the profile of a typical cinema-goer. It is possible that Kataev's enthusiastic feelings for a fusion of cinema and literature were informed by a foreign filmmaker whom he was very likely to meet while in Magnitogorsk—Joris Ivens, who worked in the city to film a documentary, *Komsomol* (1932), during almost the very same time that Kataev visited. Although there is no record in either Ivens's or Kataev's biography of the two meeting, Kataev may have had Ivens's view of outsiderness in mind when he writes about the radio in *Time, Forward!*, depictions of which open Ivens's film.

ironically call the novel truly "cinematic" only if we take into consideration the emergence of ideas about how to physically record and play back inner monologues that appeared in the budding sound cinema between 1930 and 1932. These attempts first appeared on the Soviet screen in 1931, the same year that the "Magnit" sound film theater opened in Magnitogorsk, one of the city's sole sources of entertainment while Kataev was living there.[72] Years before Lev' Termen was arrested and instructed to produce the first Soviet audio surveillance bug, Aleksei Dmitriev's 1931 film *The Mechanical Traitor* (*Mekhanicheskii predatel'*) served as a curious antecedent to Kataev's listening narrator (Fig 2.1). The film introduced the character of Professor Rastiapin (played by Fedor Kurikhin), a graphomaniacal formula-scribbler who is an equal a mix of Termen', Ivan Pavlov, and Mikhail Bulgakov's Professor Preobrazhenskii. In his first role for the sound cinema, the famous actor Igor Il'inskii plays the residential *komendant* Prut, who

Fig 2.1 *Still from Mekhanicheskii predatel'* (1931)

surreptitiously stockpiles sugar and kerosene in his own apartment. Although he has aroused suspicion among the authorities already, Prut's fate is sealed after a suitcase mix-up with Professor Rastiapin, when he accidentally makes off with the professor's prototype for the *fonovoks,* a Soviet-made Dictaphone.[73] Prut fumbles with the *fonovoks*, and mistakenly records both a confession to hoarding goods and some insults directed towards his building's *komendant*. During an unexpected meeting between the two, Prut mistakenly sets off the device: when his mouth opens, a separate voice speaks for him. The film uses early technologies of dubbing (Andrievskii went on to lead the Soviet Union's dubbing industry) to reproduce Prut's confession at an even more inopportune time, when both his building's residents and the authorities are

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[72] See Kotkin, p. 183. Curiously, the theater's ability to reproduce sound is not mentioned anywhere in *Time, Forward!* but instead the Magnitogorsk of the novel's future features several in its place: "…кинематографы представляли отгороженные пустыри с рядами вбитых в землю скамеек" (265)

[73] This symbolic recording had recently become a reality thanks to the development of Soviet-made optical film devices, such as the *Shorinofon,* the *Tagefon ,*both of which were perfected with the help of the lesser-referenced sound engineer Vadim Okhotnikov. Each technology recorded and replayed sound by printing graphical representations onto celluloid film that would be re-read by an amplifying machine, a sturdier and more portable medium than their predecessor, the gramophone's wax or shellac discs. Indeed, it was the emergence of Dictaphonic technology that encouraged the Soviet Peoples' commissar, Anatolii Lunacharsky, to call for the creation of the state's sound archive.

present. When Prut's mouth opens, the *fonovoks* fills it with incriminating words, as if his own thoughts have suddenly become audible to everyone around him.

As a feature-demo of the sound cinema's new ability to dub audio over image, *The Mechanical Traitor* makes clear that Prut speaks in multiple, competing voices that possess him. The arrival of the *fonovoks* makes all of these voices accessible at once, an analogue to the "voice that is not one's own," (*ne svoim golosom*) with which Kataev's characters speak. The voice's reproducibility had broader connections within Soviet sonic culture—ventriloquism began to emerge as a popular form of entertainment only during the Stalinist '30s, when performers would appear at circuses throughout the decade.[74] If, as Nancy Ruttenburg has argued, authorship is indeed "ventriloquism writ large," we could read *Time, Forward!* as a series of puppet-characters who are ventriloquized by more than just Kataev's ideas, but by the discourse required to "speak Bolshevik."[75] For Connor, ventriloquism emerges as a force that is able to control space metaphysically, as attested by the questions of supreme authority that characterize the ventriloquist's relationship to his speaking subject (Connor notes that the painter Yan' Dargent compared the figure of the ventriloquist to Tsar Aleksandr III).[76] But despite this metaphorical comparison to Russia, virtually no tradition of ventriloquism emerged until the early 20th century, and the practice had always been associated with trends from abroad (in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard,* the German nanny Charlotte, is one of the only literary depictions of ventriloquism in the Russian canon). Pioneered by Maria Donskaia, the daughter of Grigorii Donskoi, ventriloquism in the Soviet Union only grew more popular by the end of the '30s, when she performed at various circuses and fairs across the Soviet Union and imitated various social classes and types.[77] In fact, one of Donskaia's puppets was a kolkhoz worker—essentially a collectivized peasant—and from what we know of the act, Donskaia's jokes were based on the kolkhoznik's inability to master "speaking Bolshevik," much like Kataev's depiction of Mosia.

It is the container for Margulies' symbolic recording, his pocket, that bears the closest analogue to Prut's use of the *fonovoks,* and in which I find the key to *Time, Forward!*'s linkage of voice, listening, and interiority. As *Time, Forward!* continues, Margulies' pocket develops a metonymical relationship to his consciousness: instead of representing his concrete plans, the narrator reminds us of the transcribed article inside of Margulies' pocket. In 1932, Sergei Tretiakov published an article about the depths to be plumbed by emptying anyone's pockets, suggesting that material things alone were enough to tell a story.[78] Tretiakov's model was Tom Sawyer, but the metaphorical linking of clothing and character depth was established earlier in Russian radical realism, when Nikolai Chernyshevsky gave seemingly bottomless pockets to Rakhmetov, the ideological hero of his programmatic novel, *What is to Be Done?*. I remind the reader that Rakhmetov's pockets were filled with notes and the means for his own survival,

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[74] See Maria Grigorievna Donskaia, *Tainy zagadochnogo zhanra: 100 let na estrade* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990)

[75] See Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998). Ruttenburg's discussion of *Wieland* makes specific mention of the threat that ventriloquism posed to early conceptions of community and personality in America by investigating the idea of "The Voice of the People."

[76] See Connor, p. 308.

[77] See Donskaia, *Tany zagaochnogo zhanra.*

[78] See Sergei Tretiakov, "*Pro Karman*" in *Formal'nyi Metod: Antologiia Russkogo modernizma, tom 2*, ed. Oushakine (Moscow: Kabinetnyi uchitel', 2016), p. 399.

nearly 4 pounds of bread and cheese.[79] Crucially, at one point in *Time, Forward!* Margulies' outturned pocket is described as a "calico ear" (*sittsevoe ukho*), which implies that the pocket's woven stitching has the ability to audit, thus linking listening with Margulies' consciousness as such (35). The connection between clothing and the depth of the novel's listening was not lost on contemporary readers, either: Shklovsky described the characters as "sewn into the novel with a double stitch."[80]

To be clear, I am suggesting that the characters of Kataev's *Time, Forward!* find success by aping the technological capabilities not of the telephone, but of the *dictaphone*, a process that teaches them to store and play back privileged information. The socialist realist phenomenon of "depersonalization" is, as we have seen, often framed as a voluntary phenomenon, but in *Time, Forward!,* no characters consciously *think* that they will dissolve their individuality—having lost control of their voices, they must learn to *listen* to their surroundings in a new way in order to eventually reintegrate themselves. Indeed, one recent critic of the novel imagines an utterance from one of Kataev's characters as a "reproduced voice" (*golos v reproduktore*—a phrase that transforms the voice into a physical object) when it is, in fact, spoken by the character himself.[81]

But what is the origin of the discourse that precedes these characters, the contents of their Dictaphones they resemble? Before answering this question, I note that this distinction of dictaphonic recording and recitation offers a path to overcome not only the difficulties of speaking on the telephone, but also the problematic practice of listening to the gramophone. Gramophones are linked with western capitalism throughout the novel (going by the name of the French distributor, "patephone"), especially so when Klava, a minor character, leaves the construction site via train while music plays from a foreign record. In response to her accompaniment of recorded music, the narration becomes impregnated with Klava's thoughts, and begins to repeat a set of triumphant slogans that inaugurate the novel:

> The gleaming black disc of the phonograph turned around and around. In the center of the disc, the dog in front of the horn turned around. The needle bobbed up and down. The shining jointed horn spoke mysteriously, abysmally (*utrobno*).
> [...]
> "…to lower tempos means to fall back, and those who fall back are beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we will not have it!...
> We cannot! We cannot! We cannot! (333-4)[82]

Although the gramophone *should* be distracting, Klava is prepared with her own vocalic contents: the adverb "*utrobno,"* is derived from the Russian word for womb, *utroba*, (hence Malamuth's decision to translate the word as "abysmally"). The word *utrobno* allows us to read this scene as a figurative invagination, elevating the ear's potential for *birthing* Klava's political

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[79] See Chernyshevsky, *What is to be Done?,* p. 421.
[80] See Shklovsky.
[81] See Gasparov, "*Sotsialisticheskii realizm v metafizicheskom izmerenii: vozmozhno li lozh' khudozhestvennogo vysmysla?"* NLO 2017.
[82] These slogans are repeated when Fenya, Klava's double throughout the novel, boards a train in chapter 3. This response to sound reproduction takes after Andrievskii's Prut from *The Mechanical Traitor*, who cannot help but repeat the phrases that the *fonovoks* attributes to him (albeit on the opposite side of the political spectrum)—he is quite literally a broken record of discourse that produces utterances antagonistic towards socialism.

ideology—quotation marks surround the words that follow as if Klava begins to speak, "We must no longer stay backwards." The message that fills the punctuation, however, is directly lifted from Stalin's most famous speech of 1931, "A New Situation."[83] which reappears in bits and pieces throughout the novel. Always in quotation marks, it is archival trace that must be replayed throughout *Time, Forward!,* much like the dictaphonic records of such speeches that were being stored in the Soviet Union—Klava's language is Stalin's language, activated by the sound reproduction apparatus.

The vocalic philosophy I have attributed to Kataev's novel, which suggests that spontaneous, oral speech never quite produces a legitimate, independent subject, bears great resemblance to Jacques Derrida's concept of "phonocentrism." "Phonocentrism" is a negative term in Derrida's thinking, one that describes our reliance on *voice* as a subject's proof of being. For Derrida, speech masquerades as a kind of false "liveness," deflecting attention away from the infinite play between sound and inscription that actually governs signification. This novel about construction, however, resists a full deconstruction: Kataev swings Derrida's findings in the opposite direction towards a form of *graphocentrism,* an obsession with the letter that characterizes Stalinist culture. Nevertheless, this *graphocentrism* is still connected with sound: Derrida used James Joyce's *Ulysses* to argue that novelistic language conjoins the voice and consciousness into a "gramophoned" sign that is both written and spoken, but the claim that voices in Magnitogorsk orbit around an eternally inscribed political discourse advances a certain politics into Derrida's ideologically ambiguous critique of vococentrism. The inscription that precedes the novel has only one author in its charged vocalic space: the state. Keeping with *Time, Forward!*'s rejection of the gramophone, we can say that voices in Kataev's novel are not gramophoned, but instead "dictaphoned," taking on words and sounds that belong to the state's archives or news outlets, ready to be played back in audible form when they are needed. Herein lies the distinction between the dictaphonic capabilities of this technology and the gramophone—the former can be edited, altered, or have its contents changed. Both Katerina Clark and the media theorist Yuri Murashov have distinguished the Soviet '20s as a culture of orality and the '30s as a culture of literacy. This binary, however, is complicated by dictaphonic logic, by which sonic performance is inscribed prior to its annunciation. Indeed, as Andrei Smirnov has shown, one of the most ambitious projects of 1932 was composer Arsenii Avraamov's attempt to synthesize Lenin's voice—Avraamov planned to inscribe Lenin's words onto a graphical soundtrack, which would then be read and played by a dictaphonic reading.[84]

Paul K. Saint-Amour has recently argued against the implications of Derrida's famous gramophone essay, suggesting that the frequent juxtaposition between literary writing and sound recording as two modes of writing has led to a "gramophone problem."[85] This is not to say that Amour finds Derrida's reading incorrect; he instead suggests that "by amplifying one technology of sound reproduction, it has effectively muted the rival and neighboring regimes in relation to which phonography emerged and was denied."[86] I agree with Saint-Amour, and the case of *Time, Forward!* offers a unique example. The dictaphonic logic of *Time, Forward!* suggests that there is no production of language in the minds of these characters, but that they instead *listen* to

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[83] See Shargunov, p. 299.
[84] See Andrei Smirnov, "Synthesized Voices of the Revolutionary Utopia: Early Attempts to Synthesize Speaking and Singing Voice in Post-Revolutionary Russia," in *Electrified Voices: Medial, Socio-historical and Cultural Aspects of Voice Transfer* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2012), pp. 163-187.
[85] See Paul K. Saint-Amour, "Ulysses Pianola". *PMLA* 130.1 (2015) pp 15-32.
[86] Ibid., p. 16.

discourse and are always waiting to be re-annunciate it (as in Mosia's speech). This dictaphonic split yields both a willingness to absorb and speak again at any moment: when characters speak in Magnitogorsk, they are convinced that they suddenly fill and have authority over the space of their utterances: "'It's one of two things,' [Mosia] cried, hearing nothing except his own voice." (222)

The Noise of Time: A Socialist Realist Chronotope

The lesson that the journalist Vinkich teaches the writer, Georgii Vasil'evich which I cited at the opening of this chapter could be read as a prototype for the new Soviet writer that Kataev aspired to become. Yet when he reflected on his visit in 1966, Kataev portrayed himself as raw material that premeditated its own reforging, writing that upon his arrival to Magnitogorsk, he felt like a "small piece of iron" ("*oshchushchaia sebia malen'kim kusochkom zheleza"*); one can imagine that he waited with either anticipation or dread to be tossed into the furnace.[87] Kataev's reflections on the trip reveal that he was clearly unimpressed by what he *saw* in Magnitogorsk, and he writes that "there was nothing of the sort of either a city or a factory standing – it was only a dream…"[88] Instead of being discouraged by the city's emptiness, the persistent *dream* of Magnitogorsk inspired both Kataev's memoirs and his novel, which serve as testaments to the Stalinist fantasy of a tamed wilderness, new cities, and new types of laborers and communities.[89] The glaring absence of the completed products of these cultural fantasies at the beginning of the '30s led to constant worries about the limitations of socialist triumph, and as Georgii Vasil'evich exasperatedly puts it, the task of the writer would soon become "to believe, and not to see!" (*verit' i ne videt'!*) (166)

Indeed, two major anxieties agitate the novel's characters who are racing to build Magnitogorsk in *Time, Forward!,* and both concern time. Despite the fury and nationalistic bombast of its builders, Magnitogorsk is depressingly underdeveloped, and its workers are painfully aware that it will remain so if they do not drastically accelerate the tempo of the city's construction. Reaching a solution for this problem became the task of literary writers in the Soviet Union in 1932, when the state dissolved the Association for Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and reinstated the organization as the Writers' Union, all in order to exercise more control over fruits of the creative profession. A commitment to "merciless dynamism," as Dobrenko has called it, was the vehicle that propelled the Soviet Union's cultural and industrial transition away from the techno-utopian dreams of the avant-garde to Stalin's cultural revolution, and there is no better representation of the aim to conjoin speed and time at any cost than Kataev's novel: despite a plethora of digressions (Shklovsky complained that the novel's gorgeous array of

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[87] See Kataev, "Magnitka" (1966), (VIII*)*, p. 444.
[88] Ibid. p. 446.
[89] Kotkin has collected testimonies from some of the city's first inhabitants: "Most of those mobilized, although rarely pleased with being ordered to Magnitostroi, expected upon arrival to see large blast furnaces, steel mills, and the socialist city. Instead, what greeted them were the empty expanses of the steppe and the primitive conditions of their new life, which could turn their trepidation into outright panic, not to say despair. 'They told us, 'Well, here's Magnitogorsk,' and we began to look around,' one astonished contemporary recalled. 'But there was nothing, just a few barracks. So we began to press them, 'Where's the city?' but they answered: 'Here's the city, what else can we do for you?'" See Kotkin, p. 75.

images never fully integrated with its messy plot), the most central plot thread is a race against the clock—and debates over how to improve approaches to this race without sliding into farce.[90]

Some critics have claimed that despite the appearance of "time" in its title, the novel performs less rigorous grappling with chronos than we might expect.[91] This claim is essentially true—I would argue, however, that the ear becomes a surrogate for the eye in Magnitogorsk, particularly with regards to understandings of time. As a result, it is listening, and not seeing, that transforms into the main source of hope for the city's promising future. *Time, Forward!* is not only about the limits of visual evidence, as some critics have argued (a city unbuilt is not, in fact, a city ruined), but instead built on the idea that listening can push characters to adopt new and radical perceptions of time. The idea is so radical that some characters find it ridiculous, as a disagreement between the novel's lead antipodes, Nalbandov and Margulies, attests:

> "Why don't you make a hardwood floor? That would make it easier for your enthusiasts to work. Why don't you put a piano there? Then it will be just like a dancing class.
>
> "If music can lighten our work," said Margulies calmly, "and help us to carry out the industrial-financial plan on time, we shall place a piano there."
>
> Nalbandov shouted viciously.
>
> "That's it, that's it! That's just what I was saying! This is not a construction, but a stunt! (*frantsuzskaia bor'ba*) (238)

Nalbandov, a strict pragmatist, finds little common ground with Margulies' (and Kataev's) audacious suggestion that success can be easily achieved by listening anew. "This is not stunt," or more literally, a "wrestling match" (*ne frantsuzskaia bor'ba!*), the phrase that Nalbandov repeats throughout the novel, attempts to distinguish the Soviet industrial project from competing spectacles, like the nearby Magnitogorsk circus, which haunts the construction side in the form of a perverse double.[92]

As in other literary works considered representative of socialist realism, characters' ideological alignments in *Time, Forward!* are easy to determine (i.e. those who work for or against the triumph of socialism), but a closer reading reveals how those who imperil the construction of Magnitogorsk are dependent on measuring time with watches, not with their ears. In addition to Margulies' nearly epic epithet—the "engineer without a pocket watch"—Nalbandov checks his watch habitually, and Kataev frequently contrasts how the pair differs in assessing cement production with their ears and eyes. Ishchenko, who admires Margulies, works without a watch; Korneev, Nalbandov's right hand foreman, routinely struggles to listen and prefers to soliloquize while he checks his timepiece; one visitor to Magnitogorsk, an American engineer who calls himself Foma Egorovich, is known for his luxury watch, which doesn't stop

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[90] See Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer,* p. 373.

[91] Hellebust, for example, has written that, "The suffering of the Magnitogorsk workers, including false perceptions of its significance, relates to the theme of distorted perception in general, through which [Kataev's] heroes must struggle to learn the correct way of seeing." See Hellebust, "Suffering and Seeing," p. 704.

[92]Initially, the novel seems almost unable to take itself seriously, when murmurs about the competition develop into full-on puns concerning the noise of time. "К чему этот шум раньше времени? (183) "…А шуметь раньше времени действительно не надо." (184)…"Ну? Будем крыть? Попробуем. Но без шума. (185)"

him from tearing through advertisements for new models. Because the novel ultimately implies that time can be sped up if its measurement is *listened* to in a different way, Kataev uses the word "rhythm" to determine how Margulies arranges the aural signals that surround him into an ordered model of passing time:

> The ringing blow of the shovel. The stamping of the bast shoes on the planking. The sinuous screech of the wheels. The clanging of the scoop. The rush of water. The leaping clatter of the barrow across the rails. The sound of the spilling drum and of the pouring, crawling concrete. A voice. A cry. A word.
>
> All this spoke to him of time and rhythm.
>
> He listened to the sounds. He counted them, as if they were a pulse. The pulse was even, somewhat accelerated, fresh, and full of vigor.
>
> Half closing his eyes and bending his head, he listened to the sounds. He reveled in them. (224)

Margulies' ear has a clear antecedent within Kataev's writing: in an essay from 1931, *The Rhythms of Building Socialism,* Kataev explained how difficult it would be for workers to achieve the rhythmic perfection of machines. Moreover, unlike the form of song (the closest human analog to the production mechanistic tempos) these rhythms could have ultimate power over an entire country: "the rhythm of the Stalingrad tractor factory leaves the boundaries of one city and begins to live in a new, unbridled, progressively growing tempo."[93] Long after the novel's publication, Kataev wrote that the "main object" of *Time, Forward!* was to depict those "tempos that advanced time."[94]

Indeed, the author's praise of mechanistic, progressive tempos for labor are smoothed over by the narrator's tendency to link chronos with the flow of water, an echo of the famous "river of time" metaphor from the ancient philosophy of Heraclitus. This association offers a fluctuating structure of time as one of the novel's central temporal metaphors: "Like a river, time carried (*neslo*) life to the right or to the left, turning and swirling it smoothly. Time flowed like a river, and, like a river when you swim in the middle of it, it appeared to be closed in and without direction." (136) *Time, Forward!* complicates Heraclitus' "river of time," however, by introducing a subjective variable – the need to *sense* the river that flows by one's feet as proof of time's passage. In a later appearance, the aquatic metaphor returns in an altered form: "Time flew *(neslos')*, changing the appearance of the space around it from minute to minute. There was no sense (*oshchushcheniia*) of immobility." (160) Heraclitian flux is the earliest unity of opposites to precede Hegel's dialectics (hence Kataev's interest in the image), but the appearance of sensation (*oshchushcheniia*) in this passage indicates that the author injects a dialectic clash into Cartesian dualism, thus forcing subjects to place their knowledge of time's existence into conflict with their sensory experiences. We are told that the river carries "life" along with it, but the observer must *sense* how it curves and wraps around her foot as she enters, so that the motion of the river itself are fundamental components that lead to proof of time's passing.

Mechanistic tempos and the fluidity of water, however, are not one in the same. The threat that natural elements pose against the construction's inconsistency only serves to perpetuate the anxiety of eventual collapse or underdevelopment that both plague Magnitogorsk. This is further allegorized by another competition in the novel, one based on disagreements over

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[93] See Kataev, "*Ritmy stroiashchego sotsializma,*" (VIII), p. 231.

[94] See Kataev, "*Magnitka*" (VIII), p. 445.

the philosophy of history itself. The arrival of the novel's American visitor to Magnitogorsk construction site, Ray Roupe, puts Soviet and western models of time at odds with each other. Roupe is a type who commonly appeared at Soviet industrial projects in both fiction and reality during the first half of the '30s, and he is as knowledgeable about world history as he is about the mechanics of cement mixing.[95] Much to Nalbandov's annoyance, Roupe makes a point of habitually reminding his Soviet colleagues about how thoroughly unimpressed he is with the absence of lived, historical time in Magnitogorsk:

> Mister Ray Roupe wiped his nostrils with a clean cambric handkerchief. Black wax-like smears remained on the handkerchief.
>
> "There's a great deal of all kinds of noise here," said Mr. Ray Roupe, smiling weakly. "A great deal of all kinds of noise." But there is no 'noise of time.' Do you understand me, Comrade Nalbandov? (157)

Steven Connor writes that the primary characteristic of a world experienced only through sound is impermanence, which perpetuates the anxieties of eventual collapse or underdevelopment that threaten Magnitogorsk: "the world of sound is only ever there at our moment of hearing it."[96] By noting that he hears nothing more than the sound of the city, Roupe belittles Magnitogorsk's prophecies for itself by taunting its builders with existential musings about the inevitable disaster that befell Vesuvius and other ancient cities, somewhat of a requiem for various world civilizations. In a sense, he is a symbol of death itself, a constant threat of time's finitude and impermanence.

A connection between the ear and changing understandings of historical time was a theme that not only Kataev pursued. Indeed, It would be difficult to read his invocation of the "noise of time" as unaware of Osip Mandel'shtam's 1925 memoir by the same name, an event in Russian literature during both of its two separate publications in the 1920s.[97] Kataev knew and spent time with the Mandel'shtams, and he adored them—they disliked him.[98] Modernity often

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[95] In addition to benefiting from partnerships with various steel companies and American entrepreneurs, Magnitogorsk was always ready to bow to visiting foreigners, particularly Americans. Kotkin writes, "In 1930, the top leadership on the site was suddenly informed by the authorities in Moscow that American specialists were coming and that suitable housing for them should be completed before they arrived. The order stipulated that the foreigners were to be afforded living conditions approximating those to which they were accustomed—this at a remote, virtually barren construction site. Despite the constraints, Moscow's order was carried out to the letter." See Kotkin, p. 125.

[96] See Connor, p. 17.

[97] See Grigorii Freidin, *A Coat of Many Colors: Osip Mandelstam and his Mythologies of Self-Presentation* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1987), p. 31.

[98] In the second volume of her memoirs, Nadezhda Mandel'shtam left a special place to detail Kataev's conformism and subservience to the regime by depicting how he took up residency in Moscow's new writers' home: "В новой квартире у Катаева все было новое — новая жена, новый ребенок, новые деньги и новая мебель. «Я люблю модерн», — зажмурившись говорил Катаев, а этажом ниже Федин любил красное дерево целыми гарнитурами. Писатели обезумели от денег, потому что они были не только новые, но и внове…Катаев угощал нас новым для Москвы испанским вином и новыми апельсинами — они появились в продаже впервые после революции. Все, «как прежде», даже апельсины! Но наши родители не имели электрических холодильников, они держали продукты в комнатных ледничках, и им по утрам привозили бруски донного льда. А Катаев привез

becomes a sonic force in Mandel'shtam's text, one that impacts the experience of space and historical change as encounters with the ear:

> In the middle of the Nineties all Petersburg streamed into Pavlovsk as into some Elysium. Locomotive whistles and railroad bells mingle with the patriotic cacophony of the *1812 Overture,* and a peculiar smell filled the huge station where Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein reigned… Along Gorokhovaya as far as the Alexander Garden one could see the *karetka,* the most ancient form of public vehicle in Petersburg. Only on the Nevsky could one hear the clanging bells of the new express trams, painted yellow rather than the usual dirty wine color, and drawn by enormous, sleek horses.[99]

Charles Isenberg has characterized Mandel'shtam's style as one that is fundamentally without personal memories, in which the author is reduced to an observer of epochal changes that inform and replace his personal experiences.[100] We should notice that both Kataev and Mandel'shtam, who is often depicted as allergic to Soviet aesthetic mandates, respond similarly to the idea of narrating grand arcs history through listening. In Mandel'shtam's poetry from this time, urban space is reorganized according to telephone networks, and the poet becomes one of Kataev's radio listeners after being sent into exile.[101]

And yet, the ability to listen would still be a product of a certain Soviet ableism: prior to the appearance *Time, Forward!*, the Armenian writer Marina Shaginyan wrote *Hydrocentral* (1931)*,* widely considered one of the first production novels—Shaginyan also happened to be deaf (Dmitrii Bykov has called her the "artificial ear" of the proletariat). Her approach to space is decidedly different from Kataev's, and she chooses to value the eye by saturating the Armenian space that the novel takes place in with a palpably visual sense of history:

> Through binoculars, an observer would be able to see the details of a Lori landscape, which looked nothing like an Armenian landscape: in the Armenian landscape, countless irrigation ditches and sluices, these waterways that led into the mouth the most talkative creature on earth — flowing water — ran into one's field of vision; there, you could take in the remains of an arch or a stone aqueduct, an ancient bridge, where everything told of the links, distributions, and high social role of water. But here, in the Lori plateau, water became a destroyer a worm, whose

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из Америки первый писательский холодильник, и в вине плавали льдинки, замороженные по последнему слову техники и комфорта."

[99] See Mandelstam, *The Noise of Time: Selected Prose* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1993), pp. 69-71.

[100] See Charles Isenberg, *Substantial Proofs of Being: Osip Mandelstam's Literary Prose* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 1987,) p. 51: "Mandelstam's claim, in this deeply autobiographical work, [is that] his memory is inimical to everything personal and that it works to distance the past rather than reproduce it."

[101] In a late poem, Mandel'shtam combines the image of radio headphones with an invocation of his informants:

Наушники, наушнички мои!
Попомню я воронежские ночки:
Недопитого голоса Аи
И в полночь с Красной площади гудочки..

> long, wriggling body carved out and ate through the earth's body, separating people from each other and tossing them into the loneliness of the desert. [102]

Shaginyan, although considered a monumental writer in the production novel genre, would not be able to participate in Kataev's audible revolution, and see its course as fundamentally different.

In Magnitogorsk, the visiting American camp seems opposed to understanding time in the way that Margulies does, which allows him to expand its bounds and achieve the cement pouring record. To counter Ray Roupe's pessimistic views, Nalbandov offers an alternate, technocratic interpretation of the "noise of time." In his version, the sound (or sensation) of chronos is *disconnected* from space and the material that fills it—yet another instantiation of Georgii Vasilievich's maxim that "seeing is not believing":

> "What is the noise of time? Here, an airplane flies over the city. At first we hear the noise. Note that: the noise.
>
> "Yes, yes. At first we hear the noise. My dear Leonard, listen. What he is saying is very interesting. I see what you're driving at. But go on, go on. And so, first the noise.'
>
> 'At first, the noise. After the noise, we see an airplane appear over the housetops.'
>
> 'Well, yes. The noise precedes and accompanies its flight. Isn't that right? But what do you see in this?'
>
> ''The speed of the sound competes with the speed of the flight. Technique is struggling with time.'
>
> 'Oh, technique…' Mr. Ray Roupe's face wrinkled. 'Yes, technique…' (158)

Ironically, Nalbandov describes an approach that eventually helps his rival, Margulies, set a new cement mixing record—time can become detached, altered, and experienced differently when it is filtered through the ear instead of the eye. This not-quite sonic boom represents what Mikhail Bakhtin, nearly contemporaneously with the publication of Kataev's novel, called the chronotope, "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."[103] But unlike Bakhtin's unifying metaphors for space-time—the road as a "path of life," or "idyllic agriculture as cyclicity"—*Time, Forward!*'s "noise of time" is distinguished by its *lack* of connection between time and space. We remember that Clark has mapped socialist realism onto a territory of "modal schizophrenia," where the principle of unity is eschewed for a literature that points in two directions—to the present, and to the future.. Images of these two dimensions becoming unstuck are common throughout the novel: at one point, we learn that "although it had stopped in space, [a train] car continued to move in time." (161) Georgii Vasilievich seems particularly attuned to this problem: "We live in an epoch of varying speeds. They must be coordinated. But perhaps they have been coordinated? But by what?" (92)

One of the more curious cinematic connections to *Time, Forward!* showed the potential for this sonic chronotope's impact on Soviet life. Aleksander Macheret's 1932 film, *Men and*

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[102] See Shaginyan, *Gidrotsentral*, p. 202.

[103] See Bakhtin, Mikhail, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: Texas UP, 1983), p. 84.

Jobs, appeared just months after the publication of Kataev's novel, and alongside nearly identical plots, both works share remarkably similar themes. In Macheret's film, an eager engineer, Zakhar, struggles to speak clearly to both foreign visitors and his own students. By the end of the film, Zakhar learns to think less about controlling his own voice and more about commanding the machinery that fills his site, however, a skill he masters by listening its various sound effects. Similarly, at *Men and Jobs'* finale, the American engineer Cline, Ray Roupe's doppelganger learns a sonic lesson thanks to, once again, a deceptive gramophone. While listening to a record as he writes home, Cline's gramophone begins to skip on the phrase "won't you come back / my darling," catching specifically on the word "darling."[104] After standing up to fix the record, Cline changes his acoustic orientation to the Soviet world by breaking from an eternal return—the circular model of time that his gramophone disc plays for him. It is not only this failure of sentimentalism—"the darling that will never return" that reminds him of Soviet space—he is alerted to this panorama of construction only after hearing a train whistle that is not synced with any object on screen.

In efforts to explain the semiotics of 20th century sound design, WJT Mitchell's theory of sound effects relies on this very disconnection, calling them forms that are somewhat paradoxically based on "iconicity, metonymy, and 'customary contiguity.'"[105] We could employ Mitchell's suggestion to describe the sound of Nalbandov's plane, which in Peircean terms iconically resembles the formal qualities of the noise of an aircraft, and metonymically extends back to the motion of the plane itself. But like the socialist realist chronotope of *disjunction*, this incongruous relationship of formal resemblance and metonymic extension "all in one" attempts to juggle the contradictory status of being simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive—a signal that resounds both from the now and from the future, and which, as a result, orients the reader in a space that shares two signifying philosophies. Such is the frustrating slippage of the novel's philosophical musings, emblematized in Georgii Vasil'evich's questions to himself: "We live in an epoch of varying speeds. They must be coordinated. But perhaps they have been coordinated? But by what?" (92) In this world, time can only pass by means of its incongruous relationship between what is projected and what is real: in socialist realism, time *requires* iconic and metonymic noise—sound effects, such as the ticks of the cement mixer—to co-ordinate itself.

Socialist Realist Dictations

In *Time, Forward!*'s extended denouement, which takes place long after the crew has completed their cement mixing feat, the narrator reprises Nalbandov's example of a plane that is visually out of sync with its sonic signature. Saenko, the text's *kulak* character (rich peasants who had become the primary target of state collectivization campaigns—Saenko is at one point enticed by American advertisements for watches) flees from the construction site while a marvel of modern technology soars at his back:

> His pockets rattling, Sayenko ran…Finally, he fell behind.

[104] Christie argues that the record begins to say *Udarnik* (See Christie, *Making Sense of Early Film Sound*).
[105] The idea is discussed in Neil Verma's *Theater of the Mind.* See Verma, Neil. *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 2012), p. 33.

> The night and the lights flowed endlessly across his eyes. An airplane flew overhead. It was invisible. Only its bright signals flared. An imaginary (*mnimaia)* strip of impetuous sound hung overhead.
>
> The airplane flew over the steppe like a burning Primus oil stove. (311)

The plane eventually transforms into a symbol of the Soviet Union's industrial triumph (we are later told that the letters "USSR" span across the underside of its wings), but this does not diffuse the tension of a narrative paradox that frames this scene. Kataev's airplane is simultaneously visible and invisible; it declaratively soars across the sky ("*nad golovoi letit aeroplan*"), but the narrator insists that it can only be heard. Equally unnerving is the text's implication that the narrator hears this sonic trace through someone else's perspective—its "impetuous sound" is imagined (*mnimaia*), locating the narrator's vantage point in some kind of alternative perspective of an imagining subject. Given how difficult this point of view is to parse, what benefit, exactly, does listening grant the narrator of Kataev's novel?

There is something about the role that the ear plays in *Time, Forward!* that borders on the preposterous; superseding and surpassing the eyes of writer and foreman alike, the sense tied most intimately with impermanence is also expected to usher in a new historical era. Indeed, Kataev seems to question whether readers should take his project seriously by inviting a circus to Magnitogorsk, an analog to the disorderly nature of the construction site. We know from the concluding chapters of Kataev's novel that there was, in fact, no circus constructed in the city while the author visited, but it lays the foundation for Kataev's approach towards listening, a medley of acts and variations that culminate in an undifferentiated space for aesthetic wonder and entertainment—the dream of a future, harmonious city. The symbol most closely tied with the circus, an elephant that wanders around Magnitogorsk, bears ears similar to Margulies' "calico ear" of a pocket, and the elephant reappears (219) as an answer to Grigorii Vasil'evich's question about what takes place in the individuals that he watches milling about the construction site: "Where was the elephant from? Where are they leading it to? And why are they leading it at all? It's impossible to say (*neizvestno*)"

The disconnect between space and time, between voice and speech makes this novel reminiscent of a kind of "haunted writing," as Avital Ronell has put it, one in which the echoes of a prior sound greatly influence the words on the page.[106] While I have tried to show that this specter is none other than the speech of Stalin and the state, we can see that the novel acknowledges and undermines them at the time same time, drawing from sonic culture's newfound obsession with recording. Derrida's concept of "psychical writing" posits verbal discourse as a kind of permanent past, an "always already" written formula through which speech masquerades as presence, despite that it is manufactured via a fixed, inscriptive basis—a dictation—to communication and perception.[107] Near the end of the novel, we become privy to a

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[106] Ronnel is essentially positing a psychoanalytical framework of intertextuality, implying the "fantasmatic," "parastical," and "haunting" presence of Goethe over his later, unexpected disciple, Sigmund Freud. See Avital Ronell, *Dictations.*

[107] "The absence of an exhaustive and absolutely infallible code means that in psychical writing, which thus prefigures the meaning of writing in general, the difference between signifier and signified is never radical. Unconscious experience, prior to the dream which follows earlier frayings, does not borrow but produces its own signifiers; does not create them in their materiality, of course, but produces their status-as-meaningful [significance]" See Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972), p. 89.

literal "scene of writing," a discursive phenomenon that Derrida has coined for when speech is recursively refashioned into the written word that precedes it, based in a deep structure that is similar to the determining force of Freud's unconscious.[108] In this case, the novel draws our attention to an actual scene of dictation:

> His [Georgi Vasilyevich] round eyes shone good-naturedly. He was in full swing (*v udare*). The pencil was running over the page. Vinkich was reading in a whisper:
>
> "Recently we have noted two opposing currents of thought in the field of tempos for preparing concrete…' Very good, quite right. '…and in regard to the utilization of concrete-mixers. On the one hand, several constructions were steadily increasing the number of mixtures. Period. (*tochka*—see note) On the other hand, responsible engineers of certain of the largest constructions categorically opposed the increase of the number of mixtures, basing their opposition on the fact that such an increase in the quantity of mixtures might have a negative effect on the amortization of expensive imported equipment.' Very good."
>
> Vinkich glanced quickly at Nalbandov, and purposely raising his voice, said:
>
> "Georgi Vasilyevich, in front of the word 'negatively,' place the word 'presumably.'"
>
> He emphasized "presumably."(296)[109]

Vinkich's reading purportedly offers the reader access to a text, but because his direct, quoted speech makes edits to the final version, the reader is removed from the utterance's ultimate form. In simpler terms, the reader never sees "final" texts in *Time, Forward!*, but only witnesses them in a mediated form as vocal proclamations—like revolutionary art, they are texts still in the process of development. If we look closer, we will notice that Vinkich is reading a text that Georgii Ivanovich has already written, and as a result, Kataev's novel appears to agree with both Kotkin and Derrida's understanding of the primacy of textuality before voice in Magnitogorsk.[110] Even the novel's structure is designed according to a principle of deferral: the first chapter is inserted in place of the novel's penultimate chapter, where Kataev explains that he is writing the inaugural section of the book seven days in the future *after* the narrated events. Although it may at first seem unrelated, a deconstructive approach to Kataev's novel about construction raises a question that is unexpectedly relevant to *Time, Forward!*: why does it matter if the voice or the text comes first? And whose voice—or whose text—can we determine that we are reading?

With the advent of the socialist realist novel came the necessary advent of the socialist realist author, and although Stalin's famous, programmatic insistence declared writers the "engineers of the human soul" this could not explain that writer's relationship to a character's

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[108] Throughout the essay, Derrida characteristically puns with the word "scene" and its use in various French phrases (mise-en-scène), for example: "The "subject" of writing does not exist if we mean by that some sovereign solitude of the author. The subject of writing is a system of relations between strata: of the Mystic Pad, of the psyche, of society, of the world. Within that scene the punctual simplicity of the classical subject is not to be found." See Derrida, p. 113.

[109] A translation of the word "*tochka"* is mysteriously missing from Malamuth's translation.

[110] Murashov calls Lenin the epos of the voice and Stalin of writing (Murashov, Iurii. "*Pis'mo i ustnaia rech' v diskrusakh o iazyke 1930-kh godov*" in *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon)*

interiority or speech—how would a socialist realist text give characters a voice? Finally, we can find more complications in a sensory model for telling time that relies on the ear. First, we should not overlook that by offering an advantage to those who *can* listen, Kataev's novel is built upon a deeply ableist philosophy, and that it actually deviated from historical reality. The events of *Time, Forward!* bear little resemblance to the historical record left behind in Magnitogorsk, but the novel's image of intently listening laborers is especially misleading: because the screeching volume of industrial sites was so loud, most Soviet foreman actively sought to recruit and assign deaf workers to them.[111] As a result, deaf factory workers were often posted to the noisiest factory positions, so that they would not incur the inevitable hearing loss that came with such jobs. Second, sound defines space as frequently as it defines time in the novel, which blurs the exclusivity of its application and relevance to time telling. At one point, we follow characters to a graveyard of ruined machines in an industrial *memento mori*, but the sounds of far-off construction promise redemption to the steel corpses: "thin, rare, distant sounds of the construction reached [them]. (60)" The sound of a bright future expresses the sonic nature of the novel's philosophy of history, which insists that historical time can be heard. Throughout the novel, limited access to texts in their written form leads to an obsession with the *sounds* of writing, and not what is actually being written; because textuality invokes the inherent absence of the writer, Kataev focuses on the sound that accompanies writing to compensate.

In 1935, Kataev complained about what he perceived as a lack of insightful critical response to his novel, but he had clearly not anticipated how strong of a foothold it would eventually take in Soviet literary culture. Although the novel may seem singular, *Time, Forward!* audibly echoed across the Soviet popular imagination well into the 1960s: in 1964, a worker from Moscow wrote to a literary magazine about how reading the novel in one fell swoop as a young man must have sent him off to a life of enthusiastic work; in a less congratulatory vein, by the time of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* the style and prose structure of the production novel was recognizable enough for Solzhenitsyn to noticeably parody the language of the production novel in a Soviet labor camp. The unfathomable amount of state violence required to achieve these goals would eventually yield an opposite reading of his phrase: by the end of the decade, it would be more comforting to turn one's eyes away from what projects like Magnitogorsk left in their wake. Kataev eventually wrote that "for the people of [his] generation, Magnitka is like a first love (*Magnitka kak pervaia liubov'*).[112] But he seemed to have nagging thoughts after leaving the city, however—his essay from 1966 would eventually bemoan the extraordinary amount of *pollution* that Magnitogorsk created, one of the earlier steps towards a Soviet environmentalism.[113] Listening, however, allows the character of Magnitogorsk—and Kataev himself—to turn away. Declining its imperative to *see* reality, the novel ends halfway inside of a dream, in which another text about concrete production is waiting to be dictated: "Falling asleep, Margulies noticed the fresh newspaper sticking out of the pocket

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[111] Claire Shaw has traced the history of deaf factory work in the USSR, demonstrating that deaf workers were hired en masse: "The speed with which deaf workers entered the Soviet factory was in part testament to the urgent need for a skilled workforce to carry out the industrial transformation of the USSR...brigades of deaf people, sometimes several hundred strong, to be found working together in the noisiest parts of the Soviet factory throughout the 1930s." See Shaw, Claire. *Deaf in the USSR* (Cornell UP, 2017), pp 60-61.

[112] See Kataev, "Magnitka" (VIII), p. 444

[113] ibid. p. 449

of the special correspondent’s leather coat. Falling asleep and smiling faintly, Margulies asked: ‘Well…read it to me, where?!’” (345)

Chapter 3

Locked in Sync: High-Fidelity Incarceration on the Soviet Screen

Socialist Distortion

Despite a commitment to speed and strength that motivates Magnitogorsk's builders, achieving the concrete-mixing goal of *Time, Forward!* hinges upon whether the sound reproduction technologies that connect its characters can deliver a clear message. Failure looms when Margulies' sister, Katya, reads pivotal research in experimental concrete production over the telephone, and the engineer finds it extremely difficult to hear her through the receiver: "I'm saying that it's noisy here, speak more clearly…more cle-e-e-a-a-rly!" (143). Kataev moved this scene to the front and center of his adaptation of *Time, Forward!* at the Moscow Art Theater (MKhAT), and chose to intensify Margulies' frustration by extending the telephone conversation into a three-page sketch.[1] The skit appears to have resonated so much with audiences that in 1937, a special recording was commissioned under the title of "At the Telephone" ("*U Telefona"*), and slated for inclusion on a commemorative gramophone record for the October Revolution's twentieth anniversary.[2]

Yet in Soviet sonic culture, the intelligibility of *recorded* sound was held to an astronomically higher standard than its transmitted form, as this scene's transformation into a recording should show us. The quest to obtain recorded sound of pristine quality, interchangeably called "hygienic," "natural," or "acoustically clean" by various critics can be heard in several examples from the collections of Russia's early *Shorinofon* recordings, many of which were vetted with nearly surgical precision.[3] In one recording from 1936, the actress Alla Tarasova seems to spontaneously pronounce an innocuous statement: "Together with leading academics and inventors, our native (*rodnoe*) government has recognized and commended those who make (*deiateli*) our art and literature."[4] Just moments after uttering the phrase, however, Tarasova's own voice is interrupted by a recording technician, who stops her in order to correct an error she has made: she has transposed the word *deiateli* (creators/actors) in place of

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[1] РГАЛИ ф. 656 оп. 1 ед. хр. 1387 p. 15.

[2] РГАЛИ ф. 962 оп. 3 ед. хр. 209. Margulies is listed to be played by the actor Osip Abdulov. In fact, the distinction between mediated sound and listening *en plein air* became a common punchline in works as visible as the popular musical *Volga Volga* (1938)*!*, where Igor Il'inskii's character shouts and repeats his half of a conversation into a telephone receiver, despite his interlocutor standing mere feet behind him. I do not focus separate attention on Stalinist musicals in this dissertation, but they quickly became one of the most popular forms of sonic entertainment in the Soviet Union during this decade. Thankfully, these works have been extensively covered by other scholars. In particular, I point to Richard Taylor's "But Eastward, Look, the Land is Brighter!" in *The Landscape of Stalinism,* ed. Evgenii Dorbenko and Eric Naiman, (Seattle: U of Washington Press, 2003), Maya Turovskaia's *"A. Pyr'ev i ego muzykal'nye komedii: k probleme zhanra*," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 1 (1988), and Anne Nesbet's "The Skeleton Dance: Animation, Terror, and the Musical Comedy" in *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

[3] These recordings are currently held at the РГАФД archive in Moscow, originally opened by Anatolii Lunacharskii, and comprise the largest collection of *Shorinofon* documents outside of the device's use in the cinema. These documents are, essentially, dictaphonic recordings.

[4] РГАФД ф. 1 запис № 138.

deiatel'nost' (activity), the word that her script originally called for. The technician rolls the tape forwards (not backwards, as may have been intended), thus preserving both takes on the record: Tarasova proceeds to recite a version of the speech nearly identical to what she first pronounced, this time with the required correction.[5]

Tarasova's failure to distinguish the words "actors" and "activity" is indicative of a larger trend in the Soviet arts: by the middle of the '30s, the mandate of socialist realism required that creative activity quickly become an *activity* structured by enforced rules and regulations, and critics were beginning to evaluate it as such.[6] In this chapter, I explore the development of a new kind of model listener that emerged at the end of the '30s, one who was intended to follow a rubric for standardizing the products of recorded sound—no matter how difficult—just as strictly as the engineer who oversaw Tarasova's recording session. It is easy to find depictions of faulty telephones and crackling radios across Soviet media, but just as plentiful are artifacts of a wholly opposite fantasy for sound recording's perfect reproducibility; as the narrator of Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Diktofon* has told us, the recording machine that stuns Soviet listeners "obediently produces faithful (*v tochnosti*) recordings of everything," which quickly became an expectation of sonic culture.[7] Unlike the expected static and interruptions that complicate Margulies' telephone conversation, the task of introducing mediated sound into socialist realist art motivated listeners and sound technicians to approach Soviet recordings with a new precision.

Throughout the history of sound reproduction's commercial and domestic rise in the US, the relationship between a sound and its source was measured by the word "fidelity." But a question is always raised concerning this metaphor of devotion: dedication *to whom*, or *to what*? Is a recording responsible to be faithful to source material, to be faithful to an audience, or to something else? To better determine how Soviet sonic culture understood this relationship, I borrow a set of terms from James Lastra's essay, "Fidelity versus Intelligibility," which offers a productive model of two competing outcomes for sound reproduction.[8] Here, Lastra differentiates between "telephonic" and "phonographic" expectations for reproduced sound: in the "telephonic" model, audio artifacts unrelated to a desired signal are filtered out in order to achieve a maximum efficiency of intelligibility (in the case of the telephone, this is anything

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[5] As Stephen Lovell has noted concerning the culture of Soviet radio, live events and speeches were littered with errors, mishaps, and unexpected interruptions that are passed over or ignored—it is only in their recorded counterparts where the goal for sonic perfection can be found at every turn. See Lovell, *Russia in the Microphone Age: A History of Soviet Radio, 1919-1970*. One recording at the sound archive features NKVD head Nikolai Ezhov, the architect of Stalin's great terror, publicly delivering a speech in 1937, but features numerous starts and stops, and grammatical errors (especially with numbers) that appear to be a result of Ezhov's struggle to properly read his remarks off of the page. РГАФД ф. 1 запись № 10.

[6] The idea of socialist realism's morphing into a "fully automated" phenomenon—an aesthetic activity without human actors or human authors—has recently been put forward by Petre Petrov. See Petrov, *Automatic for the Masses: The Death of the Author and the Birth of Socialist Realism* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2015).

[7] See Zoshchenko, "The Dictaphone" in *Nervous People and Other Stories,* trans. Maria Gordon and Hugh McLean (Indiana UP: 1963), p. 255.

[8] See James Lastra, "Fidelity versus Intelligibility" in *The Sound Studies Reader,* ed. Johnathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 248-253. Lastra illustrates the distinction with a helpful explanation: "A recording of an orchestra, for example, should try to preserve the reverberant space within which the sounds were produced, while a telephone, being designed with a very different social function in mind, would never be suitable for this."

beyond a speaker's voice, which is itself sometimes filtered so effectively that even this voice is unintelligible). In the "phonographic" model, a sound's representation is intended to capture and reproduce natural sound with little to no filtration, thus producing a simulacrum of acoustic reality.[9] Like the notion of "modal schizophrenia" I borrowed from Katerina Clark in the preceding chapter, I will use Lastra's idea to suggest that against the background of socialist realism, those who carried out the process of sound recording conflated these two models, thus requiring socialist realist sound to be phonographic and telephonic simultaneously. Socialist realism was not only about connecting different spaces and times (i.e. making telephone calls), but was about simultaneously capturing and *producing* reality.[10] An outcome of total verisimilitude would thus, paradoxically, have also undergone deliberate filtering.

Looking back on the prior decade in an essay from 1941, "The Future of Cinema," Grigorii Aleksandrov depicted the era as sonically over–corrective: "the smallest distortion (*iskazheniia*) of a sound would summon up sharp criticism; if a sound seemed natural (*estestvennaia*) it summoned up general elation."[11] This "distortion [*iskazhenie*] of reality" was, in fact, a common accusation against artists who had failed to live up to the aspirations of socialist realism. Increasing critical attention to what Aleksandrov called "distortion" can help us reconstruct Soviet critics' peculiar rubric for evaluating sound fidelity and its interactions with Soviet ideology.[12] It is specifically Tarasova's words that the sound technician corrects in the recording I cite above, but we will see that both language and non-linguistic sounds were treated with an exacting attitude inside and outside of the Soviet recording studio.

Although I will draw from a variety of films, documents, and recordings in this chapter, nowhere is the intersection of sound recording and Soviet ideology more palpable than in a series of prison films that appeared throughout the 1930s. It is now well known that the Soviet Union tasked itself with reinterpreting the social and political value of incarceration during this decade: a new state would feature a new, rehabilitative prison to correct the sadistic treatment of prisoners in the Tsarist era.[13] All of the works I examine, including Vasilli Federov and Viktor Shklovsky's *The Dead House* (1932), Aleksandr Faintsimmer and Yuri Tynianov's *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934) and Evgenii Cherviakov's *Convicts* (1936), attempt to answer another question that is sonic in nature: how could sound correctly depict the realities of Imperial incarceration versus

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[9] Lastra associates the phonographic model with the prevalent idea of the "invisible observer" in film theory at the beginning of the 20th century, writing "POA sound (like the POV shot) attempts to represent the experience of hearing within the diegesis, normally the hearing of a character." (250)

[10] These compromises were not entirely absent from the Hollywood cinema, either. In a separate work from "Fidelity vs. Intelligibility," Lastra has written that telephonic and phonographic fidelity were themselves the *products* of compromises; the Soviet cinema put these two compromises into conflict. See Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), p. 156.

[11] See Aleksandrov, "*Kino budushchego" Moskva: Iskusstvo Kino* № 2 (1941), pp. 5-6.

[12] In Russian, the word *iskazhenie* denotes "distortion," or sometimes even "perversion" (only when explicitly associated with sexual behavior), and the interplay between these the acoustic and physical meanings frames the ideological associations—and implications—of Soviet sound fidelity. See Dorbrenko, p. 12, for a list of the critical instruments of socialist realism (including the "distortion (*iskazhenie*) of perspectives of construction."

[13] Two studies that touch on the development of the GULAG, specifically through the project of the Belomor Canal, are Joachim Klein's "*Belomor: Literatura i propaganda v stalinskoe vremia,*" *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* 71, 2005 and Cynthia A. Ruder's *Making History for Stalin: The Story of the Belomor Canal* (Gainesville, U of Florida Press, 1998).

Soviet incarceration? Where and how would the sonic palette for state-sponsored of depictions forced labor—its expressions of pain, exhaustion, and bodily harm—be constructed?[14] Each film depicts a different penal system: Faintsimmer and Tyianov's film transports viewers to an 18th century penal colony, Federov and Shklovsky take on the 19th-century prison where Dostoevsky underwent his religious revelation, and Cherviakov created the first—and last—feature film about the Soviet GULAG system, specifically set at Stalin's enormous White Sea Canal. While they may now seem taboo, an astonishingly large number of films depicted prisons both at home and abroad in the early sound period, only to be followed by their hasty elision from the mainstream in the second half of the decade when political attitudes towards incarceration privileged execution over reformation. I want to show that the changing demands on sound in these films had a greater impact on both their construction and reception than we have so far noticed—in a discussion of Cherviakov's *Convicts,* for example, the filmmaker Boris Barnet gave the dispute a superlative title of "the most divisive [he] had seen" in the history of the Soviet film industry, and other critics noted that the film's *soundtrack* was its most contentious feature.[15] This sonic sensitivity points to the central and complex role that Soviet sonic culture's peculiar understanding of "fidelity" played by the latter half of the '30s.

To some degree, this story runs parallel to what Lilya Kaganovsky has called "the voice of technology," which she identifies as the most consequential formal advancement of the Soviet sound cinema. Kaganovsky writes that: "Soviet sound cinema made audible the voice of power, addressing itself to the spectator...Meaning [loses] its plurality, imposing the singularity of the spoken word onto the multiplicity of the moving image."[16] Similarly, Emma Widdis has argued that challenges to official speech in soundtracks of the 1930s are only found in moments of silence, sonic loopholes that deflected state influence.[17] Both Widdis and Kaganovsky cite Michel Chion's claim that "in actual movies…*there are voices, and then everything else,"* but Widdis, in particular, claims that the multiple silences of early sound cinema challenges Chion's sonic hierarchy. I am inclined to agree with this critique, yet on the basis of different evidence: non-linguistic, extra-diegetic sound that comes to speak for the absent lieutenant in *Lieutenant Kizhe* offers one model of the role for non-vocal sound, and Soviet critics' excoriating rejections of *specific* sounds in *Convicts* demonstrates their allegiances to a wholly overlooked formal category of Soviet sound film. By paying attention to particular discussions of diegetic sound, however, I slightly revise Chion's method of audio-visual analysis (and these scholars' use of it) by giving equal consideration to non-linguistic sound and the peculiar demands placed onto it by Soviet critics.

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[14] What was "permissible" in Soviet film had always been more complex than we tend to imagine. As Denise Youngblood has shown, early Soviet film always balanced unsteadily while marketing cinema as a medium somewhere between the poles of entertainment and political education, leading to complex interactions between "politicized" entertainment and the "bourgeois" roots of NEP-era filmmaking that lived on into the 1930s. See Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1992).

[15] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 39.

[16] See Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology* (Bloomington: Inidana UP, 2018), p. 5.

[17] Widdis quotes Roland Barthes: "Nothing to be done: language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power…" See Emma Widdis, "Making Sense without Speech: The Use of Silence in Early Soviet Sound Film" in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed Kaganovsky & Salazkina (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2014), pp. 110-113.

The Roots of Soviet Fidelity: "Party-Mindedness" versus Illusion

When sound reproduction first appeared in Russia, evaluations of recordings were quite forgiving. In 1905, critics related to recorded sound optimistically in the pages of the catalogue and technology journal *Svet i zvuk*, which advertised various foreign gramophones by writing about their pristine *zvuchnost'* ("sonorousness").[18] Yet the emergence of Soviet sound cinema, and the resulting transformation of that medium into an edifying spectacle (as we saw in Chapter One), turned the relative insouciance of Soviet sonic culture into a fiery crucible. In 1929, the critic Ippolit Sokolov chided filmmakers for work that lacked acoustic clarity, and the situation failed to improve in the years that followed. Viewers of Iakov Protzanov's *Tommi* (1931) specifically complained of sub-par sonic quality (one critic wrote that "much was simply unintelligible from the screen"), and by 1932, gripes about playback technology had become a common topic in newspapers like *Kino*.[19] In that year, the newspaper published an article by an engineer named Leshchev, who attempted to explain the difficult problem facing Soviet sound studios: not only were they poorly outfitted and badly in need of better sound proofing, but what the critics called the "following reverberations" in sound theaters further distorted the already tenuous intelligibility of recordings.[20]

Although sonic culture at the time of Vertov's *Enthusiasm* harbored multiple competing visions for sound recording, expectations that sound would pristinely resemble reality quickly became the norm. We can find this attitude in a 1934 follow-up to the "Statement on Sound," when the directors Eisenstein and Aleksandrov wrote a new statement: a letter directly addressed to the sound engineer Aleksandr Shorin that was published in the pages of *Kino*. The directors appealed to Shorin in hopes of creating a multi-track sound recorder that would facilitate synthetic sound production in spaces *away* from shooting; essentially, they asked for a separate instrument dedicated to post-production in order to improve sound quality.[21] Shorin responded with frustration, pointing out the directors had misunderstood that his device could *always* have been used in a studio (the opposite of what Dziga Vertov admired about it), allowing them to record sound wherever and however they wanted.[22] His correction didn't seem to get across: just a year after his response was published, the Soviet film industry was severely embarrassed by the state of its own soundtracks when it hosted the Moscow international film festival in 1935.[23]

As was typical for problem-solving the Soviet Union, various committees and focus groups formed to address the problem of sound recording.[24] As I mentioned earlier, Soviet

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[18] See *Svet i zvuk*, July 1905.
[19] See "Ippolit Sokolov: The Second Sound Film Programme" in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*, eds. Christie and Taylor (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), p. 309, and "*Zvuk v Tommi*" in *Kino* 11.21.31, p. 2. Not everyone agreed that the pursuit of intelligible sound was the correct path: in 1929, Vladimir Sol'skii argued that the theory of phonogenie, like photogenie, should be destroyed by the Soviet cinema, and endorsed the position of counterpoint first raised by Eisenstein, Aleksandrov, and Pudovkin. See Sol'skii, p. 32.
[20] See *"Tekhnologii zvuchaniia"* in *Kino* 12 November 1932, p. 2.
[21] See *"Pis'mo A.F. Shorinu*" in *Kino* 03 June 1934, p. 1.
[22] See *"Shorinofon*" in *Kino* 04 July 1934m p. 4.
[23] See Belodubrovskaya, "Soviet Hollywood: The Culture Industry that Wasn't," *Cinema Journal* 53:3 (Spring 2014), p. 102.
[24] Records belonging to the committee for sound recording (*zvukozapis'*) are filed within the Committee

counterparts in America and Great Britain bypassed this tendency for delegation by relying on advertisements to disseminate the English word "fidelity," in hopes of using it to designate a gold standard for recordings. In the US, discourses of fidelity were associated with images equal parts mystical and libidinal, exemplified by public spectacles linked to Edison's first commercial phonograph called "tone tests:" men were blindfolded and stimulated by the sounds of opera singers, who performed arias that would then be compared to recordings of the same pieces played back by the phonograph.[25] The men's inability to tell the difference between the two, it was said, was evidence of the recording apparatus' successful imitation of reality.

The Soviet Union carried out a variety of its own "tone tests"—public displays of how sound reproduction could substitute the sounds of Soviet reality—in various forums throughout the 1930s. As both Jonathan Sterne and Emily Thompson have shown, the word "fidelity" was never linked with any kind of rigorous scientific investigation, but we have yet to abandon it as a category for the advertising of sound reproduction up to the present day.[26] Regardless, most contemporary writing on "fidelity" suggests that the word is an illusory concept, one that reveals more about cultural assumptions concerning hearing and relationships of verisimilitude than about how listeners define or understand sounds *a priori*.[27]Although Sterne and Thompson frame fidelity as the extension of cultural phenomena (namely the gender disparity that results when women become a sonic object to be tested and enjoyed, as in the case of the "tone test") James Lastra's work suggests that even in the context of classical Hollywood—where nearly all aspects of production were highly standardized—multiple competing ideas could produce conflicting agreements about what constituted proper sound "fidelity" and recording technique.[28] This

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for Affairs in the Arts *(po delam iskusstv)* in РГАЛИ ф. 962 оп. 3.

[25] See Emily Thompson, "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877-1925" *The Musical Quarterly* 79:1 (Spring 1995), pp. 131-132, n. 23.

[26] See Thompson "Machines…" and Sterne, "The Social Genesis of Sound Fidelity" in *The Audible Past.* Sterne returns to questions of "fidelity" in another on the history of the MP3, and attempts to establish a connection between the format's dedication to ultimate audio compression as a mediated experience in and of itself, an idea that is closely related to Lastra's two modes of "telephonic" and "phonographic" sound engineering. He writes: "This is not to say I simply want to replace a grand narrative of ever-increasing fidelity with a grand narrative of ever- increasing compression. I am merely proposing compression as one possible basis for inquiry into the history of communication technology—in the same sense that representation has served." See Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012), p. 250, n. 20.

[27] To this point, Brian Kane has argued that fidelity is a more ideological than it is social, and thus "precisely what keeps the ideological subject in the grip of the big Other." (Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), p. 219. Similarly, Bernhard Siegert's pronouncements concerning fidelity are equally all-encompassing, dividing the divine from the human: "Only God transmits exact reproductions…the ones transmitted by humans are merely "High Fidelity." (Siegert, *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System* trans. Kevin Repp (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), p. 261). Mary Ann Doane develops this discussion by arguing that voice-overs and voice-offs, i.e. those voices that appear from just beyond the screen, reflect the patriarchal ideology that structures society and cinematic space (See Doane, "The Voice in Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space" in *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), pp. 33-50. The ideological dimensions of this standardization, however, Theodor Adorno would later echo this point in his critical essay on sound media, "The Curve of the Needle," in which he argued that the distribution and material changes made to the recording apparatus significantly impacted factors of legibility and sound fidelity—music made in a studio.

[28] Lastra cites a 1931 article by Carl Dreher, the lead sound engineer in Hollywood at the time, where Dreher writes "Since the reproduction of sound is an artificial process, it is necessary to use artificial

muddling occurred Soviet sonic culture, as well: despite the stigma of shamanic rituals during collectivization campaigns of the 1930s, sound engineers were often called the "shamans" of film studios," fascinating the crew with the mysterious tricks they used to dampen and soundproof studio spaces.[29]

Importantly, this lack of a stable vocabulary is the first indication of shifting understandings concerning sound: as I mentioned earlier, the word *zvuchnost'* was used to measure the playback quality of imported gramophones in 1905, but throughout the '30s, critics writing in Russian had no analogue for the word "fidelity," opting instead for a wide variety of terms, including *kachestvo,*("quality") *khorosho zapisan* ("well-recorded")*, razborchivost' rechi* ("legibility of speech")*, rovnyi/chistyi zvuk* ("even/clean sound")*,* and *fonogenichnyi,* ("phonogenic"). In the latter half of the '30s, the appearance of the word "*natural'nost'*" began to describe reproduced sound, introducing the root *natura*—the unadulterated way things are—rather than acknowledging the relationship of original and copy that is indicated by earlier terms. This shift from mechanistic metaphors to the naturalistic demonstrates the messy thinking about sound that defines trends in Soviet conceptions of fidelity, even if it lacked a particular word: they would require the utility and ultimate concealment of the recording studio, where the ethereality of sound was forged into proper material.

This penchant for concealment in sonic culture had a broader cultural analogue, as well. The latter half of the '30s is an era that is typically associated with the Soviet Union's crackdown on "formalism," but precisely which dimension of what the state called unacceptable art was censored—if at all—remains an open question.[30] Nevertheless, the crackdown has led Evgenii Dobrenko to associate the rise of socialist realism with the inversion of Formalist ideas, namely in a negative reflection of Viktor Shklovsky's notion of "baring the device":

> One may trace the process of shaping the central discursive practices in Soviet culture, and their transitional quality: in the debates about "conquest of nature" and in the discourse of metaphorical violence developed in them, "revelation of the device" occurs; then, in the discourse of pedagogical violence, wherein we encounter "reforging," "laying bare the device" occurs; finally, in the practices of concealed violence connected with the routinization of terror, wherein the "magical discourse" of transforming the Socialist Realist hero is established, we see "concealment of the device.[31]

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devices in order to obtain the most desirable effects. For example, it is normal procedure to reproduce dialog at a level higher than the original performance. This may entail a compromise between intelligibility and strict fidelity." Dreher's article was actually published in translation in the leading trade journal for the Soviet film industry, *Proletarskoe Kino (*"Mikrofonnye kontsentratory," *Proletarskoe Kino* (June:5) 1931)

[29] See Z. Zalkind, "*O kachestve zvukozapise*" *Sovetskoe Kino* № 8 (1935), pp. 60-64: "Приказания "шамана", а так весьма часто на кинофабрике называют звукооператора, выполняются беспрекословно"

[30] The historiographical corrections we should consider when describing this phenomenon are outlined in Maria Belodubrovskaya's "Abram Room, *A Strict Young Man,* and the 1936 Campaign against Formalism in Soviet Cinema," *Slavic Review* (74:2, 2015), pp. 311-333.

[31] See Dobrenko, *Political Economy,* p. xv. Caryl Emerson has described the purpose of "laying bare the device," an idea first discussed in Shklovsky's seminal essay, "Art as Device" as the intention to reveal "that by which a structure is organized (thereby delivering a jolt of cognitive satisfaction [to the observer]). See Emerson, "Four Options and a Practicum" in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and*

Dobrenko's idea that the era socialist realism was built on "concealing the device" is, in fact, quite literally linked to the first example of a Soviet "tone test," when Moscow sound theaters replaced live orchestras with canned alternatives. [32] If we read "the device" as a material category—the apparatus of sound reproduction itself—we see that this concealment played out as an audible phenomenon at the very time when discussions of sound fidelity were taking place.[33]

In response to the disappearance of live orchestras, many listeners were prompted to suggest that they had yet to notice a difference when recorded music appeared in sound theaters ("The gramophone music plays with no distortion [*iskazhenie*] and completely replaces an orchestra in the foyer").[34]

As I mentioned above, Edison's rendition of the "tone test" was imbued with the blatant eroticism of a coterie of men who waited to be stimulated by a woman's voice, and this same overtly erotic set of associations with sound and listening appeared in a popular émigré book on sound cinema by theater critic Konstantin Miklashevskii. Writing in Berlin, Miklashevskii deliberately uses the figure of a strip tease to characterize the role of sound reproduction technology in the coming cinema—I cite the work in its entirety to provide the full context of how the author moves from the visual and sonic components of nudity on screen:

> [Film executives] know that things like horse riding, boxing or acrobatics are all good for selling tickets, but they are convinced that there's a little something else. That *something* is sexual corporeality, the famous *sex-appeal* [in engl. –MK], in Russian simply known as "sexual attraction" [*polovoe vlechenie*]. If an actor or actress acts in this way towards the public, then one could base an entire movie on their "game". If there are scenes in the movie in which the public will see a series of three bare little feet, and even better—feet pulled from the top into a wool sock, then the picture can be easily sold. Like music hall, the majority of movies require the presence of good and undressed *girls* [in engl. —MK]
>
> I should say that, while being a fan of healthy nudity, I will barely pretend to take on the role of a puritanical prophet, and I don't intend to sing in unison with the official and unofficial censors of morals. I want to at least point to the tedious *onesidedness* of this kind of presentation (*prepodnesenie*) of the body.
>
> […]
>
> But bodily nudity surfeits, and the viewer, having watched this woman, will have the desire to further to lay her bare (*razoblachit')*; but there is nothing left to reveal, and one must lay bare their own soul.

Criticism, ed. Dobrenko and Tikhanov (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 2011), p. 69. Elsewhere, Viktor Ehrlich has pointed to Shklovsky's fascination with the devices baring as a form of "disturbing" the reader who "expect a novelist to tell a coherent and absorbing story." See Ehrlich, *Russian Formalism: History–Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 193.

[32] See "*Zvukofikatsiia foie"* in *Kino* 07 November, 1931, p. 4.

[33] Formalist tools often provide for very insightful readings, but more recent concepts from Chion and others aptly consider the spectator's position vis-á-vis power in audio-visual scenes of violence. This is not to say that the Formalists were not aware of power (indeed, they endured its oppression throughout the 1930s), but that their stance is not as clearly illustrated.

[34] See "*Zvukofikatsiia foie."*

> […]
>
> This parable of the naked *girl* [in engl. —MK] is told with an allegorical goal. The idea is that no matter what you put your eye on, you won't see everything in this life with your eyes. And that's why the dimension of sound may have a beneficial impact on the cinema. [35]

This combination of political critique with a moral tale of scandal, nearly Dostoevskian in its intensity, takes a surprising turn when Miklashevkskii foretells how reproducible sound will flesh out the depraved images of Western cinema, thus enhancing the illusion of nudity much to the spectator's delight. Although he seems to imply that sound will divert attention *away* from exploitative images on screen, Miklashevskii leaves open the possibility that listeners could become all too focused on sound—a kind of aural fixation that could prove as illusory as the image itself. Sound becomes, in fact, the new deciding factor of nudity itself, a force that can summon perception to turn illusion into reality. Although Miklashevskii was writing abroad, this link between sound and feeling had been developing within Russian language sources from the Soviet Union as well, when articles appeared concerning the quality of sound recording, all of which indicated that by letting *the microphone* determine and capture sounds, sound technicians can give more "emotional space" to films rather than rendering them sonically hygienic.[36]

Descriptions of sound at this point had been dominated by characterizations of it as a material object, but even in the Soviet Union, the discussion was beginning to trend towards the sensual, emotional, and illusory, as in Miklashevskii's text. If we recall when Shorin, Vertov's sound engineer, promised audiences that his device would immerse them in a copy of the acoustic world, we will remember that this move signaled a dramatic shift away from the image of the nightingale that Chernyshevsky inherited from Hegel, which stipulated that the more the

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[35] I include the quote for reference from Miklashevskii, Konstantin, *Zvukovoe Kino* (Berlin: Petropolis, 1929):

Они знают, что скакание на лошадях — это хорошо, бокс, акробатика, — тоже, но они убеждены, что есть кое-что еще более верное для хороших сборов. Это "кое-что" — телесность сексуальная, знаменитый sex-appeal, по русски по просту "половое влечение". Если актер или актриса действуют в этом смысле на публику, то на их "игре" можно базировать всю картину. Если в картине есть сцены, в которых публика увидит ряд тройных голых ножек, а еще лучше – – ножек доверху затянутых в шелковый чулок, то картину продавать будет легко. Подобно Мюзик-холлю, большинство картин нуждаются в присутствии хорошеньких и оголенных "girls".

Спешу оговориться, что будучи поклонником здоровой наготы, я отнюдь не претендую на роль пуританского проповедника и не намерен петь в унисон с официальными и неофициальными цензорами нравов. Я хочу лишь указать на скучную односторонность такого преподнесения тела.

[…]

Но нагота телесная пресыщает, и зритель, насмотревшись на этих девушке, захочет разоблачать их дальше, а снимать уже нечего и остается лишь душу разоблачить.

[…]

Притча о голенькой "girl" рассказана с целью аллегорической. Смысл ее тот, что как глаза ни пяль, а в жизни одними глазами всего не увидишь. И вот почему звуковая сторона может оказать на кинематограф влияние благотворное.

[36] See "*Dialog v tonfil'me*", 28 May 1933 in *Kino,* p. 3. More recently, Christina Kiaer has explored the idea of a more emotionally and afectually robust socialist realism of feelings ("Lyrical Socialist Realism", in *October* (147: Winter 2014), pp. , 56-77), along with Emma Widdis in her recent book, Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject, 1917–1940 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2017).

imitation resembled its source, the more it betrayed the essence of creative activity. Shorin's conclusions were simply the opposite: the theater required that any trace of the apparatus disappear, resulting in a Soviet sound cinema indistinguishable from the sounds of Soviet reality. On the one hand, ideal sound chambers could create a perfect reflection of how "life sounds on screen" as composer Mikhail Cheremukhin described the task of developing the sound film.[37] On the other, some critics called for "necessary nuances," proposing that confined sound studios and sets were a degree too far removed from the very reality that artists were contracted to capture.[38]

Another Soviet "tone test" that embraced sound's illusory qualities appeared in the form of a feature film, Aleksandr Andrievskii and Alexei Dmitriev's sound comedy, *The Mechanical Traitor* (1931). As I mentioned in Chapter Two, this film starred the character Prut, whose voice is often dubbed over the film when played back by the *fonovoks* device, thus posing a "test" for audiences who were tasked with determining whether recording technologies would reproduce the unadulterated truth.[39] In that discussion, I introduced Dmitriev's film as an emblem for how dictaphonic logic impacted Kataev's use of novelistic voice, but I did not discuss the film's critical reception, nor did I describe how critics regarded its sound quality. *The Mechanical Traitor* implied that the inherent *truthfulness* of sound recording could expose class enemies—Prut's voice is dictaphonic, but plays back a nefarious script—thus designating sound reproduction as far more than a practice for merging the sonic world with technology, but exposing its reality. Yet some critics said the film didn't serve a clear purpose, because it had already failed to represent Soviet reality*;* one supporter went so far as to call *Mekhanicheskii predatel'* a "much needed" comedy, but others declared that the story was painfully unfunny, and politically irrelevant for the Soviet screen.[40] One reviewer asserted that by 1931, "the Pruts of the world had already been removed from big cities," and another leveled the first variation of an accusation that followed Andrievskii throughout his career: his audience belonged to a more mature milieu than where his film had aimed.[41] In a public hearing over the film, one viewer was particularly upset about what he or she perceived as the political arbitrariness of the *fonovoks*: "[in this film], sound works in ways uncommitted to party-mindedness (*bespartiino*)"[42]

This description of sound as "*bespartiinyi*" should give us pause. *Partiinost'* was a major concept of socialist realist art beginning in the early '30s, and grew to prominence thanks to the popularization of narratives about shaping one's own political ideology with the current of the party's, no matter what direction that ideology may be pointing in.[43] The importance of *partiinost*'s appearance in a sonic context does more than cast a politically negative assessment over the discourse of illusion—it implies that sound *could* work within the realm of Soviet

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[37] See Mikhail Cheremukhin, *"Rol' kompozitora v kino" Sovetskoe Kino* (1935:11), pp. 50-52.
[38] For the phrase "necessary nuances" and nearly every other term listed in this section, see S. Bronshtein, "*Tekhnicheskoe kachestvo nashikh fil'mov v 1936 godu"* in *Iskusstvo Kino* (1937:5) pp. 58–64.
[39] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 34 p. 8. Dubbing was a particular problem at the end of the '30s, *The Invisible Man* (1933) was the first film to be dubbed by the Soviets.
[40] See "*Mekhanicheskii predatel'*" in *Kino,* 12.01.31.
[41] ibid.
[42] РГАЛИ ф. 2494 оп. 1 ед. хр. 373.
[43] Clark writes of the phenomenon of *partiinost'* (party-mindedness) that "in effect, by the mid-thirties the mandatory quality "party-mindedness" did not merely entail using politically correct attitudes or themes; it required of the novel a "lifelike" incarnation of political values, organized "correctly". In other words, the novel became a ritualized biography." Notable here is the intersection of "politically correct attitudes" with the notion of a "lifelike" aesthetic quality, not entirely alterior to the notion of fidelity. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel,* p. 130-131.

ideology, and linked sonic culture with culture writ large. Yet finding a space for sound *outside* of Soviet politics was precisely Andrievskii's intention, as the film served as a proof of concept for his theories concerning the intersection of art and technology, which he wrote about in one of the earliest reference manuals for aspiring directors who were shifting to sound cinema.[44] In the manual, he advocated for the introduction of a hallucinatory point-of-view to the Soviet cinema that he called "*zvukovaia mistifikatsiia"* (sonic mystification).[45] Much like Prut's disbelief in hearing his own thoughts, this mystification forced viewers to remain unsure of what or whom they heard, and from where a sound originated; for Andrievskii, sonic alienation induced by audio technologies would constitute the essence of any aesthetic experience with sound.[46] As a result, the content of Prut's recording unexpectedly became secondary to criticisms of its quality, thus linking discussions of illusion with claims towards a kind of sonic realism, locating the link between sound and a kind of "reality effect" within Soviet audio technologies themselves.[47]

The final Soviet "tone test" that I cite mixed associations of sound with politics and presence: it was an event that took place in the mid-30s, when the committee for sound recording (*zvukozapis'*) began to administer audience feedback surveys concerning the quality of reproduced sound over radio sets. In 1936, the committee for sound recording (*zvukozapis'*) distributed a questionnaire asking listeners to characterize the quality of radio broadcasts of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* at MKhAT starring the well-known actor Vasilli Kachalov. Responses generally exhibit sonic culture's habit of denigrating recorded sound and exalting its transmitted counterpart: one respondent aired their delight with the clarity of voice transmitted over their radio set, and countered by questioning why the Soviet cinema had yet to produce a similarly "clean" recording.[48] Another agreed, writing that "It seems like the noise that comes with

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[44] See Andrievskii, *Postroneie Tonfil'ma,* p. 80. This idea significantly predates significantly what Michel Chion has called the *acousmêtre,* the voice of sound cinema that is omniscient, panoptic, and ubiquitous. Chion, Michel. *The Voice in Cinema*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999, p. 97

[45] See Introduction, n. 11

[46] The few available studies of Andrievskii typically limit their scope to *Gibel' sensatsii.* Several works have made reference to Andrievskii's film, but only Emma Widdis's *Socialist Senses* has offered an in-depth reading of the film. Other works of note are Assa Novikova's article in *Seans,* and the introduction to a republication of Andrievskii's archival materials in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski №45* (1999) by Aleksandr Troshin. The difficulty of unearthing Andrievskii's precise role within the constellation of Soviet cinema (and his feelings about his own work) persists only because the majority of his archive was left behind and destroyed in Moscow, from where he was evacuated and sent to Central Asia in the '40s along with the rest of the film industry.

As a result, few extant materials from Andrievskii's personal archive are available to scholars, and his rapport with other filmmakers is still generally unknown, save for memoirs left behind by his peers, and the official records that chronicle his administrative duties (the 1935 science fiction film, *Death of a Sensation* (*Gibel' sensatsii*)*,* left behind the largest paper trail out of all of Andrievskii's films.)

[47] In terms of sonic media, we can find a curious intersection between Barthes' notion of the "reality effect" and his writing on a secondary level of signification, "the third meaning," much like Miklashevskii attempts to explain when writing about the extra "something" that can push sonic representation to the next level.

[48] The questionnaires are archived in Moscow's arts and literature archives under the file РГАЛИ ф. 672 оп. 1 ед. хр. 1008. The respondent's confusion is understandable: there had been some discussion surrounding plays over the radio, sometimes referred to as "radio films" even if their content was directly linked to the performing stage. The link between radio and film, even when speaking about the connection between these two media and the theater, had begun as early as 1929. See "*Kino i radio*" in

records is completely missing."[49] One listener, Rogov, writes that "I am an old lover of radio, and have listened to many performances (*ia slyshal mnogo fil'mov*), but programs of such high quality in both a technical and artistic sense have never before been on the radio."[50] Many listeners reached for precisely with the language of listening and understanding of illusion in mind "With relation to the quality of broadcast sound, my SI-235 unit transmits it with such a clarity *(pravil'nost'*) and refinedness (*otchetlivost'*) that it creates the complete *illusion* (*illiuziia*) of a pictorial (*nagliadnyi*) viewing."[51] A student, Vetritskaia, wrote that "listening to all of this, I absolutely could not notice the absence of anything visual (*vidennogo*)—it seemed that the entire opera was in front of my eyes."[52] A respondent named Danilova dismissed the need for vision entirely: "in my life, I have never once seen a work of Tolstoy's presented on the stage. The first time I listened to *Resurrection* as a play over the radio on July 2nd, 1936, I was completely surprised. I didn't see any kind of image (*izobrazheniia*). Images didn't need to be there. What I heard was enough."[53]

It was precisely the respondent's uneasy combination of attacks against and an embrace of illusory associations with listening that gave shape to the unstable discourse of Soviet "fidelity." Indeed, was successful sound merely a successful illusion? But if so, how could it live up to "party-mindedness" (*partiinost'*)? What do these aural fixations tell us about the model listener that was developing within sonic culture?

Sounding Pain: Revealing (and Concealing) the Device of Audible Incarceration

For listeners of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* over the radio*,* the production's scenes of court and prison particularly stood out. One respondent, identified as Opodtsev, specifically commented on what he considered a masterful use of sound effects in the broadcast's carceral setting:

> The audibility (*slyshymost'*) is excellent, and especially successful are those scenes in prison on the stage. Even a scene so difficult, in the sense of the audible reception (*zvukovoe vospriiatie*), like such as a meeting of the judicial chambers, taking an oath, an interrogation and the speech of a prosecutor, give a perfectly intelligible presentation of what is going on, as if the listener themselves were located in the courtroom."[54]

That the Soviet acoustic imagination made space for the sound of punitive measures appears to have surprised no one who administered the survey. As I mentioned above, there had been several depictions of prison in various Soviet sound films throughout the '30s, and the genre developed as erratically as the frequently evolving constellation of ideological and technological restrictions that shaped Soviet film.[55] The examples that I explore in what remains of this chapter

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Kino, 10.08.29, p. 3.

[49] ibid. P. 3

[50] РГАЛИ ф. 672 оп. 1 ед. хр. 1008 p. 1

[51] ibid., p. 3

[52] ibid. p. 6

[53] ibid., p. 9

[54] ibid., p. 7.

[55] Given this great variety of settings, motivations, and ideas, the "classical Soviet prison film," as we may be wont to call it in film studies, never quite emerged. A Greenbergian approach to the Soviet

demonstrate that although they lacked a single term, notions of fidelity—and their constantly shifting expectations—came to play an important role in the production of and critical response to these films in particular. Importantly, the lack of a stable idea concerning what fidelity *was* led to an uneven, chaotic rollout of sound, and was particularly so in the case for the prison film, which was tasked with representing the sound of both reformative and ideologically incorrect incarceration. How would these films appeal to sonic culture in order to demonstrate this difference?

It would be difficult to say that a single model of sound's relationship to reality in Soviet cinema had won out by the end of the '30s; instead, there were those models that critics liked, and those they did not. One of the earliest attempts to represent the sound of incarceration came from the formalist theorist and critic Viktor Shklovsky, who wrote an ambitious sound screenplay for *The Dead House* (*Mertvyi dom,* 1932), a film loosely based on Dostoevsky's semi-autobiographical text of a similar name. Shklovsky produced several drafts of the script before a manuscript was accepted by *Mezhrabpromfil'm*, an independent studio that thrived prior to the film industry's centralization. The studio hired a young director, Vasilii Federov, to adapt Shklovsky's work for the screen, but a misunderstanding over sound quickly developed between the collaborators.

There is no question that Shklovsky took the tool of the soundtrack seriously, and that he sought to produce something wholly novel with the tools given to him. N.M. Lary has argued that Federov's disagreement with Shklovsky developed after he decided to deviate from Shklovsky's vision for the new sound cinema, and documents surrounding the film's production evidently prove him correct: Shklovsky went so far as to call the advent of sound reproduction a singular event in acoustic epistemology, and was committed to an ambitious use of sound that Federov was incapable of replicating.[56] In an introductory section to an archived copy of the script for *The Dead House*, he describes the unparalleled moment in world history that sound reproduction inaugurated:

> For millions of years, humankind had become accustomed to pinpoint the location of a sound by recognizing what the sound is. It is especially easy to do this under the normal conditions of listening, which is to say when we listen with both ears.

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soundtrack would suggest that every Soviet sound film is shaped by the severe limitations of its soundtrack, an argument that Anne Nesbet has eloquently developed by pushing beyond Greenberg's formalism and considering the social constraints and intersections with concerning the preponderance of prisons in early Soviet sound film, particularly in Lev Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler* (1934) ("Freedom, Constraint, and the Transition to Sound in Soviet Film, 1929-1933" SCMS 2017, Atlanta). Citing melodrama's eagerness to probe "an epistemology of the depths," Kristen Whissel has argued that the Classical Hollywood prison film uses, in no small part, a film's score to activate the melodramatic mode and portray the penitentiary as an institutional contradiction, one that deals in abstract punishment which petitions neither to law nor to morals. See "The spectacle of punishment and the "melodramatic imagination" in the classical-era prison film : I am a fugitive from a chain gang (1932) and Brute force (1947)" in *Punishment in Popular Culture,* ed. Ogletree and Sarat (New York: NYU Press, 2015.)

[56] N.M. Lary, who has written the most comprehensive study of the film in English, particularly demonizes Federov by affirmatively answering the question: "Did Federov ruin a great experimental film?" See Lary, *Dostoevsky and Soviet Film: Visions of Demonic Realism*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986), p. 38.

> Yet in the sound film, there is no specific point that sounds, but the entire screen. For this reason the medium achieves the effect of ventriloquism.[57]

Shklovsky's suggestion that ventriloquism could be a potentially negative phenomenon dovetails with Soviet sonic culture's suspicion of sound reproduction that I discussed in Chapter One, and it also calls to mind his negative review of vocalic space in Kataev's *Time, Forward!*. Yet itt is the ultimate *revealing* of the apparatus of sound reproduction—not its concealment—for which he advocates in a later moment in the script's introduction. Here, he insists that isolating single sounds within a film is the only method that will not confuse listeners:

> In contrast to a certain prevalent opinion, I do not recommend mixing a sound source (*zvuchashii predmet*), and I especially do not recommend mixing several sound sources at once on screen. It would probably be better if the conversation (*razgovor*) were captured at a distance farther away than close-up (*ot krupnogo plana*)[58]

Shklovsky's adamant dedication to separating sounds from one another and revealing their source of origin, however, quite noticeably diverges from his earlier sensibility. Moreover, it does not appear to have been realized in his own screenplay: more often than not, the screenplay suggests that the future film will bring sounds into dialogue with each other in an associative way, doing less to "bear" their isolation than to mollify the listening audience with the illusion of sonic continuity. When describing the sounds of the Siberian prison camp where Dostoevsky is sent, for example, Shklovsky is particularly prone to grasp for analogy—not conflict—in order to make clear a sound's thematic significance:

> On that morning the entire chain-orchestra resounded. It is a music of the soft vibrations of differently sounding chain links, just like the sounds of nature, the noise of waves or the singing of birds, as if there was nothing noisy, unpleasant, or disturbing about it.[59]

Shklovsky deviates elsewhere, as well, at one point explicitly blending the sounds of a railway and church bells together for a strikingly Tolstoyan scene of Dostoevsky at a train station at the very end of the 19th century—he even suggests that the soundtrack conjoin the cracking of a whip with the beeping of an optical telegraph relay.[60] Although he would elsewhere make use of the "contrapuntal" principle put forward in Eisenstein, Aleksandrov, and Pudovkin's

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[57] РГАЛИ ф. 613 оп. 1 ед. хр. 8293 p. 4.
[58] ibid., p. 4.
[59] РГАЛИ ф. 613 оп. 1 ед. хр. 8293 p. 29. A 19th century source appears to have informed Shklovsky's use of sound in the screenplay, most notably in a source he cites in the script for his call for a "chain-orchestra" of inmates: the memoirs of Dmitrii Akhshamurov, a writer and prisoner who lived alongside Dostoevsky in exile, and which Shklovsky likely found while researching the film. Shklovsky appears to have found Akhshamurov's sonic philosophy quite compelling, and he quotes the prisoner at length: "Every person had their own personal, peculiar sound (and timbre) from the rattling of their chains. And I soon began to recognize everyone who walked near me by the sound of their ringing shackles, which was connected with their very gait." (Ibid)
[60] РГАЛИ ф. 613 оп. 1 ед. хр. 8293 pp. 35-36

"Statement," Shklovsky more often veers towards association, linking the sound of chains with a plural set of potential meanings. Strikingly, he also appears to anticipate the eventual critique of material disturbances in sound reproduction in the quote above, where he writes that recorded sound in its final form should have "nothing noisy, unpleasant, or disturbing about it."[61]

An explanation for this tendency to invest in sonic association—and not collision—can be found in an earlier text on cinema sound by Shklovsky. Indeed, he had already explored the divide between text, screen, and sound in a manual he published in 1931, *How to Write a Screenplay* (*Kak pisat' stsenarii*). Tucked away at the very end of the manual is Shklovsky's model for a potential format of the sound screenplay, which he rightly assumed would soon be in high demand. The model is essentially a text split in two, with columns that correspond to a film's image track, and to a description of the sound that is meant to accompany the images.[62] In an explanation of the text's form, Shklovsky provides a peculiar definition of how the text should be read, one that denigrates the importance of *any* notion of sound fidelity:

> The sound in this film has no bearing on reality. This script will use something more akin to *ideas* about sound. The script also makes use of the emotional timbre of sounds and the interference of one sound's mixing into another. Having shown sound and a sound's source or having guessed the sound by its source, we can reach a very distant correspondence between a sound and its object. In this way the film will not be a musical, nor will it be onomatopoeic—sound functions as a word itself.

This elevation of sound to the level of "a word itself" contradicts Shklovsky's earlier idea, which insists sound in film would communicate in a way unlike anything preceding it. It also contradicts the notion that sound could be a wholly interrupting force, as in the ideas of the "Statement" first published by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Aleksandrov. Shklovsky's appreciation of sound's semiotic potential should remind us of some of the Formalists' most famous theoretical wagers, but in this form, now significantly amplified: sound no longer enhances or suggests a secondary meaning, as would be discussed in works by Boris Eikhenbaum and Yuri Tynianov, but instead acquires the weight of textual signification itself.[63]

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[61] To some degree, Shklovsky's writing about fully inoffensive sound recalls the noise abatement campaigns that Karen Bijsterveld has associated with the emergence of industrial modernity in *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT, 2008).

[62] Separating the image and sound into discrete elements in the text proved unpopular: the manual was panned in *Proletarskoe Kino* in 1931, which was a harbinger for what that manual called the crisis of "literary scripts." Richard Taylor has noted that in the latter half of the 1930s, "…the guidelines laid down in the thematic plans and the ideological requirements laid down for scripts proved so rigid that Soviet cinema suffered a recurrent 'script crisis'. There was a desperate shortage of suitable scripts because there was a desperate shortage of suitably safe subjects, and attempts to encourage literary people to become involved in cinema or to overcome the crisis through open 'script competitions' met with only very limited success." See Taylor, "A Cinema for the Millions," p. 447.

[63] Sound's role in the Formalist movement has been most closely associated with the study of poetry, in which Formalists like Yakubinskii, Brik, and Eikhenbaum have found the repetition of to be significant elements of both Russian poetry and Gogol's prose. After their contribtuions, Amy Mandelker has questioned if the analysis of "sound repetition" and "sound patterning" can at all be grounded in objective observations about literature (Mandelker, "Russian Formalism and the Objective Analysis of Sound in

In a review of the script, a critic named Popov specifically praised Shklovsky's proposed use of "meaningful" sound in terms quite similar to Shklovsky's own:

> From the point of view [of sound], Viktor Borisovich's script is a valuable discovery…the sound here organically enters into the content of the thing itself. Various plot twists hinge on the sound, it economically and expressively sketches the landscape, the "soul" of the city, and it emphasizes social characteristics, bringing us into the inner lives of these characters.[64]

Although it is difficult to determine precisely what his thinking may have been, Shklovsky is unlikely to have endorsed Popov's assessment of his work. At the very least, we could say that the Shklovsky who wrote *How to Write a Screenplay* would not hesitate to thank Popov for clearly understanding the potential of sound to merge with content; the Shklovsky who wrote the introduction to *The Dead House,* however, would likely bristle at his compliments. Instead of finding that sound "has no bearing on reality," Popov insists that Shklovsky's writing represents something similar to Lastra's conception of "phonographic" recording that I mentioned earlier, thus implying that the film's soundtrack aimed to capture and reproduce the sound of how things are (*natura*), in turn creating an ideal reproduction of acoustic reality. This idea trended in the Soviet press alongside Shklovsky's drafts of the script, notably appearing in a 1932 article that specifically commended Maksim Gorkii's writing for its close attention to sonic details of the environments he depicted.[65]

Yet there are further examples of Shklovsky's potential departure from the idea of "phonographic" fidelity, not only in his assertion that sounds can take on the semiotic capability of words. In a bizarre scene midway from *The Dead House*, Dostoevsky's prison sentence is announced by an officer who suffers from a debilitating stutter, an estrangement (in the sense of Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*) of official discourse. There is something deeply painful about listening to this scene, precisely in its deviation from any "realistic" quality that the speaker's voice may otherwise contain. In response, Lary writes that "Shklovsky dreamed of exploring…speech could verge on senseless sound, and music on linguistic significance; the human voice could be reduced to inarticulateness, while animal sounds could be strangely expressive."[66] Viewers are already made privy to these expressive sounds in another scene that depicts intense pain. A sequence of empty St. Petersburg is accompanied by a voice-over reading of Aleksandr Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman," and quickly shifts to a scene of corporal punishment (Fig 3.1): the grandeur of Petersburg's architecture is disrupted when, instead of stone statues jumping to life as they do in Pushkin's poem, the action shifts to the public flogging of a Finnish prisoner. Dostoevsky stumbles across the military spectacle, represented by a formally impressive tracking shot interrupted with intermittent cuts to static reaction shots from onlookers. The scene's soundtrack is structured by two sources of audio that rhythmically compete with each other: the military march, which sets the tempo for the flogging, and the prisoner's erratic cries of pain, which counteracts the rhythmic uniformity of the ritual. By the end of the cacophonous beating, Dostoevsky covers his ears, an ostentatious depiction of his aversion to sonically witnessing pain.

Poetry" *The Slavic and East European Journal* (27:3, Autumn 1983), pp. 327-338).

[64] РГАЛИ ф. 613 оп. 1 ед. хр. 8293 p. 1.

[65] See "*Zvuki zhizni*" in *Kino,* 09.18.32, p. 2.

[66] See Lary, *Dostoevsky and Soviet Film,* p. 38.

In his proposed set of terms for audio-visual analysis, Michel Chion would refer to *The Dead House*'s flogging scene as a "screaming point" of an uncommon *male* origin, which represents symbolic impotence and a failure to achieve limitlessness.[67] Later, *The Dead House*

Fig 3.1. Still from *House of the Dead* (1932)

puts Dostoevsky in the role of screamer. At the end of the film, he is depicted in a chaotic prison bathhouse, terrified as he looks on from a lone bench while seated in the nude, perhaps the only such visual image in Russian history. Unable to find connection with the writhing mass of his fellow prisoners, Dostoevsky cries out by the scene's end, "this is truly hell!" Both the male screaming point and the male bodies that surround him challenge Dostoevsky, and the film depicts these men as simultaneously intimidating and vulnerable (Fig 3.1). By the time of the bathhouse scene, the film becomes nearly cacophonous, demonstrating an association with pain and the "overloading" of the ears that Kruchenykh mentioned in 1928 (See Chapter One).

Instead of asking why Dostoevsky is so tortured by the sound of another man's scream, we should ask what both of these scenes shows us about listening to incarceration.[68] If it can be

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[67] In contrast to the male screaming point, Chion writes: "This [female] scream embodies a fantasy of the auditory absolute, it is seen to saturate the soundtrack and deafen the listener…The [female] screaming point is where speech is suddenly extinct, a black hole, the exit of being." Chion works with Lacanian terms in mind, and is working to intervene in Laura Mulvey's understanding of the male gaze in her classic essay, "Visual Pleasure in the Narrative Cinema." For Chion, this representation of pain in film is distinctly sexualized, making violence a natural inclination of the spectator, who in particular desires to visually and psychically master the limitlessness of the female scream; a kind of transcendent power that draws both the male gaze and male ears. See Chion, (*The Voice in Cinema*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999), pp 77-79.

[68] There is an intriguing parallel between Shklovksy's depiction of "senseless sound" in response to pain and Elaine Scarry's influential discussion of representations of the body in pain. Scarry writes that *"*to witness the moment when pain causes a reversion to the pre-language of cries and groans is to witness the destruction of language." In other words, a linguistic expression of pain undermines the victim's pre-linguistic, phenomenal experience and ensuing utterance (linguistic or not), their more authentic assertion of some kind of pain that has yet to be inscribed into a semiotic system. An outsider, or the victim herself, wields linguistic power that re-inflicts harm upon the victim; by choosing not to re-iterate or narrate the flogging scene, *House of the Dead* positions the spectator as a silent witness to torture. This is tantamount to Scarry's description of what she calls "the world's undoing," which forms brief insight into the mechanisms of power that oppress the body. While bearing witness to the horrors of incarceration had sparked a hint of reformation in Russian culture already in the 19th century in Dostoevsky's biography (and in Tolstoy's *Ressurection*), the Soviet project required both a rejection of the Imperial model and a renewal of the potentially reformative qualities that forced labor could bring. Bearing of the device in Formalist terms, as I explain in note 18 See Scarry, (*The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985) p. 6.

said that like the eye, the ear is directed by an kind of sonic *gaze* in the Lacanian sense—an "audit," as John Mowitt has suggested—it would suggest that a listener is ideologically positioned by the soundtrack. The scene of Dostoevsky covering his ears signals that Shklovsky recognizes a *resistance* to what Dostoevsky hears in this film, but goes on to represent it anyways. The audience's point of audition is, in fact, omniscient: in the screenplay, the audience is led to believe that they adopt Dostoevsky's acoustic point of view, but Shklovsky describes the scene from an external position, writing that "Dostoevsky raises his hands and covers his ears—silence. The only sound heard is the whining of the projector," a further *revealing* of the device.[69] Shklovsky and Federov's film is, in effect, structured around this tension between sound as real and manufactured, between a belief in fidelity and an embrace of sound as illusion.

Yet there was another film that complicated *The Dead House's* crisis of masculinity. Just a year after the appearance of *House of the Dead,* the twenty-three year old American filmmaker, Jay Leyda, visited Moscow for the first time in September of 1933, and he was particularly struck by depictions of flogging he saw in an advance screening of Aleksandr Faintsimmer's soon-to-premiere experimental comedy, *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934). The film was based on a 1927 novella by Formalist critic Yuri Tynianov, and in his diary, Leyda called *Lieutenant Kizhe* "unlike any Soviet film he had ever seen."[70] Although he was surprised by what he perceived as the film's politically lighthearted premise, Leyda's is not entirely a fair assessment: the film is set in 18th century Russia, and satirizes the tenure of Emperor Paul I, one of Russia's most vindictive leaders. Accordingly, it can be read as a reminder of the scars of imperial history. This reading becomes stronger when we learn that the plot is motivated by the chaos spun from a scribe's slip of the hand, which unintentionally invents a phantom member of the Russian army who receives the name of Lieutenant Kizhe (Fig 3.2).[71] By the story's end, the myth of Kizhe becomes so infectious that Paul promotes the lieutenant to lead the army. Still represented by just an empty space, Kizhe enjoys life at the helm of the armed forces until a doctor announces the lieutenant's

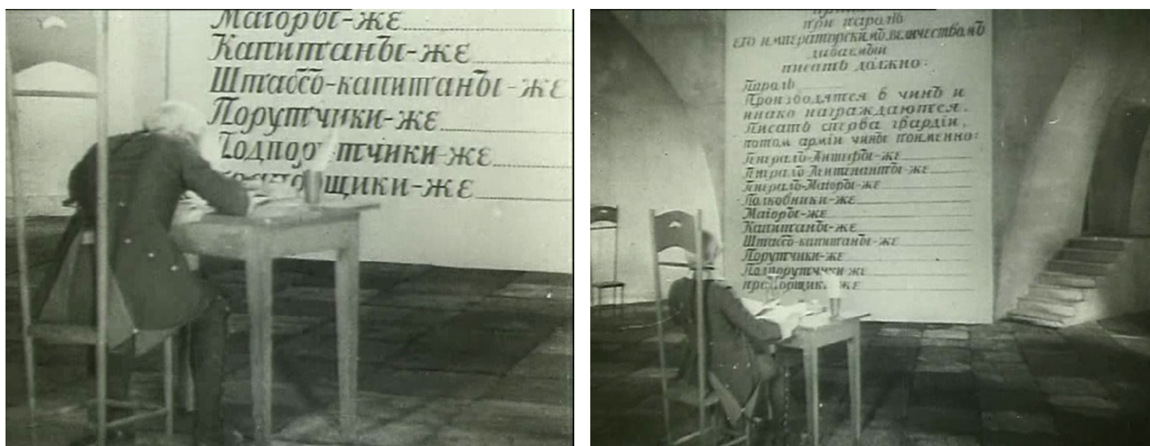

Fig 3.2 Stills from *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934)

[69] РГАЛИ ф. 613 оп. 1 ед. хр. 8293 p. 7.
[70] See Jay Ledyda, *Kino: A History of the the Russian and Soviet Film*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), p. 306.
[71] The joke is based on Russian grammar. While copying an army order, the scribe clumsily inserts an extra "K" between a formal, deictic particle (*zhe*) and the plural ending (*i)* for the word "Lieutenant" (*Poruchik)*: *Poruchiki-zhe,* meaning "Lieutenants," is mistakenly copied as *Poruchik Kizhe:* "Lieutenant Kizhe."

untimely "death." Doubling Kizhe's end, rebels assassinate Emperor Paul at the film's conclusion, thus reducing state power to a weaving of fantasies that is wont to create its own enemies and heroes on a whim.

The film opens with two characters flirting (the "fräulein" and the adjutant) who call out to each other in an elaborate game of hide and seek that takes place in Paul's palace. For no clear reason, they communicate in animal sounds that Shklovsky would adore, filling the empty halls with barks and meows, and then following the sounds that they send to each other. When the two lovers reunite, the fräulein playfully slaps the man's backside, and he responds with a yell of surprise. His yelp wakes emperor Paul, who mishears the adjutant's surprised shout as the word "*karaul!"* (guard!). Paul begins an extensive search of the palace to reveal the transgressor who rudely ended his slumber. Knowing that he is at risk of being caught, the adjutant luckily discovers the scribe's "Kizhe" error, and blames the non-existent Lieutenant. Much to the adjutant's surprise, Paul proceeds to call for the invisible lieutenant's pumnishment, sends it to Siberia, eventually pardons it, marries it off to the fräulein, and ultimately promotes it to the top of the armed forces.

Kizhe reverts to visual absence precisely where Shklovsky's film appears to have ostentatiously pushed the boundaries of representing corporal pain, marking the shift from revealing the device of the soundtrack and camera to a parable of its very concealment. Indeed, Tynianov's film offers several allegories for its own concealed devices: behind Paul's treatment of the fake lieutenant is his struggle to find the source of the utterance "*karaul!*", and he compensates for his failure by punishing the empty space that is now called Kizhe—itself drawing attention to a kind of lack. Throughout the film, shots of the distressed adjutant frequently remind the spectator that only they are in on the joke of Kizhe's glaring absence; this plurality of vision gives the spectator the privileged position of nearly ubiquitous observation, but Kizhe does not produce a word throughout the film.[72] Douglas Renfrew has written that Tynianov's creative works tends to portray the "authoritative word" as a force that can "utterly to oppress and displace the human," a phenomenon that quite literally emblematized through invention of Kizhe's personality through bureaucratic writing, and through his visual absence on screen.[73] It is characters' unwillingness to trust their *ears* that continues the myth of Kizhe.

Of course, if the visual lacuna at the center of *Lieutenant Kizhe* is already registered as humorous, we could say that this film's own flogging scene claims no resemblance to reality whatsoever, and instead puts on display the soundtrack's ability to *construct* a new image (much like Miklashevskii foreshadowed). Even Leyda wrote that "it would be difficult to imagine *Kizhe* without Prokofiev's soundtrack," gesturing towards the central absence at the center of the film that must be compensated by some sonic source.[74] Both *Lieutenant Kizhe* and *The Dead House* stage acts of violence as the products and catalysts of a crisis in masculinity, which by many

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[72] Paul's anxieties to compensate for lack are as intertextually Gogolian as they are clearly Freudian. Iampolskii has drawn attention to the intertextual links between the film and Gogol's *Nos'*, and when Paul is called "hook-nosed," he spends the rest of the film worrying about how others perceive his nose. See Iampolskii, "*Poruchik Kizhe kak teoreticheskii fil'm,"* pp. 36, 40.
[73] See Renfrew, Alastair. "Against Adaptation? The Strange Case of (Pod) "Poruchik Kizhe"" *The Modern Language Review* 102.1 (2007), p. 162.
[74] See Leyda, *Kino,* p. 307.

accounts was inherited by later socialist realist films.[75] In his own theoretical orientation, Tynianov took after the authors of the "statement" by worrying that "to fill the cinema with words" would destroy visual relationships between its images.[76] He writes: "Deprive the cinema of music and it will empty out, it will become a defective, unsatisfactory art…music in the cinema adds rhythm to action."[77] The un-scored scene of the scribe's error, which could be described as Kizhe's "birth," is a clear chaos of spoken language in which even official word absorbs all utterances, regardless of whether or not they are true. In the scene, a scribe sits underneath an enormous list, crushed by words that he mumbles out loud to himself, much like Shklovsky's orator. Strikingly, however, the film stages the false lieutenant's genesis as an acoustic error, attributed to the scribe's careless mumbling rather than an orthographical mistake.

As I mentioned above, in *Lieutenant Kizhe*'s flogging scene, the visual chasm at the center of the scene allows the soundtrack to compensate for what is concealed from the eye.[78] Formally, the violence that is paired with Prokofiev's soundtrack stages a very different scene from the flogging in *House of the Dead*, when soldiers and floggers wait in formation to flog Kizhe, who, unlike the Finn whose pain disturbs Dostoevsky, is nowhere to be seen. There is no body to beat, only an empty whipping post in the center of a crowd. Kizhe's invisible body is not

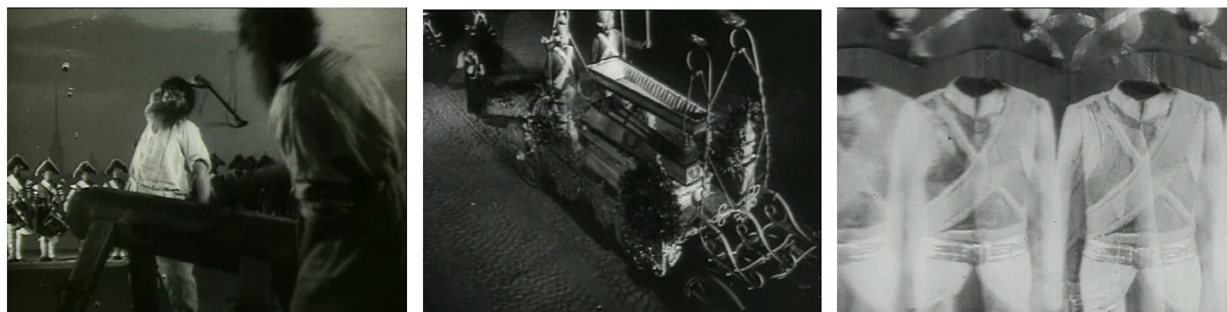

Fig 3.3 Stills from *Lieutenant Kizhe* (1934)

[75] Lilya Kaganovsky has written extensively on the dismemberment of the masculine body in Soviet film, noting that in socialist realism, the masculine body is treated material that is malleable and liable to be destroyed. Kaganovsky argues that this produced an "impossibility of belief in the extreme models of masculinity promoted by Stalinist culture…pointing to the mediation between reality and desire…," somewhat similar to Chion's comments about the male screaming point. What separates these works from the Socialist Realist cinema that would follow is not their historical subject matter – another adaptation of Dostoevsky's stories, Grigorii Roshal's *Peterburgskie nochi* (1934) was considered a brilliant success by early aesthetic engineers of what Socialist Realism – but their critical attitude towards on-screen violence. See Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin*. (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 2008), p. 7 and Lary, *Dostoevsky and Soviet Cinema,* pp. 47-57.

[76] Ibid., p. 174. *Kizhe* is typically read as a theoretical interest of Tynianov's that is given narrative shape, and have pointed to specific moments in the film that introduce Tynianov's concepts to cinematic practice.

[77] "*Lishite kino muzyki – ono opusteet, ono stanet defektivnym, nedostatochnym iskusstvom…muzyka v kino ritmizuet deistvie."* See Tynianov, *Poetika – Istoriia Literatury – Kino* (Moskva: Nauka, 1977) p. 322.

[78] The finished film is actually emptier than first intended: Tynianov's script calls for "traces" of past prisoners in the form of elbow and knee prints on the whipping post. "The whipping post." A smooth log into which the traces of human bodies still leave an impression (knees and elbows). See Heil, Jerry,"Jurij Tynjanov's Film-Work. Two Filmscripts: "Lieutenant Kiže" (1927, 1933-34) and "The Monkey and the Bell" (1932)," *Russian Literature* 21.4 (1987).

an impediment, but a constructed fact: "the prisoner is secret, and has no shape!" (*arestant – sekretnyi, figury ne imeet!).*[79] The floggers are also dubious at first, and they share skeptical glances to show their disbelief that the scourges will make contact with any kind of body. Yet the rhythm of the score overlays rhythm onto their actions, and they voraciously beat the whipping post without thinking twice.[80] Beyond the historical significance of this practice for the Russian empire, the visual and sonic collision that characterizes flogging makes it a prime object for experiments with audio-visual synchronization.[81]. Chion has called "synchresis" the illusion that a soundtrack corresponds with the visual component of a projected image.[82] Prokofiev's score is inherently syncretic, in that it represents both itself, as a piece of music, and the sounds of the floggers' contact.[83] Spectators in the scene and spectators of the film are situated within a space of temporary belief and disbelief, constantly drawn into the rhythmic correspondence between the onscreen spectacle and Prokofiev's score, but also liable to question the diegetic connections between the sound and image; after all, only drummers are depicted on screen, and the trilling flutes that might represent Kizhe's wailing are not pictured.[84]

I raise depictions of pain and violence in my discussion of these films in order to demonstrate the paradox that emerged within understandings of the role of sound for depicting reality the first half of the '30s. Both of these films depict acts of violence that are paired with sound, but both of them deviate from synchronizing this violence with specific sound effects, or

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[79] Throughout the film, characters refer to Kizhe with the neuter Russian pronoun *ono,* which the English word "it" best translates.

[80] In her now classic study, *The Body in Pain,* Elaine Scarry has argued that the depiction of pain inflicted by another person *must* be depicted with an accompanying weapon, just as Chion has argued that "believable" violence on screen relies more on a weapon or inflictor's sound effect than it does on visual cues.

[81] In describing the history of flogging in Russian literature, Irina Reyfman has compared flogging to dueling, another practice that appears often in Russian art. Reyfman shows that scenes of flogging are necessarily an index of empire, and that dueling is often an index of aristocratic class relations. The difference between the audio-visual synchronization of a gunshot and that of a scourge also indexes differing relationships of each violent act to the body. The sound of a gunshot leads the viewer back to a firearm, and not to the impact that a bullet makes with a body; the sound of a scourge's impact signifies both the weapon and the wound that it inflicts. Scarry has argued that pain cannot be depicted without an accompanying weapon.[81] In a vein similar to questions of sound fidelity, Chion has demonstrated that "believable" violence on screen, an appeal towards sound that maintains its fidelity with what is depicted on screen, relies more on the weapon's sound effect than it does on visual cues.[81] *House of the Dead* provides both the sound of scourge impact and the prisoner's screams of pain, a direct correspondence between sound and image. [There is no impact] See Reyfman, "Dishonor by Flogging and Restoration by Dancing: Leskov's Response to Dostoevsky," *Ulbandus Review* (13:2010), p. 111.

[82] See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), p. 58.

[83] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[84] Building on the idea of synchresis, Chion uses the term "transsensorial rhythm" to describe the fluid connection of a spectator's senses when watching a sound film. Inverting Bela Balasz's praise of the evocative capabilities of silence, Chion argues that silent film used transsensorial rhythm to portray acoustic phenomena more clearly than sound film could. Balász writes "The silence is greatest when we can hear very distant sounds in a very large space," drawing attention to sound film's capability to dialectically enrich silence. (Balasz, *Theory of the Film* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1952), p. 205). According to Chion, by making rapid visual cuts to almost synesthetically depict a sound on screen, a silent montage piece used its visual rhythms to phantasmatically replicate the acoustic contours of sound.

more precisely, neither of them go so far as to amplify the sound of contact between flesh and weapon. It is not the case that screening violence itself was taboo in the Soviet cinema, but the soundtrack often refused to keep apace with blows on screen.[85] 1934's *Chapaev,* for example, is punctuated by a scene of enormous explosions to demonstrate that retribution against one's murderous enemies is valid, but like the scene in Vertov's *Enthusiasm,* a single gunshot is heard over the disappearance of a group of enemy soldiers. Aleksander Dovzhenko's 1935 film, *Aerograd,* culminates with the main character shooting his traitorous friend. A gunshot is heard, but the victim's body hits the ground mutely. This allowed the soundtracks to keep tight control over their subjects, as Elaine Scarry has argued that: "Power is in its fraudulent as in its legitimate forms always based on distance from the body," an apt characterization of how these scenes mirror the state in their ability to confront, delimit, and ultimately dominate the body that experiences pain.[86] Sound is, in the arguments that these films put forward, always *too* real, something that intensifies the *trick* of what might be taking placeo on screen.

Most importantly, *Kizhe* is about looking at and listening to violence as a way of diminishing it, whereas *The Dead House* implies the impulse—but futility—to cover one's ears. This mixture of the hyper-real with a completely fabricated sonic world, as we will see, creates the uneasy basis of sound fidelity from which the film *Convicts* was forced to draw. When Shklovsky writes "the sound in this film has no bearing on reality," we see a departure from the idea that the fruits of Soviet sound reproduction should have any link to their source, a rejection of the idea of "fidelity" in its various forms. Indeed, this rejection eventually became a central feature of the socialist realist cinema.

The End of Fidelity: Evgenii Cherviakov's *Convicts*

Shklovsky and Tynianov's depictions of incarceration explored the limits of synchronized sound and image in the Soviet cinema, but the stakes for depicting the reality of *Soviet* incarceration, and not its Imperial counterpart, changed suddenly in the middle of the decade. By 1934, 500,000 prisoners were interned in the state's GULAG labor camps, and over 25,000 had already been sentenced to death by shooting.[87] Many of these prisoners were peasants who chose not to comply with the state's agricultural collectivization campaign, but another large portion was made up of petty criminals, who the state saw as prime targets for re-education. Representing the project of mass incarceration quickly became a crucial method for broadcasting the legitimacy of the state's enthusiasm for jailing its citizens to the Soviet public: the famous White Sea Canal (*Belomor Canal*) documentary project, *Kanal imeni Stalina* (1934)*,* brought together the state's leading writers and photographers—including Shklovsky, Kataev, and Zoshchenko—in order to

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[85] Several groundbreaking studies have re-contextualized the graphic treatment of the male body in works of Socialist Realism, though in contrast to Kaganovsky's work, Evgenii Dobrenko has pointed to the paradoxical obfuscation of violent acts that are inflicted upon the Stalinist hero. "Soviet life demanded the concealment of violence and the total aestheticization of life…" The reader or viewer of Socialist Realism sees only the scars of violence that is inherent to these artworks, a dramatic rupture that obfuscates the motivation for the hero's deeds. See the chapter "Bildungsfilm" in Dobrenko, *Political Economy,* pp. 215-254.

[86] See Scarry, *The Body in Pain,* p. 46.

[87] See J. Arch Getty, "State Violence in the Stalin Period" in *Times of Trouble: Violence in Russian Literature and Culture,* ed. Marcus Levitt (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

offer an accessible, documentary photo-essay that provided insight into the social utility of Soviet labor camps.[88]

The only attempt to connect the Belomor canal with sound reproduction that I am aware of was Evgenii Cherviakov's 1936 feature film *Convicts*, a work based on Nikolai Pogodin's hit 1934 play, *The Aristrocrats*.[89] To this day, the celebration of forced labor in Cherviakov's film is still shocking to watch, but the film's completion—and reception—were not entirely seamless. Cherviakov and his various employers dragged *Convicts* through two years of production, an extremely long period for the time, and the film only first debuted in late 1936, at the very beginning of Stalin's campaign of political terror.[90] Indeed, the initial language that then-head of the Soviet film industry, Boris Shumiatskii, associated with the film's premiere in 1936 bore great resemblance to the rhetoric that had been used to describe the canal project in 1934:

> One of the most amazing phenomena of our Soviet life is the fact that tens and hundreds of thousands of people twisted by the capitalist system are now being reformed (*perekovyvaiutsia*) under the influence of Soviet reality, are being reborn, are being remade and will become leading people of society. This exceptionally vital phenomenon has attracted and continues to attract to itself focused attention in all forms of art.[91]

As it turns out, using the tool of sound reproduction to depict a space that had been celebrated only with printed language and images was a major challenge. *Convicts* played for less than a year before the film (and the Belomor Canal documentary project) disappeared entirely from distribution. As we will see, the film, largely criticized for its sonic failing served as a punctuation mark to a the prison films that appeared in the Soviet Union prior to it, all but confirming the lack of any reliance on a shared idea of fidelity amongst Soviet artists and critics.

More than any other filmmaker in the early Soviet Union, Cherviakov could be called a truly "lost" talent. Given what we know about the overwhelmingly positive reviews concerning his work from the silent era, most of which has disappeared or deteriorated, his silent films amounted to what was widely seen as a major stylistic challenge to Eisenstein and Vertov.[92] According to a letter sent to Cherviakov from Paris, the directors Kozintsev and Trauberg actually trusted him to finish editing on their groundbreaking *New Babylon* (1929), naming him the only director capable enough for the job.[93] The films that have survived from Cherviakov's career are unfortunately only those that belong to the later period of his filmmaking, when he worked through serious depression to produce and release films that Stalin would find suitable.[94]

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[88] The volume was published under the title *Belomorsko-Baltiiskii Kanal imeni Stalina: Istoriia stroitel'stva* (*Istoriia fabrik i zavodov*, 1934). Since then, it has functioned as a benchark against larger arguments about the stakes of discussing the historical reality of the GULAG are measured.
[89] See Ruder, *Making History for Stalin,* p. 155.
[90] See Klein, *Belomor.*
[91] РГАЛИ Ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 72.
[92] For an excellent summary of Cherviakov's life and work, see Petr Bagrov's "*Rezhisser ekzistentsial'nogo kino"* in *Iskusstvo Kino* (2010:7) 105-116.
[93] РГАЛИ ф. 2686 оп 1 ед. хр. 16.
[94] See Bagrov, p. 107.

By the mid-50s, a lecture given on Cherviakov's films claimed that they were instrumental in creating the visual language of socialist realism.[95]

In *Convicts*, a group of petty criminals is reformed into shockworkers, and they ultimately use their new talents to help construct the Belomor canal. As in most of these narratives from the '30s, forced labor comes with a twist of political education so that it no longer feels forced, a process that was officially called *perekovka* ("re-forging"). Upon arrival, the camp's leader explains to an arrested engineer that "we make people (or things) new here" (*zdes' delaem novym*), contingent with the typical discourse of *perekovka.* The film's lead, Kostia, is clearly modeled off of visual materials that emerged from Aleksandr Rodchenko's photocollages of trips to the Belomor Canal, but he is resistant to any kind of alterations to his character (Fig 3.2). At several moments, Kostia even acts out and harms himself in order to avoid changing. It is not

Fig 3.4 Still from *Convicts* (1936) and *USSR in Construction* (1934)

until Kostia sees the "big picture" of his work—a scale model of the Belomor Canal—that he understands what adopting party-mindedness can bring to his life with a sense of accomplishment (Fig. 3.3).

A push and pull between the ideological re-forging of prisoners and their status as interned individuals structured both the *Belomor Canal* documentary project and the scores of plays and literature that surrounded the White Sea Canal. By the end of the decade, projects concerning the Belomor Canal virtually disappeared from circulation when *perekovka* was no longer the party line—it was the destruction of the enemy that Soviet culture now required.[96] When depicting the real fate of hundreds of thousands of arrested citizens became significantly more complicated, reformative labor was quickly struck from the list of potential subjects for polite conversation, despite a broadly-reaching publicity campaign to normalize those very attempts within Soviet society. Prior to the crackdown, however, how did critics expect this dimension of Soviet life to sound? At roughly the same time that the writers' brigade was sent to

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[95] "Трудно переоценить знание такого подхода к созданию образов в наши дни, но тем большую роль играло успешное решение подобных задач на заре советской кинематограяии — в период, когда ЕЧ, отстаивая идеи соц. реализма, много сил и энергии отдал борьбе с формализмом, эксцентричностью и вульгаризацией" (Ф 2686 оп 1 хр 35 1-2).

[96] This language reached sources as seemingly far-reaching as *Kino,* a periodical which I have referenced frequently in the past three chapters as a source for debates on the technology of cinema. The headline for August 22nd, 1936 reads "Kill all Trotskyites!"

chronicle the Belomor Canal in 1934, Cherviakov was also sent to visit alongside them, thanks to the small studio that hired him, Vostokfil'm. He was given the assignment of shooting *Convicts* on site, but there was one problem: Vostokfil'm was liquidated in 1934 after Mosfil'm centralized the film industry shortly after his dispatch, leading to chaos in the production funds' allocation.[97] When he received the news, Cherviakov appears to have prophetically foreseen what would mar the film's reception: after Mosfil'm subsumed Vostokfil'm, Cherviakov requested that they pay more attention to providing him with an effective soundtrack (as if shooting on site were presenting its own challenges), but was told by the studio that it would not be possible.[98] Nevertheless, Cherviakov was required to defend the enormous cost of *Convicts* in various meetings and discussions: "…because only 1/10 of the film was shot in nature (*na*

Fig 3.5: Still from *Convicts* (1936)

nature), this is all that made the film more expensive…We had very few sunny days and were only able to shoot two scenes on the canal. The rest was squeezed (*vpikhnuli*) into a studio set and the film, of course, lost a lot from that."[99]As in the scene where Kostia is shown a model of the canal he builds, the film was also moved indoors in an attempt to create a more appropriate final product; a sound stage was built especially for Cherviakov and his crew.[100]

As the film's grueling production schedule shows, it could be said that *Convicts* underwent its own *perekovka.* Yet Cherviakov's concerns about sound were appropriate—the film was fiercely discussed, heavily critiqued, and censored, particularly with regards to its subpar sound quality. By its eventual release, contemporary reviewers of *Convicts* essentially had two things to say about the film. They praised its painfully direct ideological stance, but shunned its soundtrack, which they found technologically lackluster. This praise for content mixed with a more powerful scorn for the film's form plays out in various reviews: *Pravda* lauded the film, but noted that for a story set in a region known for its beauty, Cherviakov could have made a little more use of the elements of surrounding nature.[101] Critics who represented the

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[97] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 240.

[98] Ibid. p. 242. Cherviakov was ready to film the surrounding landscape, but there wasn't a sound camera to go with him: "До сих пор у нас нет звукоопреатора и нет полного обеспечение звукоаппаратурой, Звукопередвижки мы очевидно вообще не получим к началу наших работ в экспедиции."

[99] Ibid. 2, 45.

[100] Ibid. 47-49.

[101] Ibid. 49.

intellectual side of the film industry were less forgiving, and cited serious problems with the film's recorded sound. The critic S. Bronstein, for example, wrote in *Iskusstvo Kino* that "the sound is recorded extremely unequally (*nerovno*), with a hum, without necessary nuances and sometimes with a superfluous metallic tint…separate recordings of Sadovskii and Sonia [characters in the film –*MK*] are unintelligible and break off, the music often falls out of tune and sounds acoustically dirty."[102] At the film's initial discussion, its composer, Yuri Shaporin, said that he found the recording of the film's soundtrack disgusting (*otvratitel'no*).[103]

Dobrenko has tried to salvage Cherviakov's film from its inevitable dismissal (both in 1936 and by academics today) on the grounds of taste and politics, claiming that *Convicts* "created a discursive and visual framework in which the Soviet penitentiary practices could be represented; they fit the camp into the Soviet world, creating the discourse for describing the Soviet penitentiary system in categories of socialism."[104] I approach *Convicts* from a somewhat different position, noting that the film appeared at a turning point for Soviet sound film, and quickly became evidence of a sonic framework in which the camps could *not* be represented. Critics were asking for a film that would be more exacting in the sounds that it chose to include: After the first screening, the critic Zal'kind complained that sound stages were not set up appropriately, and therefore captured only what critics called "rude, without nuances, and often uneven."[105] Pogodin, the playwright who produced *The Aristocrats,* betrayed Shklovsky's philosophy of the screenplay, saying that scenes that were "well written in the literary scenario were prone to sound poorly ("*plokho zvuchit*") when they made it on screen.[106]

Of course, film critics were thinking about these very issues of limitation and managing the Soviet Union's paltry technological resources. The reaction to *Convicts* shows how by the latter half of the 30s, a new kind of fidelity became the ultimate goal in the enterprise of Soviet sound reproduction, one that fundamentally undermined itself. Bronstein's review complains that sound in *Convicts* is lacking both the "necessary nuances," and is too "acoustically dirty," a contradiction that gets to the heart of the issues that sound reproduction ushers into socialist realism – the answer to "clean" sound is the construction of artificial landscape – a sterile room, such as the recording studio. Shumiatskii declared that in the first attempt to shoot the film at Vostokfilm there was an "enormous collection of mistakes, and even 'actual crimes' against art and the norms of Soviet work."[107] He went on to praise the film's acting, but only with relation to the microphone: "The actor (Astangov) does a good job feeling at home *(osvoitsia*) in front of the microphone. He understands that he does not need to shout in from of this exceptionally sensitive (*chuvstvitel'nyi*) device."[108] How strange, then, that critics demanded a soundtrack both more and *less* "realistic" in its quality: more nuances, but less noise; more focused attention on singular sounds, but less of the exacting nature of a sound studio. This was a new fidelity, one that had departed from notions of "phonographic" fidelity, and now required a "telephonic" approach that was closely tied with political censorship. To put it simply, *Convicts* was a film that was required to amplify a reality that was never intended to be heard; it would need to

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[102] See Bronshtein, *Tekhnicheskoe kachestvo*.
[103] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 3.
[104] See Dobrenko, *Political Economy,* p. 241.
[105] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 10, 47.
[106] Ibid. 4.
[107] Ibid. p. 5.
[108] Ibid. p. 10.

perfectly construct the construction of socialism itself, and not actually model itself off of any kind of reality

One scene that appears near the end of the film displays this tendency quite clearly. While many reviewers panned an interaction between Kostia and a love interest who works in an office at the canal (one critic, Bronstein, described the set as a "forsaken tiny hill"). For the contemporary viewer, the accordion scene is perhaps the most aesthetically interesting sequence in the film, but this scene emblematizes both reviewer's concerns – its only momentary engagement with natural surroundings, "how things are," is accompanied with an inability to convincingly represent how *things sound*. As the intertitle reads before the sequence, Kostia is given an accordion for his work at the camp – his suitor, Margarita Ivanovna, has remained a minor character until this moment, when she recites a poem by Igor Severianin that takes as its central theme music's power to rouse the senses. However, she can't finish it – much as in the poem, Kostia's music dictates her actions – after his interruption, he turns to the camera and divulges—"this woman has the heart of a tiger."[109] Suddenly, this competition of literary and theatrical intertexts is interrupted by a reference to the technology of the film itself: in a fade out that overtly transitions into a post-coital moment (the film passes up depicting any the "sex appeal" that Miklashevskii says film executives know could bring them profits) Kostia is distraught when his accordion loses a key. Margarita Ivanovna responds: "Why would you get so upset over a little trifle? Come visit me and I'll give you some glue." Kostia's unrestrained elementality gets the best of him, both in love and work—when he goes to retrieve the glue, Margarita Ivanovna has already been told by a man who clearly resembles a class enemy (slide) that Kostia is, in fact, a criminal, and that she has no business spending time with such a man. Kost'ia loses his cool, attacking the wrecker and ultimately faces the consequences for blowing his top.

Still, this moment with the accordion makes abundantly clear that the film's plot *and* its problems are produced by that to which it cannot give sound—the missing key interrupts an otherwise cohesive musical number, but Kostia's loss is never compensated (the accordion drops out the film). Surely, in a place where people are made new all the time, Kostia's accordion could expect to be fixed in quick order. And yet, this lost object remains fundamentally tied to both Kostia and the film's soundtrack. Unexpected silences are linked not only to Kostia's accordion, and as in the other films I discussed, *Convicts'* soundtrack drops out in a set of crucial, and related moments. In a scene when Kostia exposes a fellow prisoner for stealing rations, he throws his adversary to the ground with no sound effect. Dobrenko has argued that these social factors were invested in a different aesthetic practice by the time they included forced labor: the omission of violence from the screen.[110] Indeed, when it comes to violence here and elsewhere, a proclivity to which the criminals are to be purged of in the world of *Convicts*, we are given a soundtrack that, like Kostia's accordion, can't play a certain note in the form of this film itself. Shumiatskii was particularly upset about unsynchronized sound in his response, but this very restriction in *Convicts* appears as the key to what activates the socialist realist mode—*Pravda*'s reviewer loved the film, and it could be argued that they wanted more aesthetically pleasing scenes to further distort the brutal reality of prison life.[111] Indeed, much of the criticism of its

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[109] This line is a quite unexpected reference to a quote from York in Henry VI part 3, but we know that Pogodin, who wrote the screenplay, was enormously fond of Shakespeare. Pogodin even penned an article encouraging the Bard's relevance for the Soviet '30s, "120 tractors and Shakespeare."
[110] See Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*.
[111] Ibid. 15.

content is nonsensical at best: one critic, Samsonov, wanted all indications of any activity about criminal activity to be removed from a film about criminals, lest audiences be convinced that such elements still lurked amongst them; moreover, he thought comparing Kostia with a horse was ridiculous, because "everyone knows that a horse is 8 times stronger than a human."[112]

This demand in itself put ideologues in a difficult position—as Jonathan Sterne has argued, although they purport to relate to how "accurately" sound technologies mediate reality, discourses of fidelity are always tied to social factors that determine conditions of sound's reproducibility. The actual victims of the Belomor canal would receive little recognition, mediated through multiple layers of image and sound and eventually ventriloquized by a synthetic audio track that hailed from a space wholly dissimilar from where they worked. The critical apparatus of sound "fidelity," no matter how chaotic, endures over a soundtrack that is fundamentally *disconnected* from its source; this is no longer a critique of sound, but a critique of the *production* of sound. If the task of the filmmaker would become to produce the new *Lieutentant Kizhe,* then it gives a more appropriate context to something Pogodin said at the second screening of *Convicts:* that there is "another" (*drugoi*) type of realism that the film aspires to, and which its critics did not give it enough credit.[113] On the one hand, ideal sound chambers could create a perfect reflection of how "life sounds on screen; on the other, there was a call for those "necessary nuances," these confined spaces and sets were removed from the very reality that artists were contracted to capture. We should think about this film as both an attempt to normalize a ghastly incarceration network, and evidence for the consequences that emerged for socialist realism in an era of sound studios, non-places that, with a dash shamanism, something could emerge that might just resemble what a critic may call "natural." If the job of a soundtrack in socialist realism was to sound "natural," with a film like *Convicts,* the job would be harder.

Conclusion

If listeners expected to find in Soviet sonic culture a clear rubric by which they could discern between good and bad recordings throughout the decade, they might be disappointed. By the time Cherviakov's *Convicts* appeared, those discussions of sound as illusory and *bespartiino* had seemingly merged—the political *was* in fact illusory, but sound was also tasked with becoming more real than reality itself. If sound stages and noise recorded *away* from those spaces that Cherviakov's film had been tasked with representing, then the ultimate concealment of the device was taking place: the synthetic products of sound reproduction were now intended to seem *not* synthetic. The case of *Convicts* departs from *The Dead House* and *Lieutenant Kizhe,* in that there was a dividing line of what could—or should—be recorded, and what remained off limits. Real incarceration could never be recorded on-site, despite the interests and demands of directors working in the Soviet cinema. I have yet to mention the intersection of this model with a surprise twist at the conclusion of Zoshchenko's *Diktofon*, when the recording machine breaks after the group attempts to record the sound of a gunshot:

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[112] РГАЛИ ф. 2450 оп. 2 ед. хр. 628, p. 269.

[113] Ibid. 6 Pogodin defends his decision by claiming that "another" type of realism is important for the film: и есть другой реализм, за который мне хочется и в дальнейшем побороться — это реализм полнокровия, силы, смеха, радости, реализм не количества явлении, а самой сути, квинтэссенция эпохи, которые выбирает то, что дает наша философия. (36)

> The only trouble was that the machine turned out to be a bit fragile and unaccustomed to shrill noises. For instance, Konstantin Ivanovich shot a revolver, not, of course into the microphone but, so to speak, to one side in order to record on the roll for history the sound of a shot—and what do you think—it turned out that the machine got spoiled; it broke down.

As I showed in Chapter One, a sense of suspicion towards sound reproduction—particularly broadcast sound—tended to infect Soviet sonic culture of the early '30s. This chapter has shown that by the end of the decade, this fear had inverted itself, and evolved into a concerted effort to address the transformation of the threat of relying on recorded sound to depict Soviet reality: mediated sound no longer posed a threat from outside, but it *could* fail represent the correct aspects of the Soviet project if it was not produced according to an exacting standard. In the three prison films I offer as evidence for the difficult role that fidelity played in sonic culture, the categories of masculinity, violence, and party-mindedness were both reinforced and defined by sound, yet they developed as erratically as attitudes towards fidelity changed. Both concerning and empowering was the status of sound as potentially illusory, as can be seen in Shklovsky's rejection—but Cherviakov's embrace of the idea to turn the GULAG into a popular spectacle. It became clear, however, that sound's fidelity would imply a certain *political* fidelity, as well. By 1941, the situation had barely changed: some critics said the only good recordings were the Soviet National anthem and Stalin's speeches.[114]

[114] RGALI ф. 962 оп. 3 ед. хр. 1936

Epilogue: Andrei Platonov's Sonic Inscription

The preceding chapters ask if sound reproduction can become more relevant to our understanding of creative activity in the Stalinist era, and my findings have often used the example of the Soviet sound cinema, which brought composers, sound engineers, silent film directors, and proletarian writers together into an unprecedented juncture of crafts. Given this penchant for formal synthesis that defines the epoch, we could find one unifying theme for this dissertation in Steven Connor's concept of "sonification," a form of thinking that assumes correspondence between sound and non-sonic ideas, forms, or objects.[1] Each of this project's chapters has presented figures who took some form of sonification seriously: in my introduction, Lev Termen's instruments suggested that sound had an inherent equivalence with the movements of an arm; Vertov's libretto for *Enthusiasm* implied that sound could be measured and translated into a new figure; Kataev's voices were always dictated from a prior, previously inscribed source; and, Shklovsky, Tynianov, and Cherviakov's linkages of sound, presence, and reality would impact an entire genre of Soviet film, and its listeners. Yet beyond this sonification, we see that unlike listeners abroad, Soviet sonic culture was always invested in questions of materiality and ethereality, and in the role that sound would play in a non-capitalist society—it was, to put it shortly, distinct.

Indeed, sonic culture offers several avenues for future study, particularly among those artists whom we may assume are located somewhere outside of it. Consider the following passage from Andrei Platonov's unfinished novel, *Happy Moscow,* which follows the heroine, Moscow Chestnova, as she attempts to make sense of her sometimes grotesque, sometimes achingly beautiful life in the city with which she shares her name*:*

> Any music, provided it was great and humane, reminded Moscow of the proletariat, of the dark man with the burning torch who had run into the night of the Revolution, and of her own self, and she listened to it as though it were both the leader's speech and her own words—words she was always meaning to say but had never said out loud.[2]

Platonov's routine appeal to the difficulty of defining or giving shape to sonic phenomena defines the sonic philosophy of his prose.[3] Much like the dictaphonic logic that established the relationship between Kataev's socialist realist characters and their speech, Moscow senses the presence of Stalinist discourse within her own voice, but never connects that voice with her body. A fascination with defining the precise nature of sound had, in fact, already appeared as a feature of those characters who fill Platonov's prose nearly ten years earlier, in his first major novel, *Chevengur* (1927). The novel opens with the frustrations of a character named Zakhar

[1] See Connor, "Photophonics."
[2] See Platonov, *Happy Moscow* (trans. Robert Chandler), p. 26
[3] Phillip Ross Bullock has identified the musical motif in Platonov as necessarily pessimistic, yielding "flawed language and incomplete communication," and Mikhail Geller argues that Platonov's depiction of collectivization, one of an infantilization of the peasantry, has much to do with the invading sound of the Soviet regime, specifically attached to radio. See Bullock, p. 47 and Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'e,* p. 295.

Pavlovich, who is baffled by the workings of sound reproduction, and, much like Dziga Vertov, quickly becomes possessed by urges to reify sound:

> Zakhar Pavlovich had never heard any kind of music since his birth—he once say a gramophone in a courtyard, but muzhiks had tortured it and no longer played…the walls of the machine were broken, so that the trick (*obman*) could be seen—who was singing in there?—and the needle had been driven through the membrane.[4]

Like the anxiety concerning sound and deceit that echoes in the prior pages, Platonov's muzhiks only perceive the gramophone as an illusion (*obman*) Still enticed by the sensation of music, the muzhiks endure a failed Promethean moment, driving a sewing needle directly through the record.[5]

In 1941, Platonov sent a *kinorasskaz* ("cinematic story") under the title *The Foster Daughter (Nerodnaia doch')* to Viktor Shklovsky and the rest of the scriptwriting bureau at *Soiuzdetfil'm* for evaluation.[6] He did not hear back before Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, which all but insured that the contract would be cancelled. *The Foster Daughter* concludes with a scene that engages with many of the features of sonic culture that I have discussed above—an orphan, Olga, is involved in a catastrophic accident when a runaway supply train crashes into the station, seriously wounding her as a consequence of her selfless sacrifice to stop the train in time:

> Olga leans back from the window of the locomotive and looks around the interior of the cabin—Podmetko is gone, she is alone. She listens to something. From the air a harmonic, steel din is heard, growing all the while—Olga *attentively listens* to this din, which builds up into a *deafening* [*oglushaiushchii*] roar.
>
> I will not die – she says out loud, – I don't want to!
>
> Collision of the front wagon of the blind cargo train into the coal-car buffer…[italics mine][7]

Throughout *The Foster Daughter,* Olga and other characters are constantly hailed by the sounds of a steam engine. When the train whistle sounds nine times from off-screen throughout the script, Olga's infancy leads to her depiction as the only character who listens "attentively," (*vnimatel'no*) but she is also the only character who finds herself so close to the noise that it

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[4] See Platonov, *Chevengur* in *Sobranie sochinenii* t. 3, p.17.

[5] Platonov experimented with depictions of sound in various other works—many of Platonov's characters are frustrated by their inability to qualify what it is that music says to them, and while it is often argued that Platonov's work poses a central question of how to reconcile the myriad conflicts between individual consciousness and corporeality, and the transformation of non-physical sensations into physical experiences complicates this already difficult problem. *Among Animals and Plants* (1936) features a hyper-sonic world and the removal of the countryside from Moscow via radio, and the short story, *Fro* (1936)*,* culminates with a character overwhelmed by the sensations she feels with music.

[6] Kornienko, *Kommentariia* to *Nerdonaia doch',* p. 732 Platonov had signed a contract for the project three years prior, but it never reached fruition. His letters from 1938 show that he wrote to *Lenfil'm* three times prior to follow up on the project, *Ensoulment (Voodushevlenie),* for which he had received an order to revise, but about which he ultimately stopped hearing. Frustrated by the studio's silence, he took to writing: "I don't understand why a screenplay that is 'talented,' in the opinion of *Lenfil'm*, is not suitable for the screen. Platonov, *Ia prozhil zhizn'* p. 435

[7] See Platonov, *Nerodnaia doch'* in *Sobranie sochinenii* t.7, p. 589.

could prove "deafening." It is as if the models she has followed to listen to her surroundings are both a saving grace and something fundamentally different about her experience as a new Soviet citizen. Platonov writes in a note that the film should cut ties with its soundtrack at the moment of collision, when the screenplay reverts to cinematic poetics of the silent era—an intertitle reads: "ONWARDS YOU DARE, POOR OLGA, AND LET THEM SING SONGS WITHOUT YOU!"[8] This nearly elegiac intertitle promises an alternative ending to the script, a sign that the era of sound is fully upon the film's viewer, an idea reinforced after Olga survives the accident, thus rendering the intertitle a moot moment that cannot be read contiguously with the rest of the film. This is the tenuous paradox of the *The Foster Daughter,* one linked directly with Soviet sonic culture: the future hinged on determining how to listen to promising sound, but the grounds for finding a stable point of audition were always liable to change.

[8] Ibid.

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