IURII OLESHA, ABRAM ROOM AND STROGII IUNOSHA –
ARTISTIC FORM AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Milena Lily Michalski
School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of PhD

1999
ABSTRACT

_Strogii iunosha_ was a unique experiment to create a new art form, conceived by the author Iurii Olesha and developed by him and the director Abram Room. It was intended to be, at once, a literary and a cinematic work of art. Room's film was banned, but Olesha's written version was not. Analysis of previously unconsidered production notebooks for the film _Strogii iunosha_ reveals the reason for this. Other scholars have suggested that the change in the prevailing political atmosphere between 1934 and 1936 on the one hand, or the effects of the differences in the natures of literature and cinema on the other, explain why the film was banned, yet the scenario was not. While both have relevance to a comprehensive explanation, analysis of the notebooks shows that, more than either, the crucial factor is the director himself. Room's enduring fidelity to the original and his profound understanding of Olesha's intentions simultaneously kept the film true to Olesha's vision and surpassed it. Doing so in the prevailing political and cultural circumstances made the film's banning inevitable. This explains the different outcomes for the two parts of this artistic experiment.
# Contents

| Title Page | 1 |
| Abstract | 2 |
| Contents | 3 |
| Preface | 9 |
| Acknowledgments | 15 |

*Illustration: A photograph of Olesha and Room* | 17 |

## Chapter 1 Introduction: the different fates of Strogii iunosha

- the soviet context and the nature of the medium | 18 |

i) The question of Strogii iunosha: critical views | 22 |

*Illustration: Poster for future films from the Kiev and Odessa* | 29 |

ii) Soviet politics and culture: the transition of the late 1920s-1930s | 35 |

iii) Film and literature: the nature of the medium | 38 |

iv) The thesis: political context, nature of the medium and artistic intent as keys to the divergent fates of Strogii iunosha | 50 |

## Chapter 2 Iurii Olesha: before and after Strogii iunosha | 54 |

i) The development and decline of an inveterate writer | 55 |

*Illustration: A caricature depicting Olesha and his 'unnecessary themes'* | 62 |
**Chapter 3** Abram Room: before and after *Strogii iunoshia*  
1) Room: from theatre to cinema  
2) After *Strogii iunoshia*  
3) Before *Strogii iunoshia*  
*Illustration: Patterned shadows link the faces of Volodia and Liudmila in Room's Tret'ia Meshchanskaia*  
4) Conclusion  

**Chapter 4** Reconciling the old and the new: Iurii Olesha's bid for personal and political compromise in *Strogii iunoshia*  
1) The plot of *Strogii iunoshia*: an opportunity for mutual reassessment  
*Illustration: Drawing of Diskobol and Masha at the stadium by V. Kozlinskii*  
2) Thematics of ambiguity  
3) Characterization: *Strogii iunoshia* — the duality of Grisha Fokin  
4) Other characters: the old and the hope of a new future  
*Illustration: A sketch from the film Veselaia Moskva, 1934*  
5) Conclusion
Chapter 5  Critical response to Iurii Olesha's *Strogii iunosha*, 1934-35  185

i) Critical response: content  187

ii) Critical response: form  196

iii) Critical response: the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers  207

iv) Conclusion  214

Chapter 6  *Strogii iunosha*: the filming of the new art form  216

i) The film and its structure  217

ii) Use of the camera: whiteness and duration  221

*Illustration: Strogii iunosha*: light and spectacle  223

iii) Sound: music and silence  225

iv) Mise en scène  229

*Illustrations: Strogii iunosha*: Masha and Grisha at the gate to the Stepanovs' dacha  233

and Victor Horta, Staircase in 12, rue de Turin, Brussels, 1893  233

*Illustration: Aleksandr Samokhvalov, 'Devushka s iadrom', 1933*  235

*Illustration: 'Discus thrower (Discobolus)', Roman marble copy after a bronze statue by Myron of about 450 BC.*  239

*Illustration: Still from 'Oktober 1936', the prologue to Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 film *Olympia*  240

v) Conclusion  243
Chapter 7 Critical failings: production, content and form

i) The production of the film

Illustration: English-language Ukrainfil'm Kiev film factory poster advertising Abram Room's Strogii iunosha and Iakov Urinov's Intrigan

Illustration: Strogii iunosha: Dream — special effects

ii) Critical reaction; flawed content and Olesha's errors uncorrected

iii) Formal inadequacy: Olesha's promise unfulfilled

Illustration: Strogii iunosha: Operation — foliage and shadows

Illustration: Aleksandr Rodchenko, after 'Devushka s "leikoi"'

iv) Conclusion

Chapter 8 The themes of Abram Room's Strogii iunosha:

reality, reassessment and reconciliation

i) Soviet Reality

ii) Reassessment and reconciliation: the issues

ii) Reassessment and reconciliation: Stepanov and Grisha

iii) Conclusion

Chapter 9 Conclusion

Bibliography

I. Iurii Olesha
A. Primary materials 320
   i) archival materials 320
   ii) books 322
   iii) contributions to journals and collected volumes 323

B. Secondary materials 324

II. Abram Room 333

A. Primary materials 333
   i) archival materials, including material by Boris Ferdinandov and Isai Lelikov 333
   ii) publications in books 334
   iii) journal publications 335

B. Secondary materials 335

III. Cultural Background 342

Books and articles 342

IV. Theory of film and literature 355

Books and articles 355
A. Abram Room 377

B. Other key films referred to 379
  i) Soviet/Russian 379
  ii) non-Soviet/Russian 383
This thesis was first conceived as a far broader investigation into the inter­relationship between literature of the 1920s and 1930s and film. For the first two years my research involved analyzing the influence of film on the literary style of various writers, and looking at a range of film adaptations of their works. The list of writers includes Mikhail Bulgakov, Daniil Kharms (part of this work has been published as 'Slobodan Pešić's film Slučaj Harms and Kharms's Sluchai' in Daniil Kharms and the Poetics of the Absurd, edited by Neil Cornwell, Basingstoke and London, 1991), Il’f and Petrov, Boris Pil’niak and Evgenii Zamiatin. Some of the adaptations were directed by (former) Yugoslavs, although most were Russian; some were older, but most were very recent. This latter fact meant that in no case was there a reciprocal relationship between the author of the literary text and its subsequent adaptor, as the writers were no longer alive. It also meant, however, that I was able to interview some directors, including Evgenii Tsymbal (Povest' nepogashennoi luny, 1990) and Vadim Gems (Staru-kha-rmsa, 1991), even though this research did not find its way in to the finished thesis.

Once I started to research Iurii Olesha's approach to film, however, I found that his case was the most challenging because, unlike the authors listed above, he specifically confronted the issue of adaptation and attempted to go beyond its limits. I have published work on Olesha's relationship to film which includes material present here as well as material which goes beyond the scope of this thesis (as 'Iurii Olesha: Cinematic interests and cinematic influence' in Slovo, vol. 8, 1995, no. 2, pp. 33-43 and as 'Cinematic Literature and Literary Cinema: Olesha, Room and the search for a new art form' in Russian Literature,
Olesha's aim was to write a work that was neither a piece of literature intended only for the page, nor a film script intended purely for an adaptor's purposes, but one which would fuse the two forms to create an entirely new genre. He chose Abram Room as the director to carry out this project. Room shared Olesha's desire to develop a new genre, a film which was neither a slave to its literary source, nor a completely separate work based on motifs from a literary text, but rather a work which retained key stylistic elements of the original and expanded the visual aspect of the images conjured up in the prose. This was an aim which went beyond anything expressed by the directors of literary adaptations I had previously studied. It dealt directly with the issue of adaptation and the fates of the written and filmic texts, and therefore the fates of their creators are inextricably linked to these very issues. In Olesha's and Room's cases the relationship between the written and the filmic text turned out to be of critical importance when the film was banned. The question presented itself: why was the written text published but the film banned, when the content was almost identical?

It was my desire to find out more about Olesha's and Room's creative experiment as it was such an anomaly in terms of literary adaptation. I decided to narrow my research and focus solely on Strogii iunosha for this reason, but also because Room's is the most exquisite, yet preposterous, film inspired by Soviet literature I have seen.
In looking at this experiment there are some terminological issues which need explanation. As far as the script is concerned, the English term 'scenario', meaning, amongst other things, 'complete plot of film play with details of scenes' (see: J. B. Sykes, ed., The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford, 1987, p. 936) best fits Strogii iunosha, and is etymologically closest to the Russian word 'stsenarii', which Olesha himself uses to refer to his 'p'esa dla kinematografii'. I use the term interchangeably with both 'screenplay', meaning 'script of a film' (ibid., p. 943), and 'script', meaning 'text of play, film' (ibid., p. 944). The variety is, in part, motivated by stylistic concerns, but it is also used to reflect the fact that Olesha wished his work to be seen as all of these things, the detailed plot outline for a film, a descriptive guide to the way in which the film should be shot and the dialogic basis of the film. All this is in addition to Olesha's desire that Strogii iunosha be simultaneously perceived as a work of literary merit and read purely as such by non-filmmakers.

As stated in Chapter Five, I have made a distinction between content and form in my discussions of the written and the filmic texts because it facilitates the discussion of criticism contemporary to Olesha's and Room's work, which tended to impose these distinctions. I am fully aware, however, that in reality the concepts are not rigid, that these areas overlap and that, therefore, the distinction is sometimes slightly artificial.

Strogii iunosha has not received much critical attention, and very little academic analysis. Jerry Heil's monograph No List of Political Assets: The Collaboration of Iurii Olesha and Abram Room on "Strogii iunosha" [A Strict Youth (1936) (see Chapter One for full details) is the only other study I have
identified which is devoted entirely to the work, although even Heil does not focus on the question of adaptation, but rather concentrates on an analysis (in part psychoanalytical) of the film. He makes little reference to Olesha's text and practically none to the author's collaboration with Room, despite the promise of his title.

The absence of a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the relationship between the literary and the filmic texts of Strogii iunosha in itself ensures that my thesis should fulfil the demand for an original contribution. More than this, however, that requirement is satisfied by my use of previously unknown and unconsidered notebooks. These were kept during the making of the film by his assistant, Isai Lelikov, and by Boris Ferdinandov, whom Room had asked to play the part of Stepanov but had then dismissed, and who had collaborated with Room as director at certain stages during the making of the film. I had gone to Kiev to see what could be found in libraries, but a fortuitous meeting (one of several marking key stages of this project) resulted in permission to use the archives at the museum of the Dovzhenko film studio, formerly the Kiev Ukrainfil'm studio, where Strogii iunosha was made. This magical, dilapidated place turned out to hold one key to my research, Room's intentions, instructions and reactions during the filming of Strogii iunosha, as recorded by Lelikov. The books comprise reams of minute handwriting, some in faded pencil, some in ink, with accompanying sketches, photographs and cuttings pasted in. I refer to Lelikov's notebooks as Book One, Book Three and Partitura respectively. All three of the notebooks are unpublished, although since my research was carried out extracts from one have appeared in Irina Grashchenkova's article 'Mezhdu
strokoi i kadrom' (see Chapter One for publication details). She makes no reference to the other notebooks.

According to a letter from Isai Lelikov's widow, Aleksandra Nikolaevna Lyzlova-Lelikova, written in 1980 to the Odessa Film Studio Museum, when Room went to Moscow he asked Lelikov to look after the books. Then, in 1941, the Kiev film studios were evacuated to Ashkhabad, and the books were almost forgotten. However, just days before Kiev fell, Lelikov retrieved them. In 1946, a year after Lelikov's death, his widow took them with her when she moved to Smolensk, as she also did in 1963, when she moved to Kuibyshev, and again in 1968 when she went to live in Odessa. She writes that she would have given the notebooks to the film museum then, but she could not bear to part with them. Finally, in 1980, she handed over the material to the Odessa Film Studio Museum, and they subsequently ended up at the Dovzhenko Film Studio Museum in Kiev.

In the 1934 notebook, Isai Lelikov explains the nature of his notes: 'Edva li mozno nazvat' eti sborniki "Montazhnykh listov i drugikh materialov i chernovikov", kotorye mnoiu sobiraiutsia v protsesse raboty nad fil'moi "Strogii iunosha", obschhim dostojaniem s''emochnogo kollektiva, v smysle vsestoronnego i polnogo otrazheniia vsekh uchastkov raboty. Zdes' ia sovershenno ne interesuius' voprosami finplana i smety. A preimushchestvenno sobiraiu vse otnositel'no khudozhestvenno-tvorcheskogo sozdania fil'ma, cherez sobstvennoe uchastie v etom protsesse. Odnako, rabotaia sam nad fil'moi, ia v izvestnoi mere otrazhaiu i rabotu drugikh tvorcheskich rabotnikov i glavnym obrazom svoego rukovoditelia — A. Rooma.' From the contents of Lelikov's
notebooks it is evident that there was originally another notebook, but this appears to have been lost.

Ferdinandov's notebooks are kept at RGALI, the Russian State Archives of Art and Literature, in Moscow. One notebook is untitled, and I refer to it simply as 'Ferdinandov' (see: RGALI, f. 2392 Ferdinandov, op. 1, ed. khr. 119). His diary relating to Strogii iunosha is also in these archives (see: RGALI, f. 2392 Ferdinandov, op. 1, ed. khr. 181); I refer to it 'Ferdinandov, Dnevnik'. Both are unpublished.

My research materials also include Room's films other than Strogii iunosha. Some of the director's films have been lost, either in part or in entirety, while others exist, yet are inaccessible for viewing for various reasons. I have seen the following films, which span Room's career and give a good representation of the convergence or divergence of thematic and stylistic elements in his oeuvre: Tret'ia Meshchanskaia (1927), Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia, (1929), Strogii iunosha (1936), Eskadril'ia No. 5 (Voina nachinaetsial (1939), Tonia (1942), Nashestvie (1944), Granatovyi braslet (1964), Tsvety zapozdalye (1970). In addition to this I have had access to stills from and photographs taken during the making of other early Room films. I also interviewed Room's daughter from his first marriage (Ol'ga Zhizneva's step-daughter), Elena Abramovna Room, who spoke engagingly about her father. I have also had discussions with Irina Grashchenkova and Stephen P. Hill, who interviewed Room together in 1968, and Neia Zorkaia, from all of which I have benefitted.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those who helped me find my way to the wonders of Kiev, archival and otherwise, in particular Aleksandr Rutkovskii, Tat’iana Derevenskaia, Nonna Kapel’gorodskaiia and, above all, Iliia Il’inichna Sirota and Ella and Sasha Korol’, for their boundless generosity. I am extremely grateful to Janeta Tamrazova, not least for her willingness to spend hours deciphering faded pencilled Russian scribblings for me. Many thanks also to my friends and helpers in Moscow. Among these are Irina Petrova-Tsymbal and Evgenii Tsymbal, Elena Abramovna Room, Jacqie Lucock, Ira Timokhina and Denise Lay. They also include the staff at Kinotsentr, Muzei kino and RGALI.

I am grateful to Dušan Puvačić, Faith Wigzell, Neil Cornwell, Martin Dewhirst and Richard Stites for general support or specific assistance, and to Leonid Sitnikov for stimulating ideas and practical help with photographs, and to Kelly Smith the go-between. Many thanks also to the staff at the SSEES library, particularly Vlasta Gyenes, to Madeline in the Motion Picture and Television Reading Room and to Bonnie in photoduplication at the Library of Congress, to all at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, including the Kennan Institute Library, Washington D.C., to the staff both at the Slavic and Baltic Reading Room at the New York Public Library and at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. I also appreciate the time and words of Neia Zorkaia, Stephen P. Hill and Irina Grashchenkova.
I cannot even begin to thank the following enough: Julian Graffy, for inspiring me, and for his encouragement, criticism and silence; my parents, for every conceivable kind of support and enduring patience; and James Gow, for his invaluable academic guidance, practical help and simply being there for me even in the face of my frequent refusals to take his good advice.

Despite the debt I owe to all those noted above, full responsibility for any flaws in this thesis is mine.
A photograph of Olesha and Room
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE DIFFERENT FATES OF *STROGII JUNOSHA* –
THE SOVIET CONTEXT AND THE NATURE OF THE MEDIUM

On 10 June 1936 the Director of Ukrainfil'm, M. Tkach, watched a new production, *Strogii iunosha*, and decided that it must be banned. This killed off one of the most costly Soviet films of the 1930s and the most expensive of that year. More than this, it curtailed a unique project to create a new art form synthesizing literature and cinema. Initiated on the literary side by Iurii Olesha, it was given its cinematic interpretation by Abram Room, Olesha's chosen director. However, whereas Olesha's written text of 1934 had not been banned, the cinematic result of this experiment was. Although Olesha's text had been criticized it had also received a fund of good will and the project had proceeded, as will be demonstrated in later chapters.

Tkach judged Room to have made great mistakes: not only had he not improved upon the screenplay, but he had introduced his own errors in addition to those critics had identified in Olesha's work. Tkach condemned the film on all levels for not fitting into the desired mould:

---

'Po svoei ideinoi kontseptsi, v traktovke obrazov, obshchim esteticheskim i stilevym chertam, fil'm "Strogii iunosha" iavliaetsia obraztsom proniknoveniia chuzhdykh vliianii v sovetskoe iskusstvo.'

He found the film dangerously full of 'idei filosofskogo pessimizma, npravlennykh protiv kommunisticheskikh idealov revoliutsionnogo proletariat.'

In terms of characterization, furthermore, the head of Ukrainfil'm claimed that: 'V sisteme obrazov fil'ma komsomol'skaia molodezh' izobrazhena tak, chto fil'm v tselom zvuchit, kak paskvil.' There could hardly be a more damning verdict.

The Ukrainfil'm 'resolution' banning the film decreed five points. The first point, unsurprisingly, addressed the future of the film, demanding: 'vypusk fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" — zapretit'. The ban also curtailed further work on the film: 'Kinostudii prekratit' dal'neishuiu rabotu nad fil'mom.' The second point invoked the Chief Directorate of the Film Industry, GUKF (Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie kinofotopromyshlennosti, discussed below), to decree that Room should be suspended as a film director:

---

2M. Tkach, 'Postanovlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma" o zapreshchenii fil'ma "Strogii iunosha". 10 iyunia 1936 goda', Kino (Moscow) 28 July 1936, no. 37 (749), p. 2. Henceforth: Tkach, 'Postavlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma"'. Hereafter, too, all references to Kino will be to the Moscow publication, unless otherwise stated. For more on the film's fate and that of its makers see Chapter Seven.

3Ibid.

4Ibid. (This official line was echoed by the writer Isaak Babel' under KGB interrogation, when he reported that the film of Olesha's Strogii iunosha turned out to be an indescribable lampoon of the Komsomol. See: Vitaly Shentalinsky, Arrested Voices. Resurrecting the disappeared writers of the Soviet regime, New York and London, 1996, p. 52. Henceforth: Shentalinsky, Arrested Voices.)

5Ibid.

6Ibid.
'Po postanovlenii GUKF postanovshchik fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" — A. Room, kotoryi v svoe vremia za nedistsiplinirovannost' i trudove razlozhenie byl uvolen iz Mosfil'ma, — snimaetsia s rezhisserskoj raboty v kinematografii.\textsuperscript{7}

The third point contained the main thrust of Tkach's attack on the formal aspects of the film, its non-Socialist Realist look:

'Pri postanovke fil'ma dopushcheny grubeishie otkloneniia ot stila sotsialisticheskogo realizma. Formalisticheskie vykrutasy, besvkusnaia stilizatsiia, pogonia za vneshnei krasivost'iu — nalozhili rezkii otpechatok na fil'm'.\textsuperscript{8}

The cameraman Iurii Ekel'chik was blamed for letting himself be caught up in Room's vision and lending his work 'te zhe cherty estetstva, stilizatorstva, mistitcheskoi besplotnosti form.'\textsuperscript{9} Tkach announced, therefore, that Ukrainfil'm had decreed that the cameraman be reprimanded 'za dopushchennye im grubye oshibki, za neprotivlennost' i besprintsipnost'.'\textsuperscript{10}

The fourth point decreed that it should be admitted that the Director of the Kiev film studio, Neches, and the Head of Production Management at Ukrainfil'm, Levit, were too lax throughout the making of the film, 'i predostavili A. Roomu polnuiu svobodu v osushchestvlenii ego vrednykh vzgliadov otnositel'no ideinoi i stilevoi napravlennosti fil'ma.' It claimed that there was too little discipline and control over the financial side of the filmmaking, 'as a result

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid. For more on Room's previous fall from grace see Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.
of which the film cost over one million eight hundred thousand roubles."\(^{11}\) Because of all their oversights and their failure in keeping control of the situation, the issue of Neches' and Levit's accountability was to be raised in front of the Directorate.\(^ {12}\) The final point of the 'resolution' decreed that the Deputy Director of the Kiev studio's Production Department, Lazurin, 'kotoryi neposredstvenno rukovodil postanovkoi "Strogogo iunoshi"', was to be fired from his post.\(^ {13}\)

Despite this resounding condemnation of the film and the subsequent measures taken, this was not the end of the matter, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. There appears to have been so much officially wrong with the film that it

---

\(^{11}\)Ibid. A piece by Tkach in *Kino* from 11 September 1936 (an issue largely devoted to the problems at the Kiev film studio) explained that Room managed to persuade the studio that he would shoot certain scenes ('vyzyvavshie somnenia dazhe u ne slishkoi strogoi direktsii') at his own expense, only to leave the studio subsequently footing the bill. See: M. Tkach, 'Bditel'nost', organizovannost', bor'ba za masterstvo', *Kino*, 11 September 1936, no. 44 (756), p. 2. Hereafter: Tkach, 'Bditel'nost', organizovannost', bor'ba za masterstvo'.

\(^ {12}\)Ibid. For a report on the sacking of Neches and Levit, and the appointments of their respective replacements, Orelovich and Benkovich, see: *Kino*, 11 August 1936, no. 39 (751), p. 2. The atmosphere of this period, during which people were being purged or living in terror of being purged, was reflected in its language. The choice between condemning or defending a perceived state enemy often became one of life or death, therefore there could be no room for ambiguities and subtleties of expression. This explains why such strong accusations were thrown at Neches, who was said to have 'dvurushnicheski zashchishchal "Strogogo iunoshu", dazhe posle osuzhdeniia kartiny', and why Levit was described simply as 'etot trotskist, nyne iskliuchennyi iz partii.' See: 'Otvetit' delom', *Kino*, 11 September 1936, no. 44 (756), p. 2. See also Chapter Seven for more on the role of Neches.

\(^ {13}\)Ibid. Lazurin was also held responsible for the release of films such as Iakov Urinov's *Intrigan*, 1935 and Ivan Kaverlidze's *Prometei*, 1935. See Chapter Seven for more details on these films.
seems remarkable that production progressed as far as it did. In particular, given the role of the film as the culmination of an experimental venture to create a new, fused art form, one key question arises: why was the film banned when the written version was not? It is the purpose of the present study to address this question. While the body of the thesis will examine the project itself and provide decisive analysis based particularly on the film's production notebooks, which have not previously been used to such ends, the introductory chapter will refine the question posed. It will do so first through a survey of relevant literature in order to review the extent to which answers can be found there. The second and third sections will then consider the two contrasting potential answers which emerge, more from assumption than evidence and analysis, examining the conditions for these hypotheses. The two answers are: the change in the political-cultural context of the mid-1930s and the difference in nature between the medium of literature and that of film. These sections will establish the basis for narrowing down and re-posing the original question to ask: does the explanation for the different fates which befell the written and filmed versions of the new art form project lie in the changing Soviet context of the mid-1930s or in the inherent difference in medium?

The question of *Strogii iunosha*: critical views

In 1994, when Abram Room's film *Strogii iunosha* was first shown on Russian television, the newspaper *Kommersant*-daily was extremely dismissive of its content but praised its style and found it to be of interest simply because Iurii Olesha had written the screenplay: 'Fil'm interesen ne tol'ko izoshchrennost'i u kinoiazyka pri krainei khodul'nosti soderzhaniia, no i tem, chto avtorom
stsenariia byl Iurii Olesha.14 Yet, relatively little attention has been paid to Strogii iunosha by critics, either as a written text or as a film.15 Virtually none has been paid to the relationship between the two, and where it has there has been no more than passing consideration of the question of the book surviving while the film was banned, as will be seen in this section. While the fact that Olesha and his film partner Room were experimenting in a hybrid art form is noted by some, even in these cases the project is not generally examined as a whole. Instead, emphasis falls on either the script or the film.

For the most part, critical attention on Olesha has emphasised his major novel, Zavist' (1927).16 Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour's influential book The Invisible Land: A Study of the Artistic Imagination of Iurii Olesha does this; she barely discusses Strogii iunosha. What she does say about it is mainly descriptive, usually in terms of content, rather than analytical. Beaujour refers to the fate of Room's film of the script, doing no more than noting the official reasons for its

---


15For example, in his introduction to the collected works of Olesha, Viktor Shklovskii does not mention Strogii iunosha. See: Iurii Olesha, Izbrannoe. Moscow, 1974, pp. 3-10. Hereafter: Olesha, Izbrannoe. Outside Russia, particularly, there is a lack of generally available information about the film. This was illustrated in 1991, when the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. compiled a printout listing its Russian and Soviet films available for viewing, and the person responsible for providing details of the film failed to find any relevant material. Instead of including the usual credits and paragraph on the film's content, the typed entry for Strogii iunosha is accompanied solely by the misspelt name of the director, given as Avram Room, and, in the margin, the frustrated scribbled comment: 'Can't find a damn thing.'

16See, for example, Janet G. Tucker's Revolution Betrayed: Jurij Olesha's Envy, Columbus, 1996.
banning. In the introduction to their translation of Olesha's plays Michael Green and Jerome Katsell do likewise, also offering the comment that *Strogii iunosha* was Olesha's 'last and perhaps most successful attempt' to create a type of new Soviet man, although they judge that these attempts generally 'are not among Olesha's successes.' Victor Erlich broadly agrees, suggesting too that *Strogii iunosha* was Olesha's last attempt to portray the ideal Soviet young man. Erlich explains that the work had a mixed reception and offers the view that Olesha's creativity had dried up under the heat of political pressure. In a somewhat different vein, Viktor Pertsov believes that *Strogii iunosha* reveals 'the bravery of Olesha's talent.' This bravery lies particularly in the fact that the screenplay features many devices of realistic grotesque, and that Olesha adds elements of utopianism to the 'optimistic dream' and offers 'realistic criticism' of the artistic survival of the past.

In contrast to seeing *Strogii iunosha* as marking the end of the writer's creative period, other critics view it as the start of a new phase in Olesha's work.

---


20Ibid.

21V. Pertsov, "My zhivem vpervye". *O tvorchestve Iurii Alesha*, Moscow, 1976, pp. 50-51. He also notes that the text was written partly in response to negative criticism of Olesha's play *Spisok blagodeianii* (1931), and partly in response to the call for artists to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

22Ibid.
However, the philosophical thematics of the play are a subject for well-intentioned, but harsh, debate. Arkadii Belinkov claims that Olesha's text is about subservience to the power of a great mind and the notion that such power '...eto prekrasnaia vlast'.' Guy Robert Houk suggests that the film would certainly never have met with the approval of a proletarian audience, given its 'radical interpretation of the prohibition against "levelling"', and finds it 'remarkable that Olesha could have misinterpreted so badly the signs of his times.' Houk also condemns the work for its style, which he describes as 'plain to the point of severity', and for its 'two dimensional' characters. He sees Strogii iunosha as nothing but a shadow of the earlier Zavist.'

For Andrzej Drawicz Strogii iunosha is pure abstraction. Like Houk he feels that it proves Olesha could not break out of the circle of problems treated in Zavist' and that he had nothing to add to what had already been expressed there.

The central character, Grisha Fokin, is another Volodia Makarov. Marietta Chudavkova, on the other hand, appears to be more positive, noting that the reader comes to the images almost without passing through the medium of words. She suggests that Olesha realizes his thoughts. This concept recognizes

---

23 V. Badikov in Iurii Olesha, Izbrannoe, Moscow, 1974, pp. 567-68.
28 Ibid.
29 M. O. Chudakova, Masterstvo Iuriia Oleshii, Moscow, 1972, p. 62.
30 Ibid., p. 87.
the deliberate relationship between his writing and cinema which is noted by others who, nonetheless, do not analyze *Strogii iunosha.*

One of the few critics to devote real attention to *Strogii iunosha* is Kazimiera Ingdahl. Ingdahl, in her study *A Graveyard of Themes: The Genesis of Three Key Works by Iurii Olesha,* treats *Strogii iunosha* as one of Olesha's most significant works. She understands the complexity of the content of Olesha's script, as well as the way in which this made many of the author's contemporaries uncomfortable with the text. She explains that the work's ambiguity stems from the fact that 'even though it is written in the spirit of Socialist Realism it departs considerably from its conventions.'

Ingdahl analyzes the scenario in greater depth, revealing that 'Olesha conveys the illusion [...] that Fokin's capitulation to Stepanov is an independent act on a higher moral level', rather than presenting it as subservience. Her view is succinctly expressed in these two sentences: 'Olesha's statement that all the characters [...] curb their desires out of "respect for each other" appears to be an out and out euphemism. What dictates their suppression of desires is submission to the genius.' Similarly, looking at the willingness of the Doctor's wife, Masha, and his parasitical friend, Tsitronov, to put up with Stepanov's high-handed attitudes, and their disinclination to abandon him, she finds that Olesha appears to

---


33 Ibid., p. 114.

34 Ibid., pp. 115-16.
be saying that 'obedience and a lack of freedom can also bring comfort and a sense of well-being.' There is a very different factor at work here from that of respect and self-sacrifice in the face of genius.

Ingdahl takes Strogii iunosha to be Olesha's attempt to resolve his problems as an artist in terms of ethics. She reads the message as being that 'the artist must not listen to his poetic voice and allow himself to be (mis)led by a vision which conflicts with what society decrees.' Although this is true on one level, I perceive there to be a deeper level, as discussed in Chapter 4, on which Olesha is making use of veiled irony to subvert the apparent messages of his text. Ingdahl's harsh judgement that 'the poor aesthetic qualities of the "play" reflect Olesha's final choice, the strategy of compromise, adaption, and submission' is therefore, I consider, applicable only superficially. Although she offers the assertion that some passages cannot be translated on to the screen, this point is not developed. This is hardly surprising given that her focus is literature and she does not appear to have seen the film.

Aside from Denise J. Youngblood, who notes in passing that Room 'succeeded in completing (but not releasing) what can only be called an avant-garde film', there are a few other commentators who take the film into account. Richard Taylor refers to the film and notes that it was banned 'because it confronted in a politically unacceptable way the question of inequalities in Soviet

---

35Ibid., p. 115
36Ibid., p. 117
37Ibid.
38Ibid., p. 116.
life and both director and scriptwriter were disgraced', even though it was checked at every stage and was completed. However, Taylor's consideration is limited to this and he pays no attention to the fate of the manuscript. Jay Leyda is more cryptic, stating that 'there was sympathy' when the film was banned and those working on it were reprimanded, 'but for once the punishment fitted the crime.' He also notes that 'realistic comedies' such as Strogii iunosha were an embarrassment in comparison with lighter, more humorous films such as la liubliu.

Another author to refer to Strogii iunosha is concerned with Iurii Ekel'chik, the cameraman on Room's film. In his 1962 book on Ekel'chik, R. Il'in finds fault with the film not only for its flawed ideological content which, in true Soviet fashion, he sees as 'ni chem inym, kak grubaia karikatura na sovetskuiu deistvitel'nost' i sovetskuiu molodezh', na komsomol', but also for what he calls its 'contrived' form. Although Il'in grants that Room's and Ekel'chik's formal experiments worked, he asks at what price. Similarly, he wonders what the point


42 Ibid. la liubliu was directed by Leonid Lukov and released in 1936 by the Kiev film factory.

An advertisement by A. Klement'ev for forthcoming Kiev studio sound films includes the following films: Strogii iunosha, la liubliu and Aerograd (discussed below), as well as Odnazhdyi letom, Intrigan, Zastava u chertova broda, Polovod' and Prometei (discussed in Chapter Seven). See: Kino, 5 September 1935, no. 41 (693), p. 4 and the next page of this chapter.


44 Ibid., p. 27.
Poster for future films from the Kiev and Odessa Ukrainfil'm studios
of all the creative and financial extravagance was, given the film's 'extremely crude deviations from the style of Socialist Realism'.

Irina Grashchenkova, arriving at Strogii iunosta through her work on Room rather than Olesha, makes some perceptive points about the screenplay, as well as claiming that as a result of the collaboration of Olesha, Room and the actress Ol'ga Zhizneva, there came about one of the most original and refined Soviet films, a 'Fil'm-sfinks'. Unlike the majority of critics, discussed in Chapter Five, Grashchenkova does not find the screenplay to be too dry and schematic in its construction. On the contrary, she feels that there is an abstract idea underlying the work, but sees that this is fleshed out by an aesthetically rich layer of creative fiction. In her eyes the work comprises 'chistaia materiiia mysli, odetaia sil'noi krasnoi plot'iu zrimoi, pochti osiasemoi prozy.'

Grashchenkova is convinced that it is Olesha's literary style which makes the work a success. She writes that his treatment of the themes is like that of a stills photographer or film cameraman who imparts a particular tonality and a sense of the fantastic to a film, thereby preventing it from seeming merely odd or

---

45Ibid. The last part is a quotation from Tkach's 'Postavlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma"' cited above.

46Irina Grashchenkova, 'Tsvety zapozdalye', Rodina, 1994, no. 5, pp. 90-94 (p. 93). For more on Zhizneva and her roles in Room's films see Chapter Three, note 30. Grashchenkova also calls Strogii iunosta a 'fil'm-sfinks' in her more recent publication, the introduction to extracts from Isai Lelikov's first notebook; see: Abram Room, Isai Lelikov, 'Mezhdu strokoi i kadrom. Na s'emmakh fil'ma "Strogii iunosa"', Iskusstvo kino, 1996, no. 11, pp. 92-107 (p. 92). For more on this article see the Preface.

Grashchenkova appreciates that Olesha has constructed his script in the form of a discussion. She further identifies that Room has managed 'kinematograficheski realizovat' etu formu disputa, nakopit' konfliktност', vyrazit' diskussionnost'.\textsuperscript{48} It is this, she explains, which gives the film an atmosphere of tension (although there is very little action and actual confrontation in the plot). This is achieved, she explains, through the montage, contrasting tempos, the polyphony of the film's music and by the skill of the cameraman.\textsuperscript{50}

Grashchenkova is equally perceptive about the work's content, grasping the extent to which the screenplay's ambiguities and contradictions reflect Olesha's own sense of uncertainty. The form of \textit{Strogii iunosha} also reflects this duality: 'V stsenarii svoei osoboi zhizn'iu zhil nepovtorimyi, protivorechivyi etiko-esteticheskii mir pisatelia.\textsuperscript{51} Like the text, its author is unable to commit himself to communist ideals, or to condemn all things from the pre-communist society he grew up in; therefore, Grashchenkova implies here, Olesha tries to combine the two in his work.\textsuperscript{52}

Grashchenkova places a great deal of emphasis on the shared creative vision in the literary and screen versions of \textit{Strogii iunosha}. Equally, she stresses the inescapable change a shift in medium brings about, yet emphasizes that the spirit of the original creation remains despite this: 'Mir literatury, prokhodia skvoz' rezhissuru, stanovilsia mirom ekrana, no ostavalsia mirom literatury.\textsuperscript{53} She

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 155.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., pp. 161-62.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p. 162.
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., p. 137.
\textsuperscript{52}This is precisely Olesha's misjudgement, as he succeeds in pleasing nobody and offending many.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., p. 138.
identifies one of the specific differences as the altered narrative style: 'Rovnoe, nepreryvnoe stsenarnoe povestvovanie [...] prevratilos' v preryvistoe, slagaiushcheesia iz zon dramaturgicheskogo sgushcheniia i razrezheniia povestvovanie ekrannoe.' However, she insists that the film remains as much Olesha's as Room's. The difference in the fates of the two versions of Strogii iunosha is summarized by Grashchenkova in the following, almost fatalistic, words: 'literatura priniala udivitel'nyi mir etogo stsenariia, a ekran otverg.' Her unelaborated implication is that it is precisely the change in medium, and the concomitant stylistic alterations, which led to the banning of the film.

Jerry Heil is another scholar who analyzes Room's film in great detail and emphasizes its closeness to Olesha's vision. In a general article on Russian writers and the cinema Heil mentions Strogii iunosha, following in Grashchenkova's footsteps by writing that Room had a keen perception of Olesha's personality and of his creative output. There, Heil states that: 'Room's film very considerably adds to, and explicates, several aspects of Olesha's polysemic and ideologically ambiguous script.' Heil, writing in the United States in the mid-1980s rather than the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, places his emphasis on a different aspect from Grashchenkova. He identifies Strogii iunosha as 'a very good example of what Soviet film makers were capable of doing in the mid-1930s' and simultaneously as 'an edifying example of what was not permitted by the Party during this period as well.' Heil treats the banning of the film purely as a

---

54Ibid., p. 167.
55Ibid., p. 166.
56Ibid., p. 174.
58Ibid.
political act specific to its particular time and place, without addressing the issue of the script's publication.

In his monograph *No List of Political Assets: The Collaboration of Iurii Olesha and Abram Room on "Strogii iunosha" [A Strict Youth (1936)]*, published in 1989, Heil again concentrates on the film, giving the principle aims of his work as being 'to demonstrate that the value of Olesha's text is enhanced by considering its raison d'être, its filmed rendition' and to draw attention to the neglected film. He spells out unambiguously his view that the film is more interesting than the script indicates.

Heil refers to the script's ideological problems, pointing out specifically that it 'presents an ideal but it cannot conform to the official concept of the ideal' and that, although it 'is not in overt political adversity [...] it does present a multifarious psychological profile, emanating from its creators, and its surface transparency attracts attention while it obscures an intricate pattern of contrary meanings.' In this work Heil does at least raise the issue of the text's publication and the film's banning, as well as offer some suggestions as to the reasons for this discrepancy in the works' fates. A passing comment on Dmitrii Dorliak, the actor playing the 'strogii iunosha', suggests that his background may have brought him, and thereby the film, into political disfavour. Dorliak was descended from refugees of the French Revolution and his mother had been a lady-in-waiting at the last Romanov court. Heil adds, however, that strangely enough Dorliak's

---


60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., p. 3
mother was also a prominent figure in Soviet times at the Moscow State Conservatory, thereby reducing the likelihood that this was the root of the problem. Much more significantly, and convincingly, Heil writes that 'Olesha was given "his director", though this fortunate circumstance proved to be a collective error in political judgement by 1936. It is this shift in the political climate which Heil regards as holding the key to the banning of Room's Strogii iunosha.

In general no explicit and detailed discussion is offered by critics to explain the apparent discrepancy between the banning of Room's film of Strogii iunosha and the fact that, despite criticism, no major problem was foreseen with Olesha's experimental template for the project. As far as there are passing indications offered by two analysts of Strogii iunosha, Heil and Grashchenkova, these seem to offer contradictory reasons for the differing fates of the text and the film. The latter suggests without supporting argument that it is the difference in medium which defines contrasting outcomes: the nature of cinema could not help but make more obvious and concrete those things which were thematically unsound in Olesha's writing. The notion that differences in the nature of film and literature may have this kind of effect will be explored in the third section of this

---

62Ibid., p. 4.

63Ibid., p. 3. Heil also identifies the political climate as the reason why the film was banned rather than destroyed, as might have been expected:

'How could this film have been made? [...] As the film was produced in Odessa and Kiev, the politically sensitive administrative oversight was less stringent than it would have been in Moscow or Leningrad, where many people were swiftly learning to heed the political "weather vane". It is important to remember, too, that the production history [...] covered a two-year period (mid-1934 to mid-36), when the ideologues of the Stalinist era had not yet thoroughly subjected the arts to Party-line politics.' Ibid., p. 64.
chapter. The next section will examine the background to Heil's un-argued inference that it was the changing circumstances of Soviet politics and the impact of that change on the cultural sphere which caused the film to be banned whereas the written text had not been.

Soviet politics and culture: the transition of the late 1920s to mid-1930s

Olesha wrote *Strogii iunosha* in 1934, the year in which a major change of direction took place in the field of Soviet culture. That shift reflected a move towards more directed instrumentalization of the arts for political ends. Heil's suggestion, that it was the change in the political and cultural climate between 1934 and 1936 which caused the film to be banned while the 'p'esa dla kinematografa' was not, must be understood in this context, meaning that it is the new ideological context which makes the film unacceptable. The purpose of the present section is to outline the changes which occurred, expanding and exploring Heil's passing assumption in context.

The creative arts in the Soviet Union were transformed in the 1930s. Between 1917 and the late 1920s, a period of vibrant experimentation and rivalry mostly sympathetic to the Revolution prevailed. This artistic flourishing above all captured the condition of individual dislocation in a time of immense social upheaval. After 1928, however, the creative arts were ever more dominated by Party demands and Party organization.
For the film industry, the significant event of this period was the Party Conference on Cinema, which took place from 15-21 March 1928. It was a key episode in the history of Soviet film as it openly called for the cinema to play a more clearly agitational role for the Party. Attention was also drawn to the fact that to convey their messages effectively to the largest number of viewers, films must be made with mass accessibility in mind. On the second day of the conference, a letter was written and signed by Room and seven other film directors, expressing the view that Sovkino, the film organization which had been established in 1924 to focus Party and government attention and finances on cinema and to unify the industry, was more concerned with commercial than with political success. The directors felt that Soviet filmmakers should stop trying to imitate the work of those in the West and concentrate, instead, on increasing the ideological content and propagandistic effectiveness of their films. The letter recommended that a body, directly linked to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, should be set up to guide the film industry in its ideological direction. It should comprise two sections, one responsible for political planning in filmmaking, and the other for the economic realization of these plans.

---


65All but one of the other names are those of major figures in the history of Soviet cinema: Grigorii Aleksandrov, Grigorii Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eizenshtein and Sergei Iutkevich; Aleksei Popov was the only signatory who did not achieve lasting fame. Ibid., pp. 205-06.
Despite the various subsequent steps taken towards reorganization, by 1930 it was still felt that the Soviet film industry needed reconstruction. Then, in December 1931, the Party decreed that Soviet cinema should be put 'on to Bolshevik tracks'. In April 1932 it called for the reorganization of all cultural organizations, which continued throughout 1933. Finally, in 1934, in line with the centralization of all the other arts, the first Union of Film Workers was established.

The culmination of the process of increasing Party control over the arts was the elaboration of the doctrine of Socialist Realism at the First All-Union Congresses of the artistic unions, marking the start of a new era. The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers of 1934 is given detailed discussion in relation to Olesha and Strogii iunosha in Chapter Five. It was a difficult and important moment for the writer, who had to justify himself and his work, in ideological terms.

Clearly, given all of the above, the artistic and political ground was constantly shifting under Olesha's feet, from the time of his first ideas for the work that came to be Strogii iunosha to its completion. The congresses and conferences of 1934 and 1935 are manifestations of the ideological and organizational transitions taking place. Heil's inference, therefore, that changes in Soviet political circumstances and their impact on the arts can explain the different fates of the scenario and the film Strogii iunosha, certainly has validity. It is possible that, whereas in mid-1934 there was still some scope for the

---

66 Ibid., pp. 283-85.
67 Ibid., p. 315.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., p. 316.
publication of a possibly ambiguous literary text, it is the entrenchment of the principles outlined in 1934 and 1935, by mid-1936, which could explain the banning of Room's film.

Film and literature: the nature of the medium

The changed political circumstances of the Soviet Union in the 1930s and the consequent impact on the arts offer a clear hypothesis for explaining the divergent fates of the two elements of the experimental 'p'esa dlia kinematografa'. However, there may also be reason to consider that the intrinsic nature of literature and of cinema also played a role. If this is the case, then Olesha's attempt to create a hybrid form must be said to have failed because, rather than achieving fusion, the experiment would have succumbed to the inherent differences generated by the discrete forms. The features of film, it might be supposed, simply transformed what was deliberately ambiguous on the page into something else, something more concrete and unsubtle. It is this notion of the innate differences between the forms which can be used to explore Grashchenkova's suggestion that the screen resisted Strogii iunosha.

The present section will outline the basis for seeing the differences in medium as a potential explanation for the discrepancy in the official reception of the two elements of the project. To do this I will examine various views on film adaptation of literature, as this is where analysis of the differences between the media is focused. As will be seen, the emphasis on the nature of film and the importance of being 'true' to it, as advocated by many film theorists including, notably, the early Soviet contributors to the field, may be misguided. Likewise the limited idea that a 'true' adaptation is impossible because the qualities of literature do not translate may be equally misguided. Most germane to the case of Strogii
Iunousha is Iurii Lotman's concept of equivalence, whereby the filmmaker who aims to 'transcode' a literary text clearly must find filmic equivalents for the meanings expressed in the literary text. Both literature and film are narrative languages with a variety of possibilities for creating syntheses of form and content. There are, however, clear differences between those languages and the ways in which they work.

From its inception film theory has naturally tended to emphasise the visual qualities of film. This approach to film analysis has valued the technical and cinematographic aspects of cinema over other features, such as composition, drama, acting and, later, sound. The trend seems to have developed from the early years of cinema because of a desire to establish the medium as an art form in its own right. Doubts had been expressed that 'anything which could, by the wildest stretch of the imagination, be called art' might emerge from cinema. The essence of this view was that film should be regarded as no more than recorded drama: film merely mechanically reproduces that which occurs in front of the camera. This idea was rejected by film theorists, in particular the Hungarian Béla Balázs (who was also a script writer, poet and film critic) and some of the

---


72 See: ibid., p. 9.

Balázs specifically argued that film was a new art which produced rather than reproduced. To reinforce this concept Balázs discussed the visual side of cinema. Seeking to put distance between cinema and the notion that it was no more than a recording of a dramatic performance, Balázs drew on fine art theory to promote the notion that it was not the internal content that mattered for artistic purpose, but the way in which it was formed in the given material, whether paint, marble or celluloid. The most important aspect of cinema was the way in which the means of filmmaking could be used to impose a particular design on the reality of whatever was placed in front of the camera. In all of this the art form is determined by the technical materials involved: the camera and the celluloid which runs through it.

Lev Kuleshov, in 1917, was the first film director and theorist to use the term 'montage'. By this he was referring to the principle of composing a film by editing together various fragments to create a series of united images. He saw this process of composition as forming the essence of cinema, and as a technique for imparting clarity and emotional impact to a narrative. He used the technique to wonderful effect in his 1924 satire Neobychainye prikliuchenija Mistera Vesta

---


v strane bol'shevikov. Kuleshov proved to be a great influence on many other great Soviet and non-Soviet filmmakers, including Vsevolod Pudovkin.

Pudovkin used his own style of montage, a technique of dynamic and often discontinuous editing. In his films he fused his innovative methods with literary and stage tradition, in particular realist style and elements from the psychological school of acting. As in his famous Gor'kii adaptation of 1926, Mat', Pudovkin takes individual heroes and puts them in historical, mass contexts, but with little reference to historical figures. In complete contrast the experimental director Dziga Vertov, a committed Constructivist, hated all fiction film. He believed, instead, in 'catching life unaware' through a documentary approach, as exemplified in Chelovek s kinoapparatom of 1929. Vertov emphasized the social utility of film, believing that cinema was an autonomous art and one which everyone could understand. He saw it as a means of educating the masses away from 'bourgeois' melodramas and towards non-acted films which would reveal revolutionary truths.

Today, however, Sergei Eizenshtein is the director most readily evoked by the word 'montage', although he was neither the inventor of the concept, nor the first to use it. Eizenshtein saw montage not as something exclusive to film, but as a technique already existing in other arts, particularly painting (for example...
Leonardo da Vinci's planned *The Deluge* and literature (for instance, Milton's *Paradise Lost*). The technique is evident in his films of the 1920s, *Stachka* (1924), *Bronenosets Potemkin* (1925), *Oktiabr'* (1928) and *Staroe i novoe* (1929). Eizenshtein's ideas of montage treat it not as a series of logically connected shots, but as a *juxtaposition* of shots. Eizenshtein referred to this kind of film as 'intellectual cinema', intending it to convey abstract ideas rather than a narrative. For Eizenshtein the strength of montage lies in the fact that 'it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator.'

The great Soviet film theorists and film makers were so adamantly committed to their visual art with its rapidly developed array of techniques that they took a stand against the misuse of sound technique in 1928. They were concerned that its advent might detract from the artistic character claimed for film and return it to the apparently barren lands of drama. Eizenshtein, Pudovkin and Aleksandrov called for the 'contrapuntal' use of sound in which the desired effect would be achieved through a sharp discord between the audible and the visual, rather than simplistic equivalence. In their statement the directors move beyond the bulk of film criticism which, as indicated above, has tended to elevate the visual at the expense of other dimensions.

---


82 Ibid., p. 18.

83 See: Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, p. 141

84 See: Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, pp. 13-59 (p. 34).

One of the most influential figures in critical literature on film, George Bluestone, wrote in this vein. He followed in the footsteps of Balázs in particular, but departed from him by placing emphasis on the viewer's reaction. Bluestone argued that the difference between film and literature induced, for example, by the different physical and technical means involved in their creation, is compounded by the distinction between the viewer's perception of the film's image and the reader's conceptualization of the written text's words in a 'mental image'.

The prime theoreticians of film include André Bazin and Christian Metz. Metz provided the first attempt to establish an analytical approach to narrative which was specific to cinema. The result was a codification of the 'specific signifying procedures' which constitute the 'syntagma' of cinematic narrative. However, the particular signifiers identified for this cinema-specific approach and the analytical framework to which they are essential have been found confusing, unclear and inadequate. Within all of this, it is the visual dimension which counts in defining narrative in the cinema as a set of signs. Bazin recognises a distinction between films in which the director imposes order through montage and those in which the director allows 'reality' to emerge through the use of long,

---

87 See André Bazin Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?. Paris, 1958, vol.1; and Christian Metz, Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, (transl. Michael Taylor), New York, 1974. Henceforth: Bazin, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? and Metz, Film Language.
88 Ibid., p.95.
continuous shots which would permit 'pre-existing relationships' to be revealed.\(^{90}\) This is, however, no more than a distinction between two approaches to editing and use of the camera, both founded on the assumption that image constitutes film. Such a view is taken to its extreme by Siegfried Kracauer, whose phenomenological approach equates the qualities of cinema entirely with those of photography and centres on the 'material phenomena' from which its emotional and intellectual content emerge (in contrast to the 'mental continuum' derived from literature).\(^{91}\)

As Victor Perkins suggests, this is a strain of criticism which threatens to exclude, for example, even D.W. Griffith, the director credited with inventing the vocabulary of cinema.\(^{92}\) Yet it is clear that such a vocabulary does exist, and it includes the use of the close-up, extreme long-shots, panning shots, split screens and parallel editing, montage and masking techniques (such as the iris and the dissolve). It was the Soviet directors and theorists who then gave it grammar, as Boris Eikhenbaum shows in his discussion of film-phrase as the elementary unit of film articulation. Synthesizing the contributions of the great practitioners from Kuleshov to Eizenshtein, Eikhenbaum demonstrates how the progressive use of film-phrase resembles literary narration.\(^{93}\)

\(^{90}\)See: Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, p.135 (my translation).


Literature provided source material for cinema from its outset. This gave rise to critical assessments that the latter diminished the former in adaptations. Cinematic versions of works of literature were found to be guilty of a number of crimes against the original, including omission, simplification, exaggeration, destruction and lack of originality. Aside from the very literal comparative approach which simply points out the differences between a film adaptation and the book upon which it is based, the essence of the charges against adaptations is found in discussion of storytelling or narrative.

At the heart of this discussion is the distinction between concept and percept, noted above, with reference to the work of Bluestone. The difference between literature and film is that the former can 'tell' things whilst the latter can 'show' them. Seymour Chatman gives the following example: the author can write 'A woman entered the room.' At this point, stripped of adjectives and other detail, the reader will conceive an image of a woman to whom he or she attributes unstated characteristics. The filmmaker, in contrast, must inevitably show the woman entering the room and supply full description and detail — as Chatman puts it, the equivalent of a 'potentially unlimited verbal paraphrase: A woman entered a room with a Roman nose, high cheekbones, and blond hair piled elaborately on her head (etc., etc.). Conversely, the written word cannot dictate images no matter how much detail is provided in description. Each medium has intrinsic qualities which separate it from the other.


This can be seen with the French nouveau roman which tried to provide every conceivable detail of a scene. Alain Robbe-Grillet is one exponent of this method; he has written novels, such as La
These inherent differences led many, such as David Bordwell, to infer that film can have no narrator, even where, as with Bordwell, they concede that film can have narration (in that the viewer constructs something akin to a narrated understanding by watching the film). However, while the essential differences of form cannot be denied, the suggestion that film is without narration or narrator because of its visual character has been challenged since the 1970s. In 1972, for example, Perkins criticized the emphasis on the visual and on technique in film analysis which led 'the orthodoxy' to present narrative as 'an alien form' which film could 'translate and annotate but not absorb as part of its creative mechanism.' He argued that film criticism would have to take into account the film as a whole, recognizing that storytelling informed 'the character of the medium used in the telling' rather as differences in form and medium did not exclude narrative from 'poetry, novel, strip-cartoon, or theatre, [and] it cannot reasonably be seen as hostile or irrelevant to cinema.' The film is the sum of the decisions taken by the director regarding what to include and what to exclude, in which way, for how long and so forth.

Jalousie (1957), which are referred to as 'cinematic' because of their emphasis on the visual, as well as film scripts, including L'Année dernière à Marienbad (directed by Alain Resnais, 1961), which retain this technique of emphasizing images rather than ideas.

97See: David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, Madison, 1985; hereafter: Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film. Bordwell finds the Russian Formalist distinction between 'fabula' (the actual events of a story) and 'siuzhet' (the presentation of the story's events) indispensable to his theory of narration. Ibid., pp. 48-53.

98See: Perkins, Film as Film, p. 24.

99Ibid.
Since Perkins there have been serious efforts to address the question of narrative in film. Avrom Fleishman, for example, notes that even where form, in his view, still precludes true narration, there is a 'set of film practices' which 'produce the impression of narration, the narration-effect', while certain films make explicit use of narration either on screen or only on the soundtrack (with a voice-over).\textsuperscript{100} Seymour Chatman has gone further than this, arguing that alongside other forms of discourse often not considered, such as argumentation and description, narration occurs in film and, above all, derives from a narrator. Taking as his starting points criticism of Bordwell's position of constructed narration without a narrator, as well as Wayne C. Booth's discussion of the implied author, Chatman argues for recognition of implied and 'reconstructed' narration.\textsuperscript{101} From this he recommends that a distinction be made between the presenter and the inventor of a story. He explicitly takes the idea of narrator beyond the 'recorded human voice "over" the visual image track' treated by Fleishman (although voice-over can be one component of film narration).\textsuperscript{102} The implied author, in Chatman's terms, presents the story, whether by use of one specific 'teller' or many of them, or in combination with other parts of the 'composite' which is the 'cinematic narrator.'\textsuperscript{103} However, this composite is actually more the sum of narratorial devices and options than an actual narrator.


\textsuperscript{102}See: Chatman, \textit{Coming to Terms}, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., pp. 134-35.
Following from Chatman, again in the wake of Booth, James Griffith has put forward a 'neo-Aristotelean' approach.\textsuperscript{104} Whereas Chatman has an abstract narrator, Griffith, criticising the former, takes the inventor dimension of the narrator and sees both film and literature as capable of narration and, indeed, of being faithful to each other in terms of meaning and effect. The key lies in assessing the relevance and coherence of the narrative devices chosen by the creator of a film or a novel (or a poem etc.) from the range of available possibilities. The medium may be different, but the question of choices remains the same: '...' according to the material, technical, and formal choices the artist has made, what effects are necessary and what peculiar powers are possible?\textsuperscript{105} Film and literature alike draw on a set of instruments available to the medium in order to create the combination of form and content which most effectively achieve the desired artistic outcome.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, a proper understanding of film and literature will recognise that they possess different means for achieving the same, or similar, artistic ends.

This approach from the 1990s, and the critical canon from which it emerges, is implicitly linked to Olesha and Room's aims in making Strogii iunoshā: the combination of elements which would permit a narrative that worked simultaneously as an independent artistic creation in both media. It also focuses on the possibility of harmonious blending and on the inherent differences which


\textsuperscript{105}Ibid. p. 71.

\textsuperscript{106}This is in line with Boris Eikhenbaum's writing in the 1920s that turning literature into cinema is neither to stage it nor to illustrate it, but to translate it into film language. See: Boris Eikhenbaum, 'Literature and Cinema (1926)' in Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt, eds., \textit{Russian Formalism: A collection of articles and texts in translation}, Edinburgh, 1973, pp. 122-27 (p. 123).
the two material forms necessarily create. In terms of adaptation these include 'film's traditional difficulties' with time and space, abstraction and representation of the interior dimension of thought and emotion. In adaptation there are selections which determine the way in which the film represents the source novel and maintains its 'story' and supporting narrative; key issues may involve selection of plot-lines and sub-plots, characterization and compression of characters as well as structure and sequence.

Very often, despite the best intentions of those involved in making the film, elements of the film and especially its meaning may be distorted by the shift in medium. The restricted notion that faithful adaptation is precluded by the inherent qualities of literature is mistaken. Both media are narrative means which use a range of possibilities for melding content with form. However, the clear differences between them present difficulties when moving between one form and the other. It was this set of difficulties that Olesha was, in essence, trying to overcome by creating his 'new art form' combining literature and film.

It could well be, therefore, that the transition from written page to screen was not the intended successful fusion of means to the same end. Rather it was a transposition in which the shift from one medium, a type of literature, to another, film, altered the character of the work. Having assessed the nature of film, through predominant types of film theory, and the innate differences of form by reference to critical discussion of adaptation and narrative, it is clear that there is a basis for Grashchenkova's suggestion. It is conceivable that the difference in

---

107Chatman, Coming to Terms, p. 162.

medium may have caused, or contributed to, a difference in outcome for the two versions of Strogii iunosh.

The thesis: political context, nature of the medium and artistic intent as keys to the divergent fates of Strogii iunosh

The foregoing sections have examined the existing critical literature regarding Strogii iunosh and found that attention to this experiment in creating a new art form has been limited, that little of what exists addresses both the written and the filmic parts of the project and that, aside from recounting the official reasons for banning the film, there is almost no explanation offered as to why the book was published but the film was banned. The only explanations to emerge are those made in passing by Heil and Grashchenkova: the former that the changing political context can explain the differing fates, the latter that it was the shift in medium. Having treated the assumptions made in these undeveloped explanations in the remainder of this chapter it is clear that there are indeed grounds for exploring an answer to the question posed above: does the explanation for the different fates which befell the written and filmed versions of the new art form project lie in the changing Soviet context of the mid-1930s, or in the inherent differences in medium, or in both?

In order to answer the question posed this thesis will be developed in the following way: Chapters Two and Three will examine, respectively, the life and work of Iurii Olesha and of Abram Room, to provide the background to Strogii iunosh. The work will be viewed as Olesha's attempt, taken on by Room, to create a new art form which blends the literary with the visual. This involved Olesha's reconciling thematic and personal conflicts regarding the contradictory impulses of the old and the new worlds and the role of art and the artist within
them, notably in the key work for which he is known, Zavist'. Chapter Two looks at the way in which Olesha's expressed views on literature and his literary output changed to accommodate the Party's demands, as did his attitude to, and involvement with film. All of these elements had a significant impact on his career as a whole and are specifically relevant to an understanding of Strogii iunosha. The struggle to find a balance between aesthetic style and ideological content was to be a challenge in Strogii iunosha, the most experimental of Olesha's works for the cinema. Chapter Three establishes the way in which Room, singled out by Olesha for the project, was the ideal director for this experiment. One of the great directors of Soviet cinema in its silent age, Room, like Olesha, had a chequered career and is generally associated these days with one exceptional film, Tret'ia Meshchanskaia. The chapter shows Room's evolution in terms of both theme and cinematic innovation, setting the context for Strogii iunosha as the apex of the director's creative ambition.

Chapters Four and Five focus on the written version of Strogii iunosha. The first of these considers how Olesha used the text of the screenplay in his quest to achieve a compromise between his personal and creative concerns, on one hand, and the pressures of the Party and Socialist Realism, on the other. This analysis of Olesha's experiment with what he called a 'p'esa dlia kinomatografia' treats plot, theme and characterization in the light of the author's effort to incorporate the requirements of Socialist Realism in his work without succumbing entirely to the imposition of either a political or an artistic model. Chapter Five examines the contemporary critical response to Olesha's text and the way in which, despite initially positive responses to a reading of it, early newspaper and journal reviews, as well as voices at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, were largely negative about both form and content. The chapter concludes, however, with Olesha's own defence against the criticism made at the
Congress, as well as the views of some critics, that the failings were matters of misjudgement which would be corrected in the film realization of the text.

The subsequent chapters deal with Room's film version of the experimental project. Chapter Six examines the director's accomplishment in making the film itself. The distinctive qualities of the film provide the focal point: the use of the camera, the use of sound and the mise en scène. Room was faithful to Olesha's template, despite giving the film a rich texture which goes beyond the written text. However, as Chapter Seven reveals, in his artistic success Room only increased critical opprobrium, leading to the film's being banned. Taking those elements identified in the notice to ban the film as its starting point, the chapter considers production, content and form in Room's Strogii iunosha.

The final substantive chapter of the thesis uses the previously unconsidered production notebooks and notes for the film, made by the director's assistant and one of his confidants, to show precisely the way in which the filmmaker's understanding of Olesha's text and intentions consciously expanded those very elements in the screenplay which had troubled critics, making the experiment a more problematic project than it had been. This is shown by analysis of the key issues of content and theme in Strogii iunosha, above all in the treatment of conflicting ideologies within a changing society, and the need, in that situation, for reassessment and reconciliation. My examination of these notebooks in Chapter Eight makes it clear that Room, in his desire to be true to Olesha, embellished the features judged to have been flaws in the written version of Strogii iunosha.

In the conclusion, Chapter Nine, the propositions associated with Heil and Grashchenkova in this introduction are reconsidered in the light of the material examined in the thesis as a whole. While it is undeniable that the changing
context and, ultimately, the shift from one form to another, had some impact on the film, the answer to the question posed above is that neither Grashchenkova's nor Heil's suggestion offers an adequate explanation. Thus the original question remains: why was the film banned when the literary version was not? As I will argue, the evidence presented in Chapter Eight from the production notebooks shows that it is Room's interpretation which ensured that the film would be banned. This is specifically because the director's profound understanding of, and sympathy towards, Olesha's Strogii iunosha made him emphasize and build on the author's concerns. It is this fidelity and the attempt to give it clear, concrete realization which took the director beyond the written text in order to be true to it. In doing so he took it too far for critical and political acceptance.
CHAPTER 2

IURI OLESHA: BEFORE AND AFTER STROGII IUNOSHA

Strogii iunosha is Iurii Olesha's attempt to create a new art form, synthesizing the literary with the visual, whilst reconciling thematic opposites. It is entirely in character that Olesha should try an exercise of this kind, as will be seen in this chapter. Throughout his life and career he was obsessed by writing, yet he combined this with an equally intense fascination with visual phenomena, including the cinema. Olesha was driven by his individual creative temperament, yet, troubled by it, he strove (most often unsuccessfully) to subjugate it to collective political requirements. As he noted in his memoirs:

'Pust' ia pishu otryvki [...] Vse zhe eto kakaia-to literatura [...] mozhet byt', takoi psikhologicheskii tip, kak ia, i v takoe istoricheskoe vremia, kak seichas, inache i ne mozhet pisat' [...]'.

Olesha experimented with form, which resulted in an unusual style as well as a unique approach to writing for the cinema. His relationship with film, both as a viewer and as a scriptwriter, will be explored in the last two sections of this chapter, following a consideration of the stylistic and thematic qualities of his major work, the novel Zavist'. First of all, however, I shall look at Olesha's professional and personal experience as a writer.

---

1See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 343.
The development and decline of an inveterate writer

Iurii Olesha was compiling an autobiographical notebook of thoughts and reminiscences when he died in 1960. The title of that work, *Ni dnia bez strochki*, suggests that he never ceased to write, and that Olesha's desire to create never waned. Taking the same line as many others describing the author's career, Kenneth Brostrom records that during 'the Stalinist darkness, Olesha fell almost silent, apparently surviving on translations, a few second-rate stories, and film scenarios.' This reflects the prevailing view of Olesha's response to the political difficulties surrounding *Strogii iunosha*, as that of an artist trying to discipline his idiosyncratic creative style for Party purposes. It aptly presents Olesha as having subordinated his experimental and imaginative persona to that of the individual who sought to serve and be at one with the Soviet cause (the same Olesha who, in

---


1919, had parted ways with his monarchist parents to join the revolutionary cause.\(^4\) It is surprising, then, that in fact he wrote over three times more after *Strogii iunosh\a*, than before.\(^5\) Although this later creative period is clearly quantitatively more fruitful, the critical consensus, to which I adhere, is that the earlier one is qualitatively superior. While subsequent sections of this chapter will look at Olesha's development as a writer and film enthusiast — the vital elements en route to his attempting to create a new art form in *Strogii iunosh\a* — the present section provides an overview of his life and literary development and decline.

Iurii Karlovich Olesha was born in 1899 in Elizavetgrad, to middle class Polish Catholic parents. In 1902, the family moved to Odessa, a city which greatly


\(^5\)A. Belinkov, *Sdacha i gib\el' sovetskogo intelligenta. Iurii Olesha*, Moscow, 1991, p. 406. Here, Belinkov cites several examples of critics from the 1960s who have written that Olesha fell silent for a long period, before making his claim that this was never the case. Belinkov, a writer who spent eight years in prison for his work and then lived in exile, had an obsessive desire to prove that Olesha had 'sold out' by abandoning his literary principles and attempting to produce what the State demanded, as indicated by the title of his book. His point here is, however, an objectively valid and important one. The erroneous nature of the view that Olesha stopped writing for many years is highlighted in a very recent and long-awaited publication: Iurii Olesha, *Kniga proshchaniia*, Moscow, 1999. Hereafter: Olesha, *Kniga proshchaniia*. Compiled and annotated by Violetta Gudkova, this comprises Olesha's diary entries starting from 20 January 1930 until the end of his life (one was written on 20 December 1959, but most are not dated). Often very moving and revealing, they certainly testify to his unceasing literary output at a time when most assumed he had ceased writing, as alluded to in Gudkova's introduction, where she refers to him as 'budto by "umolknuvshii" pisate\l''. Violetta Gudkova, 'O Iurii Karloviche Oleshe i ego knige, vyshedshei bez vedoma avtora' in Olesha, *Kniga proshchaniia*, pp. 5-24 (p. 23).
coloured the boy's imagination. While he was still at school, before the Revolution, Olesha began to write poetry, filling a whole exercise book with what he later referred to as 'stishki', calling it 'Vinogradnye chashi'.\(^6\) In 1917 Olesha entered Novorossiisk University (subsequently Odessa State University), where he joined Odessan literary discussion groups through which he met Iļja Iļič, Valentin Kataev and Eduard Bagritskii. In 1919 Olesha rebelled against his background by volunteering for the Red Army, serving as a telephonist. He also worked as journalist and propagandist, or 'poet-agitator', ending up first in Kharkov and then, in 1922, in Moscow.\(^7\) There, the young writer joined the staff of Gudok, a successful railway journal. Other members included I'lf and Petrov, Kataev, Isaak Babel and Mikhail Bulgakov. Olesha took the pen name 'Zubilo', and proceeded to write popular, satirical verse. Two collections of Olesha's satirical verse were published; one in 1924, the other in 1927.

Far more significantly, however, 1927 saw the publication of Olesha's major work, the short novel Zavist'. This innovative and daring book, which I shall discuss in greater detail in the following section, reflects the author's reluctance to renounce his individualistic pre-revolutionary attitudes, his mixed feelings about the prospects of a radiant socialist future and his struggle to find a place for himself as a creative artist in an ideologically limiting society.

Although Zavist' was hailed as an impressive novel, critics soon began to perceive dubious ideological elements within it, and Olesha felt he had to demonstrate his political allegiance to socialism. 1928 saw the publication of his so-called novel for children (written in 1924), Tri tolstiaka, a fairytale story of


\(^7\)'Poet-agitator' is Olesha's own ironic term used later. See: Rosengrant, No Day without a Line, p. viii.
revolution, which was hugely popular and could cause no offence. This was followed by the publication, in 1929, of a stage version of *Zavist*, *Zagovor chuvstv*. As discussed below, in this work Olesha removed many of the ambiguities and innovations of *Zavist*, in an attempt to display his ideological solidarity to the socialist cause.

The struggle to fit in with the ever more restrictive demands made of Soviet writers led, also in 1929, to the writing of what is probably Olesha’s most famous story, ‘*Vishnevaia kostochka*’. The themes are those of imagination (the

---

8 *Tri tolstiaka* was first staged in 1930 at MKhAT, as adapted by Olesha, directed by Konstantin Stanislavskii; it was performed as a ballet in 1935, and at other times as an opera and a radio drama, as well as having been filmed four times, three times as animations, and once, in 1966, by Aleksei Batalov and Iosif Shapiro, as a feature film. A film has also been made of Olesha’s 1922 story ‘*Angel*’. The film, made in 1967 by Andrei Smirnov, is also called *Angel* and forms the first part of the two-part *Nachalo nevedomogo veka* (the second part is Larissa Shepit’ko’s *Rodina elektrichestva*), which was shelved until 1988. ‘*Angel*’ has been published, with an introduction by Serafima Blokh, in Chast’ rechi, no. 5, 1983-4, pp. 137-44, and the article ‘Rasskaz Iuriia Olesh’ “*Angel*” (opyt proverochnoi atributsii), by G. V. Ermolenko and V. V. Badikov, has been published in Filologicheskie nauki, 1983, no. 6, pp. 66-70. For more on *Nachalo nevedomogo veka* see: Vladimir Ognev, ‘Dvadtsat’ let nazad…’, Iskusstvo kino, 1988, no. 1, pp. 32-39 and V. Mikhalkovich, ‘Zvuchaniia i znacheniiia’, Iskusstvo kino, 1988, no. 1, pp. 39-43.

9 *Zagovor chuvstv* was first staged in March 1929 at the Vakhtangov Theatre, which, in 1928, had suggested to Olesha that he adapt his novel for the stage. The play was directed by A. D. Popov. For further details of this and other productions of the play see: Iuri Olesh, *P’esy Stat’ o teatre i dramaturgii*, Moscow, 1968, pp. 375-78. Henceforth: Olesha, *P’esy*

artist, represented by the narrator Fedia) set against action (society, represented by Avel', Fedia's literal-minded, pragmatic neighbour). The story is, essentially, Olesha's plea to be allocated a valid place as a creative artist in a society preoccupied with Five Year Plans. Superficially, it is simply the story of Fedia's (the narrator's) unrequited love for Natasha, who loves Boris Mikhailovich. Fedia fantasizes that he will plant a cherry stone and a tree will grow as a symbol of his love in the very place that is actually intended to be used for a far less romantic, but more practical architectural construction. The author is trying to justify his literary methods and style by attempting to provide an empirical explanation for his kind of vision, whilst also employing that very vision to create the story itself.

'Vishnevaia kostochka' is one of Olesha's most interesting works, both stylistically and as an expression of his dilemma as a creative artist in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s.

Olesha's first play not based on another work was Spisok blagodeianii, written and published in 1931. It, too, tries to resolve mixed feelings towards contemporary reality, this time through the drawing up of lists — one of the 'crimes' perpetrated against the individual, and the other of 'blessings' bestowed, by the new Soviet society. The lists are compiled by an actress, Elena Goncharova, who longs for the supposed artistic freedom and chance for individual success offered by life in Europe. However, when she actually

---


11This was first staged by Vsevolod Meierkhol'd at his Moscow theatre in 1931. For more details see: ibid., pp. 378-80.

12Throughout Olesha's writing, Europe plays a symbolic role, representing all that the Soviet Union has theoretically rejected, such as personal ambition, glory and wealth. For example, Zavist' raises
emigrates to Paris, Goncharova is quickly disillusioned, seeing that she misjudged the harsh reality; she soon rejects capitalism in favour of the benefits brought about by the 1917 Revolution in Russia. Tragically, while taking part in a workers' demonstration (in order to express her solidarity with the proletariat), she is murdered by a Russian emigre.

In Spisok blagodeianii, Goncharova explains her dilemma in words which are entirely applicable to Olesha's own situation: 'ia chelovek starogo mira, kotoryi sporit sam s soboi.'\(^{13}\) Her unconvincing change of heart does nothing to alter the impression that Olesha is still struggling to convince himself that the gains brought about by the Revolution outweigh the losses. Like Goncharova, the issue of Europe versus the Soviet Union though the concept of fame, highlighting the idea that in Europe one can attain glorious renown easily, whereas in Russia there are only certain parameters within which a person should aim to rise above the masses. Other references can be found in the 1928 story, 'Ia smotriu v proshloe' ('Mal'chik byl v sem'e — evropeets', see Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 222) and in two stories from 1929, 'Chelovecheskii material' ('Ia [...] khvataiu za gorlo togo menia, [...] kotoryi dumaet, chto rasstoianie mezhdu nami i Evropoi est' tol'ko geograficheskoe rasstoianie', ibid., p. 229) and 'Moi znakomyi', ('Neuzheli on tverdo ubezhden, chto rasstoianie mezhdu nami i Evropoi est' tol'ko geograficheskoe rasstoianie', ibid., p. 233). In his 1930 article 'Tema intelligenta', Olesha explains that the theme of Spisok blagodeianii is 'Evropa dukha' (see: 'Tema intelligenta' in Olesha, P'esy, p.265). This abstract 'ideia Evropy' represents the concept of the supremacy of individualistic striving (see: ibid., p. 262). Revealingly, the complete article (reproduced only in part in P'esy) was originally published in Stroika, 1930, no. 3, with a disclaimer from the editorial board distancing itself from Olesha's ideas. Scene four of the play sets out the issue of the polarization of Europe and the USSR through the hypothetical proposition that if tomorrow there were a revolution in Poland or Germany, for example, then that part of Europe would become part of the Soviet Union, therefore Soviet territory is not a geographical concept.

\(^{13}\)Olesha, P'esy, p. 99.
Olesha was torn between the desire for personal glory as a writer (and the pull of the past) and the need to feel accepted as one of the builders of the Soviet future.

As discussed in Chapter One, 1932 was a turning point for the history of Russian literature in general. It was also a turning point specifically for the work of Iurii Olesha. The beginnings of the method known as Socialist Realism can be traced back to this year, as can Olesha's plans for the play which turned out to be his 'play for the cinematograph', Strogii iunosha. That same year, at the All-Union Conference of Playwrights, in Leningrad, Olesha gave a speech which touched on many issues relating to the question of the artistic 'reformation', or 'perestroika', of writers and artists. Of himself, he says: 'Ia khochu perestroit'sia. Konechno, mne ochen' protivno, chrezvychaino protivno byt' intelligantom.' He then speaks even more melodramatically: 'Ia mechtaiu strastno, do voia, do slez mechtaiu o sile, katoria dolzhna byt' v khudozhnikhe voskhodiashchego klassa, kakovym ia khochu byt'.' In his response to a survey in issue two for 1932 of the Leningrad journal Rabochii i teatr, Olesha says almost the same as in his speech at the Conference of Playwrights, attempting to convey as forcefully as possible his dedication to the task in hand.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Iurii Olesha, 'Rech' na dispute "Khudozhnik i epokha"', in ibid., p. 268. For a 1932 caricature of Olesha, his desire to reform himself and his 'unnecessary themes' see the illustration on the next page.

\(^15\)Ibid.

\(^16\)Iurii Olesha, 'Chto ia napishu k XV godovshchine Oktiabria', in ibid., p. 287 (originally published in Rabochii i teatr, 1932, no. 2).
A caricature depicting Olesha and his 'unnecessary themes'
Both passages also contain very similar sentiments to those expressed by the writer character in Olesha's transparently autobiographical, unfinished fragment 'Koe-chto iz sekretnykh zapisei poputchika Zanda', published in 1932.17

'Koe-chto iz sekretnykh zapisei poputchika Zanda' is written with great bitterness and deals with themes which are very close to the author's heart. It is the story of a writer, Zand, and his attempt to find a compromise between his pre-Revolutionary feelings and perceptions and the types of literature required to help construct a 'radiant', socialist future. The ideas in this fragment were also reworked in other unfinished pieces, including 'Chernyi chelovek', which appeared originally in the journal 30 dnei.18 There, Olesha discusses his current work, a play, whose protagonist is a writer, also called Zand, who 'mechtaet byt' pisatelem voskhodishchego klassa.19 Zand explains that there are certain themes which may be attractive to a writer, but which are of no use, and even damaging, to contemporary society. One such theme is death, which preoccupies him. He asserts that this kind of theme, the 'chernaia tema-iashcheritsa', should be eliminated from the writer's notebooks.20

The eponymous 'Chernyi chelovek' character is the writer's cynical alter-ego.21 He represents all the non-socialist feelings and ideas Zand is fighting to
overcome in his work, and is cast as a non-believer, a man who cannot accept that a perfect, classless society is possible either in the near future, or at all. In both extracts this figure is set against another character, or other characters, who believe such a society is both possible and imminent. In a postscript to 'Chernyi chelovek', Olesha explicitly states that he is trying to create a dialectical drama, showing the quarrel between two points of view, that of the 'Chernyi chelovek' and of Zand.22

Seemingly afraid that people might not understand which side he is taking, Olesha affirms the official ideology, that: 'Mir dolzhen byt' perestroen na osnovakh sotsializma', and reiterates forcefully that he himself is 'za tekh, kto perestraivaet mir.'23 Having suffered much criticism for ambiguity in his work in the past, Olesha was trying to avoid similar accusations this time.

Evidently, the question of a writer's, and particularly his own, place in this period of transition from a class-dominated to a classless society was of supreme importance to Olesha. From the tone of desperation in his statements, as well as the extreme language he uses, it is also clear that Olesha was aware that only the right answer to such questions would do. He was conscious that he could not

22Olesha was reflecting the official line of the period that drama was an ideal medium for treating ideological issues. It is worth bearing in mind that Ivan Gronskii, editor of Izvestiya and chairman of the Organisational Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers, claimed, in a Pravda article of 1933 that Stalin had designated drama as the most important genre. He too endorsed this view, and made speeches singling out drama as the best literary medium for mass education. See: 'Zakliuchitelnaia rech' tov. I. M. Gronskogo', Novy mir. 1933, no. 2, p. 257, cited in Herman Ermolaev, Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934. The Genesis of Socialist Realism. New York, 1977, p. 142 (hereafter: Ermolaev, Soviet Literary Theories); and see footnote 13, p. 229 for further references.

afford to make any further political misjudgements at this critical stage in his career. Olesha felt the need to regain political credibility in official eyes and that, to do this, it was necessary to identify the important issues of the day — and then present and treat them appropriately in his work. As will be seen in later chapters, both the issues and their treatment proved to be problematic when it came to Strogii iunosha. For now, it is enough to note that Olesha's attempt to find the appropriate place for himself as a creative writer in this period of transition was to end unhappily.

Strogii iunosha saw Olesha trying to reconcile his desire to find an appropriate place in the building of a new society with his impulse to write creatively and to experiment in his writings. Even though he wanted to satisfy the needs of the Party, Olesha's personality meant that, for the moment at least, he was unable simply to address the themes the Party wished, in the way it wished. The themes could not be left without comment by the author. Even less could the creative artist accept a straightforward writing mission. Under pressure to write for the cinema, Olesha aimed to produce a new art form, rather than simply to deliver the scenario the system sought. When his written text was criticised, he defended it at the Writers' Congress, in 1934.\textsuperscript{24} The defence was ultimately not enough and, after the failure of Strogii iunosha, Olesha's career slipped into the shadows. Although he wrote extensively in the period after 1934, he ceased to write in the spirit of invention and experimentation. In doing so, he lost the thematic challenge to reconcile old and new which had been central to his major work.

After 1934, Olesha wrote sketches, biographical reminiscences, journalistic pieces and some ideologically correct literary criticism. In addition,

\textsuperscript{24}For more on the Congress see Chapter Five.
he produced some work of short fiction for popular magazines (universally disappointing and second-rate), as well as translations of the work of Turkmen and Ukrainian authors. Olesha did not break his connection with the cinema; on the contrary, as discussed in the section on scriptwriting below, between 1934 and 1942 he wrote and collaborated on several screenplays. It was in this context that, after the German invasion of the USSR in 1941, Olesha was evacuated with the Odessa Film Studio to Ashkhabad in Turkmenistan. He continued to write screenplays, but also started working as an agitator and propagandist again; he made about fifty contributions to radio broadcasts, in this vein.

After the Second World War, in 1946, Olesha returned to Moscow. He and his wife had to move from one friend's flat to another during this period as theirs had been reassigned during the war. Eventually, in 1954, they were able to settle in a modest apartment opposite the Tretiakov Gallery in the centre of Moscow. This came after Stalin's death, in an atmosphere of incipient political thaw. It was in this more relaxed political and personal situation, when he was also better off financially, that Olesha began working on Ni dnia bez strochki. His other major projects of the time include, in 1958, the fulfilment of a request by

---

25 Between 1934 and 1949, according to Victor Erlich, Olesha wrote many patriotic and ideologically correct pieces for newspapers and journals, 'but these tediously predictable and utterly humourless offerings were such a far cry from the unpretentious and lively jingles he had produced when both he and the century were young.' See: Erlich, Modernism and Revolution, p. 212.

26 If one includes aborted attempts and re-workings of other people's scripts, Olesha's archive at RGALI certainly indicates that, during this period, he worked on many more than just the eight or so scripts suggested by Rosengrant (Rosengrant, No Day without a Line, p. xiv); see below.


28 See Chudakova, Masterstvo Iuriiia Oleshi, p. 8.
the Vakhtangov Theatre to adapt Dostoevskii's novel Idiot for the stage. Then, in 1959, he adapted Chekhov's story 'Tsvety zapozdalye', also for the theatre. In addition to these achievements, he continued to work on Ni dnia bez strochki until his death.

Ni dnia bez strochki is testimony to Olesha's thirst for writing. Whether in response to the desire to meet official requirements or in the spirit of exploration and innovation, Olesha was committed to the act of writing. This can be seen in his frequent writing and re-writing of near identical portions of text. His writing virtually the same thing many times over, as with Isaak Babel', seems to have been a kind of graphomaniac, perhaps born of frustration as well as of perfectionism, perhaps an expression of an overwhelming physical need to write. This was a need which embraced all forms, from poetry to prose fiction, biography and drama.

The compulsion to write (in this case to make ends meet) was something Olesha made clear to others, such as Emilii Mindlin, who met Olesha, with Kataev, in Khar’kov, in 1921. Even at this early stage in his career, Olesha had

29 For more on this see: 'Roman i p’esa. (Ob instsenirovke romana F. M. Dostoevskogo "Idiot")' in Pertsov, "My zhivem v pervye", pp. 191-224.

30 Olesha explains that this work was inspired by his reminiscences of seeing an early film version of the story in Odessa before the First World War. See: 'Mag literatury' in P’esy, pp. 367-71 (originally published in Teatral’naia zhizn’, 1960, no. 2). This must have been Boris Sushkevich, Tsvety zapozdalye, Russia, 1917. See: Paolo Cherchi Usai, Lorenzo Codelli, Carlo Montanaro, David Robinson, eds., Silent Witnesses, Russian Films 1908-1919. London and Pordenone, 1989, pp. 370-71. Abram Room was also to adapt 'Tsvety zapozdalye', for the screen, in 1970. For more on this see Chapter Three.

31 See, for example, footnotes 127 and 144 below.
told Mindlin how he and Kataev would sell some piece of writing to LITO (the 'Literaturnyi otdel' of Narkompros) nearly every day. He then asked whether one could survive in Moscow by writing poetry alone, adding 'la mogu pisat' skol'ko ugodno. Khot' sto strochek v den'.

When Olesha's writing energies were low he would still press on, and even when he noted that he had completely lost the ability to write, this did not literally mean absolute barrenness, simply 'otdel'nye strochki'.

In terms of Ni dnia bez strochki and the testament it provides to his commitment to writing, Olesha's first notes about his life date from Spring 1930. He wrote in his Ashkhabad diary, in 1944, that if he were to write daily he might succeed in compiling the book of his dreams. It is such dreams which, by 1956, make his main work the project to put together a magnum opus of reminiscences and thoughts. Its themes include himself, life and art. The book emerged from the author's conviction that he must write, 'Khot' i ne umeet pisat' tak, kak pishut ostal'nye.' However, Ni dnia bez strochki was still incomplete upon Olesha's death. Whether or not its bold attempt to capture life and writing on a comprehensive and ambitious level would have finally reconciled the old and the new, and would have restored Olesha in the literary stakes, cannot be known, but it seems unlikely. A more complete collection of Olesha's diary fragments, from his literary ideas and difficulties, to his political problems and


33 See: Olesha, Izbrannoe. p. 370.

34 See V. Badikov's notes in ibid., p. 568

35 Ibid., p. 569

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 341.
doubts and his personal musings and recollections, has recently been published under the apt title *Kniga proshchaniia*. It reveals a great deal about the writer's constant struggle to come to terms with himself and his situation. Some of the entries made during the 1930s provide a very dark context for the author's fictional works of the period.

*Strogii iunosh* marked Olesha's last public attempt to reconcile different elements, and *Zavist*, which embraced similar thematic concerns to those of Olesha's experiment in literary-cinematic fusion, marked the zenith and the pivotal point in his career. As will be seen in the following section, although *Zavist* represented the height of Olesha's literary achievement, it was also the work which opened him to criticism ideologically. Because of its centrality in Olesha's writing generally, as well as its immanent relevance to *Strogii iunosh*, the following section will examine *Zavist*. While the later sections of this chapter will trace the other path to Olesha's experiment in fusion, the formal development of his involvement with cinema, the section on *Zavist* will consider the literary and thematic trajectory for *Strogii iunosh*.

---

38See note 5 above for publication details.

Zavist', published in 1927, was Olesha's major literary work. Having completed the novel, Olesha was convinced that 'ia napisal knigu "Zavist", kotoraja budet zhit' veka'. He had certainly written a book which would make a mark, but which would also, ultimately, present him with important challenges. It was those challenges, in part, that he sought to meet in devising Strogii iunosha. The following section will examine the formal and thematic elements which characterize Zavist' in order to show how, following initial acclaim focused on the former, the novel went on to provoke negative criticism because of concerns about the latter. As discussed below, the ambiguity in the treatment of the themes in Zavist', which had drawn ideological condemnation, was greatly reduced in

40There are many theories about literary parallels between Zavist' and works by other writers, including Fedor Dostoevskii's 1864 Zapiski iz podpol'ja, which has been cited as a key influence upon Olesha. See: Robert Louis Jackson, Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature, The Hague, 1958, pp. 158-65. Less obviously, perhaps, Alexander Zhokhovsky has written about Olesha's literary 'dialogue' with Bulgakov, positing that Zavist' is a response to Sobach' e serdtse (1925), and that Master i Margarita (1928-40) is a counter-response to Zavist'. (See the chapter entitled 'A Duet in Three Movements: Bulgakov — Olesha — Bulgakov' in Alexander Zhokhovsky, Text counter text: Rereadings in Russian Literary History, Stanford, 1994, pp. 181-212). Finally, in an eye-opening, unpublished conference paper 'Augusto Pérez ("Niebla", 1914) and Nikolai Kaval'ev ("Envy", 1927) Two Characters in Search of an Identity', (Ilf and Petrov, Katal'ev and Olesha "Centenary" Conference, University of Sheffield, 2-4 September 1998) Margaret Tejerizo draws an astounding number of very close parallels between the Spanish author Miguel de Unamuno's novel Niebla and Olesha's Zavist'. Tejerizo has been unable to find any evidence that Olesha had read Niebla, suggesting instead that the parallels might be a result of Dostoevskii's influence on both.

Olesha's dramatic version of the novel, *Zagovor chuvstv*, which appeared two years later, in 1929.

*Zavist'* is a complex work in terms of its narrative structure and thematic concerns. Both aspects contain elements of ambiguity. The narrative follows first person narration by the protagonist with third person story-telling, although the latter is also coloured, in part, by occasional insertions of subjective emotion and vision. Thematicall, the novel broadly concerns the conflict between the old and the new, between people and ways of the pre-Revolutionary era and those of the Soviet present. It begins as a cross between a bid for supremacy and a plea for acceptance, on the part of the representatives of the 'old', and ends as an admission of defeat by them. The ostensible message is one of admiration for the victorious and glorious 'new' world. However, implicitly, the seeds of doubt which have been sown by the first person narrator remain in the reader's mind, leaving a sense of unease at this state of affairs. Despite the negative elements in his portrayal of the non-Soviet characters, it is clear that Olesha's own sympathies lie more with them than with the slightly ridiculous, ideologically positive characters.

On the level of plot *Zavist* is a straightforward novel. At the start of the book the protagonist, twenty-seven year-old Nikolai Kavalerov, is living in the house of Andrei Babichev, an older man. The reader learns that Kavalerov, a homeless, penniless poet, was found by Andrei, a successful business man, lying drunk in a gutter. The latter took pity on Kavalerov and took him in, which is how they come to be living under the same roof. Under these circumstances,

---

Kavalerov meets Ivan Babichev, his host's brother. A combination of his own psychological make-up, which is full of ideological indecision, and Ivan's similarly negative influence, leads Kavalerov to shift from an initial position of admiration towards his benefactor to one of contempt, which is, however, mixed with a great deal of envy. Kavalerov despises the fact that Andrei's success is built on manufacturing sausages, yet envies the social status and privileges such success brings. Ivan Babichev, who is Andrei's opposite in many ways, similarly envies and resents Andrei's success and the ease with which his brother has found a place for himself in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union. Andrei soon throws Kavalerov out for behaving rudely and ungratefully towards him, leaving Ivan to become the key influence on Kavalerov.

What little further action there is within the plot includes Volodia Makarov's relationship with Andrei Babichev, and its effect upon Kavalerov, as well as Volodia's and Kavalerov's rival feelings for Valia, Ivan's daughter. Volodia is an eighteen year old engineer who plays football, who was also taken in by Andrei and treated like a son, after saving the older man's life during the Civil War. Volodia is very successful and a complete contrast to Kavalerov; he is one of the 'new' Soviet men, ideologically and physically perfect, and a match for the sweet and innocent Valia, who loves him. Kavalerov again both despises and envies Volodia for fitting into the post-Revolutionary world entirely, particularly after reading the young man's letter to Andrei in which he expresses his contempt for Kavalerov, his love for Andrei and his envy of the machine and its efficiency.

Ivan tries to persuade Kavalerov that Andrei is helping to abolish 'old' human feelings, and that he himself must be destroyed, to which end Ivan has
invented (although only in his mind) a machine called Ophelia. Having seen through Ivan, having been humiliated for being a nonentity at the grand opening of Andrei's communal canteen and having seen Volodia triumph during a football match, Kavalerov despairs of ever fitting in with, or effectively competing against, those such as Andrei and Volodia, or of winning over Valia. Defeated, he retreats to the comforts of his and Ivan's landlady, the repulsive widow Anechka. From then on, as she pitied them both, they take it in turns to sleep in her bed. Abandoning any ideas of taking an actively rebellious role against socialist society and, unable to find a place within it, they aim for the peace of indifference.

The ambiguity in *Zavist* comes from the complex presentation of characters, whereby the supposedly negative characters also possess positive traits and the seemingly positive characters are seriously flawed. This is due to the style of narration and the narrator's perspective. The main example of this is Kavalerov's inconsistent attitude towards Andrei Babichev. At first the young man is impressed by his host's physical stature, his industrial efficiency and his social status, but he soon changes his attitude. Like Ivan, Kavalerov decides that

---


44The reader does not learn the final result of the football match, merely the half-time score, which is 1-0 to the Germans. Volodia's triumph, however, is to demonstrate a collective team spirit in contrast to the German footballer Goetske's individualistic desire for glory. For more on the significance of this episode see: Ronald D. LeBlanc, 'The Soccer Match in Envy' in *Slavonic and East European Journal*, vol. 32, 1988, no. 1, pp. 55-71.

45The use of such ambiguity plays a significant role in *Strogii iunosha* too, as discussed in Chapter Four.
Andrei's communal dining hall project is in fact dehumanizing and that it is ridiculous to acquire fame through the manufacture of sausages. Even his early comments regarding Andrei's physique paint a rather grotesque picture. The increasingly mixed messages eventually throw into question the reliability of all of Kavalerov's judgements about his saviour turned enemy.

Illuminatingly, however, early drafts of the novel reveal that neither Andrei nor Kavalerov featured in the plot, leaving Ivan as the originally intended main character. These versions reveal how problematic Olesha found it to separate the characters of Kavalerov and Ivan stylistically. From the author's frequently cited confession about Kavalerov looking at the world through his own eyes, made at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress, it is evident that Kavalerov is, in many respects, based on Olesha himself. However, it is not difficult to find close parallels between Olesha and Ivan, too. The same Congress speech shows how Olesha envies the 'new' people of the future, and Ivan explicitly says: 'My zaviduem griadushchei epokhe.' Like the child of Olesha's autobiographical stories and memoirs, Ivan is presented as having been a talented, unusually imaginative child.

---

46 On this issue, see the article by I. Ozernaia, "Shtuchki" Ivana Babicheva v pervykh variantakh povesti Iuriia Oleshi "Zavist'", in Literaturnaia ucheba, 1989, no. 2, pp. 158-69.
47 See also Ingdahl, A Graveyard of Themes, p. 48 in particular, but also the section pp. 48-54.
49 See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 65.
50 Ibid., p. 52.
Andrei Babichev is not the only representative of the 'new' to be ambiguously portrayed. In his study of Zavist', Andrew Barratt discusses the characterization of Volodia Makarov. He points to two opposing views in this context, writing that the emigré writer Arkadii Belinkov sees Volodia as a parody of the Proletkul't movement, whereas the Soviet critic Viktor Pertsov takes him at face value, perceiving him to share admirable traits with the poet Aleksei Gastev, a glorifier of machines and model of efficiency. Barratt himself argues convincingly that there are too many negative elements in Volodia's portrayal, in particular the harsh intolerance expressed in his letter to Andrei, for him to be viewed as a purely positive figure. Barratt insists, however, that Volodia does have genuinely heroic moments, such as on the football pitch.

Ultimately, however, the most original and most acclaimed elements of Zavist' are not on the thematic level, but on the stylistic one. Above all, it is Olesha's concern with the visual, the preponderance of descriptions of light, colour, optical distortion and the use of real or imaginary binoculars, telescopes and mirrors, which fascinates so many readers of Zavist'. The source of such vision within the text is primarily Kavalerov, as it is he who possesses an artistic sensibility. At the same time, these visual concerns are a reflection of the author's interest in cinema and its techniques. As suggested above, it is Zavist' s experimental literary style which first caught the attention of critics and brought Olesha to prominence. However, as the political climate began to shift, towards the end of the 1920s, there was a greater demand for more propagandistic literature, and critics started to condemn Olesha's stylistic innovations as

---


superficial. Criticism started to focus to a greater extent, and largely negatively, on the ideologically ambiguous content of Zavist.

In 1929, almost certainly in response to accusations of dubious political intent in the novel, Olesha reworked his text into the simpler, more ideologically correct drama Zagovor chuvstv. As it is a play, there would already have been less scope for subjective visual indulgences than in the novel, but Olesha made a further conscious decision to reduce this aspect, by eliminating any references to Kavalerov's being a writer. This significantly changed the tone of the content. Furthermore, although the themes of Zavist remained, Olesha entirely altered the balance of the ideological equation, by leaving out the character of Volodia Makarov, and having Valia romantically involved with Andrei Babichev. In Zagovor chuvstv the conflict is based on clear-cut fraternal opposites: Ivan, the leader of the 'conspiracy of feelings', is absolutely opposed to Andrei and everything he represents.

In the drama, the novel's ambiguity has been removed. This is obvious from Olesha's statement that in his play he wanted to show that the people of the old world do not have a monopoly on feelings, and that the 'stroitel'i novogo mira, novogo byta bolee, chem kto-libo, iavl'iautsia chelovechnymi'. Similarly, Kavalerov plays a significantly different role and has a correspondingly different fate: he is chosen by Ivan to murder Andrei. In the closing scene, however, having seen the ideological error of his intention, Kavalerov has a change of heart and confesses all. In one variant of the text, the play has Kavalerov kill Ivan by cutting his throat with the razor intended for his brother Andrei, which is a symbol of

53Jurii Olesha, 'Avtor o svoei p'ese' in Olesha, P'esy, p. 261 (originally published in Sovremennyi teatr, 1929, no. 9).
Kaverov's annihilating his own past. Olesha's reworking of Zavist' was clearly an act of political compromise. It resulted in a parallel artistic compromise, which foreshadowed the path Olesha's later career would take, including his involvement with the cinema.

Olesha and cinema: invention and compromise

The young Olesha had a precocious fascination with the cinema. This was to remain with him throughout his life, permeating his writing in different ways at different times. Specifically, it was reflected in the aesthetic concerns expressed in relation to cinema during the 1920s, and in propagandistic ones during the 1930s and beyond, as external pressures compelled the writer to serve and conform. Like many others in the first part of this century, Olesha saw the cinema as a technological innovation representative of the new, industrial age. Yet the writer's understanding of the medium was more profound than this, as he grasped film's possible dual functions: either as a documentary record of history, or as a means of creating a magical, fictional world.

Olesha's interest in the cinema operates on multiple levels: the most fundamental of these is that of technology, and it forms part of a broader interest

---

54 This is pointed out by Green and Katsell, eds. and transl., Yury Olesha, p. 8.

in the modern and the mechanical, especially in aviation. As a school child
Olesha was already enthralled by one of cinema's precursors, the magic lantern.
As with the magic lantern, so with the cinematograph. Olesha admires moving
pictures, as an art, but he is also impressed by the requisite paraphernalia of the
cinema, which enables these pictures to move. In the unpublished memoir 'Zhizn'
moia zamechatel'na uzhe tem...', Olesha recalls sitting, as a child, in a long,
narrow space, 'kak by v koridore, kotoryi upiralsia v to, chto nazyvalos' ekranom.' He reminisces about the screening itself and how intrigued he was by

56 Full of admiration for cinema and aviation, the narrator of 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa' (discussed below) concisely states: 'V nashem veke my poleteli i uvideli kinematograf.' See: Iurii Olesha, 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', in Ingdahl, A Graveyard of Themes, p. 149. The idea that the cinema has lost its power to impress people as it did in the past recurs in Ni dnia bez strochki. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 388. A connection between these two inventions was made by others, such as Leonid Andreev and Aleksandr Blok. See 'Leonid Andreyev: First Letter on Theatre (Extracts)' in Taylor and Christie, eds., The Film Factory, pp. 30-31 and Aleksandr Blok, Zapisnye knizhki 1901-1920, Moscow, 1965, p. 226.

57 Olesha, Izbrannoe, pp. 359-60. The effect of the magic lantern is recalled by the writer Mikhail Kuzmin, too, in a story from 1916, 'Nerazluchimyi Modest'. See: M. G. Ratgauz, 'Kuzmin — kinozritel', Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 13, 1992, pp. 52-86 (p. 58). However, whereas Kuzmin uses the comparison as a kind of shorthand, to evoke an effect similar to that of the Lantern itself, Olesha is keen to convey the experience of actually using a magic lantern.

58 Iu. Olesha, 'Zhizn' moia zamechatel'na uzhe tem...', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 451, p. 1. He then contrasts this, in parenthesis, with the huge auditoria common in the 1930s: 'Zaly sovremennykh kinoteatrov ogromny. Oni razdaiutsia v shirinu, imeia dazhe tendentsiu okrugliat'sia. Vo vsiakom sluchae, chast'iu ikh iavliaetsia mnogojarusnyi amfiteatr.' These characteristics of early cinemas, the length and narrowness of the auditoria, are likened to a giraffe's neck by the Symbolist Fedor Sologub, in his poem 'V kinematografe': 'V uzkoi zale kinematografa /Dlinnoi, slovno sheia u zhira'a.'
the rays of light: he would watch both the events on screen and the actual projection of the films, with equal fascination. Similarly, in the article 'Mag literatury', written in the last year of his life, Olesha gives an atmospheric account of how films were watched in the early part of this century, and contrasts early films with contemporary ones. Wistfully he adds, however, that the early films had a particular 'prelest', absent from modern ones. These early films were still free from any 'esteticheskie izobretenia' and 'tot, poprostu govoria, snobizm masterov, kotoryi delaet sovremennye fil'my gromozdkimi, a inoi raz i unylymi.' But being technologically and aesthetically less complex than later ones, the early films were often emotionally more powerful.

The physical and technological aspects of early cinema-going are vividly described in a draft chapter, 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', for the novel Zavist. The fictional narrator, speaking also for Olesha, explains that the cinema was such a novelty that people were sometimes confused as to its nature: 'Togda kino putali s panoramoi, pokazyvali v chernom iashchike cherez dyrochku na rynke. V dereviannykh balaganakh, pod pol'ku.' Whereas an alarmed Maksim

---


59Ibid. Dodona Kiziria, in her unpublished PhD Thesis 'Cinematic Devices in the Works of Valentin Kataev' (Indiana University, 1979), notes that Kataev had similar concerns. I am grateful to Professor Robert Russell of the University of Sheffield for drawing this to my attention.

60Iurii Olesha, 'Mag literatury', in P'esy, p. 367.

61Ibid.

62Ibid.

63See: Ingdahl, A Graveyard of Themes, p. 148. The chapter was not included in the final version of Zavist.

64Ibid., p. 148.
Gor'kii described the unnaturlness of early film, Olesha's narrator from 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa' takes the opposite approach, identifying the unthreatening nature of the artificiality. In this context, the emphasis on the play of light and shadow he notes is further evidence that Olesha is as interested in the processes of cinema itself, in the art of projection and perception, as in the films on show.

By the 1920s, however, people had grown accustomed to these inventions, and the initial excitement was wearing off. In terms of the cinema, specifically, Olesha notes that, paradoxically, it is as much those who witnessed the invention of the cinema as those born into a period when it was no longer a novelty, who fail to appreciate its worth. As the narrator of 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa' warns: 'My svideteli rozhdeniia novogo iskusstva, my vospriemniki novoi desiatoi muzy! My slishkom ravnodushny.' Olesha makes it clear that he feels the cinema was underestimated as a concept, and film not taken seriously as a medium. For the narrator of 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', the most important thing is not to forget how films and cinemas used to be, so that the story of the birth of this new art can be passed on to future generations. Judging by some of the nostalgic reminiscences in Ni dnia bez strochki, written during the last years of his life, Olesha felt the same and played his part in keeping those memories alive.

In a 1933 article on scriptwriting, Olesha subverts the title bestowed upon early cinema, 'velikii nemoi', and calls it 'velikii svidetel', emphasizing its

---

65 Taylor and Christie, The Film Factory, p. 25 and Ingdahl, A Graveyard of Themes, p. 148, respectively.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., p. 149.
documentary powers. Olesha also states here that his favourite films are those featuring historical footage:

'Esli by menia sprosili, chto mne bol’she vsego ponravilos’ iz togo, chto ia videl v kino, ia otvetil by: dve khroniki: "Padenie dinastii Romanovykh" i "Rossiia Nikolaia II i Lev Tolstoi". Whereas at other stages in his life Olesha wrote about the cinema’s ability to preserve for posterity such celebrities as Tolstoi, or (for him, it seems, hypothetically) the Wright brothers, in the mid-1930s it was prominent political figures who had to be projected into the public eye. This had to be done not neutrally, in the name of historical interest, but as impressively as possible, for propagandistic purposes. In this vein, in 1937, Olesha published a review of Mikhail Romm’s new film Lenin v Oktiabre, praising it for its portrayal of Lenin, Stalin and Dzerzhinskii. The writer also lauds Shchukin for his expressive acting in the part of Lenin, as well as admiring the way in which he is shown at a Central Committee meeting with the others: ‘Zamechatel’nui fil’m, uvenchavshaiasia


69Ibid. Padenie dinastii romanovykh, Esfir’ Shub, USSR, 1927, see Taylor and Christie, The Film Factory, p. 429, and Rossiia Nikolaia II i Lev Tolstoi, Esfir Shub, USSR, 1928, see Esfir’ Shub, Zhizn’ moia — kinematograf, Moscow, 1972, p. 46. In this context, it is worth looking at Shub’s own words on the matter; discussing Rossiia Nikolaia II i Lev Tolstoi in her autobiography, she gives the dates of the footage used as 1897-1912, and explains that: ‘My gluboko ubezhdeny, chto tol’ko khronika, tol’ko neigrovaia 61 ma, tol’ko zhivoi material v sostoiianii otobrazit’ velichaishuui epokhu, kotoruu my perezhivaem, i liudei, real’no v nei zhivushchikh i tvoriashchikh.’ See: ibid., p. 261 and p. 257 respectively.

uspekhom popytka dat' v iskusstve obraz Lenina. Olesha claims to be impressed by the way in which Lenin is foregrounded so that the viewer can follow his individual gestures, the turn of his head, his playing with his hands. So taken is he with the film, it would appear, that it fills him with wonder at the achievements of Soviet film in general. Such simplistic rhetoric stands in great contrast to the elegant descriptions of pre-revolutionary films which captured Olesha's imagination, and which he wrote about at other times of less political pressure.


72Olesha, 'Zamechatel'nyi fil'm', p. 5. In an article written two years earlier, Olesha writes that 'Kino iavliaetsia peredovym frontom nashego iskusstva', that Chapaev is an achievement unparalleled in the other arts and that film critics must learn to be as good at their craft as filmmakers are at making films. See: Iu. Olesha, 'Byt' na urovne kinoiskusstva', Sovetskoe iskusstvo, 1935, no. 3, p. 16.

73See, for instance, one of Olesha's first pieces of writing on film: Iu. Olesha, 'Poet i koroleva' in B. B. Ziukov, comp., Vera Kholodnaia: K 100-letiu so dnia rozhdeniia, Moscow, 1995, p. 85 (originally published in the Odessa journal Figaro, 1918, no. 6). By contrast, an example of politics mixing with film criticism can be found in Olesha's article on James Whale's film The Invisible Man, USA, 1933, and three other 'foreign' films, Whale's Frankenstein, USA, 1931, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's King Kong, USA, 1933 and a film about tiger hunting. Here, Olesha summarizes the last three films as being about panic, escape, suppression and police pursuing an escapee. All three end with the corpse of the person, or animal, who was the cause of the panic. Olesha interprets this as an allegory about how terrible it would be for the Western filmmakers if the proletariat were freed, concluding that whereas American films used to end happily, now capitalism is terrified. See: Iu. Olesha, 'Zakaz na strashnoe', 30 dnei, 1936, no. 2, pp. 33-36 (p. 34). Henceforth: Olesha, 'Zakaz na strashnoe'.

Some of Olesha's most illuminating remarks on film, concerning its influence on his life and work, involve Charlie Chaplin. Amongst his memories of early cinema-going are those which take him back to the 'Odeon' in Odessa, in 1917. It was here that he first saw Chaplin, a character who was to become one of his most enduring cinematic influences. At the age of eighteen, 'kogda [...] ia perezhival svoiu pervuuiu liubov', Olesha recalls: 'M ne bylo slishkom mnogo dela do proplyvavshikh na ekrane tenei, vernee, uglovato dvigaiushchegosia na nei chelovechka'. Yet, even so, the Chaplin film struck him because of its great novelty: the subject was new, the devices were new, the hero was new, but above all, the humour was new. Years later, when the world-famous Chaplin appeared on screen, the older Olesha 'srazu uznal v nem togo zhe chelovechka.'

Olesha saw parallels between Chaplin and literature, finding similarities between the characters of Chaplin and those of H. G. Wells:

'Chaplin srodni chelovechkam Uellsa. Eto znamenatel'no — on tozhe napugan tekhnikoi, kak i oni, on tozhe iz-za mashiny nikak ne mozhet naladit' svoego schast'ia.'

This characterization is equally typical of many of Olesha's characters, for example, Kavalerov in Zavist'. There is also a certain parallel between Chaplin's and Olesha's creative obligations and desires. Just as Olesha had to compromise in his creative writing, as well as in his film and literary criticism, so Chaplin had to give the audience what they expected.

---

74 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 502.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 501.
77 The recording of this realization was prompted by Abram Room's reporting to Olesha that he had watched Chaplin's Limelight (1952) in Brussels. Olesha, Kniga proshchaniia, p. 376.
Lev Levin, a Soviet critic writing in 1933, reports that Kornelii Zelinskii said that 'Glavnaia i v sushchnosti edinstvennaia tema Oleshi, eto chapliniada.' It is, therefore, not so surprising to find that Olesha's obsession with Chaplin colours his fiction through direct references, as well as abstractly, through a common spirit. In the play Spisok blagodeianii, the actress Elena Goncharova is obsessed by Chaplin. She is about to go to Paris to work, secretly planning to emigrate. She talks to her portrait of Chaplin, telling him: 'Chaplin, Chaplin! Malen'kii chelovek v shtanakh s bakhromoi. Ia uvizhu tvoi znamenitye fil'my [...] ia uvizhu "Tsirk" i "Zolotuiu likhoradku". She explains that although the whole world is in raptures over these films, in the Soviet Union years have gone by and they have still not been seen. On a more superficial level, Spisok blagodeianii also includes a passage in which a lamplighter illuminates a streetlight, to reveal a man, who, Olesha explicitly states, strongly resembles Chaplin. Similarly, Ivan Babichev, in Zavist, also bears a passing resemblance to Chaplin: he is short, wears a hat, and walks hurriedly with little steps. Further examples of references to Chaplin can be found in Olesha's Strogii iunosha. This features a comic, pie-throwing interlude, which is read by a Soviet critic of the time as a parody of


80Ibid., p. 106.

'Americanized' comedies with happy lovers and Charlie Chaplin. Indeed, this sequence (which is part of Grisha's dream) is explicitly described in the following way: 'Vor, kak Chaplin, kidaet v nego pirozhnymi.' A second, implicit reference to Chaplin can be seen in Grisha's action as he dreams of rescuing the woman he loves from her husband's indifference, embracing her, as rain (possibly mingling with her grateful tears) falls on to his face, only to awake with his arms around a tree, in a downpour. Charlie Chaplin, in a short film from 1915, The Bank, dreams of rescuing a girl from bank robbers, and as she melts into his arms, he finds he is kissing a mop.

Finally, in his memoirs, the ageing Olesha contrasts his recent indifference to novelty with his youthful interest. He recalls that he and his fellow-writer, Il'ja Il'f, used to watch German Expressionist films featuring Werner Krauss and Konrad Veidt, and American ones starring Mary Pickford or the Talmadge sisters at the 'kino "Uran" na Sretenke, mimo kotorogo ia seichas prokhozhu s polnym ravnodushiem, dazhe ne gliadia na nego... Yet, whether because of some

---

82 See: R. Miller-Budnitskaia, 'Novyi gumanizm', Literaturnyi sovremennik, 1934, 12, pp. 104-09 (p. 109). See also Chapter Five, note 45 for a direct and full quotation of Miller-Budnitskaia's words on this.

83 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 322: 32.

84 The Bank, Charles Chaplin, USA, 1915, starring Chaplin. According to Lee Croft Gosfil'mofond records this film as having been shown in the USSR in 1920. See: Croft, Chaplin and Envy, p. 526, footnote 2. Throughout the 1930s film journals published many articles about Chaplin. For references to The Bank see, for instance, I. Sokolov. 'Charli Chaplin' in Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 46-54 (p. 49).

85 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 502. The Uran cinema was impressively renovated in Art Deco style in 1930. For further details and photographs of both the exterior and the foyer, see: Nikolai
sentimental emotion, or out of a professional interest, Olesha still feels stirred enough by Chaplin to make an effort (even if only a hypothetical one): 'Na novyi fil'm Chaplina, esli by ego u nas pokazyvali, ia by, pozhalui, rvalsia...'. So, thanks to Chaplin, Olesha has not quite succumbed to the indifference against which his alter ego, the narrator of 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', fought.

Olesha's interest in Chaplin is very much a reflection of the times, as his films were extremely popular throughout the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s. In a prefiguring of Goncharova's complaint above, Sovetskii ekran published a reader's letter in 1928 asking why so few Chaplin films were being shown (which elicited the reply that such sacrifices would have to be made in order to build socialism). Although Igor Il'inskii was perhaps the most popular Soviet comic actor of the 1920s-30s Denise Youngblood notes that he does not seem to have stolen the public's affections away from Chaplin. A nod to the American is made by both Nikolai Khodataev in his film Odin iz mnogikh (1927) and Grigorii Aleksandrov in both Veselye rebiata (1934) and Tsirk (1936).

Lukhmanov, 'Pervye shagi' in Kino i zhizn', nos. 32-33, December 1930, pp. 16-17 and Kino i zhizn', nos. 34-35, December 1930, pp. 22-23.

Ibid.

See: Youngblood, Movies for the Masses, p. 64. Chaplin was frequently the subject of readers' letters to Kino, ibid., p. 53.


In the first example Chaplin features in a dream of Hollywood (ibid., p. 58), in the second he is introduced simply to inform viewers that he will not be starring in the film! In the third example the circus master's assistant is a Chaplin look-alike who also acts the part.
There are also many references to film and the cinema unrelated to Chaplin in Olesha's fiction of the 1930s. Goncharova's Chaplin speech, cited above, and her wistful dreams of Parisian cinemas showing films which she knows will never be seen in the Soviet Union, are countered by the theatre manager Orlovskii, with the words:


Elsewhere, too, Olesha makes a reference to Eizenshtein's film: in the short story 'Stadion v Odesse', also from 1936, he mentions a bridge, explaining that '[e]tot most uvekovechen v fil'me "Bronenosets Potemkin".' This fits in with Olesha's ideas from 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', regarding cinema as a means of immortalizing an event, and indicates that places, as well as people, can become famous through films.

Olesha's interest in the world of film translated into his writing in a variety of ways, one of which is his obsession with light, the life force of cinema.

---

90 For instance, Olesha gently mocks cinema's influence on the public in the short story 'Natasha', written in 1936. Here, when a neglected father is disturbed that his daughter does not have breakfast with him because she feels that, being a famous professor, he must be left to eat alone and read the papers in peace, he asks in bewilderment: 'Gde ona eto videla? V kino?' See: Olesha, Izbrannoie, p. 263. This reflects the timeless concern that cinema may be a corrupting influence.

91 Olesha, P'esy, p. 94. A reference to: Bronenosets Potemkin, Sergei Eizenshtein & Grigorii Aleksandrov, USSR, 1925; Turksib, Viktor Turin, USSR, 1929; Potomok Chingis-khana, Vsevolod Pudovkin, USSR, 1927. Further details on these films can be found in Taylor and Christie, The Film Factory, pp. 427 and 433.

92 Olesha, Izbrannoie, p. 257.
Throughout Olesha's work, as throughout his life, light in general and particularly sunlight played an extremely significant part. In 'Koe-chto iz sekretnyh zapisei poputchika Zanda', the narrator refers to the sun as 'sama zhizn'. The sun and other sources of light work in two different ways in Olesha's scheme of things, as they often do in the cinema; light either plays with the surface of objects, or people, or appears to radiate from within them. Olesha's eye for tricks of the light, his detailed observation and eloquent recording of what he sees, steer his prose towards the diametric realms of poetry and science, in terms of content, and towards that of cinema, in terms of form.

A twist to the writer's solar references comes in a story of 1947, 'Ivolga', where what at first appears to the viewer to be an optical illusion caused by the sun is in fact reality:

'V pervuiu minutu ia dazhe podumala, chto eto igra sveta. Solnechnye piatna dvigalis' po ikh plecham i kaskam, no ia reshila, chto eto moia strastnaia mechta dorisovyvaet eti plechi i kaski i chto na samom dele nichego net peredo mnoi, krome kustov i solnechnogo sveta.'

---

93 Ibid., p. 558.
94 Ibid., p. 250.
95 Elizabeth Beaujour suggests that the difference in meaning is as follows: 'Surface light is laughing light, but real blessedness is usually represented by Olesha in terms of an object's or person's ability to absorb light, hold it, and thus possess it. Surface light is playful.' See: Beaujour, The Invisible Land, p. 60. She also discusses H. G. Wells' image of the idyllic garden in 'The Door in the Wall', seeing it as using light in a similar way. As will be shown, Olesha cites Wells as an influence in this very respect too.
96 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 292.
To readers familiar with Olesha's usual visual conjuring, whereby a personal vision is externalized, this feels like a private, subversive joke, in which what is assumed to be subjective distortion is in fact objective reality.

Olesha's frequent use of the verbs 'blestet', 'blistat', 'to shine' (in the literal and the figurative sense), and related words, which are not solely sun-inspired is of note. As discussed above, both people and objects in Olesha's writing are shown to attract and reflect light. At times this is simply stated as an observed fact; at other times it is used as a symbolic code, representing something positive (whether with or without irony). In Zavist, for instance, Olesha uses the sun as an emblem of the idealized, Communist future. He realizes the metaphor of the 'radiant future' by having the sun shine dazzlingly on its representatives, Volodia Makarov and Valia. By the same principle, in a journalistic article of 1934, revealingly entitled 'Krasota sily', Olesha describes a festive parade full of beautiful young people, off to work on the construction of the metro system. The whole scene is 'zalit[aia] solntsem'.

It is not only Olesha, but also some of his characters, who are aware of special light effects and cinematic images and allude to film-related matters. So, in Tri tolstiaka, of 1924, Doctor Caspar is looking down from a high tower and sees:

'Izdaleka liudi kazalis raznotsvetnymi flazhkami. [...] Doktor Caspar podumal, chto vse eto pokhozhe na kartinu volshebnogo fonaria. Solntse iarko svetilo, blestela zelen'.

---

97 The Oxford Russian-English Dictionary. Oxford, 1985, p. 33. This also offers: 'to glitter', 'to sparkle', again not only in the literal sense.


99 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 100.
All the key elements which were to capture Olesha's visually orientated imagination and recur throughout both his fiction and his non-fiction can be found here: from various types of viewing apparatus (the magic lantern) and optical illusions due to perspective (people like little flags) to the transforming effects of sunlight (brilliant colour). These are precisely the features of Olesha's work which are linked to his fascination with cinema.

As an observer, Olesha, like his alter-ego characters, is able to use his eyes in the same way that a cameraman wields his camera, concentrating on the position of perception. In draft versions of Zavist', in particular, the writer uses techniques of filmmaking in descriptions of Kavalerov's perception of reality. In one, his eye is compared to a camera lens which he uses to scan passing reality, shooting frames which could later be run together to form a coherent whole.100

Olesha's interest in incorporating cinematic techniques and optical devices into literature should be understood as part of a general trend in Europe in the

100 See: Kazimiera Ingdahl, The Artist and the Creative Act: A Study of Jurij Olesa's Novel Zavist', Stockholm, 1984, p. 35. This is, essentially, what the experimental documentary director, Dziga Vertov, does in his Constructivist film Chelovek s kinoapparatom, USSR, 1929, where he films a man walking through Moscow recording various scenes with his camera, which are later shown being edited together to form a kind of day in the life of Moscow. A further parallel between Olesha and Vertov can be found in 'Chelovecheskii material', in which the writer anthropomorphises compasses in the same way as the filmmaker would do the camera with its tripod in Chelovek s kinoapparatom. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 229. The image of the eye as a camera was used by Vertov when he named his group of co-workers 'Kinoki' in 1922. The group made a film called 'Kino-glaz' in 1924; Rodchenko's poster for this includes the image of an eye and two cameras. For the latter see Taylor and Christie, eds., The Film Factory, p. 118.
1920s and 1930s. Generally, such experimental writing in Russia was labelled 'formalist', reflecting its self-conscious attention to form. The fight against formalism was one of the main issues to be discussed at the Writers' Congress in 1934, and Olesha was under pressure to toe the official anti-formalist line. As he himself had been experimenting with various techniques, including the cinematic and pictorial styles discussed in this chapter, Olesha was interested in writers who attempted similar things.

---

101 For a study of similar concerns in Poland during the same period, see: Tadeusz Miczka, 'Cinema as Optic Poetry: On Attempts to Futurize the Cinematograph in Poland of the 1920s and 1930s' in Canadian Slavonic Papers, vol. XL, 1998, nos. 1-2, pp. 1-15.

102 One such writer was James Joyce. In the mid-thirties he was particularly vilified, officially, for his 'formalism' His Ulysses was notoriously described by the Soviet politician, journalist and co-drafter of the 1936 Constitution, Karl Radek, as: 'a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope'. See: Kurt London, The Seven Soviet Arts, London, (no date [1937]), p. 152. In a speech at a writers' meeting in 1936 dealing specifically with the 'struggle against formalism and naturalism in literature and art', Olesha also condemns Joyce for the negative content of his writing, yet, even as he does so, the writer's admiration for Joyce's style shines through:

"Vse plokho na zemle", — govorit Dzhois. I poetomu vsia ego genial'nost' dlia menia ne nuzhna. I poetomu, nesmotria na to, chto Gor'kii formal'no mne menee interesen, chem Dzhois, ia vse-taki znaiu, chto [...] dlia menia Gor'kii velikii pisatel', a chto takoe i v chem smysl Dzhoisa — ia skazat' ne mogu.'

"Stil' velikoi derzhavy..." Rech' Iu. K. Oleshi na obshchemoskovskom sobranii pisatelei, posviashchennom borbe s formalizmom i naturalizmom v literature i iskusstve, 16 marta 1936', Ogonek, 1991, no. 31, pp. 22-25 (p. 24). The sentiment is less than convincing, particularly as Olesha himself frequently employs striking imagery and an unusual use of language for the sake of creative expression alone.
Olesha pays an extraordinary amount of attention to incidental, descriptive detail. He concentrates, in particular, on optical effects, to a degree usually only found in the visual arts. In addition to implicit references to cinema, through the use of devices more often found in film than in literature, Olesha also alludes explicitly to the medium of film. He does so most strikingly in the following simile, in which he compares a moment in a football match in Zavist', when the ball has been kicked into the crowd and the players watch in utter surprise, to the breaking of a film:

'Tak razom ostanavlivaetsia fil'm v moment razryva plenki, kogda v zal uzhe daiut svet [...] i publika vidit stranno pobelevshii kadr i kontury geroia, absoliutno nepodvizhnogo v toi poze, kotoraiu govorit o samom bystrom dvizhenii.'

Olesha is deeply interested in the relationship between film and literature, discussing it in various pieces of writing. In 'Razgovor v foie kinematografa', the narrator expresses his view that cinema will kill the book. This is explained by the idea that the cinema can do for us what we now do for ourselves — imagine. His logic is as follows:


---

103 Olesha, Izbrannoe. p. 86. Iurii Tsiv'ian discusses reactions to, and literary interpretations of, the 'obryv lenty', including in the poem 'Porvalas' lenta' of 1910, by 'N. U-el', and in Andrei Belyi's 1918 film script for his novel Peterburg. See: Tsiv'ian, Istoricheskaia retseptsia kino, pp. 129-33.

104 Ingdahl, A Graveyard of Themes, p. 147.

105 Ibid.
Olesha uses the same words in an unpublished text of the 1920s, ‘Kino-filosofia’, which indicates the significance he feels them to hold.\(^{106}\)

In the article ‘Beseda s chitateliami’, Olesha speaks about the visual aspect of his prose, explaining that ‘Kogda ia pishu, ia dumaiu tol’ko o tom, chtoby peredat’ s maksimal’noi iavstvennost’iu to, chto ia vizhu.’\(^{107}\) Elsewhere he says that while reading, the reader closes his eyes and imagines what is being read about. \(^{108}\) This is why Olesha feels that ‘protsess vospriiatiia fil’ma skoree pokhozh na chtenie, chem na protsess, proiskhodishchii v zritele spektaklia.’\(^{109}\) These phrases emphasize the importance of a visual imagination in both creating and interpreting a text, whether on the page or on screen, and show how close the two media are, in Olesha's understanding.

Olesha's mental application of his 'cinematic' vision to literary works, in hypothetical screen adaptations, provides substantial evidence of his own awareness of connections between film and literature.\(^{110}\) His interest in the cinematic is further revealed in his literary style. As argued in this chapter, the most significant features of this are light and vision. Light is used to provide aesthetic character, or symbolic value. Unusual or distorted vision is used to heighten reality, or fantasy. These elements create Olesha's distinctive literary style, born of his enchantment with the cinema. Both his fiction and his non-

---


\(^{108}\) Olesha, ‘Zakaz na strashnoe’, p. 34.

\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) For example, in Ni dnia bez strochki Olesha's presents a theoretical screen 'adaptation' of the scene from Lev Tolstoi's Voina i mir, in which Pierre Bezukhov tells a drunken major of his secret love for Natasha. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 485.
fiction often reveal a great interest in optical games: the sun gilds, people and objects sparkle and shine, rainbows appear in spiders' webs. Such an obvious concern with observation and appearance is very much akin to filmmaking. Like many stylistically innovative films of the 1920s, Olesha's experimental writing quickly came to be branded 'formalist', meaning that it was all complex form and no simplistic ideology.

Scriptwriting and screenplays

In the Soviet Union, the question of film scripts, by whom, how and why they should be written, was perceived to be increasingly significant, both politically and artistically, during the 1930s. Indicative of this is the fact that some of the speeches at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, in 1934, were devoted to the issue, both by individuals working in the world of film, including writers, and by those from beyond this sphere. The novelist, critic and literary administrator Iurii Libedinskii discussed the function of the screenplay at the eleventh session of the Congress. Referring to Olesha's Strogii iunosha, Libedinskii expressed the view that however much talent and feeling the screenplay contained, it never realized 'vsego bogatstva vosproizvedeniia mira, kotorym obladaet iskusstvo.' In this context, too, he insisted that if one were to compare a scenario to a film, it could never amount to more than the equivalent

111 It had begun to be seen as a key issue during the late 1920s. For more on the 'script crisis' see: Taylor and Christie, The Film Factory, documents 83, pp. 208-15; 96, pp. 241- 45; 110, pp. 275-80 and 114, pp. 290-92.

112 For more information on Libedinskii's role in the political and literary events of the 1920s and 1930s, see: Terras, ed., Handbook of Russian Literature, pp. 254-55.

113 See Libedinskii's speech in Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934, p. 288.
of an architectural sketch, in relation to the resulting building based upon it. Yet, despite the limitations of its form, Libedinskii considered it possible for the reader to approach a screenplay 'kak k khudozhestvennomu proizvedeniiu', as it defines the entire character of the film which is to be made from it.\footnote{Ibid.} The question of screenplays and writers was raised again at the nineteenth session of the Congress, once more in the context of Olesha's new script, by Natan Zarkhi, the playwright and scriptwriter. He made a powerful call to other writers to move into the area of film work, for: 'Kinoiskusstvu [...] nuzhny rabotniki, kvalifitsirovanye mastera, vladeiushchie vsemi tonkostiami etogo iskusstva.'\footnote{Ibid.} He tried to enthuse writers with an evocation of the joys and status such work carried with it: 'Poimite, chto zvanie sovetskogo kinodramaturga tak zhe radostno, tak zhe tvorcheshki nasyshcheno i tak zhe otvetstvenno, kak zvanie sovetskogo pisatelia.'\footnote{Ibid.} His tone made the importance of the issue clear.

At the twenty fourth session, Konstantin Iukov, editor of Sovetskoe kino, expressed the view that writers had contributed greatly to the world of film and that, above all, the very fact of their cooperation in cinema served a crucial purpose.\footnote{Ibid.} The popularity of film scripts with the public was also emphasized by Iukov, as a means of showing that the issue was not an elitist, minor one.\footnote{Ibid.} Because of the talent of the writers involved, the quality of scripts for sound films had improved, he reported, not simply in terms of characters' dialogues, but also

\footnote{Ibid. At a separate Conference of Scriptwriters, held a week earlier, Iukov also spoke of the importance and legitimacy of scriptwriting for Soviet authors. See: Taylor and Christie, The Film Factory, pp. 331. See also Iukov's response to Olesha's Strogii iunosha in Chapter Five, below.}
in terms of the construction of the screenplay as a whole. Lukov stressed the fact that, in his eyes, film script writers had learnt to work on ideological issues in their scripts, to perfect the content, through convincing characters and relevant issues, as well as the form. The script writer was no longer a man 'kotoryi myslit tol'ko zamyslovatymi rakursami i montazhnymi frazami.'\(^{119}\) Clearly, Lukov was impressed with the results of the conversion of literary figures who write for the page alone into those who are willing to try their hand at writing for the screen too.

Issues concerning scriptwriting as part of Olesha's remit, as well as that of other contemporary writers, took on ever greater significance as 1934 wore on. Their dominance into 1935 is evidenced by Olesha's devoting an article, entitled 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', to the issue of how literary screenplays should be approached, followed by some scenes from an imaginary play, as examples. In 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', Olesha remarked that an ever increasing number of films were being made on the basis of screenplays by writers. By this, he was clearly referring to established artists like himself, who started writing for the page and were subsequently (in Olesha's case in 1921, as elaborated upon below) drawn to turning their hand to texts for the screen. As he pointed out, the obvious consequence of this trend was that 'ta oblast', gde prezhde deistvovali liudi, menee vsego obrashchavshie vnimanie na slovo, nyne okazyvaetsia pod vliianiem imenno spetsialistov slova.'\(^{120}\) Indulging his own preoccupation, and raising matters which needed to be considered by all those in his position, Olesha posed the question, in 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', of whether or not a screenplay should be a work of literature in its own right. By way of elucidation, the writer recalled how

---

119Ibid., pp. 641-42.

120Jurii Olesha, 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', 30 dnei, 1935, no. 12, pp. 45-50 (p. 45). Hereafter referred to as: Olesha, 'Kardinal'nye voprosy'.
it used to be impossible to read film scripts as one would a story or play, as the screen playwright was not obliged to create a work of literature. Apart from a few individuals with talent, like Aleksandr Rzheshevskii and Natan Zarkhi, those writing scripts were simply 'remeslenniki, dalekie ot literatury.' Indeed, there had been no external pressure on them to produce anything more creative than a functional script.

In 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', Olesha recounted a selection of responses to the question of the screenplay as independent literary work. He informed the reader, for example, that Béla Balázs called screenplays 'literatura dlia glaza', and felt that a screenplay could never be considered a work of literature to be read in the same way as a short story or novel. Similarly, Olesha explained that there were those who believed a screenplay should be just the bare bones of a film, leaving the details to be decided and fleshed out by the director and cameraman, whilst others believed that a writer should give the director as complete a picture as possible, thereby providing a full vision ready for realization on screen. As indicated below, this latter was his opinion. Here, too, as in the 1934 newspaper introduction to his film script cited above, Olesha declared that he felt he was

---

121Ibid., p. 45. Aleksandr Rzheshevskii 1903-1967. Among the scripts he wrote was one for Pudovkin's Prostoi sluchai, USSR, 1932 and he worked on the scenario for Eizenshtein's planned film Bezhin lug, USSR, 1935-37, which proved unacceptable to the authorities and was therefore banned from completion. For more details, see: S. I. Iutkevich, ed., Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', Moscow, 1986, p. 352; hereafter: Iutkevich, ed., Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'. Natan Zarkhi 1900-1935; most famous, at that stage, for his work with Pudovkin on Mat', USSR, 1926, and Konets Sankt-Peterburga, USSR, 1927. See: ibid., p. 144.

122Olesha, 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', p. 45, Olesha's italics. Balázs was working in Moscow at that time. See: Ginette Vincendeau, ed., Encyclopedia of European Cinema, p. 28. For more on Balázs's ideas on film see Chapter One.
inventing a new genre with Strogii iunosha, and that he himself was unable to write an inspired screenplay without approaching it as an independent literary work.\footnote{Olesha, 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', p. 46. He wrote this, despite being aware that the screenplay is merely a canvas for the director.}

The author recognized that the most important elements in a screenplay are action, movement, visual images and the dramatic concept, yet he put emphasis on the significance of the language itself: 'i slovesnye kachestva stsenaria chrezvychaino vazhny.'\footnote{Ibid., p. 45.} However, to avoid accusations of exclusively literary concerns, he was quick to add that 'konechno [...] ia ne zabyvaiu ni na sekundu, chto to, chto ia pishu, dolzhno prevratit'sia v zritel'nye obrazy.'\footnote{Ibid., p. 46.} It is precisely through this dual aim of engaging the reader and assisting the director that, in Olesha's view, a new, hybrid genre comes about:

'Eto ne drama i ne belletristika. Dlia dramy zdes' slishkom mnogo zhivopisi, dlia belletristiki slishkom ogolennaia kompozitsiia. Eto svoeobraznaia forma, rabotaia nad kotoroi poet mozhет razvit' v sebe kachestva i dramaturga i belletrista.'\footnote{Ibid.}

This last is significant, as it is the closing sentence of the article. As Olesha saw it, any director basing his film around 'tak nazyvaemogo literaturnogo stsenaria' would, in any case, work out his own, second scenario, and therefore the writer should not be afraid to be 'literaturnym'. On the contrary, he should
describe actions and objects 'vo vsiu svoiu silu', leaving the director to concern himself with 'raskadrirovanie', with translating these things onto the screen.\textsuperscript{127}

The evidence makes it clear that Olesha perceived scriptwriting as an artistic challenge, not merely as an obligation, although it was a skill he and other writers were under pressure to acquire and to perfect. Olesha's long-held interest in writing for the cinema was reaffirmed, in 1936, at a conference of scriptwriters and playwrights.\textsuperscript{128} By this time, he had become firmly engaged in writing for the screen.

Olesha's lifelong interest in cinema as a viewer was supplemented by his work as a scriptwriter. As stated above, his first forays into the field were made as early as 1921, when he wrote two scenarios, \textit{Zolotoe iabloko} and \textit{Svoeiu sobstvennoi rukoi}, for the Khar’kov provincial political educational committee (gubpolitprosvet). Neither of these projects was realized and neither of the scripts was published.\textsuperscript{129} In 1928-29, Olesha wrote some fragments relating to \textit{Zavist'}, which were part of a planned film scenario of the work.\textsuperscript{130} Other fragments of

\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., p. 45. Olesha's italics.

\textsuperscript{128}See: RGALI, f. 631, SP SSSR (Soiuz pisatelei SSSR), op. 2, ed. khr. 173, 'Stenogramma soveshchaniia kinodramaturgov i pisatelei, rabotaiushchikh v kino. Sektsiia dramaturgov', 23 November 1936, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{129}See: Heil, \textit{No List of Political Assets}, p. 97. Heil's is the only reference I have found to these two scripts.

\textsuperscript{130}These fragments are held at RGALI: Iurii Olesha, 'Belaia vysokaia dver', zanimaiushcha pochti ves' ekran', RGALI, f. 358, ed. khr. 199, op. 2. This is almost certainly what Heil is referring to when he writes of the existence of 'an unpublished plan or treatment co-written in the late 1930s by Olesha and Evgenii Cherviakov' which is a literary adaptation of Olesha's \textit{Zavist'}. He explains that
scenarios pre-dating Strogii iunosha include 'V gorode ostalis' odni deti', 'Ksendz, pepeesovets, pomeshchik' and the related 'Pomeshchik: Bol'sheviki zakhvatili Ukrainu...', all from 1930.\(^{131}\) After Strogii iunosha, in 1934, Olesha became particularly active as a scriptwriter, writing screenplays for various films, including some for feature films, documentary films, children's films and for animated films.

RGALI has records of fourteen feature film scripts written or planned by Olesha, of which four resulted in actual films and eight, it would appear, were never completed.\(^{132}\) In addition to this, I have found references to a scenario

---

\(^{131}\)‘V gorode ostalis' odni deti’ is held in RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 220; ‘Ksendz, pepeesovets, pomeshchik’ and ‘Pomeshchik: Bol'sheviki zakhvatili Ukrainu...' are held in RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 221.

\(^{132}\)A full list of Olesha's realized, unrealized, completed and incomplete feature and non-feature film scripts can be found in the bibliography of this thesis. The fourteen (including ten unrealized and eight incomplete) feature film scripts stored at RGALI are listed below; non-underlined titles indicate that the headings are RGALI's rather than Olesha's: 'Belaia vysokaia dver' (1928-29) – incomplete/unrealized; 'V gorode ostalis' odni deti' (1930s) – incomplete/unrealized; 'Ksendz, pepeesovets, pomeshchik' / 'Pomeshchik: Bol'sheviki zakhvatili Ukrainu' (1930s) – incomplete/unrealized; Strogii iunosha (1934); Devushka i smert' (1935) – incomplete/unrealized; Val'ter/Lager na bolote/Bolotnye soldaty (with Aleksandr Macheret; 1936-37, 1938); 'V Parizhe stroitsa vsemirnaya vystavka...' (1937) – incomplete/unrealized; Gonchie psy (1937-38 an adaptation of a story by Konstantin Paustovskii) – incomplete/unrealized; Oshibka inzhenera Kochina (with Macheret and based on themes from the play Ochnaia stavka by L. Sheinin and the Tur brothers; 1939); 'Nemtsy v Ispanii' (with Macheret; end 1930s – unrealized; 'Ta bol'she ne budu' (1940s) – unrealized; 'Primenenie parashiuta' (with Veniamin Riskind; 1940-41) –
entitled 'Desiat' pravil', on which Olesha was working three months after the completion of the script for Strogii iunosha, and another called 'Proshchal'naia ulybka', occupying him two months after that, in November 1934. There is no evidence that either of these was completed. In August 1935 Olesha reported that, for the last three months, he had been concentrating on a scenario called 'Devushka i smert' for the Kiev studio, and that Abram Room was slated to be the

incomplete/unrealized; Maiak (1942); Tri tolstiaka (1958-59) — incomplete/unrealized (although Tri tolstiaka was made into a film in 1966 by Aleksei Batalov and Iosif Shapiro, as mentioned in Chapter One, the script was written by Aleksei Batalov and Mikhail Ol'shevskii 'based on themes from Olesha's story of the same name').

In addition to the above planned projects Olesha considered, however briefly, the issue of adapting Spisok blagodeianii for the screen, as he wrote to his wife on 22 July 1932: '[...] predlozhenie est' napisat' stsenarii na temu "Spiska" — Meierkhol'd budet stavit' i, konechno, Raikh — igrat'. Po-moemu, stsenarii mozhno sdelat' zamechatel'nyi.' See: Iurii Olesha, 'My dolzhny ostavit' mnozhestvo svidetel'stv...;', (compiled and introduced by Violetta Gudkova) in Znamia, 1996, no. 10, pp. 155-81 (p. 162). Hereafter: Olesha, 'My dolzhny ostavit' mnozhestvo svidetel'stv...'.

The following scripts were realized on film: Strogii iunosha, dir. Abram Room, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev film studio), 1936; Bolotnye soldaty, dir. Aleksandr Macheret, Mosfil'm, 1938; Oshibka inzhenera Kochina, dir. Aleksandr Macheret, Mosfil'm, 1939; Maiak, dir. Mark Donskoi, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev film studio), 1942; See: RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271.

See the reports 'Na proizvodstve' in Kino for 22 September 1934, no. 43 (635) and 6 November 1934, no. 50 (642) respectively. The former reports that Olesha has signed a contract for a 'kinop'esa' about 'novye liudi i novye otnosheniia'. The latter report explains that the script deals with the issue of personal happiness in a communist society. It also adds that Olesha is currently in Odessa with Room and his team, acting as consultant on Strogii iunosha.
director of the film.\textsuperscript{134} The writer says that he wants to show 'kak novyi sovetskii chelovek vosprinimaet takie poniatiiia, kak utrata, razluka, nikogda.'\textsuperscript{135} The theme is clearly related to that of Strogii iunoshka; it features an older man talking to young people about death and an unhappy love story. Although the script had been due to be completed in October 1935, by the end of January 1936 there was still no sign of the written text.\textsuperscript{136} Typically, it too was never filmed or even finished. Olesha's realized projects include Bolotnye soldaty, about the German Communists' struggle against the Fascist regime in Germany, directed by Aleksandr Macheret in 1938, and Oshibka inzhenera Kochina, co-scripted by Macheret and directed by him in 1939. Although the script for Bolotnye soldaty was re-worked several times over eight months, under the titles Val'ter and Lager' na bolote, the result was still seen to be a disappointment, as it was too full of stock characters and situations.\textsuperscript{137} One can, however, recognize a few typically


\textsuperscript{135}See: Pol., 'Moi novyi stsenarii. Beseda s lu. Oleshei'.

\textsuperscript{136}In 1937 Olesha notes despondently in his diary: 'Leto proshlogo goda ia rabotal nad stsenariem "Devushka i smert". Ia pisal vse leto, kazhdyi den' — tselyi den' ot utra do vechera, — nakopilsia takoi zhe tiuk chernovikov...' Olesha, Kniga proshchaniia, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{137}See: S. Tregub, 'Bolotnye soldaty' in Pravda, 21 October 1938, no. 291 (7616), p. 6. According to Isaak Babel' (under KGB interrogation): 'The Bog Soldiers received a frosty, almost hostile, reception from the public which only made [Olesha] more embittered.' See: Shentalinsky, Arrested Voices, p. 52. Paul Babitsky and John Rimberg judge it to be a crude anti-Nazi picture. See: Babitsky and Rimberg, The Soviet Film Industry, p. 179. The film was shown at the Waldorf
Oleshan phrases, involving the play of brilliant light and a reference to a microscope, which brighten up the script, and are germane to the above discussion of Olesha's 'cinematic literature'.

Oshibka inzhenera Kochina, starring Liubov' Orlova (unusually, in a serious role), is a story of foreign espionage in the USSR, based on themes from the play Ochnaia stavka by the Tur brothers and L. Sheinin. The script, with its altered themes and imagery, was considered an improvement upon the original

The script was first published as 'Val'ter' in Zvezda, 1937, no. 4, pp. 14-45. Olesha wrote in 1937 that the completed scenario was about 80 typed pages but that the handwritten draft pages came to about two thousand. See: Olesha, 'My dolzhny ostavit' mnozhestvo svidetel'stv...'. Macheret subsequently wrote about the experience of working with Olesha on this script; see: A. Macheret, 'Za stolikom u shirokogo okna', Iskusstvo kino, 1970, no. 10, pp. 125-33. Macheret admits that he had difficulty in persuading Olesha to write the script, as 'predlozhennaiia skhema byla dovola vul'gama.' A. Macheret, Real'nost' mira na ekrane, Moscow, 1968, p. 122. For more information on Bolotnye soldaty see: Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil'my. Annotirovannyi katalog, vol. 2, Moscow, 1961, entry 1458, p. 150. Henceforth abbreviated to: SKhF 2.

A still from the film appears at the bottom of Macheret's article 'Trebovaniia k avtorskomu stsenariiu' in Iskusstvo kino, 1938, no. 8, p. 32.

For example: 'ona blestit v vozduke' and 'na vygibe kofeinika tochka bleska'. See: Iurii Olesha and A. Macheret, 'Val'ter. Literaturnyi stsenarii' in Zvezda, 1937, no. 4, pp. 14-45, pp. 14 and 16 respectively.

For more information on Oshibka inzhenera Kochina see: SKhF 2, entry 1555, pp. 204-05.
Macheret said that he had tried to avoid the usual cliché that spies are all around and betrayal happens daily, in favour of emphasizing the isolated and unusual character of the plot's events. In 1942, while in exile in Ashkhabad, Olesha wrote the script for 'Maik', one part of a 'Boevoi kinosbornik', a series of propaganda films relating to the second world war. The resulting film was directed by Mark Donskoi, and received a generally positive review in Komsomol'skaia pravda. That same year Olesha co-scripted the rather pedestrian 'kino-novella' Malen'kii leitenant, with Veniamin Riskind. The two men had worked together previously, around 1940, planning a script RGALI refers to as Primenenie parashiuta. They subsequently worked together again, in 1956, this time composing the music and the lyrics of the fishermen's songs for the film More zovet, directed by Vladimir Braun. The plot of this 'inspired tale' romanticizing the lives of the Black Sea fishermen was said to be slightly flawed, for having too many diverse thematic strands. Olesha made another music-
related collaboration in 1943, when he and A. Naroditskii attempted to reflect the
culture of Turkmenia in the uninspiring scenario for *Turkmenskii kinokontsert*.\(^{147}\)

Olesha was also involved in writing, or planning, several children's films,
both animated and acted. This is true of the 1940s when, for example, he adapted
*Tri tolstiaka* to be shown as a slide film, and of the 1950s.\(^{148}\) In 1950 he wrote
*Ogon*, a verse scenario for a 'contemporary fairy tale' in praise of labour, courage
and humanity, which was rejected by the studio.\(^{149}\) The same year he also scripted
the animated *Devochka v tsirke*, a film intended to educate children to avoid
laziness, and directed by Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg.\(^{150}\) Olesha co-wrote a
script for an animation with the film's subsequent director, Ivan Ivanov-Vano,
based upon Pushkin's *Skazka o mertvoi tsarevne i o semi bogatyriakh*.\(^{151}\)
Regarding non-animated, children's feature films, in 1953 Olesha wrote *Golyi
corol*, a scenario based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale 'The Emperor's New
Clothes', and, in 1958-59, a version of *Tri tolstiaka*.\(^{152}\)

In addition to all of the above Olesha participated in the writing of the
film documentary of 1940 *Kino za 20 let*, together with Macheret, Pudovkin and

---

\(^{147}\)The script is held at the Museum of the Dovzhenko Film Studio, Kiev.


\(^{149}\)See: RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 248-254.

\(^{150}\)For *Devochka v tsirke* see: RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 230-242. For an extremely brief, but
equally positive, report on working with Olesha see: Zinaida Brumberg, 'Liubimaia rabota' in *Zhizn'
v kino: Veterany o sebe i svoikh tovarishchakh*, Moscow, 1979, pp. 4-30 (p. 23-24).

\(^{151}\)See: SKhF 2, entry 2000, p. 464.

\(^{152}\)For *Golyi korol* see: RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 256-259 and for *Tri tolstiaka* see: RGALI,
Shub (the last two also directed the film). The film traced and celebrated the development of Soviet film during its first two decades, and featured extracts from popular films and documentary footage. Olesha's final text amounted to only a few pages but, in true Oleshan style, he wrote seventy seven draft pages, which he worked and re-worked and eventually reduced to just under six.

**Conclusion**

Olesha was driven to write by a need which came from the desire to express himself and to be understood, on a personal level. It also came from the wish to conform and to be accepted, on a social level. Throughout his life he was torn between his pre-revolutionary nostalgia and sensibilities, on the one hand, and the psychological and political pressures heaped upon him, on the other. Writing was his attempt to resolve internal conflicts whilst showing the new Soviet world that he was a valid member of it. The same themes echo across the pages of his fiction and his non-fiction: life, the old and the new world, and the role of art and the artist within it.

His first and major prose work, *Zavist'*, brought Olesha criticism which was as polarized as were its themes. Despite initial praise, the novel soon came

---

153 On *Kino za 20 let* see: RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 219 and SKhF 2, entry 1606, p. 232.


155 An example of early responses is the review by A. Meisel'man 'Novye knigi. "Zavist" Iuriia Olesha' in *Zhizn' iskusstva*, 22 June 1928, no. 30 (1208), p. 9.
to be regarded as seriously flawed, ideologically, due to its ambiguity. Given the growing demands for simple, propagandistic plots, in an ever harsher political climate, it is hardly surprising that Olesha decided to rewrite the work as a play with a clear, anti-bourgeois, pro-communist message. By the time he came to write Strogii iunosha, seven years later, Olesha had spent long enough in an uncomfortable position, artistically and politically, to attempt to remedy the situation by compromising both the content and the style of his work.

Zavist' had originally caught the critics' attention and won Olesha acclaim for its experimental literary style. It was Olesha's concern with the visual, with unusual effects of light, colour and optical devices, whether real or imaginary, which had captivated readers. However, the shift in the political climate towards the end of the 1920s led to the condemnation of such techniques as superficial and 'formalist'. Just as Olesha adjusted his content in an attempt to send out the correct ideological messages, so he simplified his style in order to comply with official demands for straightforward, propagandistic literature.

His interest in the visual fed Olesha's approach to cinema. As the call for established writers to create film scripts became more urgent during the 1930s, so Olesha began to play a more active role in scriptwriting. Throughout the rest of his career, too, he was to write screenplays of all kinds, from animation to documentary and short children's tales to war films, although not all of these film projects were realized. In the same way that Olesha's expressed views on literature and his literary output changed to accommodate the Party's demands, so his attitude to, and involvement with, film altered. The struggle to find a balance between stylistic form and ideological content was to be a challenge in Strogii iunosha, the most experimental of Olesha's works for the cinema.
CHAPTER 3

ABRAM ROOM: BEFORE AND AFTER STROGII IUNOSHA

In 1994, Russian film critics marked the centenary of the birth of Abram Room, Iurii Olesha's cinematic interpreter of Strogii iunosha. As part of the centenary celebration, the film itself was shown on Russian television, giving it the widest showing in the six decades since writer and director collaborated on it. For the majority of the film's audience, however, if Room's name was recognized at all it was either in connection with one of his silent era films, Tret'ia Meshchanskaia.

1 As is conventional, for the sake of clarity I should point out that Abram Matveevich Room (1894-1976) is not Mikhail Il'ich Romm (1901-1971). The aural similarity of the two surnames tends to lead to confusion, as exemplified in an article cited in Chapter Four and in Sovetskoe kino 1934, no. 11, p. 29 and p. 34; the former has a photograph and filmography of A. M. Room and the latter of M. I. Room, which should read 'Romm.' Romm made films about Lenin in 1937 and 1939: Lenin v Oktiabre and Lenin v 1918 godu. He directed many other films including, in 1944, Chelovek No. 217, mentioned below, and, in 1966, the innovative Obyknovennyi fashizm. Room explained, in an interview with Steven P. Hill on 31 October 1968, that both he and Romm came from Vil'no and that one could find many people with one or other variant of that surname there. This was recounted to me in my interview with Professor Hill on 22 March 1999. Further references to this interview will read: Hill, 22 March 1999. For Hill's published analysis of Tret'ia Meshchanskaia see below.

2 This was not the first time that the previously banned film had been seen in public. Strogii iunosha was given a limited showing during the 1960s, to specialist audiences in Moscow, but was generally not widely available. In 1974 it was shown for a month at a repertory cinema in Moscow. Olesha's scenario was also re-published in 1974, in a single volume of his collected works. See: Grashchenkova, Room, pp. 174-75.
or with films that came long after *Strogii iunosha*. The latter include *Granatovyi braslet*, a popular film of the 1960s, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, although many of its viewers at the time would have had no idea of the director's history. Eighteen years after his death, then, Room's work was still alive to many people.

Despite his undoubted success in later life, it is likely that Room's colleagues and contemporaries would consider his most significant contribution to the Soviet film world to be his pioneering work of the 1920s and 1930s. During that period he was considered to be one of the five great early directors, alongside Sergei Eizenshtein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Lev Kuleshov and Dziga Vertov. However, over time, he became more obscure and far less studied or discussed than the other four, as can be seen by his omission from, or only brief mention in,

---


4 Grashchenkova (in Room, p. 6), quotes Mikhail Levidov (a journalist who subsequently wrote about Olesha's screenplay *Strogii iunosha*, see Chapter Five) referring, in the 1920s, to the 'bol'shaia piaterka sovetskogo kino', which consisted of the above-mentioned directors. She adds that these days people usually only speak of the 'velikaia troika' meaning Eizenshtein, Pudovkin and Aleksandr Dovzhenko. Further to this, Naum Kleiman notes that Room held a unique place amongst the five famous directors listed above, adding diplomatically that if there was an argument in those days as to whose methods were right, then today we know that they were all right in their own way. See the 'Muzei kino' introduction to *Strogii iunosha* by Naum Kleiman, broadcast on RTV in Russia to celebrate Room's centenary in July 1994. Hereafter referred to as: Kleiman, *Muzei kino Room broadcast*.
current publications on Soviet film history. During his long career, Abram Room made twenty six films, but, apart from contemporary reviews when the films were first released, he is only recognised critically for one of them. The fact that he is now remembered almost solely for his unique Tret’ia Meshchankaia is a testament to the film’s brilliance. Yet, it can also partly be explained by the film’s plot, involving adultery leading to a ménage à trois and themes, including abortion and attempts to create new codes of morality. These elements, as well as the scandal they provoked upon the film’s release, are of interest not only to scholars of cinema, but also to sociologists and historians of Russia.

In general, Room’s prominence was reduced by his chequered career, as will be shown in the rest of this chapter. As also indicated below, Room ran into difficulties with the authorities more than once, as in the case of his cooperation

---

5He also scripted two (with N. Saltykov_Yeter, directed by L. Sheffer in 1926, based on Boris Lavrenev’s story, see below, and Vragi, directed by Rodion Nakhapetov in 1977, based on Maksim Gor’kii’s play), and acted in two (in 1927 Room played a cellist in M. Kapchinskii’s Kafe Fankoni [Maksim Shtraukh was also in the cast), see below note 59, and a film director in Sergei Komarov’s Potelui Meri Pikford).

The figure twenty six includes Krasnaia Presnia (1926), which Room co-directed with three other filmmakers and the animated film Tip-Top — zvukovoi izobretatel’, which he directed and co-scripted with G. Levkoev (see below), but does not include Sovest’ mira (1950) or Odnazhdy letom (1933), which the director never completed (the fate of the latter film is discussed in note 83).

6This is confirmed by the titles of just two of the works written by American academics on the film, both of which are cited below; these are: a chapter in Judith Mayne’s book Kino and the Woman Question (a revealing title in itself) called ‘Bed and Sofa and the Edge of Domesticity’ and Denise Youngblood’s article ‘The Fiction Film as a Source for Soviet Social History: The Third Meshchankaia Street Affair’. Henceforth: Youngblood, ‘The Third Meshchankaia Street Affair’.
with Olesha. This left his work of the 1920s and 1930s somewhat in the shadows until after the 1960s. Yet it is that work which sets the context for his role in the making of Strogii iunosha. Before moving to an analysis of that context (in the final section of this chapter), I shall first discuss Room's move from the theatre to the cinema, then I shall examine the director's oeuvre subsequent to his problems over the banned film. Assessment of Room's wartime films, which provided a road to professional rehabilitation, and his later work, which was critically and publicly successful, casts useful light on the director's earlier work, as does reference to his personal evolution.

Room: from theatre to cinema

Abram Matveevich Room was born on 16 June (old-style calendar) 1894, in Vil'no, subsequently Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania then part of the Russian Empire. His father worked as a bureaucrat in shipping; his mother did not have a job. After finishing school in Vil'no, in 1914 Room went to Petersburg to study at the medical faculty of the Institute of Psychology and Neurology, at the same time as Dziga Vertov. He then transfered to the medical faculty of Saratov State University until, in 1918, his studies were interrupted by the Civil War. During that year he worked as a volunteer doctor for the Red Army.

Even as a student Room was particularly interested in the degree to which the mechanism of the psychology of the individual influenced social movements

and upheavals. This was to be seen in his films, as discussed below, where it is often individual action which determines the social outcome. However, Room's interest in the role of the individual and the personal dimension can also be related to his interest in theatre. To some degree, for Room, theatre acted as a platform for understanding human psychology and its expression. In Saratov Room was involved in amateur theatre, and had helped to organize a theatre school. In 1923 his work was seen by the Commissar for Enlightenment, Anatolii Lunacharskii, who was touring the provinces. Impressed, the Commissar invited the young Room to Moscow, to work at the Teatr Revoliutsii, under the artistic direction of Vsevolod Meierkhol'd.

Once in Moscow, Room lost no time in choosing 'Ozero Liul', Aleksei Faiko's first play, to direct. A romantic melodrama about the last hours of capitalism, shattered by the Revolution, the production was a success. This was despite initial negative critical reaction in Pravda and Izvestiia, where the play's abstraction was criticized. According to these newspapers, the playwright should have been more specific in his presentation of the revolutionary movement. Room later revealed: 'Etot spektakl' byl mnoiu postavlenn pod iavnym vliianiem kino, interes k kotoromu u menia nachal rasti'. Appropriately, just as cinema influenced the director's early theatre work, so theatre would remain an influence on Room's films, throughout his long career.

---

8 See: Kleiman, Muzei kino Room broadcast.

9 See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 240-43. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, Iurii Olesha was to be similarly criticized for excessive abstraction in Strogii iunosha, also concerned with the relationship of the old and the new (as was Room himself — see Chapter Seven).

Towards the end of 1923, after directing Ozero Liul', Room left the theatre to go into cinema. This medium, which was just becoming established, had attracted many creative people, due to its seemingly infinite possibilities. From 1924 until the mid-1930s Room not only made films, but also taught courses at VGIK, the All-Union State Cinema Institute.\(^{11}\) However, the director's heart never quite left theatre, and he brought much of its culture to cinema, for example in his way of treating the people who worked on his films as a team.\(^{12}\) He also brought two other qualities to his cinematic work from the theatre. The first of these was a sense of spectacle. The second is a musicality of action unusual for the cinema, which he had created in the theatre. It includes a music of character, of plot development and of the whole composition, in addition to which Room brings to his later films a literally musical dimension through the careful use of audible music itself, the score.

In his films, as will be shown, Room pays attention not only to the subtle thoughts and emotions of an individual, but also to the hidden aspects of that individual, revealing his or her fears and dreams.\(^{13}\) The director is not afraid to show people in all their inconsistency and paradoxicality. As will be seen in later chapters, Strogii iunosha was a particularly paradoxical film, perhaps one of the most paradoxical, or ambiguous, of all Soviet films, which partly explains its being shelved. That pivotal film will be analyzed at length later; the rest of this chapter will establish the context either side of Strogii iunosha. In retrospect, as I

\(^{11}\)See: Iutkevich, ed., Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', p. 357. For Pavel Kadochnikov's wonderful caricature of VGIK professors, including Room, and students, see: Kino, 10 February 1935, no. 7.

\(^{12}\)See: Kleiman, Muzei kino Room broadcast.

\(^{13}\)Room supposedly commented on the nature of the camera lens, punning that 'Eto ne ob'ektiv a sub'ektiv!' Hill, 22 March 1999.
shall show, certain qualities in Room's later works cast light on the earlier period. Having addressed these later films in the following section, I shall then turn to the director's career preceding Strogii iunosha, in order to set the context for the film itself.

**After Strogii iunosha**

In 1974 the film director Grigorii Roshal' wrote a piece in honour of Room's 80th birthday, in which he conveyed how actively involved in film-related matters his fellow director still was: 'On postoianniy deiatel'nyi uchastnik vsekh nashikh khudozhestvennykh sovetov v ob'edinenii "Vremia" na kinostudii "Mosfilm".'

Not only was Room as concerned as in his younger days with questions of filmmaking in general, he was also as keen as before to make films himself. This is evident from the unrealized project he was working on when he died, in 1976.

In the last year of his life, Room had been planning to make a cinematic literary adaptation, based on various stories by Bunin, mixed with elements of the writer's life. The film, one planned variant of which was called Solnechnyi udar, took the stories 'Natalie', 'Rusia' and 'V Parizhe' from the cycle 'Temnye allei', written just before the author's death, and fused them with his early stories 'Sukhodol' and 'Poslednii den'. Room decided to use the music of Rakhmaninov (who loved Bunin's work) in the film, as he felt that its harmonic structure and national colouring suited the project. Room was the first Soviet director to

---

14See: G. Roshal', 'Odin iz zachinatelei...' in _Iskusstvo kino_, 1974, no. 8, pp. 115-17 (p. 117).

15See: Grashchenkova, _Room_, p. 200

16Ibid., p. 208
conceive of 'ekranno otkrytie Bunina'. In the same way, he had been the first Soviet director to recreate Olesha's literary vision on the screen, over four decades earlier.

Following the banning of Strogii iunosha, Room's experimental project with Olesha, 1936, the director effectively retreated, making no films in 1937 and 1938. Then, in 1939, still in Kiev, (see below on Room's earlier expulsion from Moscow), he directed Eskadril'ia No. 5, initially known as Voina nachinaetsia until officials ruled that the title was too negative. This hack film, whose script was written by Iosif Prut, was full of facile optimism about the prospective Soviet war effort, and deservedly proved to be an artistic and commercial failure. In 1940 Room's Vetrs vostoka was released, but this did not enhance his reputation significantly either. It is shot in a simple, almost documentary style, and tells the story of a vain struggle by Ukrainian peasants, as the Second World War was approaching, to hold on to their land in the face of the land-owning Countess's...

---

17Ibid., p. 200.

18According to Tat'iana Derevenko, head of the Dovzhenko Film Studio museum in Kiev, during a discussion of the film after its television broadcast in Russia on 17 December 1994.

19I find that it is possible to derive some pleasure from a few interesting and characteristically Room-style shots in the film, mainly of architecture, using perspective and light and shade in a creative way. I disagree in part, therefore, with Grashchenkova's condemnation of it as: 'bezlikuiu, lishennuiu ne tol'ko avtorskogo, roomovskogo svoeobrazia, no i togo vysokogo professionalizma, kotoryi do sikh por emu ne izmenial.' See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 175.

It is worth pointing out here that Grashchenkova refers to most of Room's films in her book, but in a frustratingly random and unanalytical way. I have not therefore included individual references to her work for each of the films I discuss, only references to those books and articles which are germane to the specific point I make.

20See: G. Roshal', 'Odin iz zachinatelei...', Iskusstvo kino, 1974, no. 8, pp. 115-17 (p. 117).
(played by Ol’ga Zhizneva) desire to build a road across it. This was to be Room's last film made in Kiev.

Room continued to make films after his evacuation with the Kiev Ukrainfil’m studio to Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan (although, rather implausibly given his age, he claimed he would much rather have been at the front, fighting). His initial work produced there, Tonia, formed part of a film in the series called 'Boevye kinosborniki'. These almanacs consisted of collected short films, or 'novellas', made during and about the war. The kinosbornik itself was entitled Nashi devushki, and was completed in 1943. It was not released, but was immediately shelved, due to its purported 'krupny[e] ideiny[e] nedochet[y]'. Room's contribution, Tonia, was the first of two 'novellas' about young women in the war. Tonia, the scenario for which was written by B. Brodskii, revolves around the eponymous telephone switchboard operator (played by Valentina Karavaeva), left alone at her post when the Germans invade. Vasia (played by

---


22 Ibid., p. 116. Alma-Ata is now known as Almaty.


24 It has been suggested that 'B. Brodskii' might have been 'Boris Brodianskii'. See: Sergei Zemlianukhin and Miroslava Segida, Domashniaia sinemateka. Otechestvennoe kino 1918-1996, Moscow, 1996, p. 273. Henceforth: Zemlianukhin and Segida, Domashniaia sinemateka. Valentina Karavaeva's first major role was that of Mashen'ka, also a 'telegrafistka', in Julii Raizman's film of the same name. In this film, however, the heroine leaves her sedentary post to take part in the fighting. Mashen'ka was also completed in Alma-Ata in 1942. See: Zemlianukhin and Segida, Domashniaia sinemateka, p. 242. An amazing account of Karavaeva's life is given in: Georgii Paradzhanov, 'Lik chelovecheskii', Kinostsenarii, 1999, no. 3, pp. 134-43.
Sergei Stoliarov), the man she loves, is at the front. On the telephone to him she reports the movements of the German tanks outside her window. This enables the Soviets to counter-attack. When the Germans order her to demand an end to Soviet fire she defiantly does the opposite, and is killed for refusing to cooperate. As with Nashestvie, treated below, this film highlights the difference one 'ordinary' person's heroic actions can make in times of national crisis. Throughout Tonia, Room makes dramatic use of music by Sergei Prokof'ev. The film ends with Vasia, after Tonia's funeral, looking at a photograph of her face. This melts into Tonia's living face, urging him to keep fighting: 'Vasia, ty zamechatel'no b'esh', bei eshche, bei!' The heroine's memory lives on, still helping the cause.

Despite the positive message of Tonia, film industry officials found something to fault in Room's film. The Gosfil'mofond resolution regarding the film states that it is unconvincing in its portrayal of the heroine's 'polnaia izoliatsiia ot vsekh iavlenii kipuchei zhizni prifrontovogo goroda'. The result of such a verdict of excessive abstraction, in addition to a similarly negative one for the second 'novella', was the immediate shelving of Nashi devushki.

---

25 One of Sergei Stoliarov's most memorable roles was in 1936, when he played Martynov in Grigorii Aleksandrov's Tsirk.

26 Room used related techniques in the fantasy sequences of Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia.

27 See the Russian Gosfil'mofond resolution: Gosfil'mofond Rossii, 1-2-1, no. 1450 cited in Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz' iatoe kino, p. 88.

28 The second 'novella', entitled 'Odnazhdy noch'iu', directed by Grigorii Kozintsev, also provoked a negative reaction from Gosfil'mofond. Kozintsev's film concerns the supposed poisoning, by a female laboratory assistant and Kolkhoz worker, of a saboteur, who betrays himself by his cowardly behaviour. The film organization disapproved of the plot's central theme of 'patologicheskoe sostoianie otavlenykh liudei, zhushchikh smerti.' Whatever the official rhetoric, according to
The dismal fate of Tonia did not deter Room from continuing to make war films. With his next effort, Nashestvie, completed two years later, the director's career took a turn for the better. Room achieved significant popular, as well as critical, success with this worthwhile and engaging adaptation of Leonid Leonov's play of the same name. The film was scripted by Boris Chirskov, and co-directed by Oleg Zhakov, who also played the leading character, Fedor Talanov.

Nashestvie tells the story of Fedor, a young man, recently released from prison, arriving home during the German invasion. He is full of anger and resentment at having been in prison, and cannot find a place for himself in society. In a fit of disillusionment, Fedor storms out of his family home after an argument with his father. Those working against the Germans, as well as his family, suspect him of being a traitor, but he performs a noble deed which restores their faith in him, and costs him his life. Fedor exchanges identities with Kolesnikov, a resistance leader hiding in his parents' flat. When he is captured by the Germans, both he and his parents insist that he is Kolesnikov, knowing that this means he will be killed. He is indeed killed, but Kolesnikov is free to continue his activities. Thanks to Fedor's actions, the Russians manage to drive the Germans out, and the young

---

Iz'iatoe kino, this particular 'Boevoi kinosbornik' was probably banned for a mixture of reasons, including both a general reduction in the production of such collected war films, and because of the undesirable portrayal of the Red Army's retreat in 1941-42. See ibid.

Boris Chirskov wrote the scripts for various films, the most famous of which are Valerii Chkalov (with G. Bardukov and D. Tarasov), dir. Mikhail Kalatozov, 1941; Zoia (with L. Arnshtam), dir. Lev Arnshtam, 1944 and Velikii perelom, dir. Fridrikh Ermler, 1946. He was one of the first Soviet script writers to use the technique of the inner monologue. See: Iutkevich, ed., Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', pp. 488-89. Oleg Zhakov had studied the eccentric FEKS method of acting and had played roles in several films by Kozintsev and Trauberg during the 1920s. See: ibid., p. 139.
man's family are proud of his memory, with his mother (movingly acted by Ol'ga Zhizneva) exclaiming: 'On nash'.

Like Tonia, Nashestvie revealed aspects of Room's concern for the individual's role in society and the place of the personal, as well as elements of spectacle and the use of music, rooted in his theatrical background. Indeed, many of Room's films share the theme of the unsung hero, the ordinary person who makes some kind of sacrifice for the greater good. In his wartime films that sacrifice is the ultimate: life. In Tonia the heroine gives up her life in order that the Russians may drive out the Germans. In Nashestvie Fedor does the same, but with forethought, not in a burst of spontaneous defiance. These are both ordinary individuals who make their own moral choices, which take on a far greater significance than the merely personal, standing as examples to others. Tonia and Fedor do not seek glory, they simply follow the dictates of their consciences.

Stylistically, both Tonia and Nashestvie mix realism with theatricality. Tonia features actuality footage of tanks firing, and Nashestvie, filmed in Kalinin, includes shots of genuinely war-ravaged buildings. Tonia also includes several inserts of Pravda newspaper headlines about the war and actuality footage, as well as documentary-style intertitles stating how many days into the war the action is.

Ol'ga Zhizneva came to fame in the 1920s, when she had acted in several of Iakov Protazanov's successful films, Zakroishchik iz Torzhka, 1925, Ego prizvy, 1925 and Protsess o trekh millionakh, 1926, and in Room's Privedenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia, 1929, with Boris Ferdinandov and Maksim Shtraukh. As well as in Nashestvie, 1944, after Strogii junosha she starred in Room's films Sud chesti, 1948, again with Shtraukh, and Granatovyi braslet, 1964. Zhizneva was not only one of Room's best and most consistent actors, she also became his wife, and she played her best roles in his work, usually embodying nobility and sincerity of feeling. For more on Shtraukh see below.

See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 180. Kalinin has now reverted to its former name of Tver.
The exteriors and interiors of the buildings are realistic, full of the kinds of detail Room is usually associated with: architectural intricacies such as arches or pillars, striking shadows (in the case of Tonia, cross-shaped shadows cast by tape stuck on the windows to prevent them shattering during a bomb blast), portraits and furniture which expresses the character of the household. Irina Grashchenkova suggests that the depiction of typical objects in the Talanov household preceding the arrival of Fedor is a deliberate device, ensuring that the contemporary viewer would feel an affinity with him and the family before Fedor's subsequent hostile outburst.32

In different ways, both Tonia and Nashestvie contain elements of Room's fondness for spectacular scenes, which will be discussed below and in Chapter Seven (the latter with specific reference to Strogii iunosha). Tonia plays with the fast inter-cutting of shots of the switchboard operators and the speakers at the other end of the telephone, which becomes like a kaleidoscopic visual gimmick. There is also a sense of spectacle about Tonia watching out of the window as the German tanks are being attacked. Both here and in Nashestvie the movement of the resistance and the enemy tanks appears to be a strange performance, almost choreographed. The scene most resembling a public spectacle, however, is Fedor Talanov's performance when he insists to the Germans that he is Andrei Kolesnikov, and his family first looks on, then participates in the deception. He is the focus both of the diegetic audience and of the audience of Nashestvie.

As will be discussed in further detail below, music plays a significant part in all of Room's sound films. For Nashestvie, the composer Iurii Biriukov interwove a female choir with soldiers' songs, as well as with quotations from a

---

32Ibid., p. 183.
symphony by Chaikovskii, and passages he himself had composed for the film. This adds to the drama of the film, as does the editing, which includes close-up visual interjections in the narrative flow of the plot. These frames, usually of facial expressions or physical gestures, reveal the psychological depths of a character under pressure. They occur in Tonia, too, and in many of Room's other films. Throughout the director's oeuvre, however, the individual is not merely the individual, but also a symbol for others. Similarly, a character's fate is not his or hers alone, but represents the fate of a whole swathe of society.

At the referendum of film workers in 1944, Abram Room's Nashestvie, along with Mikhail Romm's Chelovek No. 217, about Tania, a captured Russian in Germany during the Second World War who vows to avenge the murder of her fellow countryman and to fight for her freedom, was voted best film of the year. For a brief period Room was in favour, but after the war historical circumstances and critical officials once more conspired against the director. His film of 1946, V gorakh Jugoslavii, was banned, probably because relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had soured. V gorakh Jugoslavii, scripted by Georgii Mdivani, was about the struggle of the Yugoslav people against German occupation and, according to Room, about the help provided in that struggle by the Soviet people and the Red Army. The film revolved around a Bosnian peasant, who headed a small detachment during the establishment of the Partisan movement. During the national liberation war this movement grew into a real force, and its leader became famous throughout (the then) Jugoslavija. The film

---

33Ibid., p. 181.

34Ibid., pp. 175-76.

35Abram Room, 'Kak sozdavalsia fil'm "V gorakh Jugoslavii"' in Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, p. 27. This was a Russian-Yugoslav (what would now be Slovene) co-production. See: Stanko Simenc, Panorama Slovenskega Filma, Ljubljana, 1996, p. 69.
traces the hero's path from simple peasant to Colonel. Once again, Room treats the theme of one man's heroic actions and their subsequent significance for a nation. All the actors were Yugoslav, except four Russians, and help was provided by the Yugoslav Army and even Marshal Tito, who 'besedoval s nami, obsuzhdal stsenario'. As in Nashestvie, the composer Biruikov used his imagination to impart a sense of the atmosphere of the events in his compositions. He strove to convey a range of Yugoslav folk melodies and Partisan battle songs in his music.\(^{36}\)

Room's next two films, Sud chesti (the scenario of which was written by Aleksandr Shtein), of 1948, and Serebristaia pyl', of 1953, according to Naum Kleiman, expressed all the ideological tendencies of the Cold War period, as well as the 'fight against cosmopolitanism'.\(^{38}\) Serebristaia pyl' is a literary adaptation, by A. Jakobson and Aleksandr Filimonov, of the former's play Shakaly. Shot by Eduard Tissé, it shows how American spies come to infiltrate Soviet underground atomic laboratories. One of the scientists involved, seeking personal glory, discusses his research with the press while on a trip to the United States. When they are unmasked by honest citizens the Soviet court of honour condemns the

---

\(^{36}\)See: Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, pp. 27-28, p. 28.

\(^{37}\)Ibid., pp. 27-28.

\(^{38}\)See: Kleiman, Muzei kino Room broadcast. According to Zabrodin's filmography, in 1950 Room began work on a film called Sovest' mira, based on N. Shpanov's novel Podzhigateli, but the project was never completed. See: Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, p. 42. In 1952, Room filmed a MKhAT theatre production of Richard Sheridan's play The School for Scandal, Shkola zlosloviia directed by N. Gorchakov and L. Largin, but I am not including it in this survey, as he did not direct the play. See the filmographies in ibid., p. 42 (Grashchenkova's, Room p. 262, is less reliable). A. Shtein's scenario 'Sud chesti' was published in Izbrannye stsenarii sovetskogo kino, Moscow, vol. 5, 1951, pp. 529-98.
irredeemable scientist, but gives his remorseful colleague a second chance to help society. Room later found the film rather naive. His next work, Serdtse b'etsia vnov, made in 1956, is also an adaptation, this time by Aleksandr Galich, of V. Diagilev's story 'Doktor Golubev'. This film poses as a work dealing with some of the questions concerning the intelligentsia at the time, through the plot of a fatal illness, a mis-diagnosis, and an operation. In fact, it is only superficially concerned with such issues, simply through the inclusion of doctors (a shorthand for the intelligentsia). Serdtse b'etsia vnov claims to show the struggle between a progressive professional held back by his reactionary superior, yet it never actually establishes any convincing conflict, choosing ideologically safer options instead.

After these creatively frustrating capitulations to political pressure, Room did not produce any work until 1964. On his return to filmmaking, however, the director compensated for his silence with yet another filmic interpretation of a literary work, as all his subsequent films were to be. This film, Granatovyi braslet, marked the start of the successful, last period of Room's career, proving that he had managed to resurrect his talent.

---


41 For more on Serdtse b'etsia vnov see: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 157.

42 In fact the 1960s was a period which saw an exceptionally high number of literary adaptations, particularly of Russian classics.
Granatovyi braslet is based on a story by Aleksandr Kuprin, scripted by Anatolii Granberg and Room, about the tragic love of a humble clerk for a noble princess. The film uses the self-referential device of including Kuprin as a character to whom the story is told, and who records the story as it happens. The film treats social themes as filtered through the experience of individuals, and uses the devices of spectacle and music, as discussed above, to add drama, emotion and aesthetic value to the work.

As far as plot is concerned, this film includes one of Room's customary themes: the romantic triangle of a husband, a wife and a young man. The superficial morality of social convention is pitted against the honesty of expressing sincere love, with the only possible resolution being self-sacrifice. The Admirer, in this case, is socially inferior to his beloved; after a confrontation with her husband, he understands that he must commit suicide. The film is dramatic in an understated way, although there are some stylistic flourishes, such as striking shadow effects and several Expressionist-style shots of a staircase. Otherwise, Room fills the picture with period detail, including furniture and costumes. The result is a highly watchable and engaging work.

Granatovyi braslet did well at the domestic box office in the 1960s, and was shown in thirteen countries in addition to the Soviet Union. Room's next film, Tsvety zapozdalve, adapted by him from the Chekhov story, confirmed the director's popular position, as it was a great success at home and abroad, being

---

43 There are obvious echoes of Strogii iunoshka here. See Chapter Eight.

44 Room later said that after seeing this staircase three times the audience became bored with the device. Hill, 22 March 1999.

45 Grashchenkova, Room, p. 204.
sold to thirty eight countries.\textsuperscript{46} Both Granatovyi braslet and Tsvety zapozdalve are set in the pre-revolutionary period, and concern the tragic love of one person for another of a different class. However, Tsvety zapozdalve inverts the characters and situation of Granatovyi braslet, as it revolves around the love of an impoverished princess's daughter for the newly wealthy and successful doctor son of one of her family's serfs.\textsuperscript{47} The films show how, before the Revolution, social and financial status were the hardest divides to bridge.\textsuperscript{48} Even where love appears to triumph, the transgressor dies — in the earlier film the clerk kills himself, in the later one the young noblewoman dies of a poverty-related illness. Both films make significant use of music, opening with concerts, with one carrying the pre-credits pronouncement concerning Hector Berlioz's 'La Symphonie Fantastique'.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid. As stated in Chapter Two, in 'Mag literatury', Olesha recalls watching a pre-revolutionary adaptation of Tsvety zapozdalve. He writes that: 'navsegda sokhranilos' vospominanie o tom, chto peredo mnoi proshla chudesnaia, grustnaia, kakaia-to neschastnaia i blagorodnaia istoriia'. 'Mag literatury' in Olesha, \textit{P'esy}, pp. 367-71 (p. 368). Olesha writes about Tsvety zapozdalve in the context of his own adaptation of the story, for the theatre. Although on p. 388 of Olesha, \textit{P'esy} it is stated that: 'Instsenirovka rasskaza [...] byla Oleshei zakonchena i peredana Malomu teatru, no postanovka ee ne sostoinalas', a film of a stage production of Olesha's text, directed by A. Nal' in 1970, does exist. See: Zemlianukhin and Segida, \textit{Domashniaia sinemateka}, p. 483. It is a sign of Olesha's and Room's convergence of interests that both artists were working on adaptations of the same story at approximately the same time but, according to Room, independently of each other.

\textit{Hill, 22 March 1999.}

\textsuperscript{47}The Princess is played by Ol'ga Zhizneva, who conveys with great expressiveness her contempt for the \textit{nouveau riche} doctor her daughter secretly loves.

\textsuperscript{48}These themes are extremely common in Russian pre-revolutionary films. The director Evgenii Bauer was particularly well known for his extravagant melodramas in which class and money play critical roles in questions of love and matrimony, often driving protagonists to suicide or murder. See particularly his \textit{Ditia bol'shogo goroda} (1914) and \textit{Zhizn' za zhizn'} (1916).
that: 'Muzyka pomogala nam prochitat' eto romanticheskoe proizvedenie iunogo A. P. Chekhova', and the other focusing on the second movement (designated 'Largo Apassionata') of Beethoven's second sonata. Both adaptations, typically for Room, revel in period detail of costume and interior decor. Finally, both films make striking use of spectacle, not only through the depiction of concerts but, in Granatovy braslet, of circus performers and, in Tsvetv zapozdalve, of can-can dancers at a music hall. Towards the middle of the earlier film, Room presents a scene from his protagonist's memory, as he recalls how he came to be in possession of the Princess's glove. At the circus, attended by the young protagonist and, separately, by the Princess, her husband and her brother, the Princess had given the magician her glove, so that he could make it disappear. During the trick, the Princess's escorts had insisted they leave a place of such lowbrow entertainment. The viewer of Room's film sees all of this, and the following scenes at the circus in which the young man takes the glove. In the later film, the director indulges himself in a scene where the Prince and others go to watch can-can dancers perform. Although the ostensible function of this scene is to portray the debauched and vulgar pleasures of the upper classes, such as dancing girls and alcohol, the lingering shots of the dancers share a certain joyful atmosphere with similar shots in Jean Renoir's 1955 celebration of the musical, French CanCan. With its dynamism and colour, the scene works well on film.

Room's final completed film, Prezhdevremennyi chelovek, of 1972, was based on Maksim Gor'kii's play Iakov Bogomolov. Although the film portrays the love of three men for one woman, this plot is a means of setting up a platform upon which to express various views on life, work and man's purpose in the world. The issues provide the scope to set contrasting and conflicting social, ethical and psychological positions against each other. The film's style of editing

---

49 See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 203.
reflects the irreconcilable ideological and ethical polemic. As with Room's other films, music is a key feature of Prezhdevremennyi chelovek; the director uses Aleksandr Skriabin's compositions to comment upon the screen action. It is possible to relate the idea of the 'premature' man, a man who is ahead of his times, to Room's position as an artist, particularly in terms of his early film Tret'ia Meshchanskaia, discussed below, and of Strogii iunosha, discussed in later chapters.

This section has shown how mercurial Abram Room's professional status was after the banning of Strogii iunosha in 1936, until the last years of his life. At times he hit the heights of artistic success and official adulation, at others the troughs of unpopularity and disgrace. Although official and public reception of Room's work was inconsistent, there was a general consistency in the director's own attitude to filmmaking. A look at the films produced during the later stages of his career shows that Room retained the affinity for the theatre, embodied in his use of spectacle, present in his early works, as discussed below. Likewise, Room's thematic interests and stylistic concerns, in particular his concept of individual psychology as a potentially influential force in social movements, are present at the end, as well as throughout his career. Finally, the use of music as a comment upon the screen action, as well as its use in the structure of a film, is prominent in Room's later work, but is also a feature of his early sound films.

---

50 Ibid., p. 227.

51 For more on this, see: ibid., p. 209.
Before Strogii iunosha

The later stages of Room's career cast light on his filmic and thematic concerns in general. In order to present a more complete picture, I shall now turn to an examination of the character and fate of the director's works in the period leading up to Strogii iunosha. Room had directed fourteen films prior to Strogii iunosha, although, as mentioned below, he was only a co-director on one (Krasnaia Presnia), and was ignominiously dismissed from another (Odnazhvdy letom, discussed below) before it had been completed. As will be shown below, Room's career, although including periods of equilibrium, was generally marked by startling fluctuations between great success and terrible scandal. The study of Room's first decade of filmmaking undertaken here enables a clear vision to emerge of how Strogii iunosha fits into that particular stage in Room's career, as well as into the broader picture of his life.

Room's early forays into filmmaking, in 1924, were not particularly successful, but revealed the director's artistic ambition and creativity. His first film was commissioned by the bureau of advertising — to advertise the bureau! Room was given the equipment and the freedom to do as he wished, and the result was a gimmicky, eccentric piece of slapstick, with a rhyming text written by Room, entitled Chto govorit MOS, sei otgadaite vopros. It was shot in about five days in Moscow, with no studio scenes.

The director's second film, Gonka za samogonkoi, for which P. Repnin wrote the script, was an unfunny comedy, with elements of documentary-style

---


It, too, was shot entirely outside the studio. The film had an anti-alcohol message, and Room described it as being in four different registers: 'real'no-bytovom, komediinom, komicheskom i sugubо naturalisticheskom'. Room himself admitted that the work was flawed, but defended himself by saying that it was only his second film, that it was an experiment, and that the main thing he was striving for was:

'podat' sovremennuiu, istinno sovetskuiu, bytovuiu kartinu v razreze naimaksimal'noi ostrotы, ogoliaia priem do kostи, ne ostanavlivaia s' ni pered kakimi obscheprинiatymi traditsiiami i obychaiami'.

In this statement one can already recognize the Room of Tret'ia Meshchanskaia and even of Strogii junosha as, in these films, he mixes elements of everyday contemporary reality with innovative, aesthetically stylized images verging on the abstract. There, the director presents both recognisable domesticity and unusual shots of people, objects and places so as to make them appear strange and unfamiliar. The film was not widely shown because it did not meet with official favour.

Two years later Room's film Predatel' was released. The script was written by Viktor Shklovskii and Iurii Nikulin, and was loosely based on the

---

54 An advertisement for the film's release features in Sovetskoe kino, May-June 1925, nos. 2-3. Although the film is no longer in existence, the script by P. Repnin is at Gosfilmofond. See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 13.


57 See Room's contribution to Kak ia stal rezhisserom, Moscow, 1946, p. 305 quoted in ibid., p. 16.

58 See: A. Room, 'Moi kinoubezhdeniia' in Sovetskii ekran, 23 February 1926, no. 8, p. 5.

59 The film now exists only in part. See: Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, p. 37. Stills advertising this and one for L. Sheffer's Veter (see note 5 above) appeared in Sovetskoe kino.
latter's story 'Matrosskaia tishina'. The film used the format of a thriller film to treat revolutionary history. Although the theme and the plot were traditional, the close attention paid by the director to the 'living man' was unconventional. This trait was to become a feature of most of Room's films, as was the device of holding close-up shots of the protagonist for a strikingly long time. These idiosyncracies formed part of Room's move to reveal the ordinary, yet heroic, person as a force shaping the destiny of a whole society.

In 1926, too, Room made Bukhta smerti, the scenario for which was written by Boris Leonidov, based on the story 'V bukhte Otrada' by Aleksei Novikov-Priboi, with intertitles written by Viktor Shklovskii. The action is set towards the end of the Civil War, and involves a revolt, organized by a secret Bolshevik organization together with the sailors of the ship 'Lebed', against the Whites occupying the bay. Each actor in the film was used to express a particular sentiment. Unfortunately for Room, however, Eizenshtein's Bronenosets 'Potemkin' was also released that year, and dealt with similar themes in an
innovative way, leaving little room for *Bukhta smerti* to impress. Although Room also made three other films in 1926-27, it was with *Tret’ia Meshchanskaia* that he really came to the fore.

*Tret’ia Meshchanskaia* was the director’s first truly significant work. This film, made in 1927, was scripted by Viktor Shklovskii; it is set during the NEP period. The story revolves around a petit bourgeois husband and wife, Nikolai

---

62 See: A. Kurs, ‘Molodaia pleiada’ in *Sovetskii ekran*, 23 February 1926, no. 8. A still from *Bukhta smerti* was used as the cover for this edition, presumably to draw attention to the new film.

63 In 1926, with the co-directors L. Sheffer, A. Pereguda and L. Mur, Room made *Krasnaia Presnia*, the script of which was written by N. Agadzhanova. This film no longer exists. See: Zabrodin, *Abram Matveevich Room*, p. 44. Then, in 1927, Room directed *Evrei na zemle*, for which Viktor Shklovskii wrote the intertitles and Vladimir Maiakovskii the script. In that year, too, Room directed and co-scripted (with Shklovskii) the film *Ukhaby*, based on material written by the worker correspondent A. Dmitriev. It was set in a glass factory, which gave the cameraman, D. Fel’dman, an excuse to film workers’ faces through glass of various thicknesses, forms and colours, and to indulge in the play of light refracted in the surface of the glass. See: S. Freilikh, *Fil’my i gody. Razvitie realizma v kinoiskusstve*, Moscow, 1964, p. 83. For stills of *Ukhaby* and an article by Room on its making, see A. Room, ‘*Ukhaby*’ in *Sovetskii ekran*, 13 September 1927, no. 37, p. 10. Unfortunately the film *Ukhaby* no longer exists, according to Zabrodin, *Abram Matveevich Room*, p. 38.

64 The film was intended to be called ‘*Liubov’ vtroem’*, but this was regarded as too scandalous; in France it was known as ‘*Trois dans un sous-sol’*, in England as ‘*Bed and Sofa’*. The English title is apt, for, apart from its allusion to the plot, the furniture, decor and interior clutter were important to Room to convey the atmosphere of the apartment. The director writes that the objects in the film are as alive as the people, meaning, in fact, that the people are stifled by the objects: ‘*Vse vmeste oni zhivut, dyshat, vmeshivaiutsia v zhizn’ cheloveka i derzhat ego v tsepkom plenu.*’ See: Abram Room, ‘*Tret’ia Meshchanskaia (Beseda s rezhisserom A. M. Room)*’ in Zabrodin, *Abram
(Kolia — played by Nikolai Batalov) and Liudmila (Liuda — played by Liudmila Semenova), who live in a single room apartment in Moscow. He is a construction worker, she is a housewife. Kolia's army friend Vladimir (Volodia — Vladimir Fogel'), a printer, arrives in the capital, from the provinces. He has nowhere to live until he has a chance meeting with Kolia, who invites him to stay.\(^5\) Kolia does not feel it necessary to discuss this with his wife, just as he does not feel compelled to act upon Volodia's protestations against the impropriety of remaining alone with Liuda while her husband is away on business. Predictably, given Volodia's initial charming solicitude towards the otherwise neglected Liuda, the husband returns to find that his wife and his friend have become lovers.

The new couple decides that Kolia should now sleep on the sofa, where Volodia had previously been sleeping, while the latter takes his former friend's place in the marital bed. Humiliated by this, Kolia leaves to find himself a room. In this, he proves as unsuccessful as Volodia was, so he returns to the sofa. Soon Liudmila is acting as wife to both men, who are now cosily reconciled. She is equally unappreciated by both 'husbands', who pay far more attention to each other than to her. Finding she is pregnant, but unsure which man is the father, Liudmila is bullied by them into having an abortion. She has a change of heart at the clinic but, feeling neither man is worthy of being a father to her child, decides

\(^{5}\)Batalov had acted in Iakov Protazanov's Aelita and Vsevolod Pudovkin's Mat; Semenova had previously been seen in Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg's Chertovo koleso and Fogel' was already familiar to many viewers from Lev Kuleshov's Luch smerti, Fedor Otsep's Miss Mend and Lev Kuleshov's Po zakonu.

Matveevich Room, pp. 13-14 (p. 14). It is contextually apposite to note here that, as discussed in the previous chapter, Olesha's most famous novel, Zavist', also dealing with the themes of the new and the old in a stylistically innovative way, was likewise first published in 1927, rocketing its author to prominence.
that in order to raise her child properly she must leave the men, leave home and therefore leave Moscow. The closing scenes of Tret’ia Meshchanskaia show her on a speeding train, whilst the men resume their comfortable domestic life without her.

Elements of Strogii iunosha are pre-figured in Tret’ia Meshchanskaia on more than one level. The plot involves a romantic triangle, which features a married couple and another man. Thematically, it raises moral and social issues of the day, and concentrates on everyday domestic life. Stylistically, Tret’ia Meshchanskaia uses visual similes and metaphors, reveals occasional bursts of irony in its editing, through the juxtaposition of certain frames, and rejoices in purely aesthetic images. Finally, parallels can be drawn between the earlier and the later film through Room’s emphasis on a detailed portrayal of the characters’ surroundings, and his interest in the concept of spectacle and the play of light and shadow.

As suggested above, Room uses symbols throughout Tret’ia Meshchanskaia. For example, as Volodia kicks a pebble into the river it causes ripples which disturb the surface of the water, just as in Strogii iunosha Masha, swimming, creates waves. In both instances the scene is aesthetically decorative, as the camera catches the poetic movement of the water, yet it also represents the imminent disruption of the normal flow of events in the lives of the characters. In both of these films, too, Room draws attention to a framed photographic portrait of the heroine, which represents her entrapment within the marriage and milieu. In Tret’ia Meshchanskaia Liudmila wrenches her picture out of the frame when she leaves home, signifying a bid for freedom. Liudmila is also often depicted near a window, which serves as a frame. The windows of the basement apartment hold her prisoner, revealing only the legs of the passers-by. She cannot even see the sky. At the abortion clinic she sits by a window, through which she sees, or
imagines, a scene which compels her to keep her child. Finally, as she leaves Moscow and her old life, Liudmila looks out of the train window, in a reversal of Volodia's arrival at the start of the film.

Room uses images, which can be read both literally and figuratively, to suggest that the newcomer Volodia has brought something special and fresh into Liudmila's ossified life. The director does this with great emphasis, so as to increase the sense of disappointment when her second 'husband' turns out to be no better than her first. Volodia brings his hostess copies of journals from work, including the cinema-related *Ekran* which provides a means of escape into a world of fantasy, and *Nowyi mir* which, as its title suggests, represents a radical break with the outmoded attitudes and mores of the past. Appropriately, the pages are uncut; Volodia has not absorbed any of the publication's forward-looking attitudes, he is merely a catalyst for Liudmila to make the transition from old to new herself.

In *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia*, daydreams represent deepest desires, just as they do in *Strogii iunosha* (see Chapter Six). While Kolia is away, Liudmila fantasizes about Volodia, which is indicated by her face being intercut with shots of him at work. The shots of Volodia present his face covered, on the left side, by a network of hatched lines, producing white circles on his skin. This echoes the shadows cast upon the left side of Liudmila's face by the light filtering through a cane chair, when Volodia arrives unexpectedly at the apartment.66

---

66A still of the dramatic criss-cross pattern on one side of the character Liudmila's face is used for the cover of *Sovetskii ekran*, 5 February 1927, no. 6. Similar lighting techniques are used in *Strogii iunosha*, as discussed in Chapter Seven, particularly note 104. In her chapter on *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia*, which includes stills of these shadows, Judith Mayne writes that the visual similarity between the two close-ups within the film indicates the strong affinity between Liudmila
Tret'ia Meshchanskaia contains examples of literally spectacular scenes which, as I have indicated, are a feature of many of the director's works. In this film Volodia takes Liudmila flying, and to the cinema. The aerial view of the city from the aeroplane is beautiful, exhilarating and escapist, just as the cinema is a romantic escape. Liudmila is briefly taken 'away from it all' by Volodia, only to be returned to a reality even more oppressive than before. Kolia, by contrast, has been escaping from the domestic environment daily when he goes to work, where he is able to look down upon Moscow from the top of the Bolshoi theatre. This is spectacular and symbolic: the city looks impressively modern, yet by restoring that particular building he is preserving an element of the pre-revolutionary past, which reflects his outlook on family life.

and Volodia. She also adds that 'Volodia's identification with Liudmila is, then, a kind of mirroring which in its initial stages, at least, has visible and positive effects on her.' See: Judith Mayne, Kino and the Woman Question, Columbus, 1989, p. 118 and p. 116 figs. 4.1 and 4.2 and the reproductions on the next page of this chapter.

For an insight into the shooting of the film see the cameraman's account: Grigorii Giber, 'Kak snimalas' "Tret'ia Meshchanskaia" in Sovetskii ekran, 29 January 1927, no. 5, p. 4.
Patterned shadows link the faces of Volodia and Liudmila in Room's Tret'ia Meshchanskaia
Tret’ia Meshchanskaia is now regarded as a masterpiece in Russia (and beyond), and the initial contemporary reaction was likewise full of praise. The Association of Revolutionary Cinematography (ARK) meeting of 17 January 1927 centred around the film, 'an honor that was reserved for only the most important Soviet productions.' ARK was very positive about the film, in terms of both aesthetics and ideology, criticizing only a few aspects, including the implausibly abrupt transformation undergone by Liudmila. By the end of the month, however, the film was being strongly attacked in the press. Tret’ia Meshchanskaia ran for under a fortnight in Russia, in March 1927, and then was taken off cinema screens. This was partly because it depicted a 'bourgeois' individualism, rather than social conscience, as the basis for Liuda's actions. In this context it is important to understand that the transition, for leading Soviet filmmakers in the late 1920s, from revolutionary-historical themes to domestic issues, and from historical backgrounds to contemporary reality, was a complex and controversial process. In addition to this, the film revealed the problems of the present, without offering a positive vision of the future. For all these reasons, as well as

68 See Youngblood, 'The Third Meshchanskaia Street Affair'.

69 Members of ARK wrote a letter of support (which was published in Kino-front) for the film, signed by Sergei Eizenshtein, the Vasil'ev 'brothers' and Konstantin Iukov. See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 111. Iukov was also one of the minority from the film world who recognized great filmic potential in Olesha's Strogii junosha script. See: Chapter Five, particularly note 72.

70 Ibid., p. 56.

71 Iurii Bogomolov gives this as the reason why Tret’ia Meshchanskaia was received by many at the time as an innovatory film. See: Yuri Bogomolov, 'Abram Roöm', p. 19.
the fact that many regarded it as an immoral film, Tret'ia Meshchanskaia was regularly 'denounced', in the Soviet Union, for the next three years.  

In 1929 Room tackled the question of freedom again, but this time not of moral or emotional freedom, but of literal, physical freedom, in Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia (subtitled 'Pytka svobody'). The script, written by Valentin Turkin, is a loose adaptation of a story by Henri Barbusse, although the plot outline is retained only superficially. The action of Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia takes place in an unspecified Latin American country. It centres on a revolutionary prisoner, José Real, who has been released for one day, after ten years in prison. This is a set-up so that the police can have him shadowed and

72See: Youngblood, 'The Third Meshchanskaia Street Affair', p. 57. Fascinatingly, Tret’ia Meshchanskaia was allowed to be shown in London only privately in 1929 (when it left the audience scandalized), and commercially only with cuts in 1933-34. It was banned from playing commercially in the United States altogether. See: Steven P. Hill, 'Bed and Sofa (Tretia Meshchanskaia)' in Film Heritage, vol. 7, 1971, no. 1, pp. 17-20 (p. 17).

73As noted above, the cast of Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia includes Ol'ga Zhizneva, Maksim Shtraukh and Boris Ferdinandov. For more on Zhizneva, see above. Apart from Room’s films, Shtraukh acted in many other films, beginning with Eizenshtein’s Stachka 1924. He was given numerous roles as Lenin, in Grigori Kozintsev’s Vyborgskaja storona (1938), Sergei Iutkevich’s Chelovek sruzh’em (1938), Sergei Iutkevich’s Iakov Sverdlov (1940), and Aleksandr Zarkhi and Josif Kheifits’s Ego zovut Sukhe-Bator (1942). For more on Ferdinandov, see Chapter Seven. All of these actors were to be closely involved with Strogii iunosha, Room’s next significant film, made six years later. This is discussed in full in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

74Room first met Barbusse in 1927 in Moscow, when he asked him for either a scenario or permission to use a literary work as the basis for a film. Barbusse subsequently sent Room three novellas, one of which was referred to by Room as ‘Svidanie, kotoroe ne sostoiat’s’. See: Abram Room, 'Vstrechajus’s Barbiusom' in Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, pp. 20-22 (p. 20).
then killed on the pretext of attempted escape. However, Real eludes all the
detective's attempts to kill him, and he participates in the local revolutionary
struggle. Room is concerned with psychological issues, as he shows the
difficulties of adjusting to freedom after years of slavery. This theme is slightly
echoed in the director's later work Nashestvie, discussed above. The plot is a
further illustration of the premise that one man's psychology, and resulting
actions, can have repercussions on the whole of society. Stylistically, Prividenie,
kotoroe ne vozvrashchatsia is very striking and experimental. At times it is
almost Constructivist or Expressionist and it features Room's characteristic non-
linearity of narrative, expressed partly through the use of static frames, partly
through superimposition and various other optical distortions. The prisoners'
striped uniforms and the prison bars provide the perfect opportunity for Room to
indulge his love of frame composition using architectural or other vertical or
horizontal barriers.

---

75 Particularly in its prison sequences and the panoramas of the landscape and oil rigs.

76 A critic reviewing the film in England in the mid-1970s refers to the film's stylistic variety:
'Room's film runs through a virtual panoply of styles as if to anthologise the work of his masters.'
See: Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchatsia (The Ghost that Never
film's visual quality can be gained from both the stylish Russian and German (in which the film is
called 'Menschen Arsenal') advertisements. For both see: Kino i zhizn', 21 March 1930, no. 9. It
was the first Soviet silent film to have had dialogue, music and sound effects added later. On this
see: G. Levkoev, 'Opyt ozvuchaniia nemoi fil'my. ("Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchatsia")' in
Sovetskoe kino, 1933, no. 7, pp. 52-57.

77 Room's technique contrasts with the more naturalistic use of shadows cast by prison bars, and
less dramatic emphasis on striped prison uniforms, in Lev Kuleshov's Velikii uteshitel' of 1933.
Between 1930 and 1931 Room completed four films, none of which exists any more. These films were: Manometr-1, Manometr-2, Plan velikikh rabot and the animated short Tip-Top — zvukovoi izobretatel'. The first film, also known as 'Proryv na zavod "Manometr"', consisted of three short sections. The basis for the film was the fact that the Manometr factory had recently beaten the record for failing to fulfil its 'promfinplan'. The negative aspects of the factory were then filmed, as well as the positive ones; the actual workers were filmed in the factory and even the filming was occasionally filmed. The purpose was to show the workers the reason for their factory's failure and thereby help them learn how to improve matters. Essentially, the Manometr films were experiments in using film as a tool for socialist propaganda, as well as films about this process. Room subsequently wrote about the Manometr films, expressing deep regret at the fact that 'k etim dvum moim fil'mam ne bylo privlecheno dostatochno aktivnoe vnimanie obshchestvennosti (v chastnosti, ARRKa) i pressy.'

Plan velikikh rabot, the third film Room made in 1930-31, formed part of his 'Zvukovaia sbornaia programma No. 1', and is the film Room refers to as an experimental attempt to create a 'zvukovaia "Piatiletka"' (it is in fact subtitled

---

78See: Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, pp. 38-39 and p. 44.

79A positive review of the first film, including a still of the workers watching the film, was published in 1930. See: B. Alpers, 'Proryv na "Manometre"' in Kino i zhizn, December 1930, no. 36, pp. 10-11. Henceforth: Alpers, 'Proryv na "Manometre"'. A still from Manometr-2 (also called 'Likvidatsiia proryva na zavode "Manometr"') was featured on the cover of Proletarskoe kino, 1931, no. 10-11.

80According to Alpers the factory had actually improved its performance by the time of the first film's release, making it slightly redundant. See: Alpers, 'Proryv na "Manometre"', p. 11.

81See Abram Room's contribution (pp. 8-9) to 'Na podstupakh k vtoroi Piatiletke' in Proletarskoe kino, 1932, no. 4, pp. 5-12 (p. 8).
Room explained that this film was shot in Leningrad on the Shorin sound system, and ran successfully in cinemas for a long time. He defined the film as 'preiskurant vsekh vozmozhnostei zvukovogo kino', and it has even been labelled the first Soviet experiment in sound film. Plan velikikh rabot combined documentary, feature and animation film techniques to the end of creating propaganda for the Five Year Plan. Part of his 'Zvukovaia sbornaia programma No. 1' also includes Tip-Top — izobretatel' tonkino, co-scripted by Room with G. Levkoev. This featured an odd little male character called Tip-Top, who was also used by other directors in later films promoting the use of sound in the cinema. Room's great involvement in these sound and animation projects illustrates perfectly the extent of his eagerness to explore the boundaries of filmmaking beyond the limits of the silent feature film.

In 1933-34, Room attempted to realize on screen Il’f and Petrov's scenario of 1932 Odnazhdy letom (based on their novel of the previous year Zolotoi telenok). Although Room had started the project as artistic supervisor to the

---

82See: Abram Room, 'Nash opyt' in ibid., pp. 22-23 (p. 23).
83Hill, 22 March 1999 and see: 'Khudozhhestvennye puti zvukovoi fil'my', Kino i zhizn', the third ten-day period of May ('tret'ia dekada') 1930, no. 15, p. 7. For a photograph of Room recording sound see Leo Mur's report in Kino i zhizn', 21 March 1930, no. 9, p. 16.
84See: Ippolit Sokolov, 'Plan velikikh rabot', Kino i zhizn', April 1930, no. 10, pp. 5-6.
85Ibid. A frame from the film can be seen in this article and two others in Ippolit Sokolov, 'Tekhnicheskaia baza sovetskogo tonkino' in Kino i zhizn', December 1930, no. 12, pp. 18-19.
861933-34 are the dates given by Zabrodin in Abram Matveevich Room, p. 39, (not, as according to Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz'iatoe kino, p. 54, who write that Room was working on Odnazhdy letom in 1932 and 1933. Zabrodin's figures are corroborated if one takes into account the report by V. Iurtsev, from 1933: "Odnazhdy letom" vtoroi raz idet v proizvodstvo pri peredelkah s uchastiem A. M. Rooma.' See: V. Iurt'ev, 'Stsenarii-drugoe', Kino, 4 July 1933 and the fact that
original director, he was asked to take over the film's direction in order to rescue it from failure, but, ironically, Room was soon to be similarly dismissed from the ill-fated project. In disgrace for having wasted resources by failing to make a satisfactory film, he was banished from Mosfil'm and sent to the Ukrainfil'm studio in Kiev. There, as discussed in depth in Chapter Seven, Room created a much greater scandal with *Strogii iunosha*.

The entry for Il'f and Petrov in the first issue of *Sovetskoe kino* of 1934 (no. 1-2, p. 43) contains the information that: 'Po stsenariiu Il'fa i Petrova rezhisser A. Room stavit zvukovuiu fil'mu "Odnazhdy letom".'

*Ibid.* According to Hill's report of Room's words, the original director was called Tikhonov, but I do not have any further information on him. Hill, 22 March 1999. Room's fellow director Grigorii Kozintsev refers to the trouble over this film (using Room's fate as a symbol of the difficult position of filmmakers in general at the time) in a letter to Sergei Eizenshtein written on 24 March 1934: 'Vse eti pechal'nye rassuzhdeniia vyzval u menia poslednii No. "Kino-gazety".' This is a reference to an issue of the journal *Kino*, dated 22 March 1934, in which almost the whole of the front page featured pieces on Room's *Odnazhdy letom* going over budget. See: V. G. Kozintseva and Ia. L. Butovskii, comps. and annot., *Perepiska G. M. Kozintseva 1922-1973*. Moscow, 1998, p. 27 and footnote 2, pp. 27-28.

*As for the film, there had been two attempts to complete it in Moscow, the second of which was Room's, and when these failed it was handed over to Ukrainfil'm's Kiev film studio. (See: M. Gr., 'Odnazhdy letom' in *Kino*, 4 August 1934, no. 35 (627), p. 1). There it was finally completed in 1936, not very successfully, by Igor' Il'inskii and Khanan Shmain. (For Il'inskii's memoirs of the experience see: Igor' Il'inskii, 'Odnazhdy letom' in V. D. Ostrogorskaia, ed., *Sbornik vospominanii ob I. Il'fe i E. Petrove*. Moscow, 1963, pp. 148-55). Altogether, *Odnazhdy letom* 'znimal'sia chetyre goda. [...] Za eto vremia ves' material stsenariia v fil'me ustarel. On vygliadit seichas nadumannym i neestestvennym.' (Bold in original; see: *Rabochaia Moskva*, 11 May 1936, p. 4).
Conclusion

Of the twenty six films Room made, one caused a scandal soon after its release, in 1927, forcing it to close after less than a fortnight, and two were shelved prior to release, in 1936 and 1942 respectively. In addition to these ignominies, Room was dismissed from a film he had been working on in 1933, leading to his (ultimately temporary) professional banishment from Moscow to Kiev. It is apparent, then, that the first three decades of Room's career were tempestuous, in terms of the reception of his works. This led to a phase in which Room directed only a few artistically mediocre, but ideologically unproblematic films, until the 1960s. His last three films, made in the 1960s and early 1970s, were critical and popular triumphs, with two of them achieving great success both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Therefore, although film scholars these days tend to favour, or only know, the unique Tret'ia Meshchanskaia, it cannot be regarded objectively as Room's most popular or famous film. Rather, its fate represents the shifting of attitudes towards Room and of his consequent position through the years.

Before entering the world of cinema, the director had spent several years involved with theatre, and the older medium's influence can be discerned throughout Room's oeuvre. It is revealed through the emphasis on spectacle and the use of music, either actually or as a structural pattern, in his films. In the majority of his works, Room uses his other pre-cinematic training, in psychology, to assist his film direction. In his work, Room strives to convey the intricacies and

---

89I am referring to Tret'ia Meshchanskaia, Strogii iunosha and Tonia respectively.

90I am referring to Odnazhdy letom.

91For more on the success of Granatovyi braslet (1964) and Tsvety zapozdalve (1970) see above.

Room's last completed film was Prezhdevremennyi chelovek (1972), discussed above.
contradictions of his characters' inner feelings and actions, as well as to show the influence these could have in a social context. To this end, too, he frequently uses the issues raised through the depiction of individual people to present a broader, ideological polemic, with different characters representing different attitudes as well as the real and symbolic roles an individual can play to affect society positively. This is also reflected in the director’s frequent plot pattern featuring a romantic triangle. Again, this device is a means of setting up multiple attitudes and ideologies, and bringing them into conflict with each other.

Room's early films are marked by an experimental approach, with the director clearly determined to find new forms of expression and new ways of presenting the familiar. They reveal a preoccupation with the dramatic use of light and shadow, as well as with the insertion of atmospheric, close-up shots of protagonists' faces. These devices serve an aesthetic, as well as a symbolic, purpose, and briefly break the linear narrative into a montage of almost abstract images. Although traces of these techniques are evident in Room's late films, they are less abrupt and shocking, and more integrated into the general tone of the films. The same is true of the narratives. Whereas the later films are more conservative in tone, the earlier ones show radical ambition. Room's Kuprin adaptation, Granatovyj braslet, for example, includes a tragic suicide resulting from doomed love but, despite its implicit concern with social change, does not make exceptional demands on the audience, thematically or artistically. Tret'ja Meshchanskaia, in contrast, deals with a ménage à trois and raises the issue of abortion in troubling ways, morally and creatively presenting a stark, radical challenge. This reflects Room's own artistic engagement with the films. In the later stages of his career, Room had learned the possibilities and the limitations of the medium and of the system. He concentrated more on perfecting his art and less on making innovative leaps forward. With his early films, however, the director had been keen to take risks and to reach for the artistic heights. He sought
to stretch the boundaries of the 'bytovoi' film and of filmmaking itself. The peak of Room's ambition was the project to which the remainder of this study is devoted, the fascinating and unique *Strogii iunosha*. 
CHAPTER 4

RECONCILING THE OLD AND THE NEW: IURII OLESHA'S BID FOR PERSONAL AND POLITICAL COMPROMISE IN STROGII IUNOSHA

In Chapter Two I discussed Olesha's reaction to the demands made on writers in the Soviet Union, particularly after the establishment of a single Union of Soviet Writers in 1932, to use literature (above all drama) as a tool for socialist propaganda. This included plans and drafts for a play about relationships between the old and the new, at this stage on the path towards the 'radiant future' of a classless society. Olesha was under considerable pressure to keep reiterating that he genuinely shared the Party's ideological aspirations in life and in literature, and to prove that he still had something to offer in this time of transition. He was in a delicate position, having made too many mistakes and having expressed too many doubts in the past. He was clearly made to feel that his next project, Strogii iunosha, would make or break him in the new society. Much thought, therefore, went into this bold attempt to create a personally and politically acceptable 'play' for the screen.

The present chapter focuses on the way in which Olesha used Strogii iunosha in his attempt to reach a compromise between his personal position and literary concerns on the one hand, and the political demands for Socialist Realist content and form in literature on the other. I shall argue that, without complete capitulation to any ideological or literary template, it was through the plot, the thematics and the characterization within Strogii iunosha, that Olesha strove to reconcile himself and his art to the Socialist Realist demands for didactic and
inspirational drama. This argument will be presented below in four sections, dealing respectively with the plot; the themes treated; and the characterization—first of the 'strogii iunosha' as sportsman and moral guide, then of the other characters as metaphors of the old and the new. In each case, the content of Strogii iunosha shows Olesha's attempt to reconcile himself to the demands of political authority.

The plot of Strogii iunosha: an opportunity for mutual reassessment

In this section I shall examine the way in which the plot of Strogii iunosha reveals Olesha's attempt to demonstrate his allegiance to the Party's ideological concerns, whilst retaining his own values. He does this mainly through a plot device which brings together the representatives of the old, bourgeois lifestyle and the Komsomol youth of the future, and causes each side to reassess the other. The result is mutual appreciation for each other's different qualities, and political tolerance on the part of the Communists, in the knowledge that the non-Party members are nevertheless working towards the same goal of a better, more equal future.

On 3 July 1934, at the 'Dom sovetskogo pisatelia' in Moscow, Iurii Olesha held a reading of Strogii iunosha, which he had written in Odessa over 29 days during May and June of that year. A newspaper report on the work appeared in

---

1 At this stage I focus on Olesha's intentions and the resulting work, rather than discussing to what degree, ultimately, he succeeded. Critical judgements on Strogii iunosha are presented in Chapters One and Five.

2 On this and for details of the first two publications of Strogii iunosha see: Heil, No list of Political Assets, p. 1 and p. 72 (endnote 3).
Sovetskoe iskusstvo two days later, describing the reactions of the writers and film directors present at the reading, and informing the public that:

'Olesha v etoi p’ese vпервые поставил большийу проблему о новом человеке, о новых сознанических чувствах и отношениях. По своему замыслу киноп’еса Оleshя — литературное произведение глубокого философского значения.\(^3\)

On 17 July, readers were given a foretaste of the actual text of Strogii iunosha, as Sovetskoe iskusstvo published an extract from it, introduced by Olesha himself. Here, the author explains that:

'V p’ese dla kinematografа "Strogii iunosha" рассказывает о том, как некий молодой человек-комсомолец полюбил жену известного хирурга. Хирург не молод, жена его — юная женщина. Хирург живет за оградой, в саду, на вилле, дарованной ему правительством. Это — известный всему миру ученый, великий доктор.'\(^4\)

Having emphasized the centrality of issues such as youth versus age, and ideological values versus material rewards, as well as raising questions concerning the recognition of talent and the problems of love, Olesha introduces the other key characters:

\(^3\)"Strogii iunosha". Pervaia kinop’esa Ju. Oleshi', Sovetskoe iskusstvo. 5 July 1934, no. 31 (197), p. 2.

\(^4\)"Strogii iunosha". Otryvok iz p’esy dla kinematografа', Sovetskoe iskusstvo. 17 July 1934, no. 33 (199), p. 3. The central figure of a professor with a world-wide reputation can also be found in two of Mikhail Bulgakov's works of the 1920s; Persikov, the professor of zoology in Rogovye iaitsa (1924) and Preobrazhenskii, a professor and medical doctor in Sobach’e serdtse (1925). In contrast to Stepanov, however, Bulgakov's protagonists end up harming rather than helping Soviet society through their work. For more on the relationship between the works of Bulgakov and Olesha see Chapter 2 note 40 above. For a reference to the film versions of Sobach’e serdtse (Vladimir Bortko, 1988) and Rogovye iaitsa (Sergei Lomkin, 1995) see Chapter Six, note 47.
'V p’ese uchastvuet riad molodykh liudei. V tom chisle nekto, kto
imenuetsia Diskobolom. Eto drug glavnogo geroia p’esy — komsomol’tsa
Grishi Fokina.

Odnim iz siuzhetnykh zven’ev p’esy iavliaetsia operatsiia.

Vnezapno zabolevaet devushka — chlen TsK komsomola Ol’ga.

Voznikaet neobkhodimost’ vrachnogo khirurgicheskogo vmeshatel’stva.

Bol’nuiu privodiat v kliniku. Operatsiiu proizvodit khirurg Stepanov.'

From these sentences it is clear that the screenplay revolves around the inter­relationship of people of significantly different ages with significantly different ideologies, social backgrounds and attitudes.

For a greater sense of context, it is also worth noting that subsequently, in
his famous speech at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Olesha
expressed the opinion that the writer has a moral duty to educate society: 'Pisatel’
dolzhen byt’ vospitatelem i uchitelem.' 
He explained how he personally would

5'Rech’ Iu. Oleshi’ in Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s’ezd pisatelei SSSR, p. 236. The topos of the operation
as an ideological tool can be found in several works of and about the 1920s and 1930s. For
example in Evgenii Zamiatins novel My (1919-20 ) the main character D-503 writes: 'Da
zdravstvuet Velikaia Operatsiia! Da zdravstvuet Edinoe Gosudarstvo, da zdravstvuet Blagodetel!’
See: Evgenii Zamiatin, Sochineniia, Moscow, 1988, p. 121. Here, the operation is a means of
subjugating the individual to the will of the United State. It is also present in Boris Pil’niaks tale of
1926, which was withdrawn and banned as soon as it had been published, ‘Povest’ nepogashennoi
luny’. See: Boris Pil’niak, Rasplesnutoe vremia. Rasskazy, povesti, roman, Moscow, 1990, pp. 78-
107. As mentioned in Chapter Six (note 47), in Sergei LivnEv’s film Serp i molot (Russia, 1994), set
during the 1930s, Stalin has approved the carrying out of operations to change the gender of an
individual according to the State’s current needs.

6These themes are equally central to Bulgakov’s Sobach’e serdtse.

7 Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s’ezd pisatelei SSSR, p. 237.
fulfil his obligation: 'la budu pisat' p'esy i povesti, gde deistvuushchie litsa buдут решат' задачи морал'ного характера.' This is particularly important for Communism, which is not just an economic system, but also a moral one, he said, 'i первыми воплотителями этой стороны коммунизма будут молодые люди и молодые девушки.' It follows, therefore, that Olesha felt he should be writing primarily for and about young people. Accordingly, although he did not refer to the work in his speech, Strogii iunosha contains a great deal of emphasis on questions of ethics and morality.

Some clarifying detail should be added to Olesha's outline of the plot of Strogii iunosha. To summarize: a famous, successful surgeon, Dr. Iulian Nikolaevich Stepanov, is staying at his luxurious summer residence, provided by the state as a reward for his excellence, with his wife, Masha, and his acquaintance, Tsitronov. The couple's idyllic life, already slightly strained by Tsitronov's obsequious, obnoxious and parasitic presence, is further disrupted when the idealistic young Communist student of engineering, Grisha Fokin, comes to visit.

Grisha falls in love with Masha, but reveres the eminent doctor too greatly to upset him by admitting his feelings to Masha. In addition to this, as the codifier of a 'set of moral qualities' which every Komsomol member should possess, Grisha feels he must not transgress these, which he would do were he to admit his feelings for Stepanov's wife. Yet his friend, 'Diskobol', tells Masha and Stepanov about Grisha's love precisely because he feels it is a breach of the code to conceal the truth.10

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 238.
10For a drawing of Diskobol and Masha at the stadium in this scene see the next page.
Drawing of Diskbol and Masha at the stadium by V. Kozlinskii
Tsitronov, on the other hand, knows that Masha despises him and that she would like her husband to expel him from their home, therefore he goads Stepanov towards jealousy, pointing out continually how attracted to each other the young people are and suggesting that Masha married for money alone, thereby hoping to turn Stepanov against Masha. His plan backfires and Stepanov is eventually reconciled both with Grisha and with his wife.

Meanwhile, one of Grisha's friends becomes seriously ill and Stepanov is called upon to operate. He does so and saves her life, befriending the Komsomol members when they visit her in hospital, and learning about the accessibility and appeal of Marx's writing on love in the process. He, in turn, teaches the young people that not everything in life can be settled according to ideology, explaining that the human condition as a mixture of joy and pain is an eternal truth, not a political problem to be resolved. The ultimate message is one of tolerance and synthesis. There is room for the old as well as the young, for non-Party members as well as Communists, just as long as everyone is working together towards a brighter, classless future.

The operation scene is a device to throw together Dr. Stepanov, Grisha and Grisha's anti-bourgeois, Komsomol friends, who regard Stepanov as a relic of pre-socialist days and as someone who abuses his position of privilege. Grisha alone has genuinely understood from the start that the man is a genius and deserves his status and respect. In this scene he reiterates the first moral principle on his list, that it is precisely such people who should serve as role models for the Komsomol. This time, his friends agree, because Stepanov has saved their friend's life, a Communist life. They are willing to listen to the doctor when he explains that his work has made him a humanist, enabling him to understand that
This is the key scene because it shakes the characters out of their familiar mind-sets and enables important ideological transformations to take place within them. The result is that a new understanding is born between them, exemplifying the possibility of reconciling these people of different ages with different social status and different political convictions.

For his part, in this scene Stepanov is twice prompted to exclaim in admiration: "Fantasticheskaia veshch'" at things he learns about the new society. The first time, he is impressed that a man who was born as a peasant has not only risen to the status equivalent to an Admiral (these titles were in fact restored in 1935, but Stepanov is shown to be still thinking in pre-Revolutionary terms) but is even so well-mannered as to stand up for the doctor. The second instance occurs when Stepanov suggests that the patient should read something untaxing and positive, so Ol'ga reads him a passage about unrequited love in a classless society. He assumes it to be by Knut Hamsun, and approves, only to be stunned and impressed by the information that the writer was Karl Marx. From seeing

---

11 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 328, section 39. In further references the page number will be followed by a colon and the section number (e.g. p. 328: 39).

12 Ibid., p. 329: 39.

13 The quotation reads:

'Esli zhe ty liubish', ne vyzyvaia vzaimnosti, to est' esli tvoia liubov' kak liubov' ne porozhdaiet otvetnoi liubvi i ty putem tvoikh zhiznennykh proiavlenii kak liubashchii chelevek ne mozhesh' stat' liubimym chelevekom, — to tvoia liubov' bessil'nna i ona - neschastie.'

See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 329. A nearly identical quotation (the difference is that 'tvoikh' was 'svoiikh') is used in the story 'Razgovor v parke', written a year earlier, in which a writer proposes to include the quotation in a story he is planning to write. V. Badikov's explanatory notes to this story
the young people as a silly, misguided mass, spouting abstract political slogans removed from real life, he learns to appreciate the Komsomol youth's enthusiasm and beliefs.

In conclusion, Olesha uses the plot of *Strogii iunosha* to show that ideological concerns and individual expertise can be reconciled (whether those of the bourgeois doctor, like Stepanov, or the artist, like himself). The key to this is a plot device — the operation scene — which juxtaposes the old and the bourgeois with the Komsomol youth of the future, forcing mutual reassessment. The enlightened states of both the doctor and the young people demonstrate the possibilities for reconciliation between the 'specialists' and the ardent young Communists, if they are prepared to open their minds. This scene demonstrates the mutual advantage of political tolerance and of using different qualities to work towards the same future.

**Thematics of ambiguity**

The plot line involving reconciliation between Stepanov, Grisha and the other young people reflects the thematics of *Strogii iunosha*. The question I shall address in this section is how the themes of *Strogii iunosha* indicate Olesha's attempt to reach a compromise between his own ideas and those demanded by the tenets of Socialist Realism. Those themes are individual fame and the privileges it brings, the recognition that these things are rewards for genuine expertise, and the need to respect those who are famous because of their talents. The ordering of

((ibid., p. 566) identify the quotation as a precise translation of Marx's words, see: K. Marks, *'Ekonomichesko-filosofskie rukopisi 1844 goda'* in K. Marks i F. Engel's, *Iz rannikh proizvedenii*, Moscow, 1956, p. 620.
these themes reflects the structure of the plot, in which the young people first condemn the doctor's high-handedness and possibly resent his wealth, then need his help and finally come to appreciate him and be appreciated by him.

Concerning the fulfilment of Socialist Realist demands, I would argue that Olesha uses quotations and ideas taken from the works of Marx and Stalin to ground the text in socialist ideology. He then creates situations in which these words can be applied, making the abstract concrete and making the issue clear. Finally, and most importantly, Olesha examines the problems posed from both sides, leaving room for possible ambiguity in their resolution. This reflects his own attitudes towards the dilemmas he raises.

In dealing with the issue of tolerance between young Communists and non-Party 'specialists', Olesha shows what has given rise to the beliefs and prejudices each side holds, why each side needs to reassess these, and, lastly, the potential benefits to the individual and society of doing so. The ambiguity comes from the fair representation of both sides of the argument. Playing in a way the devil's advocate, Olesha runs the risk of allying the reader to the anti-Communist side. Despite depicting Stepanov as arrogant and materialistic, Olesha gives him credit for his understanding of life, his professional capabilities and his open-mindedness. Conversely, although the young Komsomol men and women are striving, with at least partial success, for strength and beauty on both a physical and a moral plane, Olesha does not hesitate to highlight their foolish naivety and ridiculously misplaced earnestness. By concluding the action with Masha's return

---

14See Chapter Five note 51 for a critical response to this. Abram Room attempted to legitimize Olesha's choice of theme in Strogii iunosha by stating that Stalin spoke a great deal about the problem of equality under socialism at the XVII Party Congress. See: E. Len-a, 'Dve diskussii' in Kino, 28 July 1934, no. 34 (626), p. 3. Henceforth: E. Len-a, 'Dve diskussii'.
to her husband, after her dalliance with Grisha, the balance is tipped slightly in favour of the sympathetic, older members of society, the side with which Olesha could most completely identify himself.

The issue of individual fame and its concomitant privileges raises the spectre of inequality within society. The problem for the Party state was how to encourage people to use their talents for the good of society and how to reward them, without creating a hierarchy and thereby destroying the concept of equality and classlessness. As shown below, the Stalinist solution, in the early 1930s, was to declare everyone working for the benefit of socialist society to be equal, but different. Therefore, the famous were different from the rest of society because they had talents that were rewarded by renown and, often, wealth. However, in a larger sense, they were not superior to people with less glamorous accomplishments.

The concept of fame is introduced in the fourth section of *Strogii iunosha*, when Stepanov is characterized as 'Doktor Iulian Nikolaevich Stepanov. Izvestnyi khirurg'. Stepanov emphasizes his fame beyond the Soviet Union when he tells Grisha that he is going to an international conference in London. The full significance of such a seemingly casual statement in Olesha's work becomes clear only when taken in the context of Stepanov's fame. The doctor is famous within the Soviet Union because he is an excellent Doctor. But his talent is so great that it is recognized even in Europe (although to be famous there does not necessarily mean to be gifted. It is only within the new Communist society that privileges are always deserved, is the official line).

---

Just as Stepanov is shown to have justly achieved his success, so, in the end, he is shown to deserve the affection of his wife, who understands the importance of his work and helps him with it. Initially, Stepanov behaves in an arrogant, patronizing and possessive manner, jeopardizing his wife’s and Grisha’s respect for him. But his subsequent heroic professional actions and personal humility, reflected in his apology to Grisha, reveal that he is an honourable man.

The key question facing the Party, regarding the famous, was whether or not these privileged people had anything to offer society. If not, then they were corrupt leftovers from bourgeois times, or parasites like Tsitronov, and had to be dealt with. If they could contribute positively to a socialist society, putting their genius and talent to good ideological use, as Stepanov does, for example, in talking to Ol’ga’s friends about humanism, then these experts should be respected and encouraged.

Stalin’s dictum of June 1931 concerning the rehabilitation of such ‘bourgeois specialists’, in part, helps explain the ideological content of Olesha’s Strogii iunosha, which is largely a plea for tolerance of and from the older, non-Party members of society. Stalin’s instruction, which can be applied in Olesha’s work to Dr. Stepanov, reads as follows:

‘Chtoby uchest’ izmenivshhuiusia obstanovku, nado izmenit’ nashu politiku i proiavit’ maksimum zaboty v otnoshenii tekh spetsialistov i inzhenerno-tekhnicheskikh sil staroi shkoly, kotorye opredelenno povorachivaiut v storonu rabochego klassa.’

This is exactly what takes place after the operation, when the young people admire and listen to Stepanov because of the miracle he has just performed.

As part of his campaign, Stalin insisted that there should be an end to simplistic egalitarianism:

'vsiakomu lenintsu izvestno, esli on tol’ko nastoiashchii leninets, chto uravnilovka v oblasti potrebnostei i lichnogo byta est’ reaktsionnaia melkoburzhuaznaia nelepost’ [...] nel’zia trebovat’, chtoby u vsekh liudei byli odinakovye potrebnosti i vkusy, chtoby vse liudi v svoem lichnom bytu zhili po odnomu obraztsu.'\(^{17}\)

This is given elaboration in the following passage:

'marksizm iskhodit iz togo, chto vkusy i potrebnosti liudei ne byvaiut i ne mogut byt’ odinakovymi i ravnymi po kachestvu ili po kolichestvu ni v period sotsializma, ni v period kommunizma. [...] Pora usvoit’, chto marksizm iavliaetsia vragom uravnilovki.'\(^{18}\)

These extracts hold the key to the screenplay, its overall theme and to Grisha's statement within it, 'Uravnilovki, konechno, ne dolzhno byt'', uttered in response to Tsitronov's mocking 'Stalo but', vy soglasny, chto sotsializm — eto neravenstvo?'\(^{19}\) Tsitronov says this because Grisha perceives Stepanov's extraordinary qualities and respects him accordingly. The theme explored here is that of recognizing true worth.

There was clearly an element of paradox in the fact that there were people of dubious social origin, from a socialist point of view, who, through their expertise, could contribute more to creating a better world for the new classless

---

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 354.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 355.

\(^{19}\)Olesha, Izbranno, p. 318: 30.
society which was being built than some of those with the right ideological credentials. Once this had been officially acknowledged, the next tactic was to harness these people to the cause, and call for their general acceptance. They should be tolerated and even respected. In return, they would be provided with the opportunity for self-improvement once they grasped the advantages of socialism. That this is what happens to Stepanov is obvious in his sudden appreciation of Marx’s words on unrequited love.

One of the thematic strands underlying Strogii iunosha is the concept of open-mindedness and a willingness to admit mistakes and learn. Grisha has reason to respect and admire Stepanov’s professional success, but Masha has equal reason to condemn him for his vanity and self-importance. Stepanov redeems himself, however, when he finds the humility to apologize to Grisha and when he learns to appreciate the young people’s qualities.

Later, giving his reasons for writing the cinema play, Olesha emphasized the ethical tendentiousness of the work, claiming that he wanted to write a play about mutual respect, a sentiment which he felt needed to be more prominent in Soviet society. He also clarifies that the play is about personal freedom and self-limitation: ‘o svobode i o neobkhodimosti, p’esa ob ogranicheniiakh svobody.’ He states that every character within the play wants something, and limits his or her desires accordingly, out of respect for another. He explains this by the fact that if people are to live in a classless society, then they will be as one, with no financial power struggles: ‘Poskol’ku my vse budem odno, to nam pridetsia chrezvychaino vnimatel’no, chrezvychaino po-chelovecheski otnosit’sia drug k drugu’. It is this tolerance and altruism which wins out in Strogii iunosha.

---

20 Ibid., p. 567.
21 Ibid.
The foregoing examination of thematics in Strogii iunosha shows Olesha's refusal to bestow unilateral, unequivocal praise or blame on the main protagonists. He makes use of quotations from Marx and Stalin to provide an ideological base. This base is used to examine issues emerging from the perspective both of the individual 'specialist' and the committed Communist. In treating the questions from both sides, Olesha places the emphasis on ambiguity, stressing the underlying importance of reconciling opposites. It is through the thematics that Olesha argues the case both for specialists like the doctor, within the play, and for himself, outside it.

Characterization: Strogii iunosha — the duality of Grisha Fokin

The thematic issues discussed in the previous section are sharply reflected in the characterization within the screenplay. The next two sections will look at Olesha's treatment of character in Strogii iunosha. Most of the characters will be dealt with in the second section, whereas the first section investigates the delineation of the central, eponymous character, Grisha Fokin, the 'strogii iunosha'. This is because the weight of Olesha's effort to resolve the dilemmas of the old and the new is placed in this pivotal figure and the ideology he embodies. As will be demonstrated, Olesha uses duality within the character of Grisha to arrive at a

---

22 Ivan Gronskii, the editor of Izvestiia who had been made Chairman of the Organizational Committee of the Union of Writers, and Valerii Kirpotin, Secretary of the same Committee, had urged writers, in 1932, to master Marxist doctrine and informed writers that knowledge of Marxism-Leninism was regarded as their greatest asset. See: Sovietskaia literatura na novom etape: Stenogramma pervogo plenuma Orgkomiteta Soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei (29 oktiabria-5 nojabria 1932). Moscow, 1933, p. 26, cited in Ermolaev, Soviet Literary Theories, p. 155 and p. 230, footnote 49.
compromise between his doubts and the convictions of the Party regarding the Komsomol youth as a symbol of a perfect new society.

The most hyperbolic description of any character in *Strogii iunosha* lies in Olesha's paean to Grisha, written as if spoken to the reader, which provides the most striking description of him. It is lengthy, but important, so I shall quote the whole passage:

'Est' tip muzhskoi naruzhnosti, kotoryi vyrabotalsia kak by v resul'tate togo, chto v mire razvilas' tekhnika, aviatsiia, sport. Iz-pod kozhanogo kozyr'ka shlema pilota, kak pravilo, smotriat na vas serye glaza. I vy uvereny, chto kogda letchik snimet shlem, to pered vami blesnut svetlye volosy. [...] Svetlye glaza, svetlye volosy, khudoshchavoe litso, treugol'nyi tors, muskulistaia grud' — vot tip sovremennoi muzhskoi krasoty.

Eto krasota krasnoarmeitsev, krasota molodykh liudei, nosiashchikh na grudi znachok "GTO". Ona voznikaet ot chastogo obshcheniia s vodoi, mashinami i gimnasticheskimi priborami'.

The physical association of Grisha with a handsome pilot is a shorthand way of suggesting that he has heroic qualities. As Rosalinde Sartorti explains, pilots had a particular symbolic significance at the time Olesha was writing *Strogii iunosha*:

'In the 1930s aviators were public celebrities in Soviet Russia. They symbolized the extraordinary talent, courage and audacity of the Soviet people, and easily became a perfect object of identification and national

---

23Ibid., p. 304: 11. At the time, as well as sport, which I shall discuss in detail below, there was a strong cult of technology and aviation, and therefore also of those working in all these fields, in the Soviet Union. This description of an athletic, blond contemporary hero also fits the acrobat turned sailor then aviator (in the circus) Martynov, played by Sergei Stoliarov (on this actor see also Chapter Three) in Aleksandrov's 1936 film *Tsirk*; (on this film see also Chapter Two).
pride. They figured not only as literary heroes of many a novel, but were also "real" men and women who could be looked up to as examples to be emulated.²⁴

The penultimate sentence of Olesha's description of Grisha's handsomeness is more ordinary, explicitly linking him with the actually existing organization "GTO" (an acronym for 'Gotov k trudu i oborone'). This was a system of mental and physical education, established in 1931 by the All-Union Physical Culture Council, whereby a badge and a certificate could be gained through 'a set programme of practical and theoretical tests', 'with the aim of stimulating independent activity among Soviet people'.²⁵ The idea was that sport


²⁵James Riordan, Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR, Cambridge, 1977, p. 129. Henceforth: Riordan, Sport. In 1934 the GTO is also mentioned by Olesha (using the immediately identifiable pseudonym 'luri Karlov') in a satirical piece entitled 'Divano-krovat'. This is a mock article by an 'ubezhdenyi staryi kholostoi-odinochka s uklonom v delovoi amerikanizm'. This character writes that he had always dreamt of having a beautiful, comfortable and elegant domestic life, and that one day he decided that all he would need to attain this is a single room and the means to turn it into a bedroom, a dining room, a study or a sitting room, as desired. His attempts to carry out his plans involve buying a sofa-bed, which he then finds impossible to adjust. The piece ends with a personal advertisement from this old, stocky 'umereno trezvyi, pochti ne piushchii' bachelor seeking acquaintance with a female
would become a part of everyday life, and that, in this sphere, everybody could achieve a certain level of competence. The tests included basic knowledge of hygiene, first-aid and civil defence.

In addition to such GTO training, as members of the Komsomol, young people were obliged continually to measure their feelings and actions against the codes of conduct prescribed by the Komsomol. The English language translation of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia contains the explanation, under the heading 'Komsomol', that this organization helps 'to make young men and women very conscious of the close connection between their personal ideals and the great aims of the people;' it trains young people:

'in the spirit of communist morality, collectivism, and comradeship and [...] to be intolerant of egotism, pettiness, the private-property mentality [...] firmly instilling in them an attitude of irreconcilability toward bourgeois ideology and morality'.

It seems appropriate, here, to list those points from the Komsomol code which relate most to Olesha's work:

---


'4. To master firmly knowledge, culture, science, and the principles of Marxism-
Leninism'. This is shown by Grisha Fokin and his group of friends discussing the
rule of man over man, attempting to square the concept of genius with that of
equality, under Communism, and by the girl's preference for Marx's words on
love, over Knut Hamsun's, for example.

'6. To be honest, truthful, sensitive, and attentive to people'. Grisha's friends urge
him to confess his love for Masha, and, when he proves reticent, Diskobol does so
on his behalf, with little tact. Grisha is polite towards Stepanov and Tsitronov,
even when they are unkind to him, until he is pushed to the limit. He is careful not
to offend Stepanov by showing his feelings for the great man's wife.

'7. To oppose all manifestations of bourgeois ideology, parasitism [...] and other
vestiges of the past, and always to place social above personal interests'. This, too,
is both why Diskobol tells the Stepanovs of Grisha's love, and why Grisha himself
attempts to renounce it.

'12. To set an example for youth in the fulfilment of their social duty. [...]'

'14. To struggle boldly to develop criticism and self-criticism, and to fight against
ostentation and conceit.' The group of young friends criticize each other, trying to
be constructive and refusing to be indulgent simply on the grounds of friendship.
Grisha is modest about his qualities and strives continually to better himself. One
of the ways he, like his comrades, does this, is through physical improvement,
which fits in with the next principle.

'16. To strive for physical fitness and to engage in sport'. In keeping with this,
Strogii junosha features several scenes showing young Komsomol members
exercising at a sports stadium.28

---

28For more on the importance of the stadium in the 1920s-30s see the section on 'Sports
installations' in Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, Pioneers of Soviet Architecture. The search for new
The above GTO and Komsomol list of instructions is reflected in Grisha's fictional 'tretii kompleks "GTO"', a '[k]ompleks dushevnykh kachestv'. The qualities he lists are:

'Skromnost'. [...] Chtoby ne bylo grubosti i razviaznosti. [...] 
Iskrennost'. Chtoby govorit' pravdu. [...] 
Velikodushie [...] Chtoby ne radovat'sia oshibkam tovarishcha. [...] 
Shchedrost'. Chtoby izzhit' chuvstvo sobstvennosti. 
[...] sentimental'nost'. Chtoby ne tol'ko marshi liubit', no i val'sy. 
[...] Zhestokoe otnoshenie k egoizmu. [...] i tselomudrie. Grisha's theory is that despite the initial appearance of being bourgeois qualities, these are, in fact, human qualities, which have been corrupted by the bourgeoisie: 'Bruzhuaziia izvratila eti poniatia. Potomu chto byla vlast' deneg.' In a classless society, he is certain, these qualities will revert to their pure state.

The idea of integrating moral and physical strands of education within Communist thinking can be traced back to Marx and Lenin, both quoted by James Riordan: 'First, mental education. Second, bodily education, such as is given in schools of gymnastics, and by military exercise. Third, technological training', and 'It is impossible to visualise the ideal of a future society without a combination of instruction and productive labour, nor can productive labour without parallel instruction and physical education be put on a plane required by the modern level of technology and the state of scientific knowledge'. On the life of young people in general, Lenin had this to say:

---

29 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 310: 22.
30 Ibid., p. 311: 22.
31 Ibid.
32 Riordan, Sport, p. 59, quoting from Karl Marx, 'Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council. The Different Questions' (1866 and 1865 respectively), in K. Marx and F. Engels,
'Young men and women of the Soviet land should live life beautifully and to the full both in public and private life. Wrestling, work, study, sport, making merry, singing, dreaming — these are things young people should make the most of.\textsuperscript{33}

This attitude of supposed multi-dimensionality is also reflected in the suggestion, quoted later in this section, that Grisha is not just an engineer, but a poet as well.

The term \textit{Strogii iunosha} is very important regarding Grisha Fokin's character. The first point to be made about the description is that Grisha's youth is significant in terms of the parallels and oppositions it sets up in relation to the other characters, allying him to those of his own generation and distinguishing him from those who are older, as well as in terms of its symbolic association with the new and, by extension, the future. The second point to be borne in mind is that the epithet 'strogii' is a conventional one in works of a Socialist Realist nature, with a lineage stretching as far back as Maksim Gor'kii's influential novel \textit{Mat'}, of 1906, as Katerina Clark has pointed out.\textsuperscript{34} As with \textit{Strogii iunosha}, ideological transformation is at the heart of Gor'kii's work and, as with Grisha, 'strogii' is used to suggest a strict adherence to one's principles. So, in \textit{Mat'}, the eponymous mother says to her son's friends: 'Kakie vy... strogie!', just as Masha

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 63, quoting from A. Bezumenskii, \textit{Vstrecha komsomol' tsev s V. I. Leninym}, 1956, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{34} Katerina Clark, 'Socialist Realism \textit{With} Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero' in Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds., \textit{Socialist Realism \textit{Without} Shores}, Durham and London, 1997, pp. 27-50 (p. 32). Henceforth: Clark, 'Socialist Realism \textit{With} Shores'. Although the comparison is Clark's, the quotations from Gor'kii's text are mine.
says to Grisha: 'Kakoi vy strogii.'\textsuperscript{35} The crucial difference is that Masha is teasing Grisha and Olesha shows that she knows he will act against his principles and follow her when she leaves his room, as he has asked her to do, whereas Gor’kii supports his character's words in \textit{Mat’}. The son is thought of by the mother as having lips which are pressed together 'stranno strogo', eyes which are 'vsegda ser’eznye i strogie' and a face which is 'smugloe, upriamoe i strogoe'.\textsuperscript{36} Clark sheds much light on the political connotations of the adjective in an article on Stalinist literature:

'It is part of Olesha's intention to reveal the irony between Grisha's youthful naivety and the earnestness of his ideological convictions. Yet Clark's analysis is apt, for, as will be made clear further into this section, the young man is indeed a kind of ideological guide as far as his fellow Komsomol members are concerned, because he has created a moral code for the group.

Revealingly, two of the three recorded alternative titles for the screenplay also point to a young Komsomol member as the focus of the drama. One of these is 'Diskobol', a nickname which remains in the play, not for Grisha, but for his friend. Originally these two characters were to be embodied in one single youth.


\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., pp. 201, 205 and 206 respectively.

The another possible title is 'Volshebnyi komsomolets', which again points to an exceptional and ideologically committed young man, such as Grisha or Diskobol.\textsuperscript{38}

The first thing to notice about the treatment of Grisha Fokin is that the author refers to him, the first time, without naming him, and only subsequently identifies him. Indeed, this is a device he uses for almost all of the main characters. Thus, Grisha Fokin is initially simply 'molodoi chelovek', described in more detail only externally: 'v belykh shtanakh i beloi rubashke'.\textsuperscript{39} Significantly, in the light of plot developments to come, it is Masha Stepanova who first refers to him by name: 'Eto Grisha priekhal', and when she sees him she calls out to him by name.\textsuperscript{40} Otherwise, it is notable how often in the text he is just 'molodoi chelovek', as for example when Tsitronov taunts Stepanov by implying that the husband feels threatened by 'eto[t] molodo[i] chelovek'.\textsuperscript{41} Likewise, as Grisha makes his way from the station, Olesha writes: 'Idet molodoi chelovek', and when he sees the dacha the 'molodoi chelovek' is awestruck at its grandeur.\textsuperscript{42} Finally, the company around the table is listed as: 'Stepanov, Tsitronov, molodoi chelovek, Masha'.\textsuperscript{43} By contrast, in conversation with her husband, Masha uses Grisha's name, but pointedly refers to Tsitronov as 'eto[t] chelovek', which underlines her allegiance to Grisha.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{38}Grashchenkova, Room, p. 145. The third title is 'Komissar byta'. See the 'Kinozal' entry on Strogii junosha at: http://russia.agama.com/rclubttl.htm.

\textsuperscript{39}Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 301: 5.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 301: 6 and p. 304: 11 respectively.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 302: 8.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 302: 8; p. 303: 11.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 304: 12.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 305: 12.
The references to Grisha as 'the young man' serve a double function, underlining both his significance as a 'type', more than as an individual with a particular personality, and, obviously, his youth. Feeling threatened by this, Stepanov stresses it, first by declining a walk with Grisha and Masha, on the grounds that 'ia uzh star', and then by musing that it is only natural that 'ei nravitsia etot iunosha', where 'iunosha' sounds even younger than the sweeping appellation 'molodoi chelovek', which covers a broader age span.

Olesha indicates subtle changes in the youth's status, through the wording describing Grisha at the station on his arrival, 'molodoi chelovek stoit na perrone', and on his departure, 'Grisha stoit na perrone'. At first he was an outsider, now he is all too much a part of their lives. Where there are other characters in the scene they refer to him in diverse ways, for example, when Grisha comes home to find his neighbour there, as well as his mother, Olesha first mentions him as 'Grisha Fokin'. Then, in the space of seven lines, he is 'On'; 'Molodoi chelovek' and 'Syn'. Next, his mother calls him 'Grisha', and his neighbour 'Grigorii Ivanych'. These phrases serve to contextualize the young man.

Grisha is both a strict follower of his own moral code and a young man in love with the charming wife of his superior. This dilemma is one of the main points of debate amongst the Komsomol crowd: whether Grisha is right to deny his love out of respect for the brilliant doctor, or whether no man is superior to any other in a classless society. Having correctly assessed Grisha's reluctance to

---

48Ibid.
acknowledge that Masha reciprocates his love, Diskobol explains that it is: 'prosto ot bol’shogo uvazheniia k nemu... [...] Ty khoroshii komsomolets... vot v chem delo. Esli partiia zabotitsia o nem, to ty ne schitaesh’ sebia vprave narushat’ ego schast’e.' He raises the question, however: 'ne sovershaet li doktor Stepanov strashnogo prestuplenia protiv nashego obshchestva [...] kotoroe vskore budet besklassovym [...] Ne mozhet byt’ vlasti cheloveka nad chelovekom... pravda? [...] On zloupotrebliaet svoim velichiem'. Grisha, for his part, is convinced that in Stepanov's case 'Eto chistaia vlast’. On ne bankir... On velikii uchenyi, on genii... [...] Vlast’ geniia [...] ostaetsia. Dlia menia — da. Dlia komsomol’tsa. Da. [...] Vliianie velikogo uma... eto prekrasnaia vlast’.' He writes: 'Komsomolets dolzhen ravniat’sia na luchshikh. Luchshie — eto te, kto tvorit nauku, tehniku, muzyku, mysli... Eto vysokie umy... Te, kto boretsia s prirodoi, pobediteli smerti...' To emphasize Grisha's multi-facetedness, Olesha has Grisha's friend quote a very similar passage to this in hospital, in front of Stepanov, who asks whether it was written by a poet. To this she replies: 'Budushchii inzhener. Student. Grisha Fokin.' Drawing attention to his talents in this context, where Stepanov has just 'resurrected' the girl, suggests that Grisha is no less, just differently, talented than the surgeon. Up to that point, in his characterization of Grisha's admiration of Stepanov, Olesha has been careful to place great stress on the fact that it is his expertise, not his class, or wealth, which Grisha looks up to, explaining that Grisha is a: 'student i komsomolets i polon uvazheniia k etomu

50 Ibid., p. 323: 33.
51 Ibid., p. 324: 33.
52 Ibid., p. 328: 38.
54 Tshitronov actually says 'Iulian Nikolaevich bukval’no liudei voskreshaet' (ibid., p. 307: 15) just as Diskobol says 'On voskresil ee.' (ibid., p. 327: 38).
The successful operation on his friend, another ardent Komsomol believer, justifies his sentiment.

A key element in the relationship between Grisha and Stepanov is respect, whether present or absent. Grisha respects Stepanov's talent, saying unambiguously, in the first part of Strogii junosh: 'Takikh liudei, kak Iuliian Nikolaevich, malo'. This becomes a recurrent theme throughout the text, and Grisha acquiesces to Tsitronov's jibe that he must consequently think that there are plenty of people like himself. Stepanov, however, is too jealous to treat Grisha seriously until he goes to see him to reinvite him to their ball, having withdrawn the invitation earlier in a fit of pique encouraged by Tsitronov. Here, Stepanov himself raises the issue of uniqueness, telling the youth's friends: 'On zamechatel'nyi molodoi chelovek. On govoril, chto takikh, kak on, mnogo, no dokazal, chto takikh, kak on, malo'. Being immature, however, the over-earnest Grisha rebuffs Stepanov's renewed invitation to his party, with misplaced pride and the self-important words: 'Komsomolets dolzhen byt' gordym'. Stepanov's sense of irony is particularly apposite here, as he adds a touch of lightness to the scene by pointing out that 'Chelovek stoit v shkafu i govorit o gordosti. U komsomol'tsa dolzhno byt' chuvstvo iumor...'. This exchange clearly shows

---

55Ibid.
56Ibid., p. 305: 12.
58Ibid., p. 333: 41.
59Ibid. These words call to mind a line of dialogue by Satin, a character from Maksim Gor'kii's 1902 play Na dne: 'Chelo-vek! Eto — velikolepno! Eto zvuchit... gordo!' M. Gor'kii, Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh. Moscow, 1950, vol. 6, pp. 103-75 (p. 170); and the final words of Vladimir Maiakovskii's 1925 poem 'Brodwei': 'U sovetskikh sobstvennaiia gordost': na burzhuev
Olesha in parodic mode, and highlights the difference between the older and wiser man who is self-assured enough to be able to apologize to his romantic rival, and the younger one who is too confused by his lists of rules to respond naturally with appreciation for the other's gesture of good will.

In this section I have shown how Olesha uses the central character of Strogii iunosha to reflect the harmonization of the old and the new. He does so by fusing a stereotypical socialist ideal, the handsome, strong, committed yet tolerant sportsman, with a gently parodic version of the same — a stubborn, immature and confused youth, who has the ability to respect those, such as Stepanov, who can contribute to society with their skills. Olesha's use of this duality within Grisha, serving his own and the Party's needs, holds the key to his use of characterization to resolve his and the Party's need for compromise.

Other characters: the old and the hope of a new future

I shall now look at the other characters in Strogii iunosha, against whom Grisha Fokin is measured. These comprise one camp, which represents the past, including Iulian Nikolaevich and Masha Stepanov, the couple whose life the young man disrupts, as well as their hanger-on, Tsitronov, and, another, symbolizing the hope of the future, Grisha's friends 'Diskobol' (Kolia) and 'Devushka' (Lizochka).

Olesha's first mention of Stepanov introduces him as a man of importance; not just his name, but his title and status in society are all presented at once:

'Doktor Iulian Nikolaevich Stepanov. Izvestnyi khirurg'. He is then given some physical characterization: 'Emu let sorok vosem'. Plotnogo slozhennia. Bez borody i usov', which contrasts him in age both with his young wife and, subsequently, with Grisha. He is evidently very wealthy, with an expensive new car and luxuries such as foreign Cognac, and favoured by the government, which has presented him with the summer residence. There are, however, negative sides to his success, including a certain arrogance. When a colleague asks to bring him back a hat from London, in response to Stepanov's enquiry as to what he would like, Stepanov's riposte is: 'Budu ia po magazinam begat', deistvitel'no. Ia, chlen Angliiskoi akademii. On a more personal level, he is vain in his enjoyment of Tsitronov's fawning flattery; as Masha points out to him with contempt: 'tebe nравится, что он тебе нравится'. Stepanov is also overly quick to take up Tsitronov's taunting bait, the suggestion that Masha is attracted to Grisha. He sulks jealously when she goes to see Grisha at the stadium, refusing to wave back to her: 'Masha skandalizovana tem, chto on ne otvechaet', causing her to reproach him: 'Neuzheli revnuesh'? Kak tebe ne stydno.

Despite his anger at Grisha, Stepanov puts his profession first when he operates on a friend of the youth's and saves her life. Thrown into a situation where he is surrounded by young Komsomol members, Stepanov learns from them and comes to admire them in various ways; as discussed above, he is impressed by Ol'ga, because of her ardent faith in Communism; by her husband for being so polite and for having risen from being a mere peasant to a naval

---

60Ibid., p. 301: 4.
61Ibid.
62Ibid., p. 327: 37.
63Ibid., p. 305: 12.
64Ibid., p. 312: 23.
officer; by Grisha for creating his code of moral values; and, finally, by the fact that Marx wrote about unrequited love as well as politics. His general response to these things is the words: 'fantasticheskaia veshch'. It is this particular redeeming feature, Stepanov's willingness to appreciate others, change his attitude and improve himself, not his professional talent, nor his love of Masha, nor his understanding of life, important though they are, upon which both the plot and the ideology behind the screenplay turn.

The romantic triangle of Stepanov, Masha and Grisha is played out symbolically within the text, in an outdoor scene where a boy temporarily blinds Stepanov by mischievously reflecting the sun into his eyes with a shard of mirror. Olesha explains why the boy singles out Stepanov: 'Estestvenno, etot grazhdanin privlekaet vnimanie maTchika: solidnyi, krupnogo slozheniia grazhdanin'. The sun means that Masha's husband is unable to see that she is looking at Grisha. Moreover, the three are linked syntactically as well as emotionally: 'Oborachivaetsia Fokin. [...] Oborachivaetsia Masha. Oborachivaetsia Stepanov'. This episode is followed by a reversal, or mirroring, of the triangle, when Grisha, in turn, cannot see Masha kissing her husband's eyes. As indicated below, this echoes the overall plot line whereby, after kissing Grisha secretly, Masha returns home to her husband.

The shift in the balance of the relationship between Masha and her husband, because of Grisha, is indicated in a reversal of the opening request by Stepanov for Masha to fetch Grisha. This time, it is Masha who asks whether she

---

65Ibid., p. 329: 39.
66Ibid., p. 331: 40.
67Ibid.
68Ibid., p. 332: 40.
could use the car to take Grisha to the station. A similar reversal occurs elsewhere
to one of the screenplay's opening scenes. Stepanov's original arrival home to
Masha's warm greeting is distorted the next time, so that now Stepanov arrives
home to find Masha just leaving to visit Grisha. Anxiously, he asks her whether
she will return, to which 'Ona ulybaetsia muzhu' and says 'Nu, konechno'.\(^{69}\)
Whatever Stepanov feels, there is no doubt in her mind that she knows what she is
doing.

The same element of control over the situation is displayed by Masha
when she visits Grisha. She has decided to see how she can appease him, since he
has refused to accept Stepanov's apology and come to the ball. On being told she
should not have come, she leaves, teasing the young man, safe in the knowledge
that he will follow. As they walk, she stops to say: 'Ja khochu predlozhit' vam
odnu ideiu. Mozho?\(^{70}\) He replies: 'Davaite.'\(^{71}\) Twice, she asks to walk a little
further, and they stop and repeat their words.\(^{72}\) The third time, however 'Oni
tseluiutsia'.\(^{73}\)

However, despite her attraction to and affinity with Grisha, Masha returns
to her husband. In the same way, she helped him prepare his lecture even after
their excruciating scene at the stadium, during which Diskobol made public
Grisha's love for Masha. An echo of Diskobol standing in for a reticent Grisha
occurs in part of Grisha's dream, where 'K Mashe sel motylek na plecho. K

\(^{69}\)ibid., p. 335: 42.

\(^{70}\)ibid., p. 336: 46.

\(^{71}\)ibid.

\(^{72}\)ibid.

\(^{73}\)ibid., p. 338: 46.
A symbolic paralleling of dream and reality takes place when the besotted Grisha dreams of Masha appearing at the ball: 'Vid Mashi, ee khod, dvizhenie skladok ee plat’ia — tak stranno, tak krasivo, tak neobychno, chto podrostok ne vyderzhivaet i, vybezhav vpered, khlopaet v ladoshi.' By placing the words at the very end of his text, and thereby imbuing them with added importance, Olesha gives an almost identical description of the real Masha, at the Stepanovs' actual ball: 'Ee khod, dvizhenie skladok ee plat’ia, ee ves’ vid — tak udivitel’ny, stranny i krasivy, chto gosti peregliadyvaiutsia, a odin — molodoi inostranets — ne vyderzhivaet i tikho — kak by pro sebia — udariaet v ladoshi.' It is significant that the first quotation reveals Grisha's self-image as that of a 'teenager', therefore even younger and more naive than the 'young man' of the second quotation; the line between fact and fantasy has been blurred, leaving Masha at the centre of both.

Tsitronov serves as an exaggerated, negative double of Stepanov. He is egotistical, materialistic and envious, with no redeeming features. He is a caricature, a self-styled 'podcherkivatel' neravenstva'. We first read of Tsitronov following Masha lecherously with his gaze, then later Stepanov catches him spying on her as she dresses, shouting at him: 'Gadina! Ty osmelivaesh’sia dumat’ o nei.' Tsitronov is offensive to everyone. He envies Stepanov for his talent, his success and his wife, so he insults him by suggesting that Masha is interested only in his money. Similarly, he envies Grisha his youth and Masha's admiration, so he

---

74 Ibid., p. 321: 32. As Irina Grashchenkova points out, in Greek mythology the butterfly represents Psyche, the embodiment of man's soul captured by love. See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 147.

75 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 321: 32.

76 Ibid., p. 338: 47.

77 Ibid., p. 319: 30.

78 Ibid., p. 336: 44.
mocks the young man's ideals and vulgarizes his relationship with Masha. The character of Tsitronov is purely a foil for the others, and his role is to highlight and exaggerate the screenplay's issues, tipping the balance against the old, parasitical bourgeoisie and in favour of those who are willing to become a part of the new socialist society.

The original title for Strogii iunosha was to have been 'Diskobol'. Diskobol (who is only once referred to by his real name Kolia, by his uncle), is the other significant young man in Strogii iunosha, after Grisha. As stated above, originally the two characters were to have been one. Diskobol is characterized as 'molodoi chelovek s diskom', and described through the eyes of a ballerina as 'soboi krasivyi iunosha' (just as she is seen by him to be 'soboi krasivaia devushka', revealing the young people's homogeneity, both in appearance and in thought).

Diskobol's physique and image are based on the classical figure he is named after. The image of a discus-thrower, both in its male and female variant, was one of the most potent images of the sportsman in the Soviet Union, with the first recorded statue to be placed in a Soviet park, in 1927, being Matvei Manizer's 'Diskobol', a bronze statue of a discus-thrower. Perhaps uncoincidentally, in 1934, the year Olesha was writing his screenplay, Dmitrii Shvarts's plaster 'Diskobol', a depiction of a naked discus-thrower, was shown at

---

79 See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 145.

80 Olesha, Izbrannoe, pp. 301: 22 and 315: 27.

an exhibition of young artists.\textsuperscript{82} The same pose was used for a statue of a discus-thrower in another work of 1934, the animated film \textit{Veselaia Moskva}.\textsuperscript{83}

In his discussion of the Soviet myth of the sportsman of the 1930s, M. Zolotonosov underlines the inherent irony. At a time when most people scarcely had enough to eat, let alone to provide them with a healthy body, a cult of sports took over: \textquoteright[s]portsmeny prevratilis' v obraztsy liudei budushchego, ikh odezhdoi stali kozha i muskuly, a nagota — znakom prinadlezhnosti k novoi porode, vozvyshaishchiesia nad liudskimi obychaiami, nad staroi moral'iu. Sovershennoe telo, uchila vizual'naia propaganda, ne stydno obnazhat'.\textsuperscript{84} In keeping with this tradition, Diskobol is described first as: 'obnazhennyi. Tol'ko korotkie trusy na nem'; then 'Zagoreloe telo blestit na solntse'; 'golyi chelovek'; and finally in Stepanov's memory: 'Vy byli golyi.'\textsuperscript{85} When the lazy, gluttonous Tsitronov confronts the young people, Diskobol's contrasting physique is again emphasized: 'Pod legkoi tkan'iu rubashki ugadyvaetsia vypukloe spletenie

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{82} Zolotonosov, 'Park totalitarnogo perioda', p. 80.

\textsuperscript{83} This was directed and animated by Ol'ga Khodataeva and scripted by Aleksandr Filimonov, who was later to co-write the scenario for \textit{Serebriataia pyl'} with Abram Room. See the still on p. 14 of the article K. Iukov, 'Tekushchie dela dramaturgii kino. Doklad na soveshchanii kinodramaturgov', \textit{Sovetskoe kino}, 1934, no. 8-9, pp. 6-14 (p. 12) and the next page of this chapter, which is followed by a photograph of Diskobol in a similar pose from Grisha's dream, taken during the making of \textit{Strogii iunosha}.

\textsuperscript{84} Zolotonosov, 'Park totalitarnogo perioda', p. 83.

\textsuperscript{85} Olesha, \textit{Izbrannoe}, pp. 310: 22; 311: 22; 313: 23 and 333: 41 respectively. For a discussion of Diskobol's (semi-) nudity see Chapter Six below.
A sketch from the film Veselaia Moskva, 1934, directed and animated by Ol’ga Khodataeva, Sovetskoe kino, 1934, no. 8-9, p. 14
Strogii iunosha: Diskobol in Grisha's dream
muskulov.\textsuperscript{86} It is clear that the two characters embody the past and the future, respectively.

Another member of the group is a girl Diskobol addresses as Lizochka, but who is most frequently referred to simply as 'Devushka'.\textsuperscript{87} She is clearly a parody of Komsomol youth, full of childlike enthusiasm and half-baked ideological rhetoric. She is very young, passionate, eager and silly, as well as irritating with her constant repetition of empty phrases, such as 'Neuzheli ty ne ponimaesh'?\textsuperscript{88}  Another favourite of hers is the concept, which she applies indiscriminately, of not denying one's desires, expressed as: 'Nuzhno, chtoby ispolnialis' vse zhelaniia, togda chelovek budet schastliv. [... ] Nel'zia podavliat' zhelaniia'.\textsuperscript{89} Even Diskobol makes fun of her in one scene, parodying her idea by applying it to his desire to hit Tsitronov.\textsuperscript{90} It is this girl who exposes Grisha as an immature coward, when she opens the door of the cupboard in which he is hiding during Stepanov's conciliatory visit, exclaiming characteristically: 'Khochetsia otkryt' shkaf —

\textsuperscript{86}Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 318: 30.

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., p. 319: 30 for both examples.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., p. 310: 22, p. 311: 22 x 5; p. 312: 23, p. 313: 23, p. 317: 28, p. 319: 30; p. 325: 36. The verb 'poniat'/ponimat' is frequently used symbolically in works of the 1920s-30s, (particularly towards foreigners in the USSR as, for example, in Iakov Protazanov's film Tommi of 1931 and in Grigorii Aleksandrov's film Tsirk of 1936) to represent ideological consciousness.

\textsuperscript{89}Ibid., p. 317: 28, the same idea is expressed on p. 317: 29, p. 319: 30.

\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 319: 30.
otkroiv. Lizochka, then, is one of Olesha's gentle parodies of idealized socialist youth.

In the above section I have shown how each of the characters against whom Grisha Fokin is measured falls into one of two groups. Of these two, one represents the past, the other — the hope of the future. Olesha uses the characters to represent the old and the new, and their interaction to reflect the conflict between the two societies both within and beyond the literary work. The understanding reached between the two groups by the end of the screenplay is a metaphor for Olesha's message that the new socialist society should also accommodate individuals who do not subscribe to the Party ideology, as long as they have something to offer in the building of a better, classless future.

Conclusion

Before writing Strogii iunosha, Iurii Olesha was under pressure to toe the Party line. It was important for him to achieve a personal and political compromise in Strogii iunosha. I have shown how the content of the screenplay reflects that quest in terms of plot, thematics and characterization.

The plot throws together representatives of the old, bourgeois society with young, idealistic members of the Komsomol. This provides the opportunity for

---

91 Ibid., p. 333: 41. For a photograph of this scene taken during the making of Room's film see the next page of this chapter.

92 Another member of the Komsomol group is Ol'ga, who is referred to in the text mainly as 'Bol'naia'. She is the character upon whom Dr. Stepanov operates, and the one who reads him Marx. Her friends regards her as the ideological authority, the one who 'Vse znaet. Est' li eto vlast' cheloveka nad chelovekom, ili net...', in the context of Stepanov and Grisha. See: Ibid., p. 324: 33.
A still from *Strogii iunosha* showing Grisha in the cupboard after 'Devushka' has revealed his hiding place
each side to learn about the other and brings about a positive mutual 
reassessment. The plot is a vehicle for the thematics of *Strogii iunosha*,
demonstrating the possibility and desirability, in the first half of the 1930s, for 
reconciliation, tolerance and even cooperation between 'bourgeois specialists' and 
politically committed Party members. This concept is legitimized by quotations 
from Marx and Stalin, and the issues are debated by the characters. By providing 
different viewpoints in various discussions, Olesha raises genuine concerns.
Rather than offering glib answers, he leaves some areas ambiguous. Above all, 
neither the old nor the young people and their actions are entirely admirable or 
entirely contemptible.

Ambiguity in theme becomes duality in characterization. Olesha's use of 
this duality within Grisha is central to his use of characterization in the resolution 
of his, and the Party's, need for compromise. Similarly, the understanding reached 
by the end of the screenplay between the two groups into which the other 
characters fall is a metaphor for Olesha's message that the new Socialist society 
should accommodate gifted non-Party members, on the journey towards a better, 
classless future. This was as relevant for Olesha in life as it was for the content of 
*Strogii iunosha*. 
CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL RESPONSE TO IURII OLESHA'S *STROGII IUNOSHA*,

1934-35

On 5 July 1934, a news report in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* informed readers that Olesha had read out *Strogii iunosha* in public two days previously. It states that all those present, including Aleksandr Fadeev, Pavel Iudin, Viktor Shklovskii, Vsevolod Meierkhol'd and Dmitrii Mirskii, as well as a representative from Soiuzfilm, Katinov, felt strongly that *Strogii iunosha* was a great achievement: 'Vse vystupavshie tovarishchi [...] edinoglasno podcherkivali, chto kinop'esa lu. Olesh — bol'shaia tvorcheskaia udacha pisatelia.'

Iudin, in a longer report by Ia. Man, in *Literaturnaia gazeta* the following day, summarizes the general opinion of all at the reading, saying that Olesha has fulfilled his friends' expectations, by producing, after his long silence, a work of great artistic worth and meaningful philosophical content. He reports that all were impressed by Olesha's courage in writing about the near future, and in tackling the problem of 'moral'nykh vzaimootnoshenii v besklassovom obshchestve, otpravliaias' ot segodniashnei konkretnoi deistvitel'nosti SSSR.' The work is said to have profound philosophical significance because it deals with the problems of the new man and new socialist feelings and relationships. However, precisely because it is the first attempt to deal with such complex issues in a work of fiction, says Iudin, '"Strogii iunosha" ne mog okazat'sia proizvedeniem

1"Strogii iunosha". Pervaia kinop'esa Iu. Olesh'.

bezuprechnym. He is referring, in particular, to the vague depiction of the young Komsomol members and their moral code. As shown below, this is to become a recurring criticism.

However, it is the form of Olesha's new work, above all, writes Man, which provoked 'strastnye debaty'. The majority of those present insisted that it is a work of literature, rather than cinema: ""Strogii iunosha" vovse ne otlichаетsia tipicheskimi osobennostiamи kinostenariia, [...] eto vpolne samostoiatel'noe khudozhhestvennoe proizvedenie. Mirskii believed that a consequence of the skillful literariness of the writer's style is that this literariness would be lost during the text's transition to the screen. Olesha is similarly criticized, by Meierkhol'd, for having constructed 'svoe prekrasnoe literaturnoe proizvedenie v vide stsenaria'; he should have written the work in the form of a short story, which could then have been turned into a film. Although Meierkhol'd felt that Olesha's talent was hampered by the narrow framework of a screenplay, Katin and, most significantly, Room, reproached him for undervaluing the capabilities of Soviet cinema. From the above statements it is clear that, despite certain objections to Olesha's chosen form for Strogii iunosha, the response at the reading is positive.

---

3Ibid.

4Ibid.

5Ibid. Man's italics.


7Ia. E. Man, "Strogii iunosha". Novoe proizvedenie lu. Oleshi', p. 4. In this report the name of the director present and appointed to make the film version of Strogii iunosha, is given as A. Romm, rather than A. Room. See also Chapter Three, note 1.
However, as will be shown in the present chapter, subsequent responses were to be more negative. This was true in terms of both form and content. It was also true of the political context offered by the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. The Congress, however, combined its criticism with approbation for Olesha’s efforts to adapt to ideological requirements. This set a tone which meant that, despite its strongly noted defects, Strogii iunosha would continue as a project. Before treating these views of the Congress, I will critically review the response to the ‘p’esa dlia kinematografa’, expressed in contemporary newspapers and journals — first in terms of content, then, of form.

Critical response: content

For a year or so after its first reading, the general, published opinion of Strogii iunosha, in terms of content, is primarily negative. Although most critics give Olesha the benefit of the doubt, as far as his intentions are concerned, critics such

---

8One contemporary recalls watching Olesha reading an extremely harsh review of Strogii iunosha at a table in a Kiev restaurant; according to Evgenii Gabrilovich Olesha looked at the newspaper, the colour drained out of his face and he said that he would have to read it in solitude. On his way out of the room Olesha stopped to ask: 'Ia poblednel?′ and sat down again to continue eating with the words 'Muzhchina ne dolzhen blednet'!, but concluded 'No bledneet.' See: E. Gabrilovich, Chetyre chetverti, Moscow, 1975, p. 115.

9In this chapter and in Chapter Seven I have chosen to emphasize the distinction between the 'content' and the 'form' of Strogii iunosha (written and filmic text) primarily because both Olesha and his contemporary critics tended to approach the work in this way, and it therefore facilitates the organization of discussions of their views. In doing so, however, I am fully aware that the concepts are fluid, that many areas overlap and, consequently, that the distinction is sometimes artificial. See the Preface for further explanation.
as Kulikov, Zhdanov and Pertsov harbour grave reservations about the text, some graver than others. These serious criticisms are reinforced by a parodic piece which is harsher, in many ways, than the straight condemnations of the work. In the following section, I shall critically outline this response, culminating in the rather humiliating, but effective, parody of Strogii iunosha by Dmitrii Maznin. I shall begin with the more prosaic assessment of the screenplay offered by others, opening with the most comprehensive.

The fullest serious appraisal of Strogii iunosha is offered by the Volzhskaisa nov' critic, I. Kulikov. His response to the screenplay is generally representative of the type of criticism directed at the work's content. But it is also more detailed and analytical than most. Like others, Kulikov takes the ideological high ground in his discussion of Olesha's work. He accepts that the author has learnt a great deal since the errors of Zavist'. In particular, Olesha is seen to accept that people flourish, rather than wilt, under socialism, with Kulikov noting that 'sotsializm neset ne oskudenie chelovecheskoj individual'nosti, a ee buinoe tsvetenie'. The critic believes that Olesha aims to show how the individual is enhanced in a socialist society.

Despite this, he condemns the writer for not being able to convey this understanding in a work of art, for not managing to portray the feelings of a young man of the socialist era. The 'new man' is seen to lack substance and suffer from the author's 'nekonkretnyi, abstraktnyi podkhod k izobrazheniu dushevnikh kachestv novogo geroia, kak iyakoby izvechnykh chelovecheskikh kachestv'. Kulikov writes that Olesha peoples the screenplay with 'mertve skhemy, sukhie

---

10I. Kulikov, 'O chuvstvakh sotsialisticheskogo cheloveka', Volzhskaisa nov', 1935, no. 8-9, pp. 84-88 (p. 88).
11Ibid.
abstraktsii, besplotnye teni', who 'ne volnuiut, ne raduiut i ne trevozhat chitatelia'.

He correctly perceives the author's use of impersonal labels such as 'sailor', 'discus-thrower' and 'girl', amongst others, as being evidence of a deliberate obliteration of individuality within the characters. In his eyes, then, Olesha has failed as an artist, and is ideologically misguided.

Kulikov finds fault with the character of Grisha, parodying his respect for a man such as Dr. Stepanov. The critic claims that Grisha sacrifices his love for Masha because he 'ne khochet portit' doktoru nastroenie', which turns the young man into a 'bezvol'nyi khristosik'. Kulikov sees Grisha's behaviour as not only foolish, but also a transgression of his own moral code. Evidently, Kulikov does not allow for the possibility of deliberate irony on Olesha's part, nor for the key idea of reconciling the old with the new.

Beyond this, Kulikov mocks the concept of cleansing those spiritual qualities which have been corrupted by the bourgeoisie — comparing such an act to the polishing of a tarnished samovar. He ridicules the idea of establishing new socialist feelings in opposition to their old bourgeois equivalents, by pointing out the difficulty in knowing how to tell them apart:

---

12Ibid.

13One example Kulikov gives of Olesha's misguidedness is the fact that he states one of the principles of the GTO to be the aspiration to be equal to the best, but then offers poor examples. The following types of people are noted as examples of 'the best': those who invent machines, those who struggle against nature, and whose who create music and philosophies. The critic asks why the writer did not set any political leaders as examples, emphasizing the significance of political authority, for 'Politicheskie vozdu strudishchikhsia iavliaiutsia luchshimi iz luchshikh, po kotorym v pervuiu ochered' sleduet ravniat'sia.' Ibid., p. 86.

14Ibid., p. 88.
'Kakie zhe novye kachestva priobretaei radost' i pechal' pri sotsializme [...] kakovo konkretnoe zhiznennoe napolnenie "nerazdeleennoi liubvi" pri kapitalizme i kakovo — pri sotsializme?\(^{15}\)

Although there is validity in Kulikov's claims that Olesha fails to engage the reader emotionally, due to unconvincing characterization, and fails to convince ideologically, due to the clumsy philosophizing and simplistic reasoning of the characters, the critic does not understand the complexity of the author's intentions. Judging from Olesha's statements, some cited in the previous chapter, others below, it seems certain that the supposedly ideal, Communist Grisha and friends are \textit{deliberately} two-dimensional, intended partly as gentle parodies. Meanwhile, the flawed, bourgeois Stepanov is nevertheless worthy of respect. As with other critics, discussed below, Kulikov either cannot see, or is afraid to see, the layer of irony and ambiguity underlying the apparent simplicity of Olesha's work.

In a similar vein to Kulikov, N. Zhdanov, the critic reviewing \textit{Strogii iunosha} in the September 1935 issue of \textit{Literaturnyi sovremennik}, also regards Olesha's ideas and characters as overly abstract. He blames Olesha for trying to solve the problem of 'novogo geroia, novoi morali, minuia zhivoe tvorcheskoe obshchenie s deistvitel'nost'iu'.\(^{16}\) He also accuses the writer of setting up a conflict, Grisha's love for Masha versus his respect for Stepanov, which is 'psevdo-problematichen, obshchestvenno neznachitelen'.\(^{17}\) In short, Zhdanov finds \textit{Strogii iunosha} artistically contrived and ideologically irrelevant, in terms of treating the issue of a new morality for a new socialist society.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., pp. 87-88.


\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 160.
One critic, identified only by the initial 'A', gives a revealing report, in the February 1935 issue of Literaturnaia gazeta, of a question and answer session held by Olesha at Moscow State University, after his reading of Strogii iunosha. He emphasizes the earnest, genuine interest of the audience. What the listeners most wanted to know, according to 'A', is why, in Olesha's portrayal, the morals and behaviour of the young people do not correspond to their own, to those 'kotorykh privykla nasha molodezh' schitat' svoei, kommunisticheskoi.' Likewise, they wonder, with disappointment, why the heroine is depicted not as a typical, Soviet, working woman, but as the type of lady who could easily fit into any bourgeois novel.

The young people feel extremely dismayed at the fact that a character such as Masha features in a work set in the not too distant future, a time when such people should no longer be a part of socialist society. Finally, Olesha's listeners are particularly keen to find out why the fictional moral code contains seemingly irrelevant points. The concerns of this public reveal a very literal and prosaic grasp of Olesha's screenplay.

A more sophisticated reading of the text is evident in A. Prozorov's article, 'Diskussiia o sotsialisticheskoi morali', which is discussed in greater detail in the section on form below. This critic recognizes the formal strengths of Strogii iunosha, including its multi-layered style. In terms of content, however, Prozorov finds the content lacking in conviction. He discusses the contradiction within the characterization of Stepanov, saying that the doctor combines the artistic formula of acceptance of and support for socialism with the psychological traits of a man

---

18 A., 'Vzaimnaia samoproverka', Literaturnaia gazeta, 15 February 1935, no. 9 (500), [page unnumbered].

19 Ibid.
of the old, bourgeois world. Prozorov sums up his view of the screenplay by saying that these words about Stepanov can be applied to the work as a whole. He concludes that, whilst Strogii iunosha is extremely interesting, it is not without flaws, meaning that Olesha refuses to condemn, or eliminate, every last bourgeois element. The critic has grasped the principle at work in Olesha's text, that of co-existence, but refuses to accept the message that a fusion of the best elements of the old and the new should be mutually beneficial.

A related, yet more serious, complaint is levelled against the work by Viktor Pertsov. He feels that the work's message is negative, even if this is not what Olesha set out to achieve. He sees the script as being a kind of inversion of Zavist', with the concept of envy having been replaced by that of competition. Yet, he feels that Olesha's use of the competition motif backfires, reinforcing the capitalist idea of inequality. Pertsov explains:

'V osnovu sovretnovaniia kladet on ne obschchuiu sotsial'nuiu tsel', a biologicheskoe neravenstvo liudei, razdelennykh na "mnogo" i "malo".'

He sees the treatment of competition as a call for submission and humility, in place of the desirable socialist collective call for courage and conviction. As suggested above, Pertsov fails to understand Olesha's intended message of reconciliation for the good of society as a whole.

---


21 As discussed in Chapter One above, Pertsov discusses Strogii iunosha again in his book of 1976 on Olesha, referring to his 'bravery' in writing the script. See Chapter One, note 21 for details.

22 V. Pertsov, 'Zagovor vysokikh umov', Literaturnaya gazeta, 28 September 1934, no. 130 (446), pp. 2-3, p. 3 [unnumbered], henceforth: Pertsov, 'Zagovor vysokikh umov'. The title of Pertsov's article is also an allusion to the negative characters and their ideas in Olesha's Zavist'.

Pertsoy’s text was accompanied by a ‘friendly’ cartoon by V. Vasil’ev. This depicted Olesha in shorts, in a stadium, using superhuman force to lift a huge cog, bearing a star containing an athlete writing ’3 kompleks’ in the middle of it, with a copy of *Strogii iunosha* attached. It is an apt parody of Olesha’s struggle to incorporate the socialist theme of ideologically and physically perfect youth in his literary work. This graphic comment can be read as either sympathetic or cruel; either way, however, it would have been regarded as slightly humiliating, but in keeping with Olesha’s own statements on his artistic and ideological torments.

*Strogii iunosha* inspired more than one critic to launch into flights of parody, in articles which also contained kernels of serious criticism. One such piece is written by Mikhail Levidov, a critic who also wrote a non-parodic criticism of the work, which is discussed in detail in the following section on form. In ‘V godu dve tysiachi tridsat’ chetvertom (2034)’, Levidov writes as if from a hundred years into the future, from 2034.\(^23\) He refers to a device called the ‘litsoteka’, with which readers are invited to establish contact through their television sets. The ‘litsoteka’ is supposedly a system for analysing individuals from the past. It reveals that Olesha’s problem is ‘bespokoistvo odinochki’, as with many others who grew up before the Revolution.\(^24\) In the writer’s case, however, he dressed up his anxiety ‘v nariadnye odezhdy, v slova pyshnye, bogatyje, neobychnye i zvuchnye’.\(^25\) Levidov, or the future critic, accuses Olesha of seeing elements of himself reflected in everything; he claims that even contemporary critics could see that ‘vse personazhi veshchi — eto razmnozhenny Olesha’.\(^26\) The

\(^{23}\) M. Levidov, ‘V godu dve tysiachi tridsat’ chetvertom (2034)’, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 24 November 1934, no. 157 (473), p. 3 [unnumbered].

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.
critic also mocks the treatment of themes such as suffering and talent, finding them illusory problems.

Revealingly, Levidov explains to readers of the future that contemporary critics found the work "ideologicheski porochna" but also a thing of "redkogo i vysokogo masterstva". The work's technical mastery, he says, had a hypnotic effect, and made people overlook its weaknesses, such as the 'ubogost' mysli, nishchetu ego filosofii. The piece ends kindly, despite these criticisms, offering Olesha a second chance to prove himself a real writer of his times: 'No tem bolee zamechatel'noi predstaet pered nami drugaia rabota etogo zhe avtora, sdelannaia im v moment, kogda perestal on byt' "bespokoinym" i "odinokoi", v tysiacha deviat'sot...'

Dmitrii Maznin's review of Strogii iunosha, 'Grisha Fokin otmezhevyvaetsia. Konferentsiia geroev "Strogogo iunoshi"', mocks Olesha in a different way from Levidov's piece. Published in Literaturnaia gazeta, it is pure parody, constructed as a meta-literary script, featuring Olesha's characters and a critic discussing Olesha's work. The characters speak in their familiar style and retain their individual, irritating traits. The original ideas are adapted to this satirical discussion in which, for example, Stepanov expresses the belief that, at the end of Strogii iunosha, it is his fate that the reader will be curious about, wondering what will become of the old 'intelligent', what will happen to the

27Ibid. Levidov's quotation marks.
28Ibid.
29Ibid.
recently happy husband whose dazzling wife has betrayed him? 'Kak perenes on neschast’ e? Poedet li on v London? Ili s goria zap’ et s Tsitronovym?'

Grisha is likewise mocked, since Maznin says that the reader probably likes him best of all the characters precisely because he is not a successful characterization. Maznin's Grisha makes fun of Olesha's Stepanov, explaining that he is operating on himself, in order to save his life for the good of socialism. This is a reference to two ideas. The first is that Stepanov saves Ol’ga's life and is therefore working for the cause of socialism, however inadvertently. The second is that the operation is a turning point in the doctor's own life, bringing about his reassessment of the young Komsomol members and their beliefs. Olesha did, of course, intend the operation to be a kind of ideological re-birth for Stepanov, as well as a physical and ideological one for Ol’ga, but he did not express these ideas quite so crudely.

Finally, Maznin raises the issue of the future film, for which the text itself is the basis. His Grisha insists that, as a main character, he has the right not to be shown ‘dal’nîm planom' in nearly every shot. He says that except for his kiss with Mashá, the rest is all filmed ‘v bukval’nom smysle slova v binokl’. Tsitronov contemptuously adds to this criticism of Olesha, stating that the author cares nothing for his characters' feelings. 'Oshelomliaushchaia igra blestiashchikh i sverkaiushchikh predmetov — vot chem uvlechen, kak rebenok, Olesha. On ustremilsia v kino, chtoby vsekh uvlech’ etoi igroi', he says, suggesting that


31Ibid.
superficial aesthetic concerns are more important to Olesha than issues of character and ideology.\textsuperscript{32}

It is Diskobol, however, who voices the most serious question of the piece: 'neuzheli vse somneniia Oleshi tak i ostanutsia v fil'me?\textsuperscript{33} As will be shown in the next chapter, this was precisely the question being asked by the film studios. Yet for all the viciousness of his satire, it seems as if Maznin has some faith in Olesha's good intentions and artistic talents, as he does not completely write him off. Rather, he allows Ol'ga to respond that we will have to wait and see how the next work turns out, as one cannot expect every last doubt to be cast aside instantaneously.

Like Levidov and Maznin, other critics felt that Olesha should be given another chance to prove the relevance of his work to society. However, the critical response in general was that Strogii iunosha was not only ideologically misguided, but also artistically seriously flawed. Many critics doubted whether Olesha's literary style could ever be adapted to suit the purposes of Socialist Realism. These key formal questions are addressed in the following section.

Critical response: form

Just as the content of Strogii iunosha is found by the majority of critics to be lacking in substance, so the form is more often than not said to be

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.
unsatisfactory. This is particularly the case with critics who approach the text with a Socialist Realist agenda. The main criticism is of the abstract quality of the text, in particular the unsubtle use of characters as mouthpieces for certain ideas, and the adoption of a pseudo-classical visual style. Although some critics find the text cinematic, as indicated below, even they are not satisfied, for they do not regard it as cinematic in the right way.

Of Olesha's contemporaries, only one critic, Prozorov, was positive about the form of Strogii iunosha. His attitude towards the script's contents has been discussed above; here, I will concentrate on the rest of his views. In his article in Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Prozorov takes a stand against the unwillingness shown by his fellow critic, Mikhail Levidov, to take Olesha's work seriously. (Levidov's parody is discussed above). Prozorov insists that Strogii iunosha deserves to be treated as an earnest project, but that it raises the question of how successfully the work fulfils the writer's aims.

Prozorov sees much in common between Strogii iunosha and Olesha's previous works. Stylistically, all of them share great visual detail and particular concentration on subjective views of the surrounding world. Prozorov appreciates that the screenplay has the added dimension of being the basis for a film, as well as being a work of literature, and therefore being structured around cinematic frames. Prozorov also understands, conversely, that, at times, a screenplay must also be more pared down in form than a purely literary text, for the full realization of an image will take place only on screen. Similarly, he also perceives that certain phrases can exist only as written text and cannot be transposed on to the screen. From his judgement, it would appear that, despite some flaws, Olesha has

---

34 Olesha's intention to create a new art form combining literature and film is discussed in Chapter Two and the film itself is treated in Chapter Six.
succeeded in writing a work which serves both as literature and as the skeleton of a film. However, this perspective is not shared by others.

Chief among these is R. Miller-Budnitskaia. Writing in Literaturnyi sovremennik, she judges Olesha's portrayal of the near future to be unconvincing. She blames this largely on the contrived nature of the writer's use of classical imagery and on his literary style in Strogii iunosha. Miller-Budnitskaia uses several cinematic terms in her discussion of the screenplay which includes the phrases: 'Ves' etot ideal'nyi mir budushchego stroitsia po zakonam kinematografichnosti' and 'detal' snimaetsia krupnym planom'.35 She also writes of Strogii iunosha that it is as if the moving image has been reduced to a series of stills.36 Judging from her comment that the 'kinematografichnost' of Western art reflects the collapse and decay of bourgeois culture, it is evident that she finds such 'cinematic' formal experimentation decadent and undesirable in socialist works of literature.37

Commenting upon the filmic elements within Olesha's writing, Miller-Budnitskaia refers to its fragmentary nature. The detailed, discrete parts of which the text is composed are united only by 'tsep'iu metamorfoz, zakonami snovideniia'.38 She writes that 'Tol'ko v uslovnom, illuzornom kinematograficheskom mire stanovitsia real'noi i estestvennoi eta legkost'

---

36 Ibid., p. 109.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
prevrashchenii, tekhnika snov.\textsuperscript{39} For this critic, it seems, Olesha's formal achievements are, in fact, failings.

In her discussion of Olesha's use of classical imagery, Miller-Budnitskaia reads it as symbolic of the 'new humanism'. She makes particular reference to Diskobol, pointing out how like an animated bronze statue he is.\textsuperscript{40} Miller-Budnitskaia concentrates on a scene at the stadium, in which she sees the moment before he throws his discus as the pivotal point:

'Dvizheniia i rechi deistvuiushchikh lits, narastanie dramaticheskogo napriazheniia, ves' ritm etoi stseny podchinen garmonii kolebanii diska v protianutoi ruke Diskobola.'\textsuperscript{41}

She sums up the situation in the following way: 'Na stadionakh sotsialistichestogo budushchego vozrozhdaetsia pafos afinskikh palestr.'\textsuperscript{42} The tone is mocking and contemptuous.

In keeping with the classical ideal of harmony and balance in space and time, Miller-Budnitskaia sees Olesha as attempting to create an equivalent ideal morality within his screenplay: She explains the work in such terms: 'Samaia lepka obraza uslovna, skhematichna, statuarna; ishchutsia kakie-to ideal'nye proportsii, kakoe-to moral'noe "zolotoe sechenie".'\textsuperscript{43} This is Olesha's greatest error, she feels, for it is precisely this lack of discord, of negative elements, which renders the work lifeless and unconvincing. Predictably, Miller-Budnitskaia

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40}See Chapter Four and Chapter Six for further discussions of parallels between Diskobol and statues of sportsmen.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 105.
adopts the official Socialist Realist line and attacks Olesha for not including any passages dealing with hatred of all the vestiges of the bourgeois past and of contemporary Western capitalism. It is these omissions, she says, which cause this ideal world to seem irrelevant, so 'lishen zhiznennosti, real'nosti, pravdivosti'. Ultimately, Miller-Budnitskaia considers the form of Strogii iunosha to be suitable for one scene alone, the only scene she regards as a success – Grisha's dream sequence. This is purely because she reads it as a:

'parodiia na amerikanizirovannuiu, iumoristicheskiiu i trogatel'nuiu kinokomediiu s schastlivymi vliublennymi i Charli Chaplinym, pokhititelem bliuda s pirozhnymi.'

Even here, innovative form is justified only by acceptable ideological content, in this case, mocking capitalist film clichés.

By contrast, V. Goffenshefer identifies the problem with Olesha's Strogii iunosha as lying primarily in the form, rather than in the content. As far as form is concerned, it appears, initially, as though Olesha and Goffenshefer agree on the need for a new genre, with the critic's call for 'sozdaniem sovershennogo novogo literaturnogo zhanra' echoing the writer's statement that, through his fusing elements of drama and fiction, 'voznikaet novyi zhanr'. On closer examination, however, it emerges that the two have different concepts in mind when they refer to a new genre. The author is concerned with creating a fusion of literature and cinema, as discussed in the previous chapter. The critic, on the other hand,

---

44Ibid., p. 109.
45Ibid. See also Chapter Two for a discussion of Chaplin and Olesha and note 82 of that chapter for a reference to Miller-Budnitskaia's words.
46V. Goffenshefer, 'Sorevnovanie s deistvitel'nost'iu', Literaturnyi kritik, 1934, no. 11, pp. 70-93 (p. 92) [henceforth: Goffenshefer, 'Sorevnovanie s deistvitel'nost'iu'], and Iu. Olesha, 'Kardinal'nye voprosy', 30 dnei, 1935, no. 12, pp. 45-50 (p. 46). The latter is discussed in Chapter Six.
concerns himself with a new literary genre which will harness the 'novye kachestva rekonstruirovannoi "chelovecheski dushi"' and help it to develop further, by indicating the 'ideal'nye garmonicheskie formy ee razvitiia'. This latter didactic view is the one prescribed under Socialist Realism.

Goffenshefer feels that Olesha has the right intentions, on the whole, in discussing issues of morality in an ideal socialist future. Indeed, he admits that Olesha can be criticized least of all for having written about feelings regaining their pure form. Rather, it is more important to clarify 'kak on zagovoril ob etom i kak on voploshchaet eti chuvstva v obraze svoego geroia-komsomol'tsa, sportsmena, poeta'. Like the other critics quoted above, Goffenshefer insists that Olesha deals too abstractly with the issues he raises. Although he complains that Olesha's work is not rooted in reality, which detracts from its ability to be ideologically effective, and that his ideal young man of the future lacks too many important socialist characteristics, he does credit the work with having raised a whole series of 'aktual'nykh i nuzhnykh' questions.

---

47 Goffenshefer, 'Sorevnovanie s deistvitel'nost'iu', pp. 92-93.

48 I am assuming that Goffenshefer is male. The article is written in the first person plural.

49 Ibid., p. 89.

50 Ibid., p. 91. Goffenshefer also cites Stalin when he writes: 'kto kak ne "inzhener chelovecheskih dush" dolzhny iavit'sia zastreTshchikami v postanovke i razreshenii kardinal'nykh voprosov, kasiaushchikhsia chuvstva i myslei cheloveka!' Ibid., p. 92. According to K. Dushenko Stalin made this remark when he met various writers at Gor'kii's house on 26 October 1932. See: K. V. Dushenko, Slovar' sovremennykh tsitat. Moscow, 1997, p. 334. Dushenko also points out (ibid.) that the engineers theme also echoes, ironically, part of Olesha's 1929 story 'Chelovecheskii material': 'Esli ia ne mogu byt' inzhenerom stikhii, to ia mogu byt' inzhenerom chelovecheskogo materiala.' See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 229 and for more on Olesha and other writers in this context.
Goffenshefer finds further fault with the presentation of ideology in Strogii iunosha, in Olesha's use of Marx. He feels that the writer has been too literal in his transplantation of Marx's words into the text, failing to integrate them or flesh out his ideas sufficiently. To illustrate his point, Goffenshefer cites a manuscript of 1844, in which Marx writes of the purity of human feeling and the corrupting influence of money: 'chuvstvo, nakhodiashcheesia v plenu gruboi prakticheskoi potrebnosti, obладает только ограничённым смыслом'.

He also quotes Marx on love and trust:

"Предположим человека как человека и его отношение к миру как отношение человеческое, и в этом случае ты сможешь любовь обменять только на любовь, доверие только на доверие и т.д."  

Olesha's emulation of similar passages lends a lifeless quality to the dialogue, in Goffenshefer's view, turning it into tiresome rhetoric. Once again, then, the main criticism is the abstract nature of Olesha's writing. Goffenshefer feels that the screenplay works more as a document of the artist's creative evolution than as a text about new forms of reality.

Further disparaging remarks concerning Strogii iunosha are found in the critic Pertsov's review. His negative views on the script have already been discussed above. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he also comments negatively on the screenplay's form. He describes how the literary elements within the work are pared down to leave just the bare skeleton of the underlying idea: 'литература как-бы разъята, разгружена от упаковки, от прослоек описаний, от соединительных


51 Ibid., pp. 88-89. For more on Olesha's (and Room's) use of quotations from Marx and also from Stalin see Chapter Four.

52 Ibid., p. 89.
tkanei motivirovok i kharakteristik', leaving just the bare skeleton of the underlying idea. Predictably, because of this technique, he sees all the characters as artificially abstract, apart from Tsitronov.

However, of the various explanations offered by critics for the artistic failings, or failure, of the form of Olesha's scenario, Mikhail Levidov's conclusion of incompatibility between artist and genre is the most unambiguous. In 'Sluchai s Oleshei', part of a Literaturnyi kritik article, he expresses his misgivings with great force. Levidov is not convinced by Olesha's 'new genre'. He feels that by fusing pure literature with screenwriting the author diminishes both. All the same, even Levidov recognizes that there are certain qualities, such as passages of sharp dialogue or humour, within Olesha's text: 'Tsenicheski zvuchit literaturno ottochenyi dialog. Khoroshii, umnyi iumor v otdel'nykh passazakh. Schastlivo naidennye siuzhetnye triuki.' He finds, however, that these few elements serve only to emphasize the work's failings, of which there are all too many.

To illustrate his point, Levidov takes the scene in which Tsitronov sits dozing in the garden, then livens up at the sight of Masha walking past. Olesha writes that she is uncomfortable and that her observer enjoys this fact: 'Ona znaet, chto idet pod ego vzgliadom, i ispytyvaet nelovkost'. On znaet, chto ona ispytyvaet nelovkost', i eto dostavliaet emu udovol'stvie. The critic hypothesizes that such a passage would not have been included if this had been a novella, rather than a screenplay. However, he does not doubt Olesha's ability to resolve this problem, possibly by adding a few sentences of explanatory dialogue.

---

53 Pertsov, 'Zagovor vysokikh umov', (unnumbered p. 2).
54 Mikhail Levidov, 'Tema mastera (o kino voobsche i v chastnosti)', Literaturnyi kritik, 1934, no. 10, pp. 180-84 (p. 182). Henceforth: Levidov, 'Tema mastera'.
Levidov argues that, given Strogii iunosha's status as a 'pesa dlja kinematografa', the extract cited above is a 'kadr', an entire frame, rather than the mere raw material of an idea. In the critic's eyes, Olesha has left too much up to the director. He explains that when a passage is, at best, 'neutral', or banal, in artistic terms, as he judges this one to be, it inevitably remains so when transposed on to the screen. For Levidov, therefore, it is not the director's job to find an appropriate device for the text, but Olesha's duty to provide a transposable text. He wonders rhetorically: 'Takova razve rol' "idushchego v kino" talantlivogo pisatelia, belletrista i dramaturga Iu. Oleshi?'

It seems, however, that Levidov finds Olesha can do no right here. When he is not leaving too much undone, he is doing too much. This is the logic behind Levidov's accusation that Olesha has over-burdened the director by writing in an unfilmable way, in a form more suited to the novella than to the cinema. He cites the passage describing Grisha's arrival at the station as an example of this: 'molodoi chelovek ekhal dovol'no dolgo. On kak by striakhivaet sledy davki, kotoraja byla v vagone. Kak by vyravnivaet nekotoruiu svoiu primiatost'. Levidov insists, convincingly, that if one were to shoot this scene, the result would be a young man standing on a platform, for some unknown reason, at best perceived to be brushing dust off himself. The abstract concept of 'sledy davki' could never be conveyed on screen.

As with other critics who are disappointed by the content of Olesha's scenario, Levidov sees it as being full of clichés and rhetoric. He is quite adamant

---

56Ibid., p. 181.
57Ibid.
58See Chapter Seven for correspondingly negative responses to the film's presentation of this scene, in particular Nikolai Topchii's views cited in note 56.
on this point, giving another example from the text to support his argument. In this case, he recalls the section in which Masha's luxurious lifestyle is illustrated by means of shots of the maid putting away Masha's 'dorogoe bel'e', followed by the words 'Tesno idut molodye liudi', that is, Masha and Grisha. Levidov once again hypothesizes about Olesha's thoughts. He suggests that the writer might have regarded this as being perfectly suited to the form of a scenario. But, to him, the device seems too simplistic, too obvious and too direct. He admonishes Olesha, stating that no sensible screen playwright would write such a 'kadr priamogo pokaza', and no self-respecting director would shoot it. He explains why: 'Ibo ne ot iskusstva kino, a ot kino-shtampa etot kadr, ibo takaia "kino-rifma" podobna rifme grezy-slezy...'. He clearly feels that Olesha should be ashamed of these lines.

Levidov is even harsher in his condemnation of the content of the text's dialogue. To him, the so-called 'truths' discussed are over-simplified and unphilosophical: 'Filosofskaja znachimost'? Nikakoi znachimosti ne imeiut eti — i ne mysli, a vialo-sentimental'nye slovosochetaniia.' He insists that each character is simply a mouthpiece for an idea. He does recognize, however, that Olesha has managed to work in some striking individual character traits, particularly in the negative characters. Yet, on the whole, he dismisses the characters as: 'uslovny, khodul'ny, dvukhmerny, fal'shivy samoi neperenosnoi fal'sh'iu, fal'sh'iu slashchavosti'. There is no doubt that, for him, the work is a disappointment.

---

59 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 305: 12.
60 Levidov, 'Tema mastera', pp. 181-82.
61 Ibid., p. 182.
62 Ibid., p. 183.
Ultimately, however, as indicated above, Levidov concludes that 'etot udeshevlennyi, vtorosortnyi Olesha voznik v rezul'tate plokhogo otnosheniia k kino'. Although he is placing the blame squarely at Olesha's feet, Levidov suggests that it is the writer's attempt to fuse literature and film that is misguided, rather than that he is an inherently flawed writer. Levidov expresses this simply, regretting that Olesha did not write in his usual manner, only with a more resonant voice. He complains that not only did the author fail to be better than usual, he failed even to be his usual self, becoming, instead, a second rate version. From this result, Levidov formulates the following equation: 'Olesha + novyi zhanr dolzhno bylo by byt' bol'she, chem Olesha; Olesha + novyi zhanr okazalos' menee, chem Olesha.' The experiment has failed. Significantly, though, he does not label the writer a failure because of this, he simply suggests that it was the wrong experiment to carry out.

Literary critics such as Levidov found that cinematic devices greatly weakened the prose. Olesha's Strogii iunosha was perceived to be flawed by the majority of readers, and many critics were unhappy about the literary style of the script, finding it too schematic and contrived. Others objected to the writer's emphasis on aesthetic concerns, such as light, shadow, composition and Graeco-Roman-style tableaux. These, however, were Olesha's way of showing that he was thinking in terms of the future film. As the written text was critically torn apart and the fusion of genres experiment considered misguided, emphasis fell on the prospective film.

63Ibid.

64Ibid., p. 182.
Critical response: the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers

The question of the future film had already been raised, before newspapers and journals were able to pass judgement, and was to form a key theme in defending the text. This was important because, as the previous section demonstrated, reviews published around the time of Strogii iunosha's appearance were almost unanimous in their disapproval of the screenplay's stylistics. The supposedly 'idealized' characters were deemed to spout hollow rhetoric, whilst striking contrived, classical poses to show off their physiques. There was also seen to be an excessive concern with superficial, decoratively formal elements such as the play of light on reflective objects. There were some reviewers who tried to be honest, at least in part, in their analyses of the screenplay, and who tried to judge the work with some objectivity. Others did what they felt obliged to do. These critics held up a template of the ideal Socialist Realist work, found Olesha's script did not correspond to this, and dismissed it accordingly.

In spite of these problems, however, the script was accepted as the basis for a future film. Olesha helped to ensure that it would be, by emphasizing the fact that certain aspects of the screenplay would become clearer and that the work would be less abstract on screen. His defence was that his work should not be judged before the resulting film had been seen. This line of defence, building on the tone of responses at the First Congress of Soviet Writers, helps to explain how the film project survived in spite of the criticism poured upon the literary text. It is the attitude at the Congress and Olesha's responses to his critics which are addressed in the last section of this chapter.

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers was an enormous event, both in terms of significance, and in terms of numbers of participants. As there were many speakers, and many issues to cover, there is a limited amount of
material pertaining directly to Olesha, and even less comment specifically on Strogii iunosha. What there is, however, reveals much about Olesha's precarious political and artistic position. The Congress proceedings give a good indication of the mixed responses the text elicited. As indicated in Chapter One, the Congress was a critical event for Olesha. It was there that the writer made his infamous speech, in which he professed his desire to renounce the old and embrace the new, as best he could, in his work. The Congress was held in August 1934, the month in which the journal Novy mir published Strogii iunosha in full. Therefore, as well as numerous responses to his speech at the Congress, there was some critical reaction to Olesha's new text. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Some speakers at the Congress, in particular I. Mikitenko and Iurii Libedinskii, say that Olesha, 'pri vsekh ego nesomnennykh sposobnostiakh', has not yet managed to employ his talents successfully for the furthering of socialism.\(^5\) Mikitenko and Libedinskii sense Olesha's ideological doubts, yet do not condemn him. Rather, they suggest that he deserves another chance.

A similar call for patience is made by V. Kirpotin, in his comments about Olesha's use of Marx. He feels that authors should be left to their own devices, in terms of how they come to terms with socialist ideology. He explains that, whereas Olesha was not convinced by Marx's words on value, when he read that 'neudachno vliublennyi i pri kommunizme budet sebia chuvstovat' neschastlivym', it impressed him overwhelmingly.\(^6\) Kirpotin finds this acceptable as a theme, because it comes from Marx.

---

\(^5\) Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S'ezd pisatelei SSSR, p.162.

\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 376. On Gronskii's and Kirpotin's call for writers to master Marxism-Leninism see Chapter 4, footnote 22.
V. Ermilov, too, finds Olesha's work ideologically acceptable. He praises him for having broken out of his usual role of observer and for having moved away from issues which concern only a very narrow circle of society, the intelligensia. In Strogii iunosha, he writes, Olesha has begun to examine new problems which are relevant to the whole country, those of culture and of the new man. Ermilov is in a minority amongst critics of the screenplay, in the 1930s, as the majority expresses outrage at the script's supposed lack of relevance to contemporary society.

Just as there were conflicting views expressed at the Congress on the content of Olesha's work, so there were conflicting views on its form. Libedinskii feels strongly that the characters are too undifferentiated, too 'faceless'. In his opinion, the writer should have provided a series of perfect individuals:

'chtoby nash novyi prekrasnyi mir byl vyrazhen v individual'no nepovtorimykh chertakh, kotorye u kazhdogo komsomol'tsa, molodogo udarnika i kolkhoznika priobretaiut osobennye, tol'ko dannomu individuumu prisushchie cherty.'

Libedinskii acknowledges that a film director or actor could make the characters more convincing, but regrets that the result would no longer be Olesha's creation.

N. Bogdanov has a similar complaint, in that he also feels that Olesha's young people are too vague. He fears that in the film: 'eti iskomye Oleshei iunoshi budut sobstvenno iunoshami Oleshi, a ne iunoshami nashego vremeni. Oni budut abstraktno krasivye, takie zhe nevedomye, kak strekozinaia ten' na stekle v ego

---

67 Ibid. p. 166.
68 Ibid., p. 288.
"Strogom iunoshe". Evidently the whole screenplay is too ethereal, when it comes to descriptions, in his view. In this context Bogdanov issues a stern warning to Olesha. He is being closely observed, for fear that his literary style might influence other writers to imitate it:

My vnimatel’no sledim za vami, Iurii Olesha, za vashei tvorcheskoj laboratoriei. Vy — sil’nyi khudozhnik i mozhetez porodit’ v kontse kontsov literaturnuiu modu, a literaturnaia moda — eto opasnaia veshch. The style is incompatible with the unsubtleties of ideologically driven Socialist Realism.

Given the importance of cinema for Strogii iunosha, both as a fusion of film script and literature, and as a future film, the views of those working in that field are especially noteworthy. For example, Natan Zarkhi is concerned with Olesha’s influence on cinema. He bestows high praise on the text itself, calling the dialogues 'prekrasnye', and the language in general 'blestiaashchii'. His fears, however, relate to the transposition of literary language into the language of cinema. Zarkhi considers that Olesha's language cannot be translated on to the screen. As does Libedinskii, he worries that, if someone else were to work on it — however successfully — everything specific to Olesha would be lost.

---

69Ibid., p. 650. Aptly, it is precisely the meticulous creation of the 'strekozinaia ten', which Olesha singles out as the example of the filmmaker's and cameraman's great attention to the script's details:

'Kazalos' by, eto otnositsia tol’ko k literature i k razvitiu deistviia kasatel’stva ne imeet, — otdakno, ia ubedil’sia na s’emke, kakoe znachenie pridali i rezhisser i operator etomu epitetu. Okazalos', eto dla nikh bylo ves’ma vazhno: sniat’ imenno strekozimuiu ten.’ See: Iurii Olesha, 'Kardinal’nye voprosy', 30 dnei, 1935, no. 12, pp. 45-50 (p. 46). For more on this and related issues, see Chapter Seven, note 104.

70Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S’ezd pisatelei SSSR, p. 650.

71Ibid., p. 464.
Finally, another contribution from the world of film is made by Konstantin Lukov. He praises Olesha for writing a work for the cinema which is out of the ordinary in various ways. It is a work which 'po kharakteru svoikh idei, po forme vyrazheniia etikh idei idet za predely togo kinematograficheskogo urovnia, kakoi my privykli nabliudat'. He feels that Olesha has made a valuable contribution by raising aesthetic questions, not just in the area of film, but pertaining to all the arts. He concludes dramatically: 'Tot fakt, chto Olesha imenno v kinematografie pokazal svoi rost, — eto zhe pobeda vsego fronta sovetskogo iskusstva.' Lukov's message, here, is that the work is formally experimental and exciting enough to push forward the boundaries of conventional cinema. Unusually, he appears not to see this as a problem, despite the prevailing anti-formalist mood of the times.

There was more negative criticism of both the content and the form of Olesha's new work at the Congress than there was praise. Significantly, however, this criticism was generally softened by praise for the writer's efforts to adapt to

---

72Ibid., pp. 641. According to the 'Prilozhenia' to the Congress proceedings, K. Iu. Lukov was a delegate from Moscow, employed by the Chief Administration of the Film Industry of the Sovnarkom. Ibid., p. 110. However, included in Isai Lelikov's notebook kept during the making of Room's film (for full details of Lelikov's notebooks see the Preface and Chapter Seven) is the 'Zakluchenie na stsenarii Iu. Oleshi "Strogii iunosha"' signed 'P. p. Proizvod. Otd. — Lukov, 28.VII-34 g.' This is almost certainly the same Lukov. Here, however, he is very critical of many of the moral stances taken in the work, regarding them as contrary to the generally understood idea of socialist morality. He is also critical of Olesha's superficial characterization of Masha. See: 'Zakluchenie na stsenarii Iu. Oleshi "Strogii iunosha"' in Partitura, p. 7. K. Iukov was one of four editors of the ARRK journal Proletarskoe kino (with Pudovkin, Ermler and V. Sutyrin). On Iukov see also Chapter Three, note 69 and Chapter Seven, note 2.

73See: Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi S`ezd pisatelei SSSR, p. 642.
ideological requirements.\textsuperscript{74} This set a tone which meant that, despite strongly noted defects, \textit{Strogii iunosha} would continue to be read by the public and discussed in the press. Above all, ultimately, it ensured that the screenplay would continue as a project for transfer to the cinema screen, in spite of doubts, like Zarkhi's, that Olesha's language might prove untranslatable.

Although others mentioned \textit{Strogii iunosha} at the Congress, it is notable that Olesha did not. However, he did discuss it in an open letter to one reader, a young Communist called Chernova. Here, Olesha himself admits that the script is imperfect, as is the rest of his oeuvre, and that it is not absolutely 'full-blooded' or concrete. In his published letter, Olesha concentrates on defending the content of \textit{Strogii iunosha}, which she attacks bitterly. On the level of ideology, Olesha says that the future film is intended to make young people re-examine their behaviour and their attitudes. More broadly, he points out that qualities not immediately obvious in the written text, such as irony and humour, will become more evident in the film: 'To, chto zadumano kak ironiia, budet ironicheskim, mnogo, chto pri chtenii kazhetsia kategoricheskim, na ekrane priobretaet komicheskii ottenok i t.d.'\textsuperscript{75} In other words, Olesha feels that the film will better convey his own attitudes towards the characters than did the script. He seems to hope that this will obviate misunderstandings such as Chernova's. He explains to her, for example, that the girl who says that one must fulfil all one's desires is intended to be an ironic character. She is positive and sympathetic rather than negative, as Chernova takes her to be: 'Ia khotel, chtoby vsem bylo iasno, chto, govoria ob "ispolnenii zhelaniii", devushka eta prekrasno ponimaet, chto eto nevozmozhno'.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74}See Chapter Four for a discussion of Olesha's 1934 Congress speech.

\textsuperscript{75}Iu. Olesha, 'Komsomolke Chernovoi' (Otvet na pis'mo, napechatannoe v No. 1 "Molodoi gvardii"), \textit{Molodaia gvardiia}, 1935, no. 4, pp. 159-60 (p. 160).

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., p. 159.
In fact, he writes, this is the whole point of the work — to show that the principle of respect for others dictates that people cannot, and should not, fulfil all of their desires.

In addition to defending *Strogii iunosh* a's content, Olesha defended its form, suggesting the importance of the, as yet unmade, film version of the text. He explains that the written work should be read as a film script and treated as a canvas on which the picture is yet to be painted. He argues that the finished version will be the film, which will be less abstract.\(^77\) Clearly, these words contradict his statements about the text as an entirely independent work. On the other hand, Komsomol member Chernova is, in all likelihood, not the ideal reader that Olesha might have had in mind when he made those statements. It requires a certain degree of perspicacity to catch the irony and humour within the work.\(^78\) Many readers lacked the inclination, imagination or courage to read between the screenplay's lines.

There is no doubt that Olesha felt misunderstood by the majority of critics, and with reason. His script was condemned for its ideological ambiguity and lack of conviction or relevance, whereas he had intended it as a plea for tolerance between the old and the new. He had evidently considered this an important issue, given his own position as a man trying to make the transition between the two camps. On an aesthetic level, too, what Olesha had tried hard to achieve — the atmosphere of youthful, earnest striving for physical and mental perfection —

---

\(^{77}\) 'Ia khochu, chtoby vy pomnili takzhe, chto eto ne roman i ne povest', eto *stsenarii dlia fil'ma.*


\(^{78}\) Just as Olesha's Komsomol members in the screenplay are short on humour, particularly self-mockery and irony, so Chernova is too ideologically earnest in her reading of the work.
was deemed contrived and absurd. Feeling that the work had been unduly
criticized, he clung to the chance of redemption through the medium of film.
Olesha tried to convince critics that his true vision would come across on screen.
Olesha, and the minority of reviewers who praised the work highly, or at least
suggested it had filmic potential, obviously succeeded in convincing those who
mattered, for the film production was permitted to commence. There were,
inevitably, conditions attached. This reflected the tone of the Congress:
acknowledging Olesha's efforts to reach an accommodation with the demands of
the system, whilst pointing out his failings. But it was the hope of validation of
the final form in a different medium which, despite its critical wording, kept
Strogii iunosha alive.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined responses to Olesha's screenplay Strogii iunosha in the
period immediately following its first reading and publication, 1934-35. From the
wide selection of reviews published in newspapers and journals of the day, and
from views expressed at the First Congress of Writers, it emerges that critical
reaction was mixed and fell into two subject areas: content and form. The
majority of critics were harsh in their criticism of the plot and thematic content of
the work. Most found fault with the treatment of the issues, or with the issues
themselves. The plot was seen as trivial, the characters as ridiculous and the ideas
as completely lacking in social relevance. A few expressed the mitigatory view
that it had been Olesha's first attempt at such a work and, implicitly, suggested
that he deserved another chance to prove himself capable of producing a work
compatible with contemporary ideological and aesthetic demands.
Others were convinced that Olesha's style was just not suited to writing film scripts, that the form had distorted his talent. The critic Miller-Budnitskaia, by contrast, pointed out elements of the text which are typical of Olesha, those in which, I would argue, his talent surfaces, such as concerns with light, composition and perspective, only to condemn them for their formal qualities. One lone critic, Prozorov, appreciated Olesha's chosen form for his scenario.

Olesha's own statements on the matter put emphasis on the film as the finished version of Strogii iuoshia. His call for final judgement to be suspended until the film is made reveals that he felt misunderstood in the critical response to his text. The writer's defence, along with the views of those critics who felt that Olesha deserved a second chance and that his errors were due to misjudgement, rather than harmful intent, ensured that the film would be made. As the next chapter will reveal, the film director, Abram Room, and his colleagues understood the subtleties, the ambiguity, the humour and the irony contained within the text — the depth of which all the critics had missed. At a reading of the scenario Room had explicitly expressed joy at the fact that the screenplay had proved to be 'problemnaia, dvuplannaia, s podtekstami.' The director and his team subsequently succeeded in conveying these elements in the film, just as they did in retaining the work's almost surreal mood. The great irony is that rather than resolving the text's difficulties, the shift in medium opened up a whole new controversy, resulting in the banning of the film.

79 According to a report by E. Len-a, 'Dve diskussii'.
CHAPTER 6

STROGGII IUNOSHA: THE FILMING OF THE NEW ART FORM

Abram Room was charged with great responsibility in making Strogii iunosha. His own career as a filmmaker required that the film should be a success, probably commercially and certainly artistically and politically, as was seen in Chapter Two. Although he was the author's choice to direct this experimental venture, the project was, clearly, also a chance for Room to redeem himself and to respond to his critics. More than the director's own fate was at stake, however.

To a large extent, Olesha's destiny also depended on the outcome of Room's work. For, as noted at the end of the previous chapter, in responding to the chorus of unhappy critics who expressed worries about what Olesha had produced, he had protected his experiment by promising them that their doubts would prove unfounded and that any problems would be resolved by the film itself. This augmented the demand on Room to render the written text successfully. What he achieved had serious political and artistic implications for his scriptwriter, as well as for himself.

Beyond all of this, Room's obligation extended to the experiment itself. There were already doubts about the fruit of Olesha's initiative to create a new art form, at the written stage. The real test was not only in terms of respective careers but, vitally, in terms of the attempt to create a new genre, one which would simultaneously have the qualities of a literary oeuvre and of a perfect template for a film, requiring neither adaptation, nor real interpretation. Room was, then, faced with saving his own career and that of Olesha, as well as with keeping the actual project afloat, along with the creative venture of the new art form itself.
Room's achievement is the subject of this chapter and those following. Chapter Eight will examine closely how the director understood Olesha's text, only too well, and the way in which this highlighted precisely those qualities to which the literary critics had taken exception. Chapter Seven will analyse the film in terms of those elements identified in the notice to ban it. The purpose of the present chapter is to examine the director's accomplishment in making the film itself. This will be done through an examination of the distinctive qualities of the film. These are the use of the camera, the use of sound and the mise en scène. Taken together, these serve to make Room's Strogii iunosha one of the most striking, if little seen, Soviet films of the 1930s. Room's work also goes much of the way towards meeting Olesha's desires. In order to explore these qualities it is appropriate, first, to consider the structure of the film.

The film and its structure

Strogii iunosha is one of the most visually distinct and impressive films of the 1930s. It mixes ascetic minimalism of tone variation and simplicity of line in some parts with a fantastic extravagance of decoration and atmospheric distortion in others. In terms of content, too, the film ranges from moments of blatant ideological rhetoric to an episode of spectacular, symbolic dreaming.

Room retains the thematic elements of Olesha's text: the triangular relationship between Stepanov, Masha and Grisha, and the way in which that relationship is resolved through mutual respect. The film treats this plot in six episodes, effectively, including an introduction and a conclusion. The episodes alternate between what is real and fantasy-related sequences, although the two often share visual traits, which appears to blur the boundaries.
The opening section establishes the setting. Here, Room shows Soviet life in the not too distant future. This section shows Grisha’s arrival at, and reaction to, the utopian, bourgeois surroundings of the Stepanovs’ dacha. It also conveys his feelings for Masha, and hers for him. The two of them share a romantic walk, which her husband accepts, given that he does not have their energy. The young Komsomolets, a representative of change and of ‘the new’, is visually and emotionally confronted with qualities seemingly from pre-revolutionary life. He learns, however, that Stepanov’s lifestyle is supported by the government, as a reward for his contribution to society.

The second episode, while set in the real world, has an imaginary quality. It is almost a decorative aside. Diskobol visits his uncle at the theatre to borrow a tailcoat for Grisha to wear to the Stepanovs’ ball. The coat is the costume from the opera ‘La Traviata’, which, here, symbolizes bourgeois culture. The extended scene is an excuse for the filmmakers to indulge in recreating the unreal, old-fashioned charm of the backstage setting, as well as celebrating spectacle, in this case ballet. At the same time Room is again contrasting Soviet youth with aspects from a different life.

The theatre episode is followed by a different kind of spectacle. The viewer is returned, clearly, to the contemporary Soviet real world. This is a world of young people at the gymnasium and stadium, training body and mind, through physical exercise and moral debate. Yet, much in their stylized posture and surroundings suggests a contrasting classical setting. As Grisha’s friends turn to

---

1Heil points out that in Verdi’s day critics found the contemporaneity of the work’s themes ‘to be unacceptable in aestheticized form’, and quotes a critic saying that the opera “combines unorthodoxy with a strong vein of morality”, which certainly applies to Strogii iunosha.” See: Heil, No List of Political Assets, p. 81, endnote no. 33.
listen to him, facing left, the viewer sees a bas-relief behind the four heads (although there are five friends there, this frame includes only four) showing four other heads facing in the same direction, those of Engels, Marx, Lenin and Stalin. The key issues in the film are introduced in this scene. The sequence unites both a sense of timelessness, in its references to antiquity, and contemporaneity, in its representation of Komsomol youth and its icons.

The fourth scene is the most fantastic. In it, Grisha's dream splendidly provides another form of spectacle. It reveals his poetic imagination and his romantic desire. The dream is triggered off by Grisha throwing the tailcoat down the stairs at Diskobol, in disgust at the suggestion that he should go to the ball. He then dreams of an empty, black column-shaped pedestal, on to which climbs Diskobol, wearing the tailcoat and top hat. Subsequent scenes in the dream take place at the ball itself. These are followed by a series of incidents, often comical, or slapstick. Overall, the dream depicts Grisha 'rescuing' Masha from all the elements of bourgeois life which a young Komsomol member feels he should despise.

The fifth episode is the central scene in the film – the operation. The operation is filmed with an audience in the operating theatre. It too, therefore, can be read as a spectacle, but of a different kind. However, there is no fantasy here. The issues of life and death, as well as the subsequent discussions of ideology, are rooted in diegetic reality. It is in this scene that the old and the new, in Soviet terms, are made to confront the value and necessity of each other.

---

2 For more on the bas-relief see Chapter Seven, note 95.

3 Such scenes are typical for American musical films such as those choreographed by Busby Berkeley. It was, of course, precisely American films such as Berkeley's upon which directors of Soviet musical comedies, in particular Grigorii Aleksandrov, modelled their films.
Finally, the dénouement to the plot strikes an honourable balance, confirming the mutual evolution of opinion witnessed in the previous episode. The concluding scenes include Grisha's dream fulfilment, the kiss with Masha. Yet, their walk has an element of the fantastic about it, again suggesting an imaginary quality. Moreover, Masha's return to her husband marks the closure of that incident. Therefore the episode feels like a fantasy that has left no mark on reality.

In terms of structure, as well as of plot and theme, Room's film follows Olesha's script very closely. However, there are minor differences, such as the addition and removal of certain scenes. In his Strogii iunosha the filmmaker has added the scene showing Grisha's chariot-racing victory, and has cut the episode in which he repairs the tram wire. Although one episode has been moved in the film, the scene in which Diskobol goes backstage at the theatre, this is almost certainly not of Room's doing, but merely a slip in the subsequent editing of the film. As indicated above, Strogii iunosha is a very distinctive film visually. There are several particularly striking features which characterize the film's style. The remainder of this chapter will examine these.

---

4In Olesha's text this episode occurs after the stadium and before the dream episodes (it is episode 26). In an unpublished paper on the film, J. Heil expresses the same opinion:

'In the available print from Gosfil'mofond, the theatre sequence is obviously misplaced: it comes with no transition (a cut/splice) immediately after the introductory sequence. But here it has no motivation in either story or images, as Diskobol has not yet been introduced'.


Use of the camera: whiteness and duration

The first of the distinctive uses of the camera in the film — a dazzling whiteness — is the most striking. The film's opening scenes show, through a piece of tulle swaying in the breeze, a searingly white tablecloth, with fruit piled high, glinting crystal and shining cutlery laid out, and with an arrangement of flowers in the middle. A little later, a kind of luxurious reality is imposed in which there is no mediating, focus-blurring tulle, but distinct shots of a table laid with a white cloth and napkins, as well as white plates. This is an example of Iurii Ekel'chik's original 'white on white' effects.

Whiteness is also highlighted in the foam crests of the ripples on the river, as it is in the person of Masha getting out of the river. When she smiles her teeth glint white; she is wearing a white bathing cap, and putting on a white robe. In the strong sunlight both the satin material and her shoulder gleam white, the latter as if made of marble. Similarly, when her husband returns home, Masha comes out of the dacha onto the white steps to greet him, wearing a white, long dress. She stands between the white columns, in front of the patterned white, translucent curtains of the doorway. Likewise, before Grisha and Masha set off for their walk they pause, statuesque, at the top of the steps, both in white, framed by the white columns.

5Excessive whiteness and brightness is also a feature of Iulii Raizman's 1935 film Letchiki. The film critic Boris Alpers writes, on 28 March 1935, of the various white uniforms throughout the film, of the white tablecloths in the canteen, the white walls of the houses and hospitals and the white wings of the planes, carefully pointing out that 'etot priem ispol'zovan umno, nenaviazchivo.' See: B. V. Alpers, Dnevnik kinokritika 1928-1937, Moscow, 1995, p. 132. Yet it is this device which creates the 'kolorit prozrachnosti, chistoty i nariadnosti' which characterizes the film. Ibid., p. 133. Henceforth: Alpers, Dnevnik kinokritika.

doorway, curtains and columns. One close-up shot, in which Grisha stands alone in front of the steps, is composed purely of white lines, to the extent that all depth and perspective is lost in the whiteness.

The white markings of the playing field and the running track in the stadium sequences are emphasized by being shot from above, so that they dominate the darker expanse of ground. It is in the dream scene and the operating theatre scene, however, that whiteness and brightness are the most effective. The dream features a space with white or translucent pillars, sets of stairs, sometimes in amphitheatre style, sometimes separate, surrounding a pale, slightly raised circular platform in the centre of the room. Grisha dazzles in his white clothes which reflect the light, and Masha, draped in a long white gown, appears to radiate light, as it bounces off her face, her hair, her arm and her neck. This contrasts with the black grand piano and the pianist's suit, as well as those of the scene's spectators. This extravagant sequence features an unusual effect, in which objects appear to be surrounded by a white halo of light, which involved the use of special equipment: "nasadochnye opticheskie prisposobleniia" — tumannya i diffuzionnye svetofil'try i razlichnye po tsvetu setki. Throughout this

---

7For a photograph of a scene from Grisha's dream, taken during the making of Room's film, see the next page of this chapter.

8This is reminiscent of a dream, temporarily taken for reality, in Nikolai Gogol's tale 'Nevskii Prospekt', which features 'molodye liudi v chernykh frakakh [...] v plat'akh, sotkannykh iz samogo vozdukhva'. See: N. V. Gogol', 'Nevskii Prospekt' in Sobranie sochinenii v devatyi tomakh, Moscow, 1994, vol. 3, pp. 7-37 (p. 21).

9R. N. Il'lin, Jurii Ekel'chik, Moscow, 1962, p. 27.
Strogii iunosha – light and spectacle
scene the light fluctuates, emphasizing different elements at different times, but consistently highlighting at least one of the protagonists.

As for the operation scene, and other hospital scenes, this specifically features 'Zhenshchina v belom', played also by Olga Zhizneva, and possibly representing an alter-ego of Masha's. The whole scene is white: the bed and the patient are clothed in white, and the operating theatre has streams of white-uniformed nurses pouring in. The patient's young friends are also clad in white. The filmmaker regarded the operation as 'glavnyi epizod stsenariia', and broke it down into its component parts, including sunlight: ""Rozhdenie" novogo cheloveka — Stepanova. Solntse — tsvety. Raskrytie kompleksa." Evidently, the light is as important here as the narrative content.

In addition to the striking use of light by Ekel'chik, the film is characterized partly by the director's calling on the cameraman for insertions of extremely lengthily held shots. One such shot comes at the start of the film, during Masha's swim when the surface of the water, and the shadows playing upon it, fill the screen and remain there for long enough to impress the poetry of

---

10 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 327: 37

11 Isaï Lelikov, Book Three, p. 181. As directed in Chapter Five above, for full details of Lelikov's notebooks see the Preface. For more on Room's views regarding Stepanov's ideological rebirth as the key issue see Chapter Eight, note 59.

12 One could see these lasting shots as part of Room's desire for viewers to 'look at' his films, according to Irina Grashchenkova: 'Roomu, vsegda predpochitavshemu takuiu dinamiku fil'ma, pri kotoroi zritel' ne smotrit, a rassmatrivaet, ochen' po dushe byla mys' Oleshi o tom, chto v epokhu bystrykh tempov khudozhnik dolzhen dumat' medlenno.' See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 167.
the sight upon the viewer. Another involves Grisha's speeding train, which is also shown for a strikingly long time, conveying a sense of anticipation, as well as providing aesthetic pleasure.\textsuperscript{13} The most memorable lengthy shot, however, is of Grisha standing by the Stepanovs' gate, wondering whether or not to enter. This gate, which is discussed below, is an understandable object of admiration for the camera. Finally, Masha and Grisha's idyllic walk through the trees is yet another instance of Ekel'chik's holding shots longer than is usual. These shots serve a purely aesthetic function and often involve the emphasis of light and shadow patterns.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Sound: music and silence}

In addition to the film's look, its originality is ensured through its use of sound. Music is the most dominant aspect of sound in \textit{Strogii iunosha}, but it is used in strong contrast to silence. The latter can be properly regarded as a part of 'sound' in its own right. Crucially, the effect of each reinforces the other, through interplay and contrast.

In terms of the positive use of sound, and specifically music, Room was knowledgeable in this field, and was very deliberate in his choice of Gavriil Popov as composer of the film's score.\textsuperscript{15} Irina Grashchenkova writes that the director needed Popov's specific talent, describing it as: 'iarkoe, dazhe derzkoe,}

\textsuperscript{13}The train calls to mind another train in Room's \textit{Tret'ja Meshchanskaia}, which has a similar effect on the viewer.

\textsuperscript{14}For more on this, see Chapter Seven.

\textsuperscript{15}The film score for Room was Popov's third composition for the cinema; he later worked on Room's \textit{Veter s vostoka}. See: Grashchenkova, \textit{Room}, p. 165.
antiillustrativnoe po samoi svoei suti, polifonicheskoe, spletaishchee ekspressionisticheskuiu muzykal’nuiu tkan’ fil’ma." She further suggests that Popov did just this, and that as a 'kompozitor-dramaturg' he imbued his score with plastic expression and a clear texture, through the use of melodic lines; as a 'kompozitor-psikholog' he created sounds which emphasized the plot's subjective elements; and as a 'kompozitor-simfonist' he built up even the shortest musical moment in a multi-layered, complex way. The music in Strogii iunosh provides more than mere background acoustic to the images. It comments on the action, reinforcing either the underlying harmonies or the tensions of the plot, and it reveals the director's attitude to what is being shown, whether ironic or sympathetic.

The film opens in silence, with nothing to distract the viewer from the beautifully filmed scenes of the dacha steps and an elegantly laid table, which Masha has left behind to go swimming. These are followed by images of Masha entering the river, causing poetic ripples to decorate the water's surface, along with the sunlight. Only then do the resounding notes of a harp begin to swell, until music suffuses the scene. The notes on this made by Room's assistant, Isai Lelikov, suggest that the music relates to the dacha's setting, as well as to Masha:

'Val’soobraznaia dzhazovaia forma. Vpletaiutsia nezhnye, zveniaschcie zvuki arf. Muzykal’naia kharakteristika sada, dachi, Tsitronova sootvetstvuiut zaputannosti, neprozrachnosti otnoshenii v dome Stepanovykh.'

---

16Ibid., pp. 164-65.

17The musical configurations employed by Popov in the score for Strogii iunosh were later elaborated as his 'Symphonic divertissment in 10 miniatures.' See: ibid., p. 165.

18Partitura, p. 23.
In the subsequent shots, whenever there is a cut away from Masha, there is silence, and whenever she is seen swimming there is music. Her music is referred to by the director as "bliuz Mashi", and described as: 'melodiia legka i charuiushcha i zritel' nevol'no "napevaet" ee vmeste s razvitiem muzyki po siuzhetu.' The further out she swims, the greater the expanse of river filling the frame and the more extravagant the music, until finally an orchestra reinforces the idyllic nature of the scene. As Masha swims back to shore there is a cut to a medium shot of Tsitronov, during which silence reigns. However, the slightly discordant music creeps in, and remains audible as the film cuts back to Masha: 'voznikaet prozrachnyi, bezoblachnyi "bliuz Mashi". Val'soobraznaia-dzhazovaia forma narushaetsia volnuishchimisia, nespokoinymi zvukami.' The musical link between Masha and Tsitronov is explained by the fact that after he wakes up, which is shown in silence, he watches Masha leave the water, as does his dog. The music does not disappear when she does, but lingers on as the viewer stays looking at the dacha's marble steps, which Masha has just climbed. It continues even as the camera moves to reveal a cook, on the veranda, breaking eggs, and lasts until Stepanov's car horn drives it away: "Bliuz Mashi" neozhidanno sorval vlastnyi khoziainskii gudok avtomobilia.' After Stepanov's arrival, accompanied by diegetic sounds of the car engine, there is a cut to Grisha's train arriving, again with no music, followed by the film's first words, uttered by Masha: 'Vot... Eto Grisha priekhal.'

The next use of music occurs during Grisha's arrival. As he peers through the gate to the Stepanovs' dacha there is slow, distant music, reflecting what he

---

19Ibid., p. 29.
20Ibid., p. 27.
21Ibid., p. 30
sees. It is the same 'val’sooobrazno-dzhazovaia forma' as at the start of the film:22
'Ona zvuchit slovno ottuda iz-za ogrady. I eshche bol’she charuet molodogo
cheloveka. Muzyka sryvaetsia zvuchnym okrikom "Vam kogo?"'23 When Masha
eventually turns up, the music has become an orchestra, with strings sentimentally
echoing Masha's and Grisha's joy at having found each other. A similarly clichéd
use of music to denote romance is found during the couple's stroll through the
trees.

The most significant role of music in the film comes in Grisha's dream
sequence, however, as Grisha 'proves' that Masha is music itself. In addition to the
piano, played on screen, which Stepanov accuses Masha of disrupting, the scene
includes an ironic-sounding, non-diegetic waltz, full of glissandos, featuring an
incongruous zither-like instrument. The music here adds a sense of comedy and
lightness to the surreal proceedings. As Grisha delivers his paean to Masha the
music is fast and dramatic, transformed into a mock-angelic choir as they kiss.

Finally, music features in the scene in which Grisha follows Masha out
into the nocturnal city. They stop to listen to a pianist working on a composition,
who then comes out on to his balcony to complain that he always seems to end up
playing for lovers and wishes to play in solitude. These complaints, as well as the
interrupted piano, echo Grisha's dream.

While much of the resonance comes from the use of both music and
silence combined, there is also use of silence alone. Most strikingly, the silence is
almost oppressive in one scene which shows what Stepanov sees through his
binoculars as he observes Masha and Grisha. He is frustrated at being unable to

22Ibid., p. 47.
23Ibid.
hear their words, and the viewer shares this impotence as the scene is silent. Stepanov's diegetic world and the viewer's real world are in sympathy.

**Mise en scène**

Almost as imposing as the dazzling use of camera and sound is Room's composition of scenes. The texture of the film is dominated by four key aspects of the mise en scène, in part amplified from Olesha's template. However, these elements also begin to go beyond the printed page into a rare visual world. The fabric of the film is, therefore, dominated by architecture, athleticism, classicism and spectacle, as will be seen in the following section.

To some extent, the different aspects of the mise en scène combine and overlap. Often, these aspects of the setting, such as classicism and architecture, complement one another. There is one brief, unscripted series of shots, for example, which acts not only as an aesthetic addition to the surrounding scenes, but also as a kind of subliminal simile, comparing the young men to classical heroes. The scene occurs after the first of Grisha's domestic interior sequences and before the first gymnasium sequence. It features Grisha (who wins) racing an opponent, both in horse-drawn chariots, intercut with Diskobol hurling a discus. There are athletes running, too. Jerry Heil comments: 'This picture [...] does not remain on screen for long enough to be perceived as "real" (the shots are "non-diegetic inserts", formalistic flights of fancy), but it is startling enough to the
viewer.\textsuperscript{24} It is startling, yet quite in keeping with the film's other stylistic idiosyncracies.\textsuperscript{25}

Room's \textit{Strogii iunosha} is generally characterized by a plethora of classical references. These include the aforementioned discus-throwing (which is echoed in Grisha's dream by Diskobol throwing pies) and, possibly, philosophizing. In addition to these images, Room carefully poses Grisha, Diskobol and the other young people at the gymnasium and stadium in such a way (semi-reclining, in profile or in mid-action) as to maximize their Graeco-Roman statuesque qualities, and underlines this by including a classical, male nude statue beside them. Likewise, there is a visual simile concerning Masha, whereby her photograph is abruptly intercut with a Venus or Aphrodite-like sculpture.\textsuperscript{26} In addition to these examples, there are also architectural references to classicism through the repeated use of columns (in front of the dacha, at the gymnasium and stadium and in the dream sequence).

The use of columns is, however, not only a classical reference representing antiquity. It adds, simultaneously, a sense of modernity to the film's style, echoing, as it does, the straight lines of constructivism. Lelikov notes

\textsuperscript{24}Heil, \textit{No List of Political Assets}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{25}Even though it is unscripted, it is very much in Olesha's style, and calls to mind the words of a character in his story 'Al'debaran', who says: 'Katia, vash vozliublennyi pokhozh na rimlianina!' See: Olesha, \textit{Izbrannoe}, p. 241.
\textsuperscript{26}'Kamera ne spesha, zacharovanno brodit po etoi vystavke antikvariata, zagliadyvaetsia na mramornuiu devu i vdrug perevodit vzgliad na visiashchuuiu na stene fotogafii Mashi, kak by ob'ediniaia eti dva obraztsa zhenskoi krasoty. Dva stilia zhizni, dva varianta krasoty, uiuta, byta.' See: Grashchenkova, \textit{Room}, p. 164. See also Chapter Seven, note 95, on the use of statues.
specifically of the film’s early shots of the dacha: ‘Strogie vertikali kolonn.’ Another example of the great care taken when planning the composition of individual scenes within Strogii iunosha, as well as of the use of straight lines, is a scene at the railway station where the frame is bisected as a train hurtles down the track, which runs from the top right hand corner to the bottom left: ‘Kadr prorezaet, s pravogo verkhnego ugla v levyi nizhniu ugol, kak molniia promchavshiisia elektricheskii poezd.’ It is a purely aesthetic diversion. In this vein, most of the windows in the film have vertical and horizontal wooden bars, creating small separate squares within the panes, which are emphasized by the camera and form lattice-type shadows (discussed in the next chapter). Grisha’s room, too, is notable for its rational clarity of line.

Masha’s room, on the other hand, as with the rest of the Stepanovs’ dacha, is full of antique, curved furniture and decorations. Curves are emphasized in the library, which is rounded in shape, in the oval of the stadium, where the wall forms a similar arc, and in the amphitheatre-style steps of Grisha’s dream, as well as in the route taken by Masha and Grisha in the car, and the other taken on their walk. Above all, however, undulating swirls characterize the wrought-iron gates to the Stepanovs’ dacha. These gates are decorative in typical Art Nouveau style.

---

27 Partitura, p. 23.
28 Book One, p. 201.
29 According to Grashchenkova, the interior shots of Masha’s room were filmed in the former Ashkenazi dacha, one of the richest in Odessa. See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 164. For a reference to the dacha in Olesha’s story ‘Stadion v Odesse’, see: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 257. Here, he refers to the ‘Frantsuzskii bul’var’: ‘Zdes’ zhili khoziaeva goroda. Villa Mavrokorato. Villa Reno. Villa Ashkenazi. Villa Marazli. Vse eto byli avantiuristy, krupnye shuleri, torgovtsy zhivym tovarom.’
30 Similar designs in wrought iron can be found in the work of Belgian architect Victor Horta (1861-1947). He ‘had learnt from Japan to discard symmetry and to relish that effect of swerving
They form part of one of the most memorable frames in Room's film, as a tiny Grisha stands in front of the enormous gates to the Stepanovs' dacha. The scene is beautifully constructed to maximize its symbolic content. All of the above architectural idiosyncracies contribute to the film's visual uniqueness.

Yet another distinctive feature of Room's film is the depiction of athletes and sports. The ideological aspects of this are discussed in Chapters Four and Eight. Here, it is the visual aspect of sport which is of interest in Strogii iunosha. In the screen version the young Komsomol members tend to wear white vests and shorts, emphasizing their athletic natures and their uniformity. Diskobol, in curves [...] from Eastern art. [...] He transposed these lines into iron structures that went well with modern requirements. [...] These inventions became identified with *Art Nouveau*. See: E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, Oxford, 1984, p. 426 and illustration p. 425. Henceforth: Gombrich, *The Story of Art*. For a reproduction of this and a photograph of the gate as used by Room, taken during the making of his film, see the next page of this chapter.

31The crew found this gate, according to Lelikov's records, at a sanatorium for children of the OGPU 'na 13-oi stantsii' outside Kiev. The gate was then brought to the 'dacha Chubaria', and used there. 'Na 13-oi stantsii v detskoii sanatorii OGPU naidena zamechatel'naiia reshetka (foto v kontse sbornika), cherez kotoruiu i byl sniat Konsovskii.' See: Book One, p. 187. For an explanation of why Konsovskii is mentioned here, rather than Dorliak, see Chapter Seven.

32This was standard summer attire for young people during the 1930s: 'Trusy i maiki poivilis' pervonachal'no v 1920-e gg. v kachestve sportivnoi odezhdy, prichem, odezhdy kak muzhskoi, tak i zhenskoi. Shirokaia propaganda sporta v SSSR sdelala ikh iskliuchitel'no popular'nymi, tak chto trikotazhnye maiki i futbolki nadolgo prevratilis' v izliublennuiu letniuiu odezhdu molodezhi.' See: Iul'ia Demidenko, 'Evoliutsiia bel'ia: 1910-1930-e gg.', *Sovetskii eros 20-30-kh godov. Sbornik materialov*, Saint Petersburg, 1997, pp. 117-121 (p. 121).
Top – Strogii iunosha: Masha and Grisha at the gate to the Stepanovs' dacha

Bottom – Victor Horta, Staircase in 12, rue de Turin, Brussels, 1893
particular, wears a sports vest with the letter 'D' on it.

A key to a possible implicit meaning in this is provided by Wolfgang Holz, in his reading of a Soviet painting from 1933. Aleksandr Samokhvalov's *Devushka s iadrom* depicts a young woman in a similar white vest with the letter 'D' on it, standing for the sports club Dinamo, wearing red shorts, seemingly effortlessly holding a metal ball in her right hand, at shoulder level, just as Diskobol holds the discus in Room's film. In the painting there is a zeppelin in the illuminated sky; the sports field and race track are impressionistically painted. The young woman is traditionally feminine, with short blond hair falling across her gentle face, yet bodily she appears solid and maternal, as well as physically fit. Holz suggests that the letter 'D' provides a vital clue to the allegorical meaning behind this work, simultaneously signifying 'devushka', 'dirizhabl' and 'dinamo'. This combines the main elements of the new socialist person who 'succeeds in incarnating the ideal of the "machine-body", inside which soul and physical body bear the dynamic tempo of the organised society'^34. The same can be applied to Diskobol's characterization, substituting the idea of military training ('disk'; although the discus was probably originally a weapon; discus throwing may also be practice for hand grenade throwing), for technological progress ('dirizhabl'), with the discus rather than the

---

33Wolfgang Holz, ' Allegory and iconography in Socialist Realist painting', in Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, eds., *Art of the Soviets: Painting, sculpture and architecture in a one-party state, 1917-1992*, Manchester and New York, 1993, pp. 73-85 (p. 79). See also illustration no. 4.1, p. 78 and its reproduction on the next page of this chapter.

34Ibid.
Aleksandr Samokhvalov, 'Devushka s iadrom', 1933
Toby Clark discusses the integration of sport and labour in Social Realist iconography, linking it to the figure of the new man:

'The utopian form is seen most clearly in the sports pageant, in which labour and sport images are merged in allusion to the Marxist prophecy of a future elevation of work to the plane of recreation or play. The sportsman is thus an inevitable new man because of this characteristic combination of present and future.'

Clark further quotes René Fülöp-Miller describing plans for celebrations of the Third Congress of the Communist International, which includes several elements featuring prominently in Strogii iunosha: 'the gymnastic associations on motor vans were to have shown the people of the future engaged in throwing the discus'.

---

35 The poses that Diskobol strikes in the screen Strogii iunosha are very much like those of the girl in the painting, but she also calls to mind the filmic (jumping) 'devushka' in Strogii iunosha. Even more than the 'devushka', however, she resembles Valia in Zavist, because of her haircut and shorts: 'Eshche ne opravivshis' ot pryzhka, [...] nakloniv nemnogo nabok golovu s korotkimi, rezko i koso u shchek podrezannymi kashtanovymi volosami' and 'No vyshe, pod chernymi trusami, chistota i nezhnost' tela pokazyvaet, kak prelestna budet obladatel'nitsa, sozrevaia i prevrashchais' v zhenschinu'. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 88 and p. 81 respectively. Just as Olesha wanted to concentrate on Soviet youth, so Samokhvalov specialized in the new socialist woman, either as sportswoman, or as construction worker.

Such a parade glorifies both the youth of the day involved in healthy pursuits, and, through the automobile, advances in technological progress.\textsuperscript{37}

In his discussion of Strogii iunosha's athletes, and the shift in Soviet attitudes towards condemnation of such figures, Heil points out the similarities between Room's stereotypes and those found in Nazi propaganda of the period:

'By the year 1936, however, it was realized that the athletic, usually blond(e) "Aryan" type had become an essential image of the Hitlerjungen in fascist Germany.'\textsuperscript{38}

He points to Nazi film posters of the mid-1930s, and films such as Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph des Willens, of 1935. More relevant, however, are the surprisingly close parallels to be found between the classical-style depictions of sportsmen, and the way in which these shots are held, in Room's Strogii iunosha and Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia. Riefenstahl was commissioned by Adolf Hitler to make a film of the 1936 Olympic Games, held in Berlin. It was not completed until 1938 and it could not therefore have influenced Room, yet the prologue, made in October 1936, shares several traits with Strogii iunosha. It uses elaborate special effects to depict a modern athlete emerging from an ancient statue of a naked young discus thrower, in an idealized landscape, enveloped in fog.\textsuperscript{39}


\textsuperscript{38}See: Heil, No List of Political Assets, p. 69.

Further parallels with young socialist athletes can be found in Dziga Vertov's 1929 masterpiece, *Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, which includes a section 'o sporte', showing pole-vaulting, and chariot-racing. Above all, however, parallels are evident with photographs by Aleksandr Rodchenko. His works from the 1930s include the Dinamo sports club, featuring rows of athletes on Red Square, and a sports parade featuring a sign reading 'Gotov k trudu i oborone', with a star containing a girl, carried by male athletes in shorts. As explained in Chapter Four, the 'GTO' badge referred to by Olesha in his description of Grisha Fokin stands for this slogan; the athletes photographed by Rodchenko, therefore, were the real-life members of the organization alluded to in both versions of *Strogii junosha*. Also interesting in this context is a photograph by Rodchenko of two rows of forward-facing male athletes, in white vests and black shorts, with a row of female athletes, also wearing white vests and shorts, marching into line between them.

Finally a particulary interesting and, perhaps, more subtle aspect of *Strogii junosha*, is the use of spectacle within the film. What this means is that scenes are watched by other characters as well as by the film's viewer, or they are simply constructed as performances of sorts. This begins, on a minor level, with Tsitronov's watching Masha walk back to the dacha after her swim, at the start of the film, and is later echoed by his attempt to spy on her as she dresses. Grisha's

the reproduction on the next page of this chapter, followed by the still from the prologue to Riefenstahl's *Olympia*.


'Discus thrower (Discobolos)', Roman marble copy after a bronze statue by Myron of about 450 BC.
Still from 'Oktober 1936', the prologue to Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 film *Olympia*
dream is also a spectacle, both for the observers within it and for the audience. Heil sees it as an inverted Hollywood-style spectacle: 'one might expect that the ballroom would be the setting for a climactic extravaganza of song and dance, yet it is oddly static and quiet'.\textsuperscript{42} It may not be as lively and noisy as a Hollywood version, but it is at least as impressive. The scene is set in a huge ballroom, whose background keeps changing. Sometimes tiers of steps in amphitheatre formation are clearly visible all the way round the back of the room; at other times it looks as if the steps come just at certain intervals around the room.

At first, in Grisha's fantasy ballroom, there are male spectators in evening dress, standing to the left of the room. In the centre, Tsitronov sits by a piano, with a pianist playing the instrument, and Masha looks on, also a spectator. Diskobol is there too, at first, but is soon replaced by a dashing Grisha, who kisses Masha. As he does so, the pianist drops his head on to the piano, in shock, and all the other figures disappear. The couple are now the spectacle, surrounded by flowers, on their stage-like island.\textsuperscript{43} There are some additional comic scenes outside the ballroom, a kind of exaggerated performance, in which a semi-naked Diskobol is chased by a tail-coated Tsitronov. Finally, the closing episode shows Grisha embracing Masha's legs, only to awaken with his arms around a birch tree.

\textsuperscript{42}Heil, 'An oneiric film', p. 13. In this section of his paper, Heil has mis-remembered some of the film's details; the men's suits are black, not white, for example.

\textsuperscript{43}Irina Grashchenkova confirms that none of these descriptions can be found in Olesha's screenplay, yet the general atmosphere is there:

'Vsekh etikh fantasticheskikh atributov, takogo dikovinnogo inter'era ne bylo v oleshevskom tekste, no ironicheskaiia energiiia tailas' v podtekste, i rezhisseru nuzhno bylo ee vysvobodit', pridat' ei plasticheskuiu konkretnost'.

to be told that the Stepanovs' ball has been postponed. The spectacle has vanished, and the dreamer leaves.

The theatre episode, too, is like a spectacle, a fact which Lelikov notes:

The camera is mounted on a lift, in order to capture the stage and dancers from Diskobol's point of view, making them look small. In fact, this is a spectacle within a spectacle, as the viewer watches Diskobol react to his surreal and decorative surroundings.

Above all, however, it is the operation scene which creates the setting of a spectacle. Indeed, it is so like a spectacle that it even has an audience — and, during the 'performance', an inter-title reading: 'Tishe!' The operation episode begins with the camera moving, following the professor as he walks away from a

---

44 The overlapping of dream and reality is reminiscent of Olesha's story 'Liubov', in which Shuvalov dreams that Newton is calling him a swine, when really it is Lelia's words feeding into his dream. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 201.

45 Book three, p. 181.

46 Grashchenkova describes the process: 'ogromnaia dinamicheskaia panorama, s primenieniem operatorskogo lifta, kamera stremitel'no dvigalas' [...] podchiniaias' shirokomu sportivnomu shagu Diskobola. Ona vzbiralas' vmes'te s nim po lestnitse i smotrela na vse szhimaiushchiisia krug stseny, poka ona ne stanovilas' vsia s bliudechko.' See: Grashchenkova, Room, p. 163.

47 These scenes call to mind other ideologically symbolic cinematic operations, such as in Evgenii Tsymbal's Povest' nepogashennoi luny (1990), Vladimir Bortko's Sobach'e serdce (1988), and Sergei Lomkin's Rokovye iaitsa (1995). These are all adaptations of works from the 1920s and 1930s, the first of Boris Pil'niak's story and the last two of works by Mikhail Bulgakov, as discussed in Chapter Four, note 4, and see Chapter Four, note 5 for a reference to the operation in Sergei Livnev's film Serp i molot.
group of colleagues in the background into the foreground. The camera moves back as the surgeons wash their hands and put on their surgical masks and as the nurse prepares the instruments, revealing the constructivist style of the operating theatre. The patient is also shown, and the effect is as in a play, where the characters are being introduced and the scene set up for action. The operating theatre itself is huge; it is amphitheatrical in shape (appropriately), and constructivist in style. The 'theatre' is suffused with light, and takes on the appearance of a temple, suggests Grashchenkova, with Stepanov playing the role of priest.48

Architecture, athleticism, classicism and spectacle are deployed to great effect in providing Strogii iunosha's distinctive composition and visual character. Whether individually, or interwoven, these key aspects of the mise en scène dominate the film. They give it character and texture, both of which reflect Olesha's design, yet also provide a purely cinematic weave.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how ambitiously Room constructed his film. In keeping with the director's wishes Iurii Ekel'chik concentrated on achieving the effect of whiteness, and on using unusually lengthy shot duration, to give Strogii iunosha a fantastic quality. Similarly, Gavriil Popov composed music specially for the film, to complement the camerawork, and also to convey Room's sense of humour and irony, where appropriate. Through these elements, as well as through the mise en

48Ogromnaia operatsionnaia [...] stanovilas' khramom, v kotorom bezrazdel'no tsaril Stepanov, delom dokazyvaia svoe [...] pravo na poklonenie i blagogovienie okruzhiushchikh.' See: ibid., p. 172.
scène and Room's focus on aspects such as classicism of form and the concept of spectacle, the film acquires a texture which goes beyond Olesha's blueprint, yet remains true to it.

Room's accomplishment was cinematically remarkable, and went a long way towards the attainment of Olesha's ambition to create a formally innovative work. Precisely because of these successes, amongst others, it failed to gain official sanction. Rather than serving to exonerate Olesha from critical disfavour and to rehabilitate Room, Strogii iunosha did neither of them any favours. The charges against the film, leading to its banning, will be explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 7

CRITICAL FAILINGS: PRODUCTION, CONTENT AND FORM

In a speech to his colleagues working in the film industry, in 1936, Olesha explained that neither he nor Room knew why the film Strogii iunosha had been banned. The author's assumption was that it was due largely to the change in political circumstances between the time of his starting the script, in 1933, and the film's making, in 1935. With hindsight Olesha felt that 'mnogoe bylo mnoiu ne poniatno, kogda ia pisal stsenarii', yet that 'vse-taki, mne pokazalos', chto pokazat' ego sledovalo, potomu chto tam byli kakie-to pravil'nye veschi.'^ Olesha and Room had tried a brave new experiment. However well it had worked in their own terms, and in purely creative ones, it had failed even to reach the public. Far from being welcomed into the official fold, both writer and director were critically dismissed. The attempt to satisfy the demands of the communist commentators and to create an innovative work left both of them in disgrace once again.

Not only were Room and Olesha disgraced, they were also held up as negative examples. The banning of Strogii iunosha, which had taken place on 10 June 1936, was publicized on 28 July of that year. This was to ensure that the film's fate, as well as that of its makers, should serve as a lesson to others. The open discrediting of Room and Olesha was a warning to other artists not to fall into the same traps. Those traps, according to Tkach (the director of Ukrainfil'm,

1^Stenogramma soveshchaniia kinodramaturgov i pisatelei, rabotaiushchikh v kino. Sektsiia dramaturgov. 23 November 1936', RGALI, SP SSSR (Soiuz pisatelei SSSR), f. 631, op. 2, ed. khr. 173.
discussed in Chapter One) were financial profligacy, caused by production excesses, and creative experimentation. The ban sharply criticized the style and the content of the film – the very elements of creative experimentation which made it so interesting.² Tkach berated Room for not having 'corrected' the

²In an article of 1935 Konstantin Iukov had written in Kino about the recent improvement in Ukrainian film production; ironically, he commented on the intensive work carried out by, amongst others, Abram Room (on Strogii iunoshka), Khanan Shmain and Igor’ Il’inskii (on Odnazhdyi letom) and Leonid Lukov (on Ia liubliu). With equal irony, from today's perspective, he expressed the view that the 'iarkaia kinematograficheskaia vyrazitel’nost’ kadrov' in sections of Strogii iunoshka, Ia liubliu and Lev Golub and Nikolai Sadkovich’s Polovod'e (from Ukrainfil’m's Odessa studio) was a positive characteristic. K. Iukov, 'Ukrainskaia kinematografiia na pod’'eme', Kino, 23 July 1935, no. 34 (686), p. 2; (for more on Iukov see Chapter Five, note 72). These are the same qualities and films which were to be so denigrated in 1936. See, for example, the criticisms concerning a lack of realism in Polovod’e, Iakov Urinov’s Intrigan and Ivan Kavaleridze’s Prometei in S. Ivanov, 'Kriticheskii smotr' and I. Livshits, 'Protiv formalizma i naturalizma. Diskussiia na Ukrain. Nastoiaashchikh vyvodov ne sdelano', both in Kino, 21 March 1936, no. 15 (727). On Prometei see below. Presumably in this same spirit Miron Bilinskii's Zastava u chertova broda, (from Ukrainfil’m's Odessa studio and advertised in the 1935 poster reproduced in Chapter One) was banned in 1936, although those working on the film were not informed of the reasons for this (according to the film's set designer Vladimir Kaplunovskii, who had also worked on Strogii iunoshka, as discussed in note 33 below; see: Evgenii Margolit and Viacheslav Shmyrov, (Iz’iatoe kino) 1924-1953, Moscow, 1995, p. 48. Henceforth: Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz’iatoe kino). See also a discussion of the poor artistic quality of recent Ukrainian films by A. Khvylia, head of the arts section of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom, who wrote that "Strogii iunoshka" iavljaetsia naibolee iarkim primerom podobnoi porochnoi khudozhhestvennoi linii po otnosheniu k ukrainskoj kinematografii.' A. A. Khvylia, 'Ukrainskaia sovetkskaia kinematografiia', Kino, 11 September 1936, no. 44 (756), p. 1.
'mistakes' made by Olesha in the written text. The primary reason for this was the way in which Room's Strogii iunosha fulfilled Olesha's ambitious conception by bringing out precisely those elements which had irked the writer's critics. As will be seen in the present chapter, the thrust of Tkach's comments, as well as the earlier voices of doubt about Olesha's text, would be repeated, over time, by other critics. Rather than redeeming the new art form, as Olesha had insisted that it would, the script's realization had enhanced the failings which had been found to be troubling, with respect to both content and form. To this was added Room's sin of production inefficiency. Overall, the very nature of Room's film and of film itself contributed to this dismal outcome. To demonstrate this, the present chapter will examine Room's Strogii iunosha in the light of the three major failings identified by its censors: production, content and form.

The production of the film

The production of Strogii iunosha was problematic in two senses. First, it was an ambitious project which had major requirements, which were both time-consuming and costly. Secondly, perhaps predictably, the film began to fall

---

3 Tkach charged that: 'Room ne tol'ko ne pytalsia v protsesse s'emki preodolet' ideino-
khudozhestvennuui porochnost' stsenariia, no eshche rezche podcherknl i naviazchivo vypiatil ego
chuzhuiu "filosofskuiu" osnovu i lozhnuuiu sistemu obrazov.' Tkach, 'Postanovlenie tresta
"Ukrainfil'ma"'.

4 See the Preface and Chapter Five, note 9 for an explanation of the reasons behind, and problems
with, my distinction between 'content' and 'form' in this chapter and in Chapter Five.
behind schedule and run over budget while in production. The way in which the production progressed, and the numerous problems it faced, will be outlined in this section.

This analysis is based on examination of the unpublished production notebooks kept during the making of Strogii iunosha, by Abram Room's assistant, Isai Lelikov, as discussed in Chapter Six, as well as on an assessment of notes made by Boris Ferdinandov, who also worked closely with the director on the film. Lelikov's notes are contained in three notebooks, although judging by the content, there may originally have been more. These comprise a mixture of typed and handwritten notes, as well as sketches and photographs. As stated in the Preface these books are: 'Montazhnye listy i drugie materialy i chernoviki postanovki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" 1', written by Isai Lelikov in Odessa in 1934; 'Montazhnye listy i drugie materialy i chernoviki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" 3', written by Lelikov in Kiev in 1935 and 'Partitura postanovki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha"' written by Lelikov in Kiev in 1936. The other notebook was written by Ferdinandov, during the making of Strogii iunosha. Ferdinandov also kept a diary concerning the film. His work, in this context, is extremely significant, but it has not been acknowledged in anything I have read about Strogii iunosha.

5Bizarrely, the general production timetable for Strogii iunosha was drawn up after production had already started, rather than before, as it should have been. See: R. Z., 'Tsennyi opyt', Kino, 10 April 1935, no. 17 (669), p. 1.

6Given that the last notebook is dated 1936, as well as given other facts recounted below, it is impossible that the film was completed in 1935, as the Gosfil'mofond copy states. The erroneous date is also pointed out by Margolit and Shmyrov. See: Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz'latoe kino, p. 53.

7For the untitled notebook see: RGALI, f. 2392, op. 1, ed. khr. 119. Hereafter, I shall refer to it simply as Ferdinandov. For the diary see: Boris Ferdinandov, Dnevnik rabot po kartine "Strogii
Boris Alekseevich Ferdinandov (1889-1959) was a Soviet actor, theatre director, artist and teacher who, in 1930, had played the part of Jose Real in Room's film *Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia.* In 1934, Ferdinandov was the actor Room first approached for the part of Dr. Stepanov, and he recorded the events in his 'Dnevnik rabot po kartine "Strogii iunosha"'. The protracted process of Ferdinandov's actually becoming involved in the project symbolizes the overall pattern of the film's troubled making. Ferdinandov's account is movingly personal, yet, as I shall show, it reveals a great deal about the climate of its times, as well as about Room's precarious professional position.

On 17 September 1934, Ferdinandov wrote in his retrospective 'Diary': 'Nachalos' eto s rannei vesny (1934).’ He describes how, towards the end of April, he found out that Room had telephoned him: 'V odin iz mrachnykh moikh dnei, kogda ia iznemogal ot bezdeTia i ot vsekh prelestei svoego sushchestvovaniia i vozvrashchalsia domoi s kakoi-to bestsel’noi progulki'. Room had asked him to return the call, however late, and in fact phoned back himself at around midnight, asking Ferdinandov to visit him the following day 'po povodu kakoi-to raboty'.

Ferdinandov explained that Room had just received an offer of work, after a period of immense difficulties: 'Posle bol’shikh mytarstv, kogda on edva ne

---


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
Initially, Room told Ferdinandov that he would not act in the film, other than in a bit part possibly, as this would interfere with his directorial duties. Already at this stage, Ferdinandov noted some contradictions, particularly on the financial front, such as the fact that Room had said both that there was no money

---

12Ibid. These comments appear to be a reference to Room's problems finding work following his disgrace over the film Odnazhdv letom. For more on this see Chapter Three, particularly notes 86 and 87.

13Ferdinandov, Dnevnik, p. 13. According to Irina Grashchenkova and Stephen Hill, Olesha worked on the script on board a train from Moscow to Odessa, and then was accompanied by Room on a trip to Kharkov to see A. E. Korneichuk, the literary consultant for the Kiev branch of Ukrainfil'm, where the script was approved by the 'prosomotrovyi plenum zavodov i fabrik'. Writer and director then went to the Kiev film studio itself and had the script accepted 'bezogovorochno' by the director, Neches (byvshii matros bol'shevik, "broshennyi" na kinofront i vyrosshii v nediuuzhino matovoditel'). It was included in the studio's list of forthcoming films and advertised in Kiev's Kinogazeta as due for release in the first quarter of 1935. Grashchenkova, Room, p. 140 and Hill, 22 March 1999. According to Grigorii Roshal' it was 'zamechatel'nyi chelovek — direktor studii Neches, kotoryi voskoko tsenil rezhisera Abrama Rooma' who had invited the director to the Kiev studios. G. Roshal', 'Odin iz zachinatelei...', p. 116. For a caricature of Neches by E. Mordmilovich see: 'Sed'moe vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie po proizvoditel'nomu planu. V zasvedani', Kino, 16 December 1935, no. 58 (710), p.2.

14Ferdinandov, Dnevnik, p. 13.
and that he would recompense him. However, he was told to sort these questions out with Bliumberg, the Ukrainfil'm representative in Moscow. Room said he would be going to Odessa with Olesha on 1 May, and that Ferdinandov should go there around 10 May. He advised him that Bliumberg would call in a couple of days, but he did not call for a long time and Ferdinandov wrote that he was in despair.

In mid-summer, recalled Ferdinandov, Room called, and his assistant visited, asking Ferdinandov to play the part of Stepanov after all. They sent him the screenplay and, again, he agreed to Room's request. This time, however, Room said nothing about directing. The result was yet another lengthy silence. The next time Ferdinandov heard from Room it was September, when he was again asked to act in the film. Ferdinandov stated that the whole of 1934 turned out to be quite catastrophic, as agreements were constantly broken.

In spite of all the uncertainties, a contract was drawn up for Ferdinandov, which ran from 1 September 1934 until 1 April 1935. It was signed in Moscow by the representative of the Director of the Kiev film factory (film unit 'Strogii iunoshia'), Guvimskii, and specified that the actor B. A. Ferdinandov should get 2,000 roubles a month, that his working day should not exceed 12 hours and that he would be paid extra for any overtime work.15 Shooting began with Ferdinandov as Dr. Stepanov, and he turned down offers of theatre roles in order to be able to devote himself to this project, but Room then decided that the actor was not right for the part. Ferdinandov was understandably bitter and took the matter to the Central Committee of the Union of Workers in the Film Industry, which decreed that he had been unfairly dismissed. The Moscow City Court became involved, resulting in the Kiev film studio being ordered to pay

15'Trudovoi dogovor'. See: RGALI, f. 2329, op. 1, delo 289 Ferdinandov.
Ferdinandov 4,446 roubles in compensation for Room's decision. The role of Stepanov was then given to Vasilii Kachalov and ultimately to Iurii Iur'ev.

Isai Lelikov wrote in his first notebook on the making of Strogii iunosha that some of the material had been put together in preparation for a meeting about the film to be held between Room and the creative staff of the Kiev film factory on 10-11 September 1934. The notebook also includes a note about a photograph of the 'sanatoriia im. Chubaria' in Odessa, taken on 13 September of that year. Most importantly, however, it records that Olesha had read his scenario to those working on the film on 27 September 1934. All this shows that work had begun in earnest by September 1934.

By November, however, it was clear that things were not going smoothly. An Ukrainfilm report published in Kino on the 28th reveals the chaotic state of

---

Hereafter: E. K., 'Predupreditel'nyi signal'. Grashchenkova explains that Vasilii Ivanovich Kachalov was told by the director Konstantin Stanislavskii to give up the part, as he had too many theatrical commitments with him. Grashchenkova, Room, p. 160.
18P.S. Nastoiaashchie prilozheniia byli mnoiu sostavleny v kachestve materiala dla doklada rezhissera A. Rooma na sobranii tvorcheskikh rabotnikov Kievskogo kino fabriki 10-11 sentiabria o postanovke fil'me "Strogii ...' (the rest has been torn out). See: 'Prilozhenie I-e', Book One, p. 23.
19Book One, p. 11. See Chapter Six, particularly notes 29 and 30 for more on the use of this gate in the film.
20Ibid.
things. The crew had just returned from shooting in Odessa, where they had gone in October in the hope of filming in sunlight. They had left for Odessa 'ne imeia dazhe zakonchennogo rezhiserskogo stsenariia! Ne byl podobran i akterskii kollektiv.' The article reported, with contempt: 'Gruppa sidela "u samogo sinego moria", grelas' v luchakh iuzhnogo solntsa, i ... pochti nichego ne snimala.' Room was berated for not having learnt from his past mistakes: 'Vidimo, plachevnye uroki raboty nad fil'mom "Odnazhdy letom" daleko ne polnost'iu usvoeny rezh. A. Roomom.' However, the Kiev film studio was also blamed for allowing such disorganization to prevail: 'Vinovata i direktsiia kievskoi fabriki, otpravivshaia v ekspeditsiiu sovershенно nepodgotovlennuiu gruppu.' The report did contain an intended positive note, asserting that the situation with Strogii iunosha had improved. As evidence of this the reader was offered the fact that

21 No author given, 'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm', Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647). See also: RGALI, f. 2758, op. 1, ed. khr. 2149, p. 10.

22 'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm', Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647). Boris Barnet's film U samogo sinego moria was released by the Kiev branch of Ukrainfil'm in 1935, therefore it is likely that this is a reference to it. It is a comedy which involves two friends falling in love with the same woman, Mashen'ka, causing them to become rivals. The triangular relationship and the woman's name coincide with the same elements in Strogii iunosha. U samogo sinego moria was criticized in the same sentence as another of Room's (until he was dismissed — see Chapter Three, notes 86 and 87) films involving two men in love with the same woman, Odnazhdy letom. Both comedies were said to be too detached from reality in their subject matter, in their characterizations and in their surroundings. For reminiscences of the making of U samogo sinego moria by one of its cast, see: E. Kuz'mina, O tom, chto pomniu, Moscow, 1976, pp. 224-29.

23 'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm', Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647).

24 Ibid.
'Rezhisserskii variant stsenariia, nakonets, razrabotali i utverzhdali rukovodstvom fabriki.'

It is ironic just how inappropriate this optimism proved to be.

The admonitory article 'Predupreditel'nyi signal' examined the problems Room had been having in 1934 concerning Strogii iunosha. The author discussed the casting, in which only Ol’ga Zhizneva and Maksim Shtraukh were definite actors from the start. The constant change of actors for the part of Stepanov was referred to, as was the absurd situation whereby the Ukrainian actor Petr Masokha had been chosen to play Diskobol, had had costumes made and had been provided with a Russian language teacher and a physical trainer, only to be dismissed once rehearsals began. G. Sochevko, from the Stanislavskii theatre, replaced him. The article also named Konsovskii as the actor playing Grisha Fokin, stating that he alone had been chosen 'po deistvitel'no ob’ektivnoi prichine'. Once again, it is ironic that in the final version of the film Konsovskii was replaced by Dmitrii Dorliak. Whereas Isai Lelikov's first notebook refered to Konsovskii as the

---

25Ibid.  
26Masokha was named as the actor playing Diskobol in a production report from October 1934, too, which also stated that the director of the Kiev film studio had confirmed that Strogii iunosha would be completed by June 1935. See: 'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm', Kino, 4 October 1934, no. 45 (637). By 1936, Petr Emelianovich Masokha had been in three of Dovzhenko's films; he had acted in Iakov Urinov's Intrigan (1935), which, like Strogii iunosha, was accused of 'formalizm i triukachestvo' (see: Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz'iatoe kino, pp. 40-41, and for references to Intrigan see Chapter One, notes 13 and 42 and this chapter, note 2. For more on Masokha see: Iutkevich, ed., Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', p. 256.  
27*Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm*, Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647).  
28For the subsequent fall from grace of Dmitrii Dorliak, a matinée idol figure from the Vakhtangov theatre, see: Heil, No List of Political Assets, pp. 4-6. Heil suggests that Dorliak's bourgeois background may have worked against the film's reception. Margolit and Shmyrov simply state that
young male lead, *Book Three* includes a plan to shoot the scenes with Dorliak between April and June 1935.29

Apart from the inconsistency of actors, yet another ridiculous occurrence was Room's sudden decision to dismantle the nearly-completed sets for the film in Kiev, in order to re-make them in Moscow to fit in with actors' commitments there, followed by a reversal of this decision. As for the trip to Odessa, the article 'Predupreditel'nyi signal' pointed out that filming had had to be cut short because members of the cast had theatrical commitments elsewhere, and concluded that although about two thirds of the outdoor filming officially planned had been carried out, only a small proportion of this was actually usable (mainly the scenes of Masha walking past Tshitronov).30 From a budget of 800,000 roubles, 300,000 had already been spent, yet only about 20 per cent of the filming had been successfully completed.

From Lelikov's notebooks it is obvious not only that Room had been ambitious in his vision of the film, but also that he had had high hopes for the film's distribution prospects. *Strogii iunosha* had been translated into French and Ukrainian during its making, and had been expected to be translated into English.

---

Dorliak died young. See: Margolit and Shmyrov, *Iz'iatoe kino*, p. 54. They also refer to the brothers D. and A. Konsovskii, explaining that D. Konsovskii, the elder brother who had been cast in *Strogii iunosha*, was arrested; ibid.


30See: E. K., 'Predupreditel'nyi signal'.
too, as an English-language poster had been commissioned.\footnote{Neobkhodimo prisutstvie konsul’tantov t. Foreggera (frantsuzskii variant) i t. Tatarinova (ukrainskii variant). See: Book Three, p. 111. See also French translations of the film’s dialogue on pp. 69, 241, 265, 275 291 and 313, and Ukrainian translation on p. 297 of Book Three. Grashchenkova mentions the contract with Soiuzkinoeksport for a French version. See: Grashchenkova, Room, pp. 172-73. A reproduction of the poster jointly advertising 'A Strict Youth' and Urinov's 'Intrigue' as 'Talking films to be released in 1935-36' by Ukrainfilm, Kiev film factory can be seen in: A. Arossev, Soviet Cinema, Moscow, [1935], p. 318 [unnumbered] and on the next page of this chapter.}

The extravagance and lavishness of Room’s ideas for Strogii iunosha are evident throughout the film, but nowhere are they so obvious as in Grisha’s dream sequence. The realization of such an artistic vision is a piece of technical brilliance. The scene in which Grisha reveals Masha to be ‘music itself’ was filmed using a huge pool within the studio grounds.\footnote{The music here, as well as throughout the film, was condemned by one critic for being ‘sugubo formalistichna’. V. Usievich, ‘Za kachestvo’, Kino, 16 March 1936, no. 14 (726), p. 2. Hereafter: Usievich, ‘Za kachestvo’.}

The sets, made after sketches by the ingenious Morits Umanskii, were about the height of a six-storey...
English-language Ukrainfil'm Kiev film 'factory' poster advertising Abram Room's Strogii iunosha and Iakov Urinov's Intrigan
building, according to a Ukrainian article of 1935. The author, P. Mel’nichenko, explains how the chairs and columns in the scene were placed at

33P. Mel’nichenko, "Son Fokina" (Iz zimannia "Strogogo iunaka"), Radians'ke kino, 1935, no. 1-2, pp. 54-56 (pp. 54-55). The Gosfilmofond copy of the film credits M. Umanskii and V. Kaplunovskii (who designed the sets for Erwin Piscator’s 1934 Vosstanie rybakov); in a 1936 article on artists in cinema, Vladimir Kaplunovskii refers to Olesha’s suggestion that it might be more effective if the descriptive parts of a scenario were illustrated in images rather than described in words. See: V. Kaplunovskii, 'Khudozhnik v kino', Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 1, pp. 38-39 (p. 39).

It should be noted that all the articles cited here from Radians'ke kino are published in Ukrainian. They were translated into Russian for me by Nonna Kapel’gorodskaia, and it is her words that I am quoting. Incidentally, Kapel’gorodskaia is the niece of Ivan Petrovich Kavaleridze, who directed the film Prometei, to which I refer in Chapter One, notes 13 and 42. Kavaleridze’s Prometei, which was made in 1935, also at the Kiev Ukrainfil’m studios, is a revolutionary historical epic. It tells the story of a serf sent off to be a soldier in Caucasus. There, he is ideologically influenced by the revolutionary Gavrilov and, on returning to his village, he brings about a peasant revolution. The first version of Prometei was banned in May 1935, shortly after completion. It was then supposedly ‘improved’ and passed for distribution, it is assumed after the rukovodstvo tresta "Ukrainfil’ma" was granted permission by GUFK. The GUFK report on the film, after its fall from grace, stated: ‘Fil’m "Prometei" proizvodstva Kievskoi kinofabrike "Ukrainfil’m", kak izvrschaushchii deistvitel’nost’, formalisticheskii i naturalisticheskii po svoei khudozhestvennoi traktovke — k demonstratsii zapretit’. Nachal’nik GUFK Litovskii.’ See: Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz’iatoe kino, p. 45. The criticisms heaped upon Kavaleridze’s film, particularly the accusations of ‘formalism’, were echoed with Room’s film, and an editorial piece in the first 1937 issue of Radians’ke kino criticized Neches, the Director of the Kiev film studio, for allowing Prometei and Strogii iunosha to be made. See: [No author, editorial piece], ‘Prezrennye vragi naroda’, Radians'ke kino, 1937, no. 1-2, p. 5.
water level and mounted on to special stands rising from the bottom of the pool. When the surface of the water was still it looked like a mirror, and functioned as the floor. The flowers, which were made of metal, were fixed to cork life-belts which, in turn, were attached to the bottom of the pool. At the appointed time, the flowers rose to the surface. The chairs and furniture were hidden under the water: mounts supported the 'path' lying across the surface of the water and, at the appropriate moment, the furniture folded and was submerged. The technical device used to make the ripples was very complicated, and required a great deal of energy and effort to make it work. It involved a large wheel, resembling a water-mill, which was fixed to the bottom of the pool, as well as the use of propellers, and several powerful pumps to start the water moving.

In addition to the above, Mel'nichenko reported that over 5,000 metres of tulle were used to create the 'transparent' walls. He wrote that when the cameraman changed focus, one could see a specially built 'chudnyi sad' through these walls. Altogether, over 400 lights (7,000 amps) were used to light the set during the dream scenes. These descriptions of the dream scene alone reveal the amount of creative imagination and practical ingenuity lavished upon Strogii iunosha by the director and his crew. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Room should have been anxiously excited by the thought of Olesha's reaction to the film. In a telegram sent to the latter on 24 February 1935, the director did not conceal his feelings:

Prometei was shot by Nikolai Topchii, who subsequently published a critical article about Strogii iunosha, which I cite below. Topchii subsequently worked for Room as cameraman on his next films, Eskadril'ia No. 5, in 1939 and Vetry s vostoka, in 1940.

34 For a photograph of this scene taken during the making of the film see the next page of this chapter.
Strogii iunosha: Dream — special effects
Room was clearly deeply immersed in making the film, and eager to proceed, with Olesha's help. Unfortunately there is no record of the writer's response to the viewing, if it did take place.

A year later, however, the film had still not been finally completed. An interview with Pavel Neches, published in Kino in the February 1936 edition, revealed that the film was still on the editing table at that stage. It was nearing completion, however, and it must have been between February and June that Room sent the following telegram to Olesha, reporting that the film had been wonderfully received when shown to the film factory heads:

'Dorogoi Iurii Karlovich vcheria pervye smontirovannyi "Strogii iunosha" pokazyvalsia rukovodstvu fabriki kartina smotrela vnimaniem napriazheniem pozdravliaem interesom chasto smeialis' i protiv ozhidaniia byli slesy tochka vse'.

---

35 Telegramma Rooma Abrama Matveevicha Oleshe Iuriu Karlovichu'. See: RGALI, f. 1334, op. 1, ed. khr. 774.
36 In August 1935 it had been reported that the indoor scenes had all been shot, that Room and his team were currently in Odessa shooting the dacha scenes and that, therefore, the film was nearing completion. 'Strogii iunosha', Kino, 23 August 1935, no. 39 (691), p. 3.
37 Margolit and Shmyrov, Iz'iatoe kino, pp. 53-56 (p. 53).
38 Telegramma A. M. Rooma Iu. K. Oleshe', RGALI, f. 358, op. 1, ed. khr. 27, p. 2 (and published in: Zabrodin, Abram Matveevich Room, p. 39). Tkach wrote that the film was practically finished on 10 July, when he watched the 'tak nazyvaemogo chernogo montazha [...] (fakticheski zakonchennogo fil'ma). Tkach, 'Postanovlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma".'
Not only did the studio officials engage with the film intellectually, they also laughed and were even moved to tears by it!

By June, however, events had taken a catastrophic turn for the worse. This time, on 26 July 1936, Room’s communiqué was not a telegram of joy, but a letter of despair. Persecuted and reeling from the shock of the unexpected and devastating official response to the film, Room wrote to the friend who had played the part of Tsitronov so perfectly, but now seemingly so pointlessly:

'Dorogoi Maksim Maksimovich!

Kraine priznatelen — za teploe, zabotlivoe pis’mo.

Vse eshche nakhozhas’ v sostoianii cherezvychainoi ugnetennosti, — i chto eshche bolee tiazhelo — v odinochestve.

Nikak ne mogu primirit’sia, chto razbit stoT iskrennii tvorcheskii trud, kotoryi stoil stoil’ko zdorov’ia, energii i truda.

Po vashemu sovetu, ia uzhe napisal seichas pis’mo Oleshe, esli by on byl v Moskve ili ia — v Odesse, on, konechno, napisal by, — no odin on vriad li eto sdelat.'^39

By this time, the Kiev film studio and the Ukrainfil’m officials who had endorsed the film in the first place were in a difficult and embarrassing predicament. Their responsibility for the problems associated with this project would be noted. For

---

I should point out that 'fabrika', in this case, refers to the film studio. Vladimir Mikhailov explains, in his chapter on Stalinist control of the film industry in the 1930s, that it was simply through inertia that the old-fashioned name 'kinofabrika' was used until 1936, except for a brief period in 1934, when 'kinokombinat' came into fashion. In 1936 the word 'kinostudiiia' became the norm. See: Vladimir Mikhailov, 'Stalinskaia model’ upravleniia kinemotografii' in L. Kh. Mamatova, ed., Kino: politika i liudi. 30-e gody. Moscow, 1995, pp. 9-25 (p. 21).

Room, the production became an instrument of criticism against him. However worthwhile the things he had achieved in the film were in their own right, as well as in his view and in Olesha's, they were not appreciated by those in whose hands the future of the film lay. However, more than the extravagant production costs of the film, which might have been bearable had the film met with approval in other ways, it was the deficiencies of form, addressed in the final section of this chapter, and content, examined in the following section, which brought about the downfall of Strogii iunosha.

Critical reaction: flawed content and Olesha's errors uncorrected

As has been emphasized above, there was pressure on Room to 'improve' Olesha's screenplay in his film version of Strogii iunosha. In terms of narrative and content this meant that the film should be more down-to-earth, more accessible and more relevant to the ordinary viewer. Olesha's characters had been deemed too precious, and their surroundings and concerns too rarefied. In addition to this, the representation of the people in the screenplay was said to be unconvincing, they were criticized for being more like two-dimensional stereotypes than real individuals. However, despite the obvious advantage of the medium of film over literature for bestowing a specificity upon a role (by using an actor), Room's characters also failed to satisfy the critics. They were still seen as excessively abstract. Worse still, the world in which these fakes were seen to live was equally insubstantial.

As explained above, general critical opinion was that Room had made his Strogii iunosha even more flawed than Olesha's, through choosing to make the characterization of Grisha still less specific and more abstract than in the screenplay. One of the ways in which he did this was by not including a scripted
scene in which Grisha is actually shown being an engineer. Although he is still said to be one in the film, as in the script, the statement might have been more plausible if it had also been illustrated. In the script, when Stepanov leaves the hospital after Ol’ga’s operation, he looks for Masha in the crowd which has formed on the street. She, in turn, is watching people working on the platform of the tower used for fixing broken tram cables. One of the workers ‘v rukavitsakh’ turns his head: ‘Emu zharko. On snimaet shapku. Padaet na potnyi lob svetlaia priad’. Na temnom ot zhary litse svetiatsia serye glaza. Eto Grisha Fokin. He is obviously struggling in the sun for the good of the community.

Lelikov’s notebooks reveal that Room had clearly had every intention of including this scene in his film. In Book One, Lelikov included two variants of a list of scenes to be shot outdoors, both of which involve ‘Ulitsa s tramvainoi avariiei’.

Equally, the list of characters includes extras for the scene featuring the tram accident: ‘Massovka na ulitse pri tramvainoi avari’. Finally, a corresponding list of props needed for the shoot includes: ‘Avariinaia mashina. Zerkalo. Golub’.

In his study of Strogii iunosha, Jerry Heil writes of this scene that: ‘The inconsequential tram mishap is a pretext to enable the film-makers to set up a series of extreme long-shots and theatrical/cinematic points of view.’ Referring to Masha, he explains that: ‘A series of eye-line matches establishes “what she sees”’.

---

40 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 331: 40.
41 Prilozhenie I-e’, Book One, p. 23, point 7, and Prilozhenie III-e, Book One, p. 29.
42 Prilozhenie IX-e’, Book One, p. 35, point 42.
43 Book One, p. 267. This also reveals that, at some stage, there was also a plan to include a scene in which a boy with a mirror dazzles Stepanov, Grisha and Masha.
44 See: Heil, No List of Political Assets, pp. 44-46.
45 Ibid.
It is evident from the multiple occurrence of such instances that, aesthetically, this was an important vignette for Olesha. For example, in his story 'Den', of 1931, a handsome young engineer performs the same task. Here, the narrator follows the stranger through the town and suddenly sees him on the roof of a tram, repairing it: 'Uzh on byl v perchatkakh. [...] Unosha khodil po kryshe, stanovilsia na odno koleno, lozhilsia na spinu. To podnimalas', to opuskalas' duga, legkaia kak tsifra.'^ Finally, in the article 'Zametki dramaturga', Olesha described how: 'Odnazhdy oborvalsia tramvainyi provod. [...] Tolpa molchala. Zatem priekhala avariinaia bashnia. Molodoi chekovek v rukavitsakh poiavilsia na vershine, nad tolpoi, — on chto-to delal u provoda. On byl ves' vnimanie [...] — on byl akterom pered mnogoestvom zritelei.'^^ Quoting this passage at slightly greater length, and in English, Elizabeth Beaujour emphasizes its connotations of youthful heroism as the attraction for Olesha:

'Indeed, Olesha admires the Soviet young men as much in their role as the heroes of a certain romance of technology as for their military heroism. For example, he watches a young man fix an overhead trolley wire [...]. In such an intrinsically dramatic situation, says Olesha, life may become art without the intervention of the artist.'^8

Room seems to have appreciated the significance of the scene in which Grisha fixes a tram cable, as he had planned to create it on screen. The reason for its omission from the completed film is unrecorded, but it is likely that the director simply felt it did not work, either in purely visual terms, or in the context of the surrounding scenes. Unfortunately the omission was lamented by critics who were unaware that it had even been considered, and who felt that it left the

---


character of Grisha further devoid of convincing traits, both as a future engineer and as an individual. The cameraman Nikolai Topchii, writing around the time of the film's completion, blamed both Room and EkeTchik for 'depriving' Grisha of the possibility of 'rehabilitating' himself through the tram repair scene. Furthermore, he condemned them for substituting it with an athletic one, in which we see Grisha racing along in a chariot, which does not feature in the screenplay. These brief inserts are stylized visions of an idealized Komsomol youth; for many critics, they reinforced the feeling that the film had no relevance to the lives of contemporary young socialists. This aspect will be discussed further below.

A related criticism also concerns the excessively abstract characterization of Grisha. Again, an intended scene was planned in one way, corresponding to Olesha's Strogii iunosha, but actually filmed in another. As with the previous example, viewers could not have known that the first, script-like version had been the initial choice. The screenplay says of Grisha's leaving the train: 'Sredi vysadivshikhia molodoi chelovek v belykh shtanakh i beloi rubashke.' Lelikov's notebook states 'Iz vagona vyshel Grisha v belom kostiume.' An additional description confirms the youth's solitude: 'Dachnaiia stantsiia pusta. Stoit Grisha.' As in the earlier tram fixing example, the list of actors required for filming includes extras, in this case the 'Passazhiry dachnogo poezda.' All that the film

---

49 N. Topchii, "'Strogii iunosha' i ego operator', Radiants'ke kino. 1936, no. 8, pp. 5-8 (p. 7). Hereafter: Topchii, "'Strogii iunosha' i ego operator'.

50 Ibid.

51 Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 301: 5.

52 Book One, p. 57.

53 Book One, p. 195.

54 Prilozhenie IX-e', Book One, p. 35, point 33.
shows is the train, then, after a cut to Masha and Stepanov, a cut to Grisha standing on the empty platform, as he does in the written text: 'Molodoi chelovek stoit na perrone. Poezd ushel. Molodoi chelovek ekhal dovol’no dolgo. On kak by striakhivaet sledy davki, kotoraja byla v vagone. Kak by vyravnivaet nekotoruiu svoiu primiatost'. In Chapter Five, I quoted Mikhail Levidov criticizing Olesha for over-burdening the future director of Strogii iunosha by having written parts of his script in an unfilmable way. In particular, Levidov cites the above passage describing Grisha's arrival, insisting that, on screen, such a scene could only appear as a young man on a platform, at best seen to be brushing dust off himself. The abstract concept of 'sledy davki' does not come across visually, only verbally.

In his review of the film, Topchii referred to this scene at the station, again condemning Room and Ekel’chik. In this context, he did so on two counts. The first involved the passage cited above, as he insisted that the viewer would look in vain for any traces of creases, tiredness or other human qualities in Grisha. Topchii said that the young man is always impeccably shaven and his trousers are carefully pressed. He also commented upon the absence of the scripted action of Grisha repairing the car engine. Whereas Olesha's text reads: 'Molodoi chelovek zaniat ispravleniem motora', in the film it is Masha who is seen repairing the engine, when the car gets into difficulties as she drives Grisha back to the train station. Both driving and repairing are traditionally male areas, and yet the film shows Masha to be active and capable, whereas Grisha is unimpressively passive. Topchii mocked Room's characterization of Grisha by suggesting that Masha had

---

57Topchii, "Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', p. 6.
to fix the car because the young man was afraid to dirty his hands and ruin his suit!\(^59\)

Topchii's second condemnation of Strogii iunosha's director and cameraman for the train station scene concerned the emptiness of the platform. He wrote sarcastically of Grisha's 'poetic solitude', insisting that the image of him there makes the viewer assume that he lives alone and aloof from the community, whereas Olesha had suggested that he has many neighbours. Topchii accused Room and Ekel'chik of helping Grisha forget Lenin's words, that 'zhit' v obshchestve i byt' svobodnym ot nego' is impossible.\(^60\) Altogether, Topchii was extremely disappointed that Room and his team had put 'an anaemic, white-blooded young man', who is training to be an engineer, but has no specific occupation, at the centre of their film.\(^61\) He disapproved of Grisha's abstraction from reality, both physically, in his excessive cleanliness, and intellectually, through his belief that it is possible 'to create an independent proletarian culture of moral qualities by laboratory means'.\(^62\) Above all, he felt that the film failed because it failed to make the viewer engage with Grisha and his concerns. He stated dammingly that, because of the director's and cameraman's treatment, the main protagonist, Grisha Fokin, 'iz zhivogo komsomol'tsa, polnogo zhivoi burliashchei krovi, krovi molodosti, prevratilsia v besstrastnogo kholenogo iunosha so vzgliadom, napravlennym vo vnut'; on kapituliruet pered

\(^{59}\)Topchii, "Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', p. 7.

\(^{60}\)Ibid., p. 6.

\(^{61}\)Ibid., pp. 6-7. Usievich, the critic quoted in note 32 above, had also expressed his disapproval of the portrayal of the young people, complaining that Room had made it seem as if they did nothing but engage in sports, philosophizing and falling in love. Usievich, 'Za kachestvo'.

\(^{62}\)Topchii, "Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', p. 7.
"fantasticheskim" doktorom Stepanovym. In his reasons for banning the film, Tkach similarly disapproved of Room's portrayal of Grisha and, in particular, of his moral code, which he regarded as pretentious. He found the way in which Stalin's words were 'mechanically' inserted into the text simplistic, and saw it as an unsubtle attempt to provide the film with 'prokhodimost', to have it officially sanctioned.

It was not only Room's depiction of Grisha and his code which were criticized, but also his portrayal of Stepanov. He was blamed for not correcting Olesha's faults in the characterization of the doctor, who is presented as being incredibly naive. Topchii pointed out that it is absurd for a person to have been rewarded by the government to the degree Stepanov has, and yet be unaware of the life around him. In that respect, he felt that Olesha's character had remained unconvincing in the film. Tkach, for his part, went even further, mocking the concept of Stepanov's being a suitable role model for young people. He disapproved of a man with a bourgeois ideological background being held up as an example of 'genius' useful to a future classless society. Tkach claimed that the doctor had been depicted as 'ogranichennyi i vul'garnyi samodur, wysokomernyi i chvanlivyi, chuzhdyi sovetskoi deistvitel'nosti'. He found the idea that the government would bestow special favours upon him ridiculous (moreover, the representation of the form these favours would take was also seen to be absurd,

---

63Ibid., pp. 7-8. For Room's explicit statement that it is in fact Stepanov who is the main protagonist, see Chapter Eight.

64Tkach, 'Postanovlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma"'.

65For instance Stepanov is amazed by the 'vospitannost' of Ol'ga's husband because he is of peasant origin, and he is surprised to hear that Marx wrote about 'simple' human relations, not just about capital and surplus value.

66Tkach, 'Postanovlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma"'. 
even satirical, as Tkach wrote: 'tut rezhisserom dopushcheny sharzhirovka i oposhlenie').\textsuperscript{67} Above all, he abhorred Stepanov's philosophy concerning the inevitability of suffering in life, and the way in which the film's supposedly positive characters were impressed by it.\textsuperscript{68}

Room, with Ferdinandov's advice, worked on the characterization of Masha, providing her with additional qualities which served to make her less nebulous and more practical. There are two minor plot details which help to strengthen the image of Masha as a living woman, rather than merely femininity personified. The first involves Masha being shown as Stepanov's research assistant. In Olesha's text she is simply sitting at a table in some unspecified place while Stepanov talks, and 'Pered nei listy i raskrytye knigi.'\textsuperscript{69} She is helping her husband, but the reader does not learn much about her activities. In the film, however, she is actually shown to be typing. This reinforces the idea that she is actively working for him, and has a professional skill. The second example, which has been discussed above, is more important as it also affects the characterization of Grisha. It involves Masha repairing the car engine as Stepanov watches through binoculars. As with the first example, Ferdinandov advised Room to include these in order to make the character of Masha more concrete.

The characterization of Tsitronov also contains important details, and adds to the general texture of the film. Not least significantly, the initial mood of the film is established by the sight of Tsitronov sleeping in the orchard in front of the house. The atmosphere is one of sleepiness and laziness; in one version of the opening scenes, Lelikov noted twice that the man's face 'khranit vyrazhenie,  

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69}Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 314: 24.
svoistvennoe zasypaiushchemu cheloveku.\textsuperscript{70} At this stage, as will be explained below, the viewer is led to believe that the man is the owner of the dacha and grounds. In another version, he is twice described as half asleep: 'V kresle sidit chelovek — khoziain. On poluspit.'\textsuperscript{71} The lazy atmosphere is conveyed not only by Tsitronov's demeanour, but even by the marble lions at the foot of the steps: 'Spiat l'vy u mramornoi lestnitsy.'\textsuperscript{72} Finally, Tsitronov's somnolence is echoed, too, by the sleeping dog at his feet. This is reiterated, with a reference to the identical, statuesque stillness of the lions, with the later note: 'U ego nog spit gromadnyi "mramorny" pes.'\textsuperscript{73} The dog reflects Tsitronov's appearance, and acts as a symbol of the man's animalistic nature.

Just as Tsitronov, the dog and the lions are tranquil and still, so parts of the natural surroundings are too. The flowers are similarly unmoving, just as they are in Olesha's text: 'Nepodvizhno stiati tsvety.'\textsuperscript{74} As with Olesha, the only

\textsuperscript{70}Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 1', Book One, p. 49, point 16 and point 19. This image is taken from Olesha. See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 299: 1.

\textsuperscript{71}Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 2', Ibid., p. 51, point 9 and the same idea in point 23. These same phrases are also found in the third version of this scene. Also: 'Khoziain zakryl glaza v istome', ibid., p. 53, point 28.

\textsuperscript{72}Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 2', Ibid., p. 51, point 13.

\textsuperscript{73}Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 2', Ibid., p. 51, point 9, and point 24.

\textsuperscript{74}Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 300: 2. In the first version of the opening scenes, Lelikov wrote: 'Nepodvizhno stiati tsvety na poludennom solntse' and 'Nepodvizhno stiati na solntse tsvety.' 'Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 1', Book One, p. 47, point 7 and p. 49, point 20; in the second version he put simply, but repeatedly: 'Nepodvizhno stiati tsvety'; see: Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 2', ibid., p. 49, point 2 and p. 51, point 10 and p. 53, point 25.
movement is provided by massive larches.\textsuperscript{75} Evidently, the director considered it of crucial importance to retain the atmosphere of the screenplay in this part of the film.\textsuperscript{76} An indication of Room’s feelings about the first part of the film is provided by Lelikov’s note about it:

‘Nastaivaiu, soglasno nashei ekspozitsii, na tom, chto eti vse elementy dolzhny byt’ sniyati sovershenno statichno bez vsiakogo dvizheniia. Eto nachalo fil’ma. Zdes’ vse dvizheniia v montazhe a vntri kadra est’ lish’ zastavshie predstavleniia o dvizhenii (skul’ptury, natiiur morty).’\textsuperscript{77}

Even when people are seen working, as when the culinary preparations for Grisha’s arrival are shown, the feeling that nothing has stirred is deliberately preserved.\textsuperscript{78} The film’s first scenes create a sense of suspended animation almost, a stylized kind of stillness, which represents both a luxurious freedom from anxiety and an atmosphere of stagnation in the Stepanov household.

According to Topchii, Room was not satisfied with ‘ordinary’ film making, but turned his directorial attention towards presenting ‘mysli krupnym planom’, or abstract ideas revealed metaphorically.\textsuperscript{79} This is why he used retardation of movement, as well as why he emphasized the statuesque quality of the figures. Such devices turned the characters into pseudo-classical sculptures in light and shade, complained Topchii, as, for instance, in the scene featuring the young

\textsuperscript{75}Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 300: 2. Lelikov copied the original phrase, and added two shorter versions: ‘Dvizhutsia bol’ shie listvennye massy’ and ‘Dvizhutsia tol’ko bol’ shie listvennye massy.’

\textsuperscript{76}To this end, he even added his own detail, in the sea scene, which Lelikov recorded as: ‘Pleshchetsia lenivo more.’ See: Ekspozitsiia. Variant No. 3’, ibid., p. 56, point 32.

\textsuperscript{77}‘Primechanie’, ibid., p. 91.

\textsuperscript{78}Lelikov explained that: ‘Pokaz kukhni ne narushaet obshchego vpechatleniia fil’ma, stilia ego pokoia i nedvizhnosti.’ See: Partitura, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{79}Topchii, ‘“Strogii iunosha” i ego operator’, p. 6.
people's conversation at the stadium. He felt that this distanced the filmic world from the real one, and gave rise to 'still-born images'.

Once again, then, in terms of filmic content Room had been seen to disappoint critical expectations. Instead of being more concrete than the scenario, his Strogii iunosha was equally vague on the most sensitive issues, such as characterization. The Komsomol youth, representatives of the radiant future, were not shown working, were not shown doing anything in particular, other than classical posing and engaging in ideologically ambiguous debates about personal issues. They were more parodic than inspiring, some critics felt. The world

80 Ibid.

81 Three other films of the period, Iulii Raizman's Letchiki of 1935, Iurii German's Semero smelykh of 1936 and Semen Timoshenko's Vratar', also from 1936, depict young Communists in a far more ideologically desirable way, from a socialist viewpoint. The first is about members of a pilot training school, yet it has parallels with Strogii iunosha in that it includes a scene of a critical operation, as well as a girl who says 'Neuzheli ty ne ponimaesh'!'. Jerry Heil actually takes this latter as a clue to Olesha's co-authorship (with the credited Aleksandr Macheret) of the screenplay, something which has never been established; [see: Heil, 'An oneiric film', p. 22]. German's film is about polar explorers rather than pilots. In both, however, the young people are shown working, as well as suffering and resolving awkward romantic 'triangles'. These protagonists do make mistakes but, ultimately, they prove themselves ideologically sound, as well as heroic. Therefore they were regarded as suitable role models for young viewers. The third film, Vratar', revolves around football rather than work. It too, however, is acceptable as a positive example to young Communists as it depicts the rise to fame of a provincial melon sorter who plays football and dreams of fame. The protagonist, Kandidov, is also more ideologically acceptable than Grisha Fokin, for he is shown hard at work and at play. Once given the chance to prove himself he achieves heroic success in the national team. There are visual echoes of Strogii iunosha in Vratar', such as the white-clad sportsmen and women, constructivist architecture and the decorative
which they were seen to inhabit was also ideologically ambiguous, and was perceived to be so removed from reality as to be irrelevant or even disturbing. What Olesha had left uncertain, Room had confirmed in the most unacceptable way.

shadows it creates. Above all, there are shots of a classical style stadium, filmed from above, which at one stage appears as white markings on grass, filling the screen, just as in Room's film.

The same type of shot is found in another sports related film of 1936, Igor' Savchenko's Sluchainia vstrecha. Like Strogii iunosha, this film examines socialist morals. The narrative concerns the friendship, love and separation of a shock-worker in a children's toy factory, Irina, and a physical education trainer, called Grisha. The latter coaches the athletic Irina for the All-Union sports competition in Moscow and marries her, only to leave once she gets pregnant. The collective sympathizes with her and helps her to raise the child. Upon her victory of the thousand metre race at the Moscow competition he congratulates her and wants to resume their relationship, but she feels only pity and contempt for him.

Sluchainia vstrecha shares a startling number of visual details with Strogii iunosha, including a few specific scenes and shots. These include Savchenko's Grisha arriving at his destination by train and standing alone on a deserted platform, dressed in white. The former film also features an image in which the heroine shares a walk in the countryside with Grisha, and shots of leaves in bright sunlight fill the screen. In addition to this there is a reference to a ball being held, a written intertitle and a scene in which Grisha puts his arms around a tree. All these details exist in Strogii iunosha too. Above all, however, as with Room's film, Savchenko's features shots of young sportsmen, including in classical-style profile, and two shots of a 'diskobol' in particular, as well as the stadium sequence discussed above.
Formal inadequacy: Olesha's unfulfilled promise

As much as the content of Room's film was misguided, perhaps even more so than Olesha's original, so too were its formal aspects. To some extent it was these which emphasized the nature of the film medium and played a part in making concrete or exaggerating those parts of the written text which had previously been deemed in need of correction. Room's style, as suggested above, while confirming Olesha's vision, also served unintentionally to undermine it, as less imaginatively inclined viewers, including those whose approval was needed to ensure the film's release, were unsettled. In order to understand this process, the present section considers a number of the film's formal aspects in turn.

The first aspect of the film's form to be considered is lighting, which has already been discussed in other contexts in Chapter Six. Room's Strogii iunosha is particularly striking in its use of lighting, just as Olesha's is in its description of the effects of light on various surfaces. In his notebooks Lelikov recorded the filmmaker's intention of capturing diverse examples of light play. In the opening scenes alone he refers to sunlight on water flowing from a fountain, using the verb 'iskrias', to rays of light, which 'zazhigaiut ogon'ki' on the crystal, the glass and the nickel of the dishes on the table, to sunlight which 'blestit' on the sea, and

---

82 A book about Soviet cinema published in 1937 refers to various 'vrazhdebnii vliianiia' upon Soviet film, focussing, in particular, on the 'bourgeois' attributes 'formalism' and 'naturalism'. Amongst the different categories of film adversely affected are those concerned with socialist ethics and morality; the example given in that category is Strogii iunosha. P. Poluianov, ed., Sovetskoe kino, Moscow, 1937, p. 2.

83 For more on Olesha's use of light see Chapter Two.
to 'stolb bleska' reflecting off Tsitronov's patent leather shoe.\textsuperscript{84} Shining buttons also feature later in the film, on the Sailor's uniform in the hospital scene: 'pugovitsy khorosho nachishcheny (vse blestit)'.\textsuperscript{85} Another detail of a light effect which was listed as planned, but remained unfilmed, is the shimmering of windows on a moving train.\textsuperscript{86} Other examples of Room's use of light include the description of the marble of a statue as 'oslepitel'nyi'.\textsuperscript{87} Finally, Lelikov's record of the director's response upon viewing the day's rushes reveals, once again, the value placed on the visual effects of light:

'Prokhod Mashi pered Tsitronovym. Udaliaetsia vпечатление, chto Tsitronov posmatrivaet za kupaiushcheisia Mashei i znachitel'no sokrashchaetsia. vse kupan'e i prokhody za schet moria i "tenei".'\textsuperscript{88}

Aesthetic form is explicitly given precedence over narrative content here.

Room wanted to create a particular atmosphere in the early scenes of the film, and lighting was one of the ways in which he attempted to do this. After some experiments with it, he concluded that there was still a great deal of work to be done. As above, Lelikov's notes explaining the unsatisfactory result of the


\textsuperscript{85}Book Three, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{86}'Pered apparatom zamel'kali okna vagona.' See: Book One, p. 195. This is the same device as Room used to great effect in Tret'ia Meshchanskaia.

\textsuperscript{87}'Oslepitel'nyi mramor statui.' See: Partitura, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., loose page, point 3.
lighting achieved thus far, and the desired effect, hold the key to much of the film's visual style:


The visual style of Strogii iunosha and, in particular, the capturing of light effects in the film, is the result of a collaboration between the director and his team. Although Room bears overall responsibility for the film, some must also be borne by the main cameraman, Iurii Ekel'chik, whether one accords him praise or blame. This is Topchii's view. Although he recognized Ekel'chik's professional abilities, he insisted that his colleague's talents were put to undesirable use in Room's film. The result, wrote Topchii, was that the film had become unappealingly contrived: 'Stil' pereshel v manemost'.

---

89 Book One, p. 97.
90 Topchii, "Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', p. 7. In an Iskusstvo kino article about the new Ukrainian film journal Radians'ke kino, Ekel'chik and Room were accused of a lack of self-criticism in their respective contributions to the publication. The author (hiding behind the pseudonym 'Kinematografist') noted of Ekel'chik that "v ego tvorcheskom opyte byli (i sovsem nedavno) krupnye formalisticheskie vyvikh [ ... ] poluchivshie osobennoe razvitie pri rabote nad "Strogim iunoshei". 'Kinematografist, 'Ukrainskii kinozhurnal', Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 62-64 (p. 63).
92 Ibid. A fellow critic, B. Kanevskii, criticized Topchii for demolishing Ekel'chik's whole oeuvre with one blow, as well as for being inconsistent. He pointed out that Topchii both praised the optical effects, light and perspective, of Strogii iunosha, and on the other hand said that the film was badly shot. Kanevskii's own judgement was more positive; he found Ekel'chik an excellent
Topchii's greatest specific objection, in terms of Ekel'chik's work on the film, was his uniform tonality of light. He claimed that the use of the same scheme of general, diffused lighting throughout the film rendered the whole thing monotonous and bland: 'Edinaia svetovaia skhema obschego rasseyannogo osveshcheniia privela k nivelirovaniu materiala, ego odnozvuchnosti.' He offered the scene in the Stepanovs' kitchen, the backstage theatre scene and the scene in the operating theatre as cases in which identical lighting had been used. In fact, Topchii complained that the same is true of the way in which the individual characters are lit:

'Svetovaia traktovka chelovecheskich obrazov lishena tendentsii vnutrennego osmysleniia i kharakteristiki geroev, chto privodit k ikh ploskostnomu odnoobraziiu.'

It was this idiosyncratic style, featuring undifferentiated lighting, which led to the branding of the film as contrived and unengaging.

It is highly revealing, as far as Room's intentions relating to light and tone are concerned, to find that Lelikov glued into one of his notebooks a clipping cameraman because he was able to create a moving panorama shot, and to achieve 'svetotonai no edinstvo.' B. Kanevskii, 'Protiv putanitsy v kritike,' Radians'ke kino, 1937, no. 1-2, pp. 55-58 (p. 56).

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid. As far as the appearance of uniform flatness is concerned, it is notable too that there is a bas-relief showing the heads of Engels, Marx, Lenin and Stalin at the stadium (referred to in Chapter Six), and a picture of Lenin in Grisha's room, but no socialist- or Socialist Realist-themed three dimensional sculptures, only classical ones (see Chapter Six for descriptions of the latter).
from Pravda about the artist Pavel Petrovich Sokolov-Skalia. The article is a review of a retrospective exhibition of his work, which had opened the previous...
evening. It concentrates precisely on this issue of foreground and background, significant and insignificant, and uniformity of style. As in Topchii's criticism of Ekel'chik, published over a year later, this critic, V. Kemenov, found fault with Sokolov-Skalia for not distinguishing sufficiently between the primary and the secondary elements in his works, for not establishing the correct relationship between the whole and the part. Kemenov wrote, and Lelikov underlined in red ink, that, even in such undisputably significant works as the painting 'Tamanskii pokhoď': 'iarkost' krasok, rezkost' siluetov, intensivnost' sveta s odinakovoi siloi vyrazhajut razlichno po znachimosti ob'ekty.'^97 There is an equivalent intensity at various points throughout the painting. He explained that: 'Vsledstvie etogo chasti ne tol'ko ne usilivaiut edinstva tselogo, no dazhe vstupaiut s nim v nazoilivyi spor pered litsom zritel'a.'^98 The result of too many highlighted bright and colourful focal points creates a sense of conflict within the work, rather than bestowing upon it a feeling of homogeneity.

By drawing attention to these phrases, Lelikov brought out parallels between the techniques used in painting and those used in filmmaking, and Sokolov-Skalia, pp. 31-34) and expressed the desire to meet Aleksandr Dovzhenko to discuss their respective, eponymous works; (in 1935 Stalin had suggested to the director that he make a 'Ukrainian Chapaev'. It was finally completed in 1939. See Vance Kepley, Jr., In the Service of the State. The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko, Madison and London, 1986, pp. 121-22). Sokolov-Skalia believed that different media could be united through Socialist Realism, not by the mechanical transposition from one to the other, but through the use of similar forms of expression, similar recreations of reality in a single style. (See: P. Sokolov-Skalia, 'Kinematograf i zhivopis', ibid., p. 59).


98Kemenov, 'Vystavka kartin P. P. Sokolova-Skalia'.
seemed to use Sokolov-Skalia's failure as a warning to Room and Ekel'chik. The painter was accused of highlighting and setting apart too many details, and thereby destroying all sense of harmony within the composition. The viewer was being forced to struggle with competing foci of attention, he wrote. Yet Room and Ekel'chik were also blamed by Topchii for bathing too many people and objects in the same uncontrasting light, in effect, removing all focal points. Both Sokolov-Skalia and the filmmakers failed, through opposite means, to create a critically acceptable balance between foreground and background. This was said to give their works an artificial, unnaturalistic air.

As well as criticizing the excessive evenness of tone in Strogii iunosha, Topchii also disapproved of the film's decorative stylization. He bemoaned the fact that certain scenes appeared to function on a purely aesthetic level. As an example of this he cited the scene in which Diskobol walks around backstage at the theatre, and watches part of a rehearsal. The critic insisted that this can only be read as an 'operatorskii kadr "v sebe"', for it lacks any narrative weight: 'smyslovaia i funktsional'naia nagruzka etogo kadra mizernaia.'

In addition to the rehearsal, the actual environment backstage is in itself a kind of spectacle. There are all kinds of props, including various statuettes, such as classically-posed figures, busts of individuals, a semi-reclining amorous couple

---

99 Topchii, "Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', p. 8. As far as Topchii was concerned, the only positive stylistic element of the film was the 'sveto-opticheskaia' treatment of Tsitronov: 'Polozhitel'nym iskluucheniem iavliaetsia lish' sveto-opticheskaia traktovka obraza Tsitronova, ch'ia ob''emnost' i nepriylazhennost' svidetel'stvuiut o tom, chto operator prekrasno vladeet portretirovaniem zhivogo cheloveka.'
and Egyptian-style figures, as well as swords, chairs and a chandelier. There are also surreal prop trees, with extremely stylized, wavy branches. Such artificiality is natural in a props department, as well as in Grisha's dream, which produces bizarre and enormous paper flowers and leaves, but ends with a genuine little birch tree which he awakes to find himself embracing. Indeed, foliage is a recurring stylistic motif in Room's film. It denotes utopian, verdant luxury, on the one hand, and surreal decoration, on the other. Trees are associated with the Stepanovs' dacha at the start of the film, as there are shadows of leaves on the white marble steps of the dacha in the first scene of Strogii iunosha, as well as actual leaves on the right of the frame when Masha goes swimming. Dark foliage forms a contrast to the brightness of the dacha, on Masha's return from the river, and Masha and Grisha are surrounded by a haze of impressionistic, Cézanne-style trees when they go for their first walk together. In addition to these actual trees and leaves, there are many instances of shadows of leaves in the film, as mentioned above. These are purely aesthetic idiosyncracies, and occur even when there can be no diegetic source for them, such as on the background to the intertitle about Stepanov's dacha and privileges. More diegetically explicable instances can be found in shadows of leaves on Grisha's room wall and in the hospital.

---

100. This initial part of the scene appears in the copy of Strogii iunosha held at the Library of Congress, but not in the one shown on Russian television in 1994. It is aesthetically impressive and show-cases the filmmakers' skills.

101. This calls to mind Olesha's story 'Vishnevaia kostochka', in which the narrator says: 'Pust' mechtateli proizvodiat dla novogo mira derev'ia.' See: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 218. See also Chapter Two, note 84 on the links between this scene and one from Chaplin's 1915 film The Bank.

102. See above for a reference to massive larches.

103. Other shadows form part of the film's repertoire of light play, of what Topchii saw as superficial decoration, such as those found on the surface of the water as Masha swims, or at the train station. The latter forms part of the constructivist design of this scene, which is composed of three sections.
The shadow motif which recurs most in Strogii iunosha, however, is that of hatched lines against a white wall, presumably a reflection of the dividing bars in the latticed window panes. These occur, sometimes more than once, at the Stepanovs' dacha, in Grisha's room (where they take up two-thirds of the frame at one point) and on the staircase inside his building. The most notorious shadow effect, however, is the curved pattern formed upon a swaying curtain to create the 'strekozinnaia ten' which so impressed Olesha. Discussing the filmmakers' meticulous attention to the detail of his screenplay, as quoted in Chapter Five, Olesha cited, as an example, their creation of this particular type of shadow: 'Strekozinaia ten' stekol na stenakh'. If one compares this to Room's 'Strekozinnaia ten' na beloi kolonne' and 'Strekozinnaia ten' ot zanavesok', the

The foreground is white, framed by two pillars on either side; the middle ground consists of dark shadow, so the pillars there look dark, as does the strip of ground across which Grisha walks; finally, the background is white once more, due to the lack of shadow, so that as Grisha steps out of the shadow he is suddenly bathed in white sunlight. Here, as elsewhere, the shadow is used in direct contrast to the bright light, to create a hyper-real effect. For a photograph of the hospital scene, taken during the making of the film, see the next page of this chapter.

See Chapter Five, note 69. It is interesting to compare the recurring lattice shadow effect achieved by Room and Ekel'chik, particularly in the scene in which the shadow on the wall takes in Grisha's white clothes too, with Aleksandr Rodchenko's 1934 photograph depicting a woman in a white dress and white hat, sitting on a bench, with criss-crossed lines forming lattice-effect shadows on her, and on the floor and bench. See: L. Volkov-Lannit, Aleksandr Rodchenko. Risuet. Fotografia, Sport., Moscow, 1968, p. 112 and, for a reproduction, the page after next of this chapter. Above all, however, it is a device which Room had already used in earlier films, particularly in Tret'ia Meshchanskaia where it similarly links the male and the female characters; on this see Chapter Three, note 66 and the related illustration.

Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 299: 1.
Strogii junosha: Operation – foliage and shadows
Aleksandr Rodchenko, 'Devushka s "leikoi"', 1934.
intention is apparent. The great emphasis placed on the role played by light, in the work of both artists, reflects a shared vision and sensibility as far as Strogii iunosha is concerned.

The aesthetic aspects of Strogii iunosha were discussed in detail by the filmmakers, and every detail of each frame was carefully arranged and usually sketched on paper before being set up for filming. Evidence of conceptual work concerning individual frame composition is provided by a note made by Lelikov about using the principles of Japanese drawing as a model for the film. In the context of the early scenes Lelikov wrote that the composition should be taken, or even "vyrezana", from a generally realistic picture of nature. He concluded that: 'Tol'ko pri etikh usloviakh vozmozhno slozhenie kadrov, v rezul'tat chego my imeem predstavlenie ob obshei kartine.'

Lelikov referred to a literally 'picturesque' quality, where objects and beings appear to finish beyond the frame creating a 'zhivopisnaia zamknutost' elementoV as, for example, when only part of a hand, a cigar or a dog is visible, suggesting that 'za kadrom est' mir [...] v kadre predmety ne konchaisia'. Such a device creates the impression that one frame is continued in the next. Although each such frame (which is shot in extreme close-up) can stand alone, aesthetically, it needs the subsequent frame to provide context and give meaning to it.

From the above examples it is obvious that the style, as well as the content, of Room's film was experimental. As far as the majority of critics were concerned, it had missed the mark. Many were disturbed by Strogii iunosha's innovations, and regarded it as a step further — in the wrong direction — from

107 Book One. p. 95.
Olesha's screenplay. The content of the film had made the same ideological errors as Olesha's script, and had then compounded them. Formally, too, what Olesha had left vague, allowing him the benefit of the doubt, Room had presented visually, confirming the critics' worst fears about the work. What Room, his filmmaking team and Olesha had regarded as a creative success, the authorities saw as a failure, and worse.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how Olesha's promise that the script's 'failings', on the levels of form and of content, would be 'corrected' in the subsequent film, was not fulfilled. Rather, the problems were emphasized and multiplied. In being sent to the Kiev film studio the director had been given another chance, following the disgrace of his dismissal from Odnazhdy letom. But he had not redeemed himself. On the contrary, not only was he guilty of the same lack of financial and temporal discipline on Strogii iunosha as he had been on his previous project, but he had made an ideologically and aesthetically unacceptable film. Because of their anger at Room's seemingly deliberate flouting of the rules, and their disgust at his work, and because officials were determined to avoid other directors taking a similar path, Strogii iunosha was publicly vilified. What, in other times and circumstances, might have been used as an example of ambitious creativity, was, in the Soviet Union of 1936-37, used to symbolize precisely how not to make a socialist film.
CHAPTER 8

THE THEMES OF ABRAM ROOM'S *STROGI IUNOSHA*: REALITY, REASSESSMENT AND RECONCILIATION

In the previous chapter, analysis of published responses to Olesha's screenplay revealed that, in general, critics found elements of the work at best misguided, at worst anti-Socialist Realist. Much of the criticism was focused on the Stepanovs and based upon the fact that the couple retained too many traits of the pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie, both in their psychologies and in their lifestyles, for Communist comfort. Writers present at the first official reading of *Strogii iunosha* felt that it was courageous of Olesha to have set a work in the near future. By this, they presumably meant that, as society was supposedly heading towards perfected socialism, the writer would have to depict a perfect, or more nearly perfect, society, whilst remaining ideologically relevant to the present. Olesha's response to criticism of his screenplay was to reassure critics that the film would correct what appeared to be weaknesses in the text, as these were misunderstandings. The author insisted that the film would do full justice to his work, as it would make explicit subtleties of tone, such as irony, which some readers had failed to catch from the page. However, when it was made, the film was perceived not as having eliminated the text's errors, but as having exacerbated them. The present chapter will show how the filmmakers' understanding of Olesha's text and his intentions consciously expanded precisely those elements in the screenplay which had troubled critics. By emphasizing Olesha's thematic concerns (discussed in Chapter Five), Abram Room and his team only made *Strogii iunosha* a more problematic project.
This analysis is based on examination of the production notebooks kept during the making of Strogii iunosha by the director's assistant, Isai Lelikov, as well as on an assessment of notes made by Boris Ferdandov, who also worked closely with Room on the film, as discussed in Chapter Seven. As explained there, Lelikov's notes are in the form of three notebooks, 'Montazhnye listy i drugie materialy i chernoviki postanovki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" 1', 'Partitura postanovki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha"' and 'Montazhnye listy i drugie materialy i chernoviki fil'ma "Strogii iunosha" 3', although judging by the content, there might originally have been more. The notebooks contain a mixture of typed and handwritten notes, as well as sketches and photographs. As also explained in the previous chapter, the other set of notes was written by Boris Ferdandov during the making of the film.

It is apparent from all of these notebooks how carefully the filmmakers have analysed the meaning behind each sentence of Olesha's, and how much they have put into motivating each action within the film. Examination of Lelikov's and Ferdandov's notebooks shows that, in fact, Room and his team understood Olesha's ideas perfectly and even intended to reinforce them in the film. This intention can be seen through an assessment of the key concern of Strogii iunosha. This is the theme of Soviet reality and its conflicting ideologies, stemming from the remnants of a bourgeois society and from the socialist present. What Olesha describes is actually more like the flawed present than the perfect future, although it is probable that critics were afraid to say this quite so bluntly. This chapter, inter alia, shows how the approach taken by Room and his colleagues in the depiction of Olesha's 'near future' and its inhabitants made this more evident. Here, too, the filmmakers' understanding of Olesha, based on the

1For full details of Isai Lelikov's notebooks see the Preface and Chapter Seven.

2For more on Boris Ferdandov and his notebooks see Chapter Seven, notes 7 and 8.
production notebooks, is analyzed in terms of Soviet reality, through the issues at the heart of 'reassessment and reconciliation' and through the 'reassessment and reconciliation' theme as shown in the characterization of Stepanov and Grisha.

Soviet reality

The previous chapter establishes that one of the major criticisms levelled against Iurii Olesha's Strogii iunosha upon publication was its abstract nature. The action is set in some unspecified future, in which some people's lives retain elements of bourgeois attitudes and habits, whilst others' are closer to socialist ideals. In addition to these uncertainties of time and setting, there is also a mixture of the fantastic and the quotidian, the dream-like and the real. In this section, by reference to the notebooks, I shall show how Abram Room understands and develops such abstractions and incongruities, and how he manages to root them in an obviously Soviet context.

The first apparent conflict between Soviet reality and bourgeois fantasy occurs in the setting of the film's opening scenes, at the Stepanovs' dacha. The next, related issue revolves around the fact that the characters living an apparently bourgeois lifestyle are able to do so because of Communist government support. How these seemingly irreconcilable problems are carefully resolved in the minds of the filmmakers, allowing Soviet reality to triumph, is established below.

In depicting the Stepanovs' dacha, the director was working to create the following scene: 'Utopiia v zeleni, raspolozhena bogataia, belaia dacha'. The utopian nature surrounding the dacha is intended to be read as a reflection of the

\[3\text{Partitura, p. 23.}\]
luxurious lifestyle of those living there. More 'concrete' proof of the dacha's opulence is visible in the form of two marble statues and a marble staircase leading from the veranda to the garden. Life at the dacha is full of such luxuries as bottles of foreign cognac and wine, and boxes of foreign cigars.

The cumulative effect of such displays of splendour and wealth seems un-Soviet, explained Lelikov in an extremely telling phrase: 'Bogataia dacha, bogatyi sad — bogatyi khoziain. Vse eto vosprinimaetsia, kak budto pokaz ne sovetskoi deistvitel'nosti.' This is no ordinary Soviet citizen's residence, not even a standard dacha. As far as the characters are concerned, their accoutrements are equally expensive and exclusive. Iulian Stepanov wears German glasses and reads a 'foreign' newspaper. He also has a 'komfortabel'nyi avtomobil', which is

---

4*Partitura*, p. 22

5'Mramornaia statuia mal'chika prizhavshego k sebe rybu.' in *Partitura*, p. 22; 'Statuia devushki' in *Book One*, p. 31, and 'mramornaia lestnitsa' in *Partitura*, p. 23.

6Lelikov notes 'Inostrannaia etiketka na butylkakh', in *Partitura*, p. 25, and lists amongst the props needed for the garden and veranda scenes '4 butylki vina (luchsh. marok)', see: *Book One*, p. 267. (This is in keeping with Olesha's words: 'Inostrannaia etiketka' on the cognac bottle, in Olesha, *Izbrannoe*, p. 302: 9, and that 'Eto liubimaia marka Iuliana Nikolaevicha. Emu vazhnye litsa prisylaiut', ibid., p. 304: 12). As with the alcohol, the cigars to be used as props are described as: 'Korobka s sigarami (luchshei marki)', in *Book One*, p. 267.

7*Partitura*, p. 24

8*Book One*, p. 155. This representation of luxury contrasts with the very negative coding of the 'Pansion Chernyi lebed' which features in Grigorii Aleksandrov's 1934 film *Veselye rebiata* (mentioned in Chapter Two above). The latter clearly mocks the tasteless displays of wealth in the building and the vacuous pretensions of the boarders.
sometimes even chauffeur-driven. Masha, his wife, has the finest lingerie, as well as a maid to tidy it up for her. The lifestyle presented is obviously that of the aristocracy. However, Olesha defines the Stepanovs specifically as 'sovetskie aristokraty.' This confirms, therefore, that the screenplay's action is set in Soviet times, just as the above notes confirm that the same is true of the film.

Indications of Soviet reality as the background to Strogii iunosha are also evident in the characterization within the film, as revealed through the notebooks. This is shown in the present analysis of the similarities and differences between Stepanov and Tsitronov, and between their outlooks and attitudes to life, each other and the relationship between Masha and Grisha. Initially, the 'Soviet' aspect of Stepanov's characterization is expressed superficially, in one version of the scene of his first appearance in the film, by the 'orden Lenina' on his jacket lapel. Similarly, but more explicitly, Lelikov later noted of the 'GTO' badge Grisha wears that it allows the viewer to understand 'chto fil'm idet v sovetskoi deistvitel'nosti.' On a more profound level, Lelikov recorded the imagined history behind Stepanov and Tsitronov's friendship. This insight into their

---


10Amongst the props needed to decorate the set of Masha's bedroom are listed 'Damskoe bel'e (garnitur) luchshego kachestva'. Book One, p. 265. Olesha wrote: 'Domrabotnitsa priachet v shkaf bel'e Mashi. Dorogoe bel'e.' Ibid., p. 305: 12.

11Ibid., p. 317: 29. My italics. The film features an inter-title, near the its opening, after Stepanov's return to the dacha, stating: 'Sovetskaia vlast' okruzhila vnimaniem izvestnogo khirurga Stepanova. Emu prinadlezhit dacha, sad. Zdes' on zhivet so svoei zhenoi i zhivet pri nem nakhlennik Fedor Tsitronov.'

12Book One, p. 145.

13Partitura, p. 38.
backgrounds plainly sets out the difference between the two men, clarifying how Stepanov is a Soviet aristocrat and Tsitronov, who was formerly a bourgeois aristocrat, is a non-Soviet parasite.

The notebooks reveal that the two men became friends while studying medicine at university, where Stepanov worked extremely hard and did well. He benefitted from the 'changes in the social structure', by the government's recognition of his talent and hard work. His success has resulted in great material rewards, including luxurious living conditions, which are provided by the government as a means of facilitating further professional excellence. Tsitronov, by contrast, is the son of wealthy parents, so, as a young man, he did not have to work to achieve social status or financial gain. Because of the material means at his disposal, he simply enjoyed himself instead of studying. For him, going to university was just something he had to do for form's sake. With the collapse of the old social order his status and money were gone, and he had not studied hard enough to become a doctor. In political terms, once the bourgeoisie had been annihilated he found himself "vne profsoiuza", vne zhizni. It was at this stage that Stepanov took him in, which gave him somewhere to fit in, in Soviet 'reality'. Tsitronov's cynical outlook and lazy, self-centred lifestyle make him totally redundant to the new socialist society. Stepanov lets him stay out of sentimentality and because he enjoys his servile obsequiousness, as well as due to the lack of the courage needed to throw him out. These factors mean that, although his views and behaviour are wholly anti-socialist, Tsitronov benefits vicariously from the government's support of Stepanov.

---

14 Presumably 'peremeny sotsial'nogo stroia' is a reference to the Russian Revolution of 1917.
15 Partitura. p. 26
16 Ibid.
17 Takim obrazom Tsitronov i okazalsia v sovetskoi deistvitel'nosti.' Ibid.
For all their differences in personality, background and circumstances, the representatives of the 'old world', Stepanov and his hanger-on, Tsitronov, share a world view which is outdated. It is still burdened by the 'leftovers' of bourgeois norms of morality and ethics, by old-fashioned ideas about the family and relationships between the sexes. This is partly why Stepanov puts up with the repulsive Tsitronov. However, as Lelikov bluntly recorded, if Stepanov were not there or, more to the point, if he were to change his attitudes, then he would find Tsitronov to be 'incompatible' with Soviet reality. There is no room for him there, so he has become a 'lishnii chelovek novogo obshchestva.'

In order to explore fully the role of Tsitronov in Strogii iunosha, Lelikov cited words by Viktor Pertsov in his notes. This shows that reviews of Olesha's work were taken seriously, and not only by the author. Here, the critic defined Tsitronov's role in the script: 'On podcherkivaet neravenstvo, potomu chto zaviduet. Zaviduet Fokinu za to, chto on molod, i za to, chto ego liubit Masha.' He therefore wants to humiliate Grisha. In addition to this, wrote Pertsov, Tsitronov envies Stepanov his wealth as well as his wife, and tries to mask his envy with flattery.

---

18 Lelikov refers to the: 'predstaviti "starogo mira" prizhivalets Fedor i sam doktor Stepanov' and to their outlook as being 'uslozhneno perezhitkami burzhuznykh norm morali i etiki, starymi predstavleniiami o sem' e i otnosheniiakh mezhdu muzhchinoi i zhenshchinoi'. Ibid., p. 21 for both quotations.


20 See Chapter Seven for a discussion of Pertsov's article 'Zagovor wysokikh umov'.

21 Partitura, p. 31.

22 Lelikov explains that Tsitronov is 'Taino i bessil'no vliublen v Mashu i donosom na Mashu khochet vysluzhit' sia pered Stepanovym i prikryt' pokhotlivuiu zavist' evnukha-sogliadataia.' Ibid., p. 31.
The dangerous aspect of Tsitronov is his destructive influence, in ideological terms. As stated below, Tsitronov, Stepanov and Masha are all representatives of the old society, at various stages in their development into members of the new society. Tsitronov's hold over Stepanov is insidious; he attaches himself to the 'otpadaiushchie korni mirovozreniia Stepanova', and tries to hold him back from further development. The only way Tsitronov can be truly cast out of the new society is by eliminating his attitudes.

One of Tsitronov's worst characteristics is his vulgar lechery. This is also one of the ways in which he contrasts negatively with Grisha. Whereas Grisha is unable to look at Masha because he loves her, in the film Tsitronov watches Masha 'zhadno', with his 'zhivye plotoiadnye glazki'. Lelikov's notebook includes a diagram of the actors' movements in the scene where Masha is observed by Tsitronov, as she returns from her swim: 'Ee veselost' i zhizneradostnost', pod vzgliadom Tsitronova, kak rukoi sniato. Ona izmenila pokhodku.' Under his observation, Masha feels the gaze of a cynic and a sadist. To compound this, Tsitronov is also revealed to be looking at an advertisement for underwear, featuring a semi-naked woman, as if it were pornography. This is something which the filmmakers clearly intended as a sign of his corrupt mind (rather than a reflection on the advertisement itself).

---

24 Book One, p. 57, point 57 of variant two of the film's exposition. Olesha is less vivid in his description of Tsitronov's eyes, using only the adjective 'zhivye'; see: Olesha, Izbrannoe, p. 301: 4. For his words on Grisha see: ibid., p. 313: 23.
25 Book One, p. 117.
26 Partitura, p. 29.
27 Book One, p. 73: 'Viden otdel ob' iavlennii s polugoloi zhenshchinoi, reklamiruiushchei bel'e.' and Partitura, p. 24: 'on i v otdel obiavlenii vidit pornograficheskie fotografii.'
An important point, affecting the viewer's perception of *Strogii iunosha* as a whole, was made by Ferdinandov, with reference to Tsitronov's poisonous attitudes. Ferdinandov discussed the fact that Tsitronov accuses Stepanov of jealousy, and that he keeps insisting that Masha is physically attracted to Grisha. His analysis of the situation revealed that although there is a grain of truth in Tsitronov's words, these aspects of the young people's relationship are of no great significance. Ferdinandov elucidated, however, that it is precisely this 'dolia istiny' which made the script complex and consequently complicated the work of the director and of the actors. This is because, viewed through Tsitronov's eyes, all male and female relationships are essentially base, and the issues raised in *Strogii iunosha* are no more than those of a clichéd romantic triangle: 'Dostatochno posmotret' na vse vzaimoootnosheniia personazhei s tochki zreniia Tsitronova (a eta storona, storona fiziologicheskogo vzgliada na liudei raznogo pola v bol'shei stepeni eshche nam prisushcha) i srazu zhe ves' stsenarii prevratitsia v trivial'nuui ili, bol'she skazat', poshluiu p'esu.'

The filmmakers needed to find a way to convince the viewers that Tsitronov's attitude is inappropriate, and that Masha's and Grisha's feelings are based on morally higher principles than physical attraction.

The examples in this chapter leave no doubt that the filmmakers thought long and hard about Olesha's text. They tried to delve into the meanings and motivations hidden within it, and invented their own where none could be found. As a result, everything that happens in the film *Strogii iunosha* has some basis in the characters' psychologies. These, in turn, are always set against, or alongside, the characters' ideological convictions. The moral struggle involved in behaving

---

28Ferdinandov, p. 9, point 17.

29Ibid., point 18. Germane to this, too, is Lelikov's insight that, when Grisha appears, 'Zritel' dogadyvaetsia, chto eto konkurent doktora Stepanova.'
as one believes one should, rather than as one desires, drives the plot. To complicate matters, the characters are presented as confused, imperfect humans, rather than perfect automatons. In ideological terms, all of the film's characters are still working towards perfect socialism or, as it is euphemistically put: 'vse personazhi Strogogo iunoshi eshche tol'ko po puti k sovetskoi deistvitel'nosti.' This is why the question of Stepanov's evicting Tsitronov is critical, because it represents a step backwards or forwards along this path. Room explicitly comments upon this in his response to one of the first readings of Olesha's script in 1934: 'Tsentral'nyi geroi veshchi ne Fokin i ne Diskobol. Eto Stepanov, osvobozhdaiushchiia ot Tsitronova.' This reveals his complete grasp of Olesha's intentions.

Detailed analysis of Lelikov's notebooks on Strogii iunosha, with particular regard to context and characterization, throws light on Room's concern with presenting identifiable aspects of Soviet reality within the otherwise relatively abstract film. At the same time, the film embraces elements of wealth and luxury, revealing the place of these ostensibly anti-Soviet qualities in Soviet society. In this respect Room reflects Olesha's approach in the screenplay, whilst also accommodating the fact that film is generally a more concrete medium than literature, and therefore requires more specifically visual detail. As a result of this, Soviet reality is depicted in an even less ideal manner than in Olesha's critic-offending text.

---

30 I am referring here to the author's and filmmaker's intentions, rather than the result.

31 See: Book Three, p. 169. This is a postscript by Lelikov to the day's notes, saying that it is important to bear in mind Zel'dovich's words (quoted above).

32 See: E. Len-a, 'Dve diskussii'.
Reassessment and reconciliation: the issues

As established above, as well as in Chapter Five, Strogii iunosha is about the need for reassessment and compromise between representatives of the old and of the new societies, with the relationships between characters reflecting these issues. In the present section, I shall examine how the representation of the key issues of 'the old' and 'the new' are treated in the notebooks. These reveal that, while the characters with opposing perspectives and backgrounds are capable of mutual reassessment and reconciliation, the filmmakers expand certain aspects of characterization. In doing so they go beyond the screenplay, thereby exacerbating the perceived failings of Olesha's text. However, it is important to note here that there are nuances within the characters; all can be divided roughly into the 'old' and the 'new', yet within these categories each character is at a different stage in his or her ideological development.

Ferdinandov analysed Olesha's text in a schematic way, and he arrived at the convincing conclusion that:

'Strogo razbiraia Fokina, diskobola i devushku, mozho skazat’, chto oni est’ raznye storony odnogo obraza — novogo cheloveka. Tochno takzhe Tsitronov, Stepanov i Masha est’ raznye storony odnogo obraza — stanoviaschchegosia novogo cheloveka.' 33

Seen in this light, it becomes still more obvious that the fate of Tsitronov within the Stepanov household reflects the broader issues of Strogii iunosha. If Stepanov does not see that Tsitronov represents the most negative aspects of the bourgeois past, and therefore fails to throw him out, then Masha will lose her respect for her husband and will leave him. If he does understand, and does send him away, then

33 Ferdinandov, p. 10, note 23.
it will prove that he is willing to correct his mistakes and move on. Ferdinandov explained this with reference to Masha's and Grisha's kiss:

'Постелуй Гриши и Машки следует рассматривать так: если бы Степанов остался с Цитроновым, то поцелуй есть уход Машки от Степанова. Если Степанов изгнал Цитронова, то поцелуй есть высокая плата новому человеку за возврат ей (Маше) Степанова.'

In rejecting Tsitronov, as well as in coming to appreciate what Masha respects in Grisha and his friends, Stepanov bridges the divide between the old and the young. Just as he learns to appreciate their ideological beliefs, so Stepanov comes to realize that the young people's relationships are nobler than he had imagined, and than he himself had experienced in his youth. The renowned doctor sets out from a position of feeling jealousy towards his wife and seeing Grisha as a rival for her love. He then gradually comprehends, according to Ferdinandov, that Masha loves Grisha as a person, not just as a man, and that this person's feelings towards her are based upon moral ideals.

Masha is an ambiguous character. She belongs to Stepanov's world through marriage and habit, but to Grisha's in spirit and age. As the filmmakers were careful to emphasize, when she is alone she reveals herself to be part of Grisha's world, by her natural behaviour: 'Она весела, иуна, непосредственно, проста.' They even suggested that she has elements of Lizochka's 'не подавляй...

---

34 Ibid., section 26. Along similar lines, but with a different angle, Lelikov noted that the relationship between Masha and Grisha is just developing; as will be discussed later in this chapter, he wrote that they do not love each other yet, but have the potential to do so. If Masha falls in love with Grisha, she will leave Stepanov. If not, then she will stay. Partitura, p. 36.

35 Partitura, p. 24
zhelanii' attitude. However, living in Stepanov's world, 'Masha khorosh o usvoila "svetskie manery" etiketa i povedeniia etogo kruga.' This is evident in the film's opening scenes, in which Masha is joyfully alone, in the orchard, happy just being young and healthy. But as the orchard changes, so does she. The closer she gets to the dacha, the more cultivated the orchard looks. The trees are pruned, there are marble statues and a fountain, and these things inhibit Masha: 'Vse eto deistvu et uzhe v sotyi raz na sostoianie Mash.' Finally, beneath Tzitronov's lustful gaze, she loses her youth, spontaneity and simplicity. Her walk changes: 'Ona, kak by podravnivaetsia pod obstanovku, pod stil' dachi Stepanovykh.' As she approaches the house, to her discomfort, she becomes as constrained as her husband: 'Seichas ona uzhe Masha Stepanova.' She looks forward to Grisha's arrival precisely because, she thinks, he has nothing contrived about him.

The filmmakers were aware, as suggested earlier, that viewers are all too quick to look for romantic situations in relationships between men and women. The viewers will, therefore, ask themselves whether or not Masha loves Grisha. But, explained Lelikov, in reality things are slightly more complicated: 'fil'm zasta et Grishu i Mashu v tot period, kogda oni nachinaiut, eshche tol'ko "nachinaiut vliubliat'sia." [...] Ved' problema fil'ma i zakliuchaetsia v tom, —

---

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 28
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 29
41 Grisha's arrival is said to be 'ta "otdushina", ta razriadka atmosfery dachi Stepanovykh, vsego etogo uslovnogo etiketa, kotorye tak nadoeli Mashe.' Ibid., p. 34.
42 See: Partitura, p. 34.
Far more significant than Masha's possible romantic feelings towards the young man, however, is the fact that she is drawn to him as a representative of the new society, as her ideal: 'Masha [...] tiagoteet k novomu molodomu cheloveku, v mirovoozrenii i povedenii kotorogo ona vidit svoi ideal — novuiu prekrasnuiu zhizn'. She knows that he is her ideal because, unlike Stepanov, as shown below, Masha is already familiar with the principles Grisha and his Komsomol friends stand for, before his arrival at the dacha.

In their work on the film, the director and those working with him took particular care to portray Grisha as a highly moral young man. Lelikov wrote about the character in great detail, explaining his situation by contrasting him positively with Balzac's Eugène de Rastignac:

'Fokin ne Rastin'jak [...] On stroitel' novogo obschestva. On ne oppozitsioner politiki praviashchei partii, a ee predstavitel'. On komsomolets. On ne amoralen, a sozdaet novuiu moral'.

\[43\] Ibid., pp. 34-36.

\[44\] Ibid., p. 21.

\[45\] Lelikov wrote that if until Grisha's arrival Stepanov 'ne soprikasalsia s Fokinym i ne mog na sebe ispytat' otoshenii molodykh liudei, to dla Mash, prikhod Fokina est' uzhe razvitie, prodolzhenie etikh otoshenii.' He explained that Masha already knows Grisha before the visit, and that 'Sleduet polagat', chto Mashe izvestny i te moral'nye "kompleksy", kotorye molodezh'yu vydvigaiutsia. Ona etimi voprosami tak zhe interesuetsia tem bolee, chto oni dla nee imeiut osobenno ostroe znachenie.' Ibid., p. 24.

\[46\] Ibid., p. 34. A reference to Eugène de Rastignac, one of Honoré de Balzac's main characters in the series Scènes de la Vie Parisienne, particularly Le Père Goriot. Helped by admiring women, the humble student rises to success in corrupt Paris society. By contrast, Lev Levin, writing about
The Komsomol youth is shown to be politically and morally honourable. As for Grisha and Masha's kiss, the filmmakers saw it as the symbolic culmination of the meeting between the nobility of ideas, embodied in Grisha, and the beauty of human emotions, embodied in Masha.

Lelikov's notebooks show the film to be very carefully thought out, particularly on the level of psychology. Room, with the help of Ferdinandov and others, attempted to flesh out his characters by providing them with backgrounds, emotions and other motivating forces. These are not present in Olesha's text, and they are not always evident in the film, but they are there in the notes, showing that they were used as actors' tools. These various comments reveal how Room's understanding of Olesha's ideas took the plot beyond the screenplay, in terms of inner logic. It is this sensitivity to, and treatment of, Olesha's work which compounds what the writer's critics saw as the original's ideological and aesthetic flaws.

Reassessment and reconciliation: Stepanov and Grisha

Like Olesha, Room understood the supreme importance of tolerance amongst people with different ideologies and lifestyles in a society which was undergoing a great shift in values and direction. He could see that adaptation takes time and

Olesha's Kavalerov, suggests that 'Na samom dele, vyzyvaia obraz Toma Virilri, Kavalerov mechtal o sud'be Ezhenia Rastin'iaka.' See: Levin, Na znakomye temy, p. 92.

47His attitude to Stepanov is contained within the following sentence: 'Grisha Fokin iunosha novogo mira ravniaetsia na luchshikh i kak khozaiain berezhet ikh.' Partitura, p. 34.

48Lelikov noted that the evening walk represents: 'Raskrytie mnogoobrazii (kompleks Fokina i krasota chelovecheskikh chuvstv: Fokin-Masha-potselui'). Book Three, p. 183.
causes many problems, on both a personal and a political level. The focus for this in Strogii junosha, as seen in Chapter Five, lies in the evolution of the way Stepanov and Grisha perceive each other. As will be shown below, the production notebooks indicate that Room and his colleagues on the set regarded Masha as the catalyst for the process of mutual reassessment, through the way in which Stepanov and Grisha relate to her. The former learns to respect his junior rival. Similarly, the latter comes to see that Masha’s husband is a man worthy of respect and admiration, given that he has been honoured by no less than the government. In the notebooks, Room reinforces Olesha’s message concerning the desirability of ideological and personal reconciliation.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Iulian Stepanov has both positive and negative characteristics, in ideological terms. His situation is plainly described in Lelikov’s notebooks, in which the latter noted that Tsitronov is one aspect of Stepanov. For the rest, he wrote that: ‘Stepanov est’ intelligent, vyshedshii iz starogo obshestvennogo uklada, pereshedshii na storonu sotsializma, no eshche mnogo imeiushchii v svoem mirovozzrenii starykh, odriakhlevshikh perezhitkov.’ Examples of Stepanov’s outmoded attitudes can be found in his behaviour towards Masha. For instance, when he first appears on screen, he kisses her rather stiffly and formally: ‘Ego potselui kazhetsia kakoi-to pechat’iu starykh form povedeniia. ”Tak polagaetsia zdrovat’sia s molodoi zhenoii.” Ot etogo potselui ofitsialen, nepolnotsenen, zaglushen.’ Lelikov explained that Stepanov loves his wife and would gladly have kissed her more ardently, were he not

---

49 As discussed in Chapter Three, Room’s 1927 film Tret’ia Meshchanskaia deals with these very issues.

50 See: Partitura, p. 22.

51 Ibid., p. 29.
constrained by his sense of decorum.\textsuperscript{52} This contrasts with Masha and Grisha's kiss, as well as with the Komsomol girl's principle of fulfilling one's desires. Similarly, Stepanov is concerned that Masha should go to meet Grisha at the train station because that is the polite thing to do. Yet, no sooner have Stepanov's feelings of mistrust and jealousy been stirred, than he behaves boorishly. As Lelikov wrote, Stepanov's politeness is only superficial.\textsuperscript{53}

The first changes occur within Stepanov upon the arrival of Grisha Fokin at the dacha. The young Komsomol enthusiast disrupts the usual flow of things in the household, and brings about a 'perelom v mirovozzrenii doktora'.\textsuperscript{54} The doctor consequently begins to feel increasing sympathy towards the young people. Through this, he gains a deeper understanding of their negative views of 'byt', and sees why, for them, the old-fashioned conventions and habits of everyday life are an anachronism.\textsuperscript{55} In addition to the above description, Stepanov was defined, in the filming notes, as:

'Staryi intelligyent, chestno otdaiushchii svoi znaniia proletariatu, i stremiashchiiia sam "perestroit'sia", poniat' te novye sviazi i otnoshenia, kotorye slozhiis' i skladyvaiutsia na ego glazakh'.\textsuperscript{56}

It is the desire and ability to find a place for himself in the new society, to help that society, which are his redeeming features and make him into a positive character.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., p. 24.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p. 29
Stepanov's broad-mindedness shines through also in his professional attitude. Although the doctor is said to be going to London to represent Soviet medicine at an international congress, one should not assume that he works only within his narrow sphere of interest — fighting cancer. On the contrary, he calls himself a humanist, and has interests beyond his immediate specialization. In this context, then, *Strogii junosha* recounts how the moral and ethical views of the old intelligentsia, in the person of the genius doctor Stepanov, are being transformed under the influence of the young people's behaviour. As Stepanov comes to reassess his values he changes his outlook towards the young people and their relationships. In the hospital sequence, the most significant part of the film as far as ideology is concerned, during his discussion with the patient, the doctor reveals a growing interest in politics. More specifically, Lelikov wrote, the scene suggests that the doctor has read some Marx. Above all, however, it clearly reveals Stepanov to be a forward-looking man.

Just as Stepanov re-evaluates his views of the young people, so Grisha is forced to reassess his views of Stepanov very early in the plot. He then spends part of the film trying to convince his friends that Stepanov is worthy of respect. Grisha himself is presented as slightly naive, foolish and stubborn, but with feelings which are essentially ideologically sound. In a key example of this, Grisha is seen walking to the Stepanovs' dacha. As he approaches he stops,

57Ibid.

58Ibid., p. 9

59Lelikov wrote that the scene in the hospital ward, during which Stepanov talks to the young patient and her friends, is 'Glavnyi epizod stsenariia' because it involves the "Rozhdenie" novogo cheloveka — Stepanova.' See: *Book Three*, p. 181.

60Ibid.
apparently stunned by the beauty and grandeur of the house and grounds.\textsuperscript{61} The viewer, like Olesha's reader, is led to believe, for an instant, that Grisha Fokin is shocked by the splendour of his surroundings \textit{per se}. It is explained that, although such is the audience's natural assumption, this would not fit with Grisha's characterization, for he is no provincial or kolkhoz-worker, but a town-dweller, a gymnast and a future engineer. He has seen clumps of trees in the Parks of Culture, he has seen luxurious dachas just outside his town, he has seen gardeners at work before, he has flowers at home, and, above all, he has certainly seen the car before as Stepanov often drives around town in it. Why, then, is Grisha so taken aback, wrote Lelikov? The explanation can be found in the subsequent conversation between Grisha and Tsitronov, in which the former is genuinely amazed, despite himself, at the information that the government rewards the doctor with material tokens of its esteem.\textsuperscript{62} Indeed, the filmmakers were concerned with conveying to the audience that specialists, in the Soviet Union, were provided with all the necessary conditions to ensure the optimum development of their genius and talents, for: 'V etom skazyvaetsia blagosostoianie nashei strany.'\textsuperscript{63}

As already discussed, in socialist terms, bourgeois wealth, like the young Tsitronov's, is bad because it is unearned. Socialist wealth, like Stepanov's, is good, because it is a just reward for work from which the state also benefits. In an example of the notebooks spelling out clearly the motivation behind character behaviour, where Olesha does not, Lelikov explained Grisha's stopping before the Stepanovs' gate. He expanded on the young man's reactions, saying that:

\footnotesize
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., p. 42.
\textsuperscript{62}'Fokin deistvitel'no nevol'no dlaia udivilsia'. See: \textit{Partitura}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{63}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
'On, konechno, znal, chto Stepanovykh partiia i pravitel'stvvo okruzhayet vsemi material'nymi blagami, daby sozdati usloviia dlia maksimal'nogo proiavleniia ikh talantov i geniia. No Fokin ne predpolagal shirotu i kachestvo etikh zabot. On pervye uвидал, v chem real'no vyrazhena eta zabota.'^64

It transpires, then, that he is not so much amazed at the beauty of the place, as struck by the realization of how great Stepanov's significance for the country must be. This, in turn, sets him thinking about his own position in relation to this genius: 'On zdes' pervyye zadumalsia nad tem, kak zhe on — komsomolets Fokin, dolzhen otnosit'sia k etomu genial'nomu doktoru.'^65 This gains an added dimension of irony when one understands in what dismissive terms (related below) Grisha had previously thought of Stepanov.

In yet another illustration of how much thought was put by Room, Ferdinandov and others into the characterization of the main protagonists in the film Strogii iunosh. Lelikov's notes include versions of the history of Grisha's relationship with the Stepanovs. Grisha and Masha have either known each other since before her marriage to Stepanov, or they met after her marriage, through her sporting activities. In any case, they know each other already, and Masha has invited Grisha to her home for the first time.^66 To complicate matters, Grisha is in love with Masha, and thinks of her husband abstractly and contemptuously as 'etot profesor'.^67 His 'rival', however, turns out to be no ordinary husband, but a figure of political importance. Before this realization, Grisha had 'probably' thought the same as Diskobol, that he had every right to take Masha away from Stepanov.

---

^64See: Partitura., p. 46

^65Ibid.

^66Ibid., p. 24.

^67Ibid., p. 48.
Indeed, he had gone to the dacha with that very intention. His feelings for Masha, and his plans, explain his cheerful confidence and athletic energy as he walks from the station, despite not knowing the way. Upon his arrival, however, he stops at the gate, pondering his new moral dilemma: a Komsomol member should be true to his feelings in his deeds, but is it not a crime towards his country, towards his Party, to steal the wife of a professor whose work the country needs, even if he loves her?

In this section, I have demonstrated how the notebooks relating to the making of Strogii iunosha placed even greater emphasis than Olesha on the significance of reassessment and reconciliation between opposing ideologies and personalities. Lelikov, reflecting Room’s views as director, explicitly explained how Stepanov comes to grasp that, although Masha is undoubtedly also attracted to Grisha's youthful beauty, she admires him primarily for the freshness and naive nobility of his ideological and moral convictions. He showed how the initially jealous and contemptuous husband learns to respect and admire his young 'rival' too, and so wins the 'competition'. The film director also made it clear that the reverse process takes place too, whereby Grisha understands that he was wrong to condemn Stepanov for his age and attitude, when he sees how the government rewards him for his professional contribution to the Soviet Union. From the above, it is evident that Room was at least as desperate as Olesha to convey the need for, and benefits of, mutual tolerance and understanding in a time of great political and personal transition and uncertainty. On the basis of the notebooks, as I have shown, the director’s intentions regarding the ideological content of Strogii iunosha were to strengthen the message of the screenplay.

68Ibid.

69Ibid., p. 38.

70Ibid., p. 48.
Conclusion

The aspiration to reinforce Olesha's ideological message in Strogii junosha can be seen in the treatment of Olesha's themes, primarily that of conflicting ideologies within a changing society, and the need for 'reassessment and reconciliation' in such a context. These themes are personified in the relationship between the characters of Stepanov and Grisha, in particular, as well as being addressed in the other characters at various stages on the journey towards a perfect socialist future and the context of that socialist Soviet framework. In terms of the last of these, it is clear from the production notebooks that the journey towards the bright Soviet future was seen to be far from over. As a result, distinct features of Soviet reality in the 1930s are sharpened by Room and his colleagues, as are the remnants of bourgeois society judged to have value. Soviet reality is seen to embrace un-Soviet luxury and opulence, so long as it is deserved. The result of this is a Soviet reality even less recognizably socialist than that found in Olesha's text.

In terms of the filmmaker's treatment of the central themes of the old and the new, and reassessment and reconciliation, the notebooks make it clear that Room, in order to be faithful to Olesha's aims and ideas, went beyond the scenario. The carefully thought out approach for the film production ensures that opposing viewpoints and ways of living are clearly represented and the value of each confirmed by accommodation and reassessment of prejudices. While true to Olesha's aim, this could only add to latent criticism of Soviet values: if things non-Soviet had value, then the perfection of the Soviet way had to be brought into question. Above all, the value of the old, as well as that of the new, is focused in the development of Stepanov's and Grisha's understanding of each other. The former comes to esteem the youth, and benefits from the admiration of a representative of the Komsomol. Again, the notebooks confirm that Room was reinforcing Olesha's concept of mutual need and benefit. This, however, could
only embellish features judged to have been flaws in the written version of *Strogii iunosha*.

The notebooks on Room's film reveal how carefully the director studied and discussed the underlying meanings and motivations behind the original text. This was both in order to ensure that his version had weight and depth to it, and because he shared Olesha's desire for the work to convey a message of tolerance. Through a thorough analysis of production notebooks kept by his co-workers during the making of the film, this chapter has demonstrated how it is Room's profound understanding of, and sympathy towards, Olesha's *Strogii iunosha*, which caused him to emphasize the writer's concerns. Ironically, it is Room's very faithfulness to the spirit of Olesha's work and the attempt to give it clear, concrete realization, which caused it to be banned. Thus, although the critics had been led to expect that the film would correct what they saw as the written text's failings by rendering Olesha's ideas more explicitly, the very faithfulness of Room's interpretation made virtually certain that the film would have to be shelved.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Strogii iunosha was an important experiment and a lesson for those involved. The written and the screen versions of Strogii iunosha represent pivotal moments in both the writer’s and the director’s careers. Both artists had held high hopes that their work would legitimize their ideological positions as well as their artistic status in official eyes. It was, above all, a chance for Olesha and Room to redeem themselves after earlier disgraces.

Room was under an enormous amount of pressure to make a successful film, artistically and commercially, with Strogii iunosha. Having been thrown out of Mosfilm for failing to satisfy the studio heads in Moscow while working on a previous film, he had arrived in Kiev with much to prove. He had to show himself to be an asset to the studio, as a creative artist and as a responsible director. With such serious concerns to consider, it is hardly surprising that an enormous amount of work and time went into the making of the film.

Room’s film career spanned over fifty years and encompassed notable artistic experiments and innovations (including Tret’ia Meshchanskaia, of 1927), popular successes and official triumphs. But it also embraced creative failures and disappointments, as was shown in Chapter Three. Whereas in his earlier films Room had concentrated on expanding the boundaries of filmmaking, for example by the introduction of sound to film, in his later work he had come to know the possibilities and the limitations of the medium, and devoted his skills more to perfecting his art than to seeking further innovation. Between these two periods, however, there were devastating scandals, through which Room learnt the hard
way about the rules of the Soviet film industry. Of these scandals, the one surrounding Strogii iunosha was the most unexpected and crippling. In the eyes of the critics he had failed both to correct the supposed errors of the writer's text and to satisfy Olesha's ambition to invent a new art form, the watchable yet literary film (the other aspect of the unstilted and readable, yet functional, scenario project).

Olesha knew that Strogii iunosha would be a decisive work as far as the making or breaking of his career was concerned. He was in a precarious position and needed to show that he could be of use as a writer in the new, socialist society. When, in 1927, he had published his first major prose work, Zavist', Olesha had provoked a great deal of critical interest and admiration for his fresh use of imagery, his bold content and engaging, original narrative style, as explained in Chapter Two. These same elements which drew readers to his work soon began to disturb officials and to cause difficulties for the writer. In the later part of his career, by contrast, Olesha did not produce any fictional works of great inspiration. Rather, he wrote more ideologically and stylistically conformist works, as well as more confessionally introspective fragments concerning his inability to write as he used to. The start of this downward spiral in his creativity can be traced to Strogii iunosha.

In terms of Strogii iunosha, Olesha's interest in the visual, including cinematic devices and techniques, made him an obvious choice to answer the official call for writers to work for the film industry as scriptwriters. His work was more experimental than that of many others, aiming to create a self-standing work of literature as well as a functional scenario. He attempted to write in a way which would engage the reader as well as the future viewer. When many critics responded negatively, as shown in Chapter Five, claiming that the piece was unpersuasive in plot terms, undesirable in ideological terms and excessively
concerned with aesthetics in stylistic terms, Olesha insisted that the film version would correct these perceived failings.

Olesha had put a great deal of thought into the piece, therefore, and attempted to find a way to reconcile himself and his art to official demands for a Socialist Realist work without capitulating entirely to any ideological or literary template. As elaborated in Chapter Four, his method was to introduce elements of ambiguity into the plot, the thematics and the characterization within Strogii iunosha. These were faithfully retained and even heightened in Room's translation of the work for the screen. The resulting film was judged to be too abstract, too aesthetically orientated and artificially stylized and too removed from real-life issues. In the light of this it was banned.

The central concern of this thesis has been to explain why the film version of Strogii iunosha was banned when the literary original was not. Two broad explanations were identified at the outset. One of these involved the changing political and ideological context for artistic creation. This theme was associated with Jerry Heil's work. The other proposed reason for the banning rested on the effects of transposition from the written medium to the cinematic. This was derived from the work of Irina Grashchenkova. It was clear from the start that there were grounds to support both propositions, which has been confirmed by the research in this thesis. The claims are not mutually exclusive, and both contribute to the fate of the film. However, as the bulk of the evidence drawn from the production notebooks suggests, a third element is crucial to understanding why the film was banned but the written text was not.

The changes in the political context surrounding each of the works cannot be ignored. Between 1933, when the project was first conceived, and 1936, when it met its demise, the Soviet Union had changed. Socialist Realism had become
more firmly embedded, imposing restrictions and limitations on artistic creation, while formal innovation and artistic experimentation had been effectively outlawed. Whereas Olesha had begun his part of the project in a period which had not yet completely clamped down upon creative expansion and challenge, Room's film was completed at a time when, officially, there was no room for any individual experimentation in the arts.

The climate shift was the explanation offered by Olesha for the different fates of the film and the book. As was noted in Chapter Seven, after the film's banning, Olesha said he could only guess that the film had been refused release primarily due to the change in political circumstances between the time of his starting the script, in 1933, and the film's making, in 1935. Another year later, when the film was banned in 1936, the weight behind this argument becomes still greater.

A further sign of the importance of changing circumstances is the position of the Kiev Studio officials. The banning, which was decreed by the head of Ukrainfilm, the body responsible for the Kiev studio, came as a shock to those at the studio who had given the director artistic and financial support over the last two years, even though they had long been all too aware of Room's profligate and inefficient use of time and money. There is no doubt that these officials were taken by surprise as they were overtaken by change. They had been optimistic about the prospects for several artistically ambitious projects in 1935, which they themselves were then strongly obliged to condemn for these very same experimental and aesthetic qualities in 1936.

Above all, however, it was not those in charge of the Kiev studio but their superiors at Ukrainfilm, driven by the mood in Moscow, who ruined the film's commercial possibilities. The film studio officials suffered at least as much as
Olesha and Room did because, like the creative duo, they too had not reduced their ambition to match the new mood. Not only were the top Kiev studio officials sacked, but the studio was also subsequently under great pressure to redeem itself with future productions. Room and Olesha, meanwhile, were publicly vilified for abusing their freedom and the goodwill shown towards them by the studio. Room was initially banned from further filmmaking (although by 1939 he was allowed to resume his directorial career). Olesha was in disgrace. All of this demonstrated how much times had changed.

However, despite Olesha's own view and the clear evidence that altered conditions were important, other dimensions of the problems faced by Olesha and Room cannot be overlooked. The times had changed, but so too had Strogii iunosha itself, in part simply due to its transposition from page to screen. The original written version had not been without problems. There is evidence to indicate that the move into cinematic form reinforced these problems and made them more apparent because of the nature of the medium.

When Olesha's 'p'esa dlia kinematografa' was first published, the majority of contemporary critics were harsh in their criticism of the plot and thematic content of Olesha's work, finding the issues and the characters trivial and absurd and the work as a whole lacking in social relevance. Some found the writer's literary style unsuited to the scenario form, others felt that his originality would be lost once the text left the page. Ultimately, however, Olesha was given enough benefit of the doubt to ensure that the film went into production with an enormous budget and no administrative constraints.

The ideological problems raised by Olesha's prose were compounded by the issue of the change in medium. By its nature film is more specific than literature; it therefore highlights certain aspects of the written text, yet it cannot
represent other elements, including some metaphors. Similarly, the screen alone (without the use of voice-over) cannot reveal interior thought and emotion in such an explicit way as the page can. This element of non-specificity, added to camera and lighting techniques, such as the cameraman Iurii Ekel'chik's device of emphasizing whiteness and lengthy shot duration, gave Strogii iunosha a fantastic quality. Furthermore, Gavriil Popov's music complemented the camerawork, and also conveyed Room's sense of humour and irony.

The problems of transferring ideas and images from page to screen are numerous, as noted in the discussion of adaptation in the Introduction. The evidence from the foregoing analysis of Strogii iunosha confirms that, even where writer and director are striving to create a fusion that will work equally on the page and on the screen, there are problems in moving from one medium to another. The scenario offers an architectural sketch for a film, as registered in Chapter Two. As critics of Olesha's written template noted (discussed in Chapter Five), the problems involved include the loss of the effects of literary skill when passages are reduced to the concrete visual manifestation of an idea, or, conversely, the way in which the scenario can offer only a pared down version of the image fully to be seen on the screen.

Some elements of the written text, even where great care has been taken to overcome the problem, remain unfilmable. This can lead to the removal of scenes and images, as with the metaphoric concept of Grisha brushing away the 'sledy davki' of his train journey (discussed in Chapter Seven). It can also lead simply to the manifestation of passages which were inchoate in the original, such as Grisha's dream sequence, which is true to the spirit of the written text, but is not in it, and which replaces imagination with physical reality.
Another effect of the transition from page to screen, seen in Chapter Seven, was the loss of key elements in the characterization of Grisha. Among other things, this stemmed from the omission of the scene in which he was to repair a tram wire, while an unscripted scene involving chariot racing was added. The screen Grisha becomes a less specifically delineated figure. He is shown as an effete daydreamer rather than a pragmatic young communist. Evidently, both the written text and the filmed text can, therefore, supply either too much or too little detail for successful absorption by the other medium.

Both the passage of time and the change of political circumstances, on the one hand, and the effects of translation from page to screen, on the other, affected the outcome of Strogii iunosha. The context had changed, but it was the sum of the formal changes made from one medium to the other that was critical in making the film unacceptable in a way in which the scenario was not, whether because these changes added concrete and specific detail, or because they dissipated it. Moreover, it should be noted that although the political environment had changed, Olesha's original written version was never proscribed.

However, as this thesis has demonstrated by reference to the previously ignored production notebooks for the film, it was not simply the intrinsic and inevitable problems of transition from one medium to another that gave rise to those elements in the film which were clearly different from the written text, and which caused offence to such an extent that the film was banned. The vital difference was made by Room. As was seen in Chapters Six, Seven and particularly Chapter Eight, all that emerged on the screen was Room's intention. The differences from page to screen version were not merely those inherent in the natures of the mediums, they were, above all, the result of the director's conscious effort. Paradoxically, that conscious effort was prompted by (and actually demonstrated) his closeness to Olesha's ideas, and his faithfulness to the writer's
conception. Ironically, it was Room's absolute faithfulness to Olesha's part of the creation that led him to go beyond the original and, by doing so, to make it wholly unacceptable to the authorities. The director had seen what others had failed to see in Olesha's writing, and he had given it enhanced cinematic realization.

Room and his film crew worked hard to retain the ambiguous and ironic spirit present in much of Olesha's text. They took care to present the opposing viewpoints of those representing 'the old' and those representing 'the new', thereby confirming the value of reassessing prejudices and accommodating others in the name of the 'radiant future.' This, however, was read as criticism of Soviet values. The lavish mise en scène, together with Room's play on the classicism of the young Communists, gave the film a texture which went beyond Olesha's idiosyncratic blueprint, whilst remaining true to it. As demonstrated in Chapter Eight, Room and his team worked hard to realize Olesha's vision and ideas. Precisely because of their success in this aim, the combined effect was branded 'formalist', and thereby became ideologically unacceptable.

The question at the heart of this thesis is whether it was the changing political context or the shift from one medium to the other which allowed Olesha's Strogii iunosha to be published yet caused Room's to be banned. The answer to this question has been shown to be threefold. The decrease in ideological tolerance between 1934 and 1936 undoubtedly played a part in the different fates of the works, as did the change in medium, which exacerbated some of the original's problems. However, the most significant factor was the extreme faithfulness of spirit in Room's transposition of the written text to the screen. In his realization of the screenplay, Room had enhanced Strogii iunosha's supposed deficiencies of form and content. Olesha's humour, his doubts, his irony and his pleas for tolerance of difference, as well as his experimentation, were all not only not eliminated from Room's film, but rather were more emphatically
present and visible than before. While both the change in the prevailing political atmosphere during the years in question and the effects of the differences in the natures of literature and cinema are relevant to explaining why the film was banned yet the scenario was not, the crucial factor is the director himself. The real difference was made by Room's enduring fidelity to the original, which simultaneously kept the film true to Olesha's vision and surpassed it.
This bibliography is divided into the following sections:

I. Iurii Olesha, comprising primary materials, divided into archival materials, books and contributions to journals and collective volumes; and secondary materials;

II. Abram Room, comprising primary materials, divided into archival materials, including those by Boris Ferdinando and Isai Lelikov, publications in books and journal publications; and secondary materials;

III. Cultural Background and

IV. Theory of film and literature.

I. Iurii Olesha

A. Primary materials

i) Archival materials

'Belaia vysokaia dver', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Devochka v tsirke', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 230-242

'Devushka i smert', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271
'Golyi korol', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 256-259

'Gonchie psy', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Ja bol'she ne budu', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Kino-filosofsiia', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 407

'Kino za 20 let', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 219

'Ksendz, pepeesovets, pomeshchik'/Pomeshchik: Bol'sheviki zakhvatili Ukrainu...' RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 221

'Maiak', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Napisana li istoriia aviatsii?', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 378.

'Ogon', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 248-254

'Oshibka inzhenera Kochina', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271


'Strogii iunosha', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Tri tolstiaka', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Tri tolstiaka' notes for a slide film, RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 225-6

'V gorode ostalis' odni deti', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'V Parizhe stroitsa vsemirnaia vystavka...', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

'Zhizn' moia zamechatel'na uzhe tem...', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 451, p. 1

Olesha, Iurii, and Macheret, Aleksandr, 'Nemtsy v Ispanii', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

Olesha, Iurii and Macheret, Aleksandr, Val'ter/Lager' na bolote/Bolotnye soldaty, RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271
Olesha, Iurii, and Naroditskii, A. A., 'Turkmenskii kinokontsert', 1943, Dovzhenko film studio, Kiev

Olesha, Iurii, and Riskind, Veniamin, 'Primenenie parashiuta', RGALI, f. 358, op. 2, ed. khr. 199-271

ii) Books

In Russian

Ni dnia bez strochki. Sovetskaia Rossiia, Moscow, 1965,

Povesti i rasskazy. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow, 1965

P’esy. Stat’i o teatre i dramaturgii. Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1968

Izbrannoe. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow, 1974

Kniga proshchaniia. Vagrius, Moscow, 1999

In English


iii) Contributions to journals and collective volumes

'Den", 30 dnei. 1931, no. 10-11, pp. 12-16

'Neobkhodimost' perestroiki mne iasn', 30 dnei. 1932, no. 5, pp. 67-68

'Nauchit'sia byt' stsenaristom', Kinogazeta, no. 32 (583), 4 July 1933, p. 1

'Diskobol', Literaturnaia gazeta, 28 June 1934

"'Strogii iunosha". Pervaia kinop'esa Iu. Oleshi', Sovetskoе iskusstvo, 5 July 1934,
no. 31 (197), p. 2

"'Strogii iunosha". Otryvok iz p'esy dlia kinematografa', Sovetskoе iskusstvo, 17
July 1934, no. 33 (199), p. 3

'Strogii iunosha. P'esa dlia kinematografa', Novyi mir, 1934, no. 8, pp. 66-89

'Krasota sily', Vecherniaia Moskva, no. 169, (25 July 1934), p. 1

Karlov, lurii [lurii Olesha], 'Divano-krovat', Krokodil, 23 October 1934

'Beseda s chitateliami', Literaturnyi kritik, 1935, no. 12, pp. 152-65

'Byt' na urovne kinoiskusstva', Sovetskoе iskusstvo, 1935, no. 3, p. 16

'Kardinal'nye voprosy', 30 dnei, 1935, no. 12, pp. 45-50

"Komsomol'ke Chernovoi" (Otvet na pis'mo, napеchatannoe v No. 1 "Molodoi
gvardi"");, Molodaia gvardiia, 1935, no. 4, pp. 159-60

'Zakaz na strashnoe', 30 dnei, 1936, no. 2, pp. 33-36

4, pp. 14-45

'Zamechatel'nyi fil'm', Literaturnaia gazeta, no. 70 (706), 26 December 1937, p. 5

'Devochka v tsirke', in Fil'my-skazki. Stsenarii risovannykh fil'mov, vol. 5,
Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1958, pp. 46-77
'Ogon', Iz istorii kino, vol. 6, Moscow, 1965, pp. 65-87

'Angel', Chast' rechi, no. 5, 1983-4, pp. 137-44


"'Stil' velikoi derzhavy...". Rech' Iu. K. Oleshi na obshchemoskovskom sobranii pisatelei, posviashchennom bor'be s formalizmom i naturalizmom v literature i iskusstve, 16 marta 1936', Ogonek, 1991, no. 31, pp. 22-25


'Poet i koroleva', in Vera Kholodnaia: K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia, B. B. Ziukov, ed., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1995

'My dolzhny ostavit' mnozhestvo svidetel'stv...', Znamia, 1996, no. 10, pp. 155-81

B. Secondary materials

A.,

'Vzaimnaia samoproverka', Literaturnaia gazeta, 15 February 1935, no. 9

(500)

Aborskii, Aleksandr Ivanovich,
'Iurii Olesha. Stranitsy vospominanii', unpublished, Dovzhenko Film Studio Museum, Kiev

Appel, Sabine,

_"Zavist'" und "Zagovor čuvstv". Ein Vergleich des Romans mit seiner dramatisierten Fassung_, Sagner in Kommission, Munich, 1973

Barratt, Andrew,

_Yurii Olesha's Envy_, Department of Russian Language and Literature, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 1981

Beaujour, Elizabeth Klosty,


'Proust-Envy: Fiction and Autobiography in the Works of Iurii Olesha',

_Studies in 20th Century Literature_, 1977, no. 1, pp. 123-34

Belinkov, A.,

_Sdacha i gibel' sovetskogo intelligenta. Iurii Olesha_, RIK "Kul'tura", Moscow, 1991

Chudakova, M. O.,

_Masterstvo Iuriia Oleshi_, Nauka, Moscow, 1972

Cornwell, Neil,


'Olesha's "Envy'", in _The Structural Analysis of Russian Narrative Fiction_, J. Andrew, ed., Department of Russian Studies, University of Keele, Keele, 1984, pp. 115-36
'At the Circus with Olesha and Siniavskii', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 71, 1993, no. 1, pp. 1-13

Croft, Lee B.,

'Charlie Chaplin and Olesha's *Envy*', *College Language Association Journal*, vol. 21, 1978, no. 4, pp. 525-37

Drawicz, Andrzej,

'Jurij Olesa, auteur de *L'envie*', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, vol. 8, 1967, no. 3, pp. 349-68

Ehre, Milton,

'Olesha's *Zavist*': Utopia and Dytropia', *Slavic review*, vol. 50, 1991, pp. 601-11

Ermolenko, G. V. and Badikov, V. V.,

'Rasskaz Iuriia Oleshi "Angel" (opyt proverochnoi atributsii)', *Filologicheskie nauki*, no. 6, 1983, pp. 66-70

Gabrilovich, E.,

*Chetyre chetverti*, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1975

Goffenshefer, V.,

'Sorevnovanie s deistvitel'nost'iu', *Literaturnyi kritik*, 1934, no. 11, pp. 70-93

Gutorovich, A.,

'Gnevnyi golos Ukrainy', *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 9 May 1942, no. 107 (5202), p. 4

Hallett, Richard,

'Problems of communication in Yury Olesha's *Zavist* and *Zagovor chuvstv*', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 1982, pp. 103-18
Harkins, William E.,

'No Day Without A Line: The World of Iurii Olesha' in Russian Literature
and American Critics. In Honor of Deming B. Brown, Kenneth N.
Brostrom, ed., Papers in Slavic Philology, no. 4, University of Michigan
Press, Ann Arbor, 1984, pp. 95-101

'The philosophical tales of Jurij Oleša', in Orbis Scriptus: Dmitrij
Tschižewskij zum 70. Geburtstag. Dietrich Gerhardt et al., eds., Munich,
Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1966, pp. 349-54

'The Theme of Sterility in Olesha's Envy', Slavic Review, vol. 25, 1966,
no. 3, pp. 443-57

Houk, Guy Robert,

The Rout of Metaphor: Yury Olesha and his reader, 1927-1934,

'Olesha in the Thirties', unpublished conference paper delivered at the
28th National Convention of the American Association for the
Advancement of Slavic Studies, 14-17 November 1996, Boston

Ingdahl, Kazimiera,

The Artist and the Creative Act: A Study of Jurij Oleša's Novel Zavist',
Almqvist and Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1984

A Graveyard of Themes. The Genesis of Three Key Works by Iurii
Olesha, Almqvist and Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1994

'Iurii Karlovich Olesha (1899-1960',

Russkie sovetskie pisateli. Prozaiki: bibliograficheskii ukazatel', O. D.
M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina, Leningrad, 1964, pp. 348-67
Jones, R.,

'The primacy of the subjective in the work of Jurij Olesha', Melbourne Slavonic Studies, 1969, no. 3, pp. 3-11

Klimontovich, Nikolai,

'Nochnoi tramvai pisatel'ia Iuriia Oleshi' in Kommersant'-daily, 19 July 1994, no. 132, p. 13

Kulikov, I.,

'O chuvstvakh sotsialisticheskogo cheloveka', Volzhskaia nov', 1935, no. 8-9, pp. 84-88

LeBlanc, Ronald D.,


Levidov, Mikhail,

'V godu dve tysachi tridsat' chetvertom (2034)', Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 November 1934, no. 157 (473), p. 3

'Tema mastera (o kino voobshche i v chastnosti)', Literaturnyi kritik, 1934, no. 10, pp. 180-84

Macheret, A.,

'Za stolikom u shirokogo okna', Iskusstvo kino, 1970, 10, pp. 125-33

Man, Ia. E.,

"'Strogii iunosha". Novoe proizvedenie Iu. Oleshi', Literaturnaia gazeta, 6 July 1934, no. 85 (401), p. 4

Maznin, D.,

'Grisha Fokin otmezhevyvaetsia. Konferentsiia geroev "Strogogo iunosh"

Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 October 1934, no. 143 (459), p. 2
Meisel'man, A.,

'Novye knigi. "Zavist" Iurii Olesha', Zhizn' iskusstva, 22 June 1928, no. 30 (1208), p. 9

Michalski, Milena,


Mikhalkovich, V.,

'Zvuchaniia i znachenia', Iskusstvo kino, 1988, no. 1, pp. 39-43

Miller-Budnitskaia, R.,

'Novyi gumanizm', Literaturnyi sovremennik, 1934, no. 12, pp. 104-09

Nilsson, Nils Åke,


Numano, Mitsuyosi,

'Sud'ba iskusstva Iuriiia Oleshi. Ego zhizn' v metaforakh', Novyi zhurnal, no. 145, 1981, pp. 59-76

Oja, Matt F.,


Ostrovskii, Iu.,

'Problema intelligentsii v tvorchestve Iuriiia Oleshi', Literaturnyi kritik, 1934, no. 2, pp. 8-28
'Otkrytoe pis'mo rabochego litkruzhka Dvoretsstroia pisateliu Iuriu Oleshe',

30 dnei, 1932, no. 3, pp. 63-64

Ozernaia, I.,

"Shtuchki" Ivana Babicheva v pervykh variantakh povesti Iuriia Oleshi

"Zavist'", Literaturnaia ucheba, 1989, no. 2, pp. 158-69

Peppard, Victor,


The Poetics of Yury Olesha, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1989

Pertsov, V.,

"My zhivem vperwe". O tvorchestve Iuriia Oleshi, Sovetskii pisatel',

Moscow, 1976

'Zagovor vysokikh umov', Literaturnaia gazeta, 28 September 1934, no. 130 (446), pp. 2-3

'Pis'mo "staroi komsomolki" Iuriu Karlovichu Oleshe',

Molodaia gvardiia, no. 11, 1935

'Postanovlenie Tresta Ukrainfil'ma o zapreshchenii fil'ma Strogii iunosha, 10 iiunia 1936 g.',

Kino, no. 37, 28 July 1936, p. 4

Prozorov, A.,

'Diskussiia o sotsialisticheskoi morali', Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1935, no. 2, pp. 12-15

Romm, Mikhail,
'Vozvrashchenie zhanra', Kino, Moscow, 23 November 1939, p. 3

Russell, Robert,


Scheffler, Leonore,

'Jurij Olešas Roman "Zavist" — ein Kommentur zur Zeit. Skizze zum Missverständnis der Kritik', Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie, Band xxxvi, 1972, pp. 266-95

Schellenberg, Elke,

'Erzählerischer multiperspektivismus und ideologische disparität ein versuch über Jurij Olešas "Zavist"' in Festschrift für Alfred Rammelmeyer, Hans-Bernd Harder, ed., Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Munich, 1975, pp. 327-50

Shenshin, V. K.,


Shitareva, O. G.,

'Tvorcheskaia istoriia sozdaniia romana "Zavist" lu. Oleshi', Filologicheskie nauki, 1969, no. 4, pp. 82-92

'Ia vsegda byl na konchike lucha...', Russkaia rech', 1989, no. 2, pp. 32-36

Starshinov, Nikolai,

'Jurii Karlovich Olesha', in his Litsa, liki i lichiny. Literaturnye memuary, Moscow, RIF 'Roi', 1994, p. 92
Struve, Gleb,

'Pisatel' nenuzhnykh tem. Tvorcheskaia sud'ba Iuriia Oleshi', Novyi zhurnal, no. 25, 1951, pp. 139-58

Tejerizo, Margaret,

'Augusto Pérez ("Niebla", 1914) and Nikolai Kavalerov ("Envy", 1927) Two Characters in Search of an Identity', unpublished paper delivered at the 'Ilf and Petrov, Kataev and Olesha "Centenary" Conference', University of Sheffield, 2-4 September 1998

Tucker, Janet G.,

Revolution Betrayed: Jurij Olesa's Envy, Slavica Publishers, Inc., Columbus, 1996

Vanchu, Anthony,


Vospominaniia o Iurii Oleshe.

O. Suok-Olesha and E. Pel'son, eds., Sovetskii pisatel', Moscow, 1975

Zhdanov, N.,

'O geroiakh', Literaturnyi sovremennik, 1935, no. 9, pp. 158-62

Zhokovsky, Alexander,

II. Abram Room

A. Primary materials

i) Archival materials, including material by Boris Ferdinandov and Isai Lelikov

Ferdinandov, Boris, *Dnevnik rabot po kartine "Strogii iunosha"*, RGALI, f. 2392, op. 1, ed. khr. 181

Ferdinandov, Boris, 'Trudovoi dogovor', RGALI, f. 2329, op. 1, delo 289

Ferdinandov, Boris, untitled notebook on *Strogii iunosha*, RGALI, f. 2392, op. 1, ed. khr. 119

Lelikov, Isai, untitled notebook ('No. 1'), Dovzhenko Film Studio Museum, Kiev

Lelikov, Isai, untitled notebook ('Partitura'), Dovzhenko Film Studio Museum, Kiev

Lelikov, Isai, untitled notebook ('No. 3'), Dovzhenko Film Studio Museum, Kiev

'Pis’mo A. M. Rooma M. M. Shtraukhu', RGALI, f. 2758, op. 1, ed. khr. 1449, p. 28

'Telegramma A. M. Rooma lu. K. Oleshe', RGALI, f. 358, op. 1, ed. khr. 27, p. 2
ii) Publications in books


('Kratkaia avtobiografiia', p. 7
'Kak ia stal rezhisserom', p. 9
'Moi kinoubezhdeniia', p. 10
'Kartina vysokogo napriazheniia', p. 12
'Tret’ia Meshchanskaia (Beseda s rezhisserom A. M. Room)', pp. 13-14
'Ukhaby', p. 15
'Rezhisser A. Room o svoei kartine', p. 17
'Vstrechaias’ s Barbiusom', p. 20
'Nash opyt', p. 22
'Na podstupakh k vtoroi piatiletke', p. 24
'Sozdadim fil’mu, dostoinuiu iubiliara i epokhi', p. 25
'O fil’me i zhizni letchikov i voennom fil’me voobshche', p. 26
'Kak sozdavalsia fil’m "V gorakh Iugoslavii”', p. 27
'Rossii posviashchaetsia', p. 28
'Tsvety zapozdalye', p. 31
'Kak iabloko na ladoni', p. 32
'Telegramma A. M. Rooma Iu. K. Oleshe', p. 39
iii) Journal publications

'Moi kinoubezhdeniia', Sovetskii ekran, 23 February 1926, no. 8, p. 5

'Ukhaby', Sovetskii ekran, 13 September 1927, no. 37, p. 10

'Na podstupakh k vtoroi Piatiletke', Proletarskoe kino, 1932, no. 4, pp. 8-9

'Serebristaia pyl', Kinomekhanik, December 1953, no. 12, p. 42

Abram Room and Isai Lelikov, 'Mezhdu strokoi i kadrom. Na s”emkakh fil”ma

"Strogii iunosha", Iskusstvo kino, 1996, no. 11, pp. 92-107

B. Secondary materials

'Kinozal' entry on Abram Room's Strogii iunosha at:

(An advertisement for the release of Strogii iunosha, Sovetskoe kino, May-June 1925, nos. 2-3)

(Stills advertising Predatel', Sovetskoe kino, 1926, no. 3)
(An advertisement for Predate!, Sovetskii ekran, 3 August 1926, no. 31)

(A still from Tret'ia Meshchanskaia, Sovetskii ekran, 5 February 1927, no. 6)

(Russian and German advertisements for Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia, Kino i zhizn', 21 March 1930, no. 9)

(A still from Manometr-2, Proletarskoe kino, 1931, no. 10-11)

(Klement'ev, A., advertisement for forthcoming films including Strogi junosha), Kino, 5 September 1935, no. 41 (693), p. 4

(Untitled report on sackings and replacements) Kino, 11 August 1936, no. 39 (751), p. 2

"Tret'ia Meshchanskaia." Rasskaz v dokumentakh i odno intervi'u, Ekran, 1968-69, Moscow, 1969, pp. 22-25

A. V., 'Rezul'taty nechetkoi raboty', Kino, 11 September 1935, no. 42 (694), p. 4

Alpers, B., 'Proryv na "Manometre"', Kino i zhizn', December 1930, no. 36, pp. 10-11

Anon, 'Bed and Sofa', Close Up, 1927, pp. 69-74

Arossev, A., Soviet Cinema, Moscow, [1935]

'Bed and Sofa', National Film Theatre Programme, 1929, London

Bogomolov, Yury, 'Abram Roöm', Soviet Film, 1974, no. 6, pp. 18-19

Bryher, Winifred,
Film Problems of Soviet Russia, Riant Chateau, Territet, 1929

Burns, Paul E.,

'An NEP Moscow address: Abram Room's "Third Meshchanskaia (Bed and Sofa)" in historical context, Film and History, vol. 12, 1982, no. 4, pp. 73-81

Giber, Grigorii,

'Kak snimalas' "Tret’ia Meshchanskaia", Sovetskii ekran, 29 January 1927, no. 5, p. 4

Gr. M.,

'Odnazhdy letom', Kino, 4 August 1934, no. 35 (627), p. 1

Grashchenkova, I.,

Abram Room, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1977


'Tsvety zapozdalye', Rodina, 1994, no. 5, pp. 90-94

Heil, Jerry T.,

'A STRICT YOUTH, an Oneiric Film: Restoration of the Cultural Memory, and Beyond', unpublished paper, October 1991


Hill, Steven P.,

'Bed and Sofa (Tretia Meshchanskaia)', Film Heritage, vol. 7, 1971, no. 1, pp. 17-20
Il’ina, O.,

'Bez chetkikh perspektiv. Kievskaja fabrika' in Kino, 28 October 1935, no. 50 (702), p. 2

Iukov, K.,

'Ukrainskaia kinematografiiia na pod’em', Kino, 23 July 1935, no. 34 (686), p. 2

Lurtsev, V.,

'Stenarii-druoe', Kino, 4 July 1933

K. E.,

'Predupreditel’nyi signal', Kinogazeta, 16 February 1935, no. 8 (660)

Kanevskii, B.,

'Protiv putanitsy v kritike', Radians’ke kino, 1937, no. 1-2, pp. 55-58

'Khudozhestvennye puti zvukovoi fil’my',

Kino i zhizn’, the third ten-day period of May 1930, no. 15, p. 7

Khvylia, A. A.,

'Ukrainskaia sovetskaia kinematografiiia', Kino, 11 September 1936, no. 44 (756), p. 1

Kieffer, Anne,

'Abram Room (1894–1976)', Jeune cinéma, no. 232, June 1995, pp. 8-12

Kinematografist,

'Ukrainskii kinozhurnal', Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 62-64

Korotkii, V.

"'Tret’ia Meshchanskaia" Abrama Rooma: nekotorye nachala analiza fil’m’, Tiani-tolkai, no. 1, 1993, pp. 33-60
Kurs, A.,

'Molodaia pleiada', Sovetskii ekran, 23 February 1926, no. 8

Len-a, E.,

'Dve diskussii', Kino, 28 July 1934, no. 34 (626), p. 3.

Levkoev, G.,

'Opyt ozvuchaniia nemoi fil'my. ("Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia"), Sovetskoe kino, 1933, no. 7, pp. 52-57

Mel'nichenko, P.,

"Son Fokina" (Iz znimannia "Strogogo iunaka"), Radians'ke kino, 1935, no. 1-2, pp. 54-56

N. A.,

O. 'Kogda nachnutsia s''emki', Kino, 30 January 1936, no. 6 (718), p. 5

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm',

Kino, 22 September 1934, no. 43 (635)

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm'

Kino, 6 November 1934, no. 50 (642)

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm',

Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647)

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm',

Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647)

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm',

Kino, 28 November 1934, no. 55 (647)

'Na proizvodstve. Ukrainfil'm',

Kino, 4 October 1934, no. 45 (637)
'Otvetit' delom',

Kino, 11 September 1936, no. 44 (756), p. 2

Pen, Polly and Klavan, Lawrence,


Perepiska G. M. Kozintseva 1922-1973,

V. G. Kozintseva and Ia. L. Butovskii, comps. and annot., Artist.

Rezhisser. Teatr, Moscow, 1998

'Predatel',

Sovetskoe kino. 1926, no. 8

'Prezrennye vragi naroda',

Radiants'ke kino. 1937, no. 1-2, p. 5

Reikh, B.,

'Pravdivyi dokument', Iskusstvo kino, 1941, no. 3, pp. 13-15

Rosenbaum, Jonathan,

'Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchsaetsya (The Ghost that Never Returns)',


Roshal', G.,

'Odin iz zachinatelei...', Iskusstvo kino, 1974, no. 8, pp. 115-17

Shklovskii, V. B.,

'Abraham Room. Tret'ia Meshchanskaia' in his Za sorok let, Iskusstvo,

Moscow, 1965, pp. 104-06

Shtein, A.,

'Sud chesti' in Izbrannye stsenarii sovetskogo kino v shesti toakh, vol. 5,

Goskinoizdat, Moscow, 1951, pp. 529-98
Sokolov, Ippolit,

'Tplan velikikh rabot', Kino i zhizn', April 1930, no. 10, pp. 5-6

'Tekhnicheskaia baza sovetskogo tonkino', Kino i zhizn', December 1930,
no. 12, pp. 18-19

Sullivan, B.,

'Bed and Sofa/Master of the House', Women and Film, 1972, no. 1, pp. 21-
25

Tkach, M.,

'Bditel'nost', organizovannost', bor'ba za masterstvo', Kino, 11 September
1936, no. 44 (756), p. 2

'Postanovlenie tresta "Ukrainfil'ma" o zapreshchenii fil'ma "Strogii
iunosha". 10 iiunia 1936 goda', Kino (Moscow) 28 July 1936, no. 37
(749), p. 2

Topchii, N.,

"'Strogii iunosha" i ego operator', Radians'ke kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 5-8

Turovskaia, Maya,

'Soviet films of the Cold War' in Stalinism and Soviet Cinema, Richard
Taylor and Derek Spring, eds., Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 131-41

Usievich, V.,

'Za kachestvo', Kino, 16 March 1936, no. 14 (726), p. 2

Youngblood, Denise J.,

'The Fiction Film as a Source for Soviet Social History: The Third
50-60
Z. R.,
'Tsennyi opyt', Kino, 10 April 1935, no. 17 (669), p. 1

Zagorskii, M.,
'I vse zhe — eto lushche srednei evropeiskoi fil'my', Sovetskii ekran, 19 October 1926, no. 42

Zorkaia, N.,
'Brak vtroem — sovetskaia versiia', Iskusstvo kino, 1997, no. 5, pp. 89-97

III. Cultural Background

Books and articles

(Uran cinema photograph, Kino i zhizn', nos. 34-35, December 1930, pp. 22-23)

(Mordmilovich, E. caricature of Neches, 'Sed'moe vsesoiznoe soveshchanie po proizvoditel'nomu planu. V zale zasedanii', Kino, 16 December 1935, no. 58 [710], p.2)

Aleksandrov, Grigorii,
'Opisanie vstrechi s Charli Chaplinom', Iskusstvo kino, 1998, no. 3, pp. 68-72

Alpers, B. V.,
Dnevnik kinokritika 1928-1937, Fond 'Novoe tysiacheletie', Moscow, 1995
Avins, Carol,


Babitsky, Paul and Rimberg, John,


Belyakov, Victor,

'Russia’s Last Tsar Nicholas II and Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 15, 1995, no. 4, pp. 517-24

Benjamin, Walter,


Brandist, Craig,


Brumberg, Zinaida,

'Liubimaia rabota', in *Zhizn’ v kino: Veteran’ o sebe i svoikh tovarishchakh*, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1979, pp. 4-30

Bulgakov, Mikhail,

*Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2, Mastatskaia literature, Minsk, 1990

Burns, Paul,

'Linkage: Pudovkin's Classics Revisited' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 9, 1981, no. 2, pp. 70-77
Clark, Katerina,


Clark, Toby,


Demidenko, Iuliia,


Dushenko, K. V.,

*Slovar' sovremennykh tsitat*, Agraf, Moscow, 1997

Eizenshtein, S.; Pudovkin, V.; and Aleksandrov, G.,

'Zaiavka' in *Zhizn' iskusstva*, 5 August 1928, pp. 4-5

Erlich, Victor,


Ermolaev, Herman,
Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934. The Genesis of Socialist Realism.
Octagon Books, New York, 1977, p. 142

Esenin, Sergei,
'Chernyi chelovek' in his Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh, vol. 3,
Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow, 1962, pp. 209-14

The Film Factory. Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939.
Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., Harvard University Press,
Cambridge (Mass.), 1988

The Films of G. W. Pabst. An Extraterritorial Cinema, Eric Rentschler, ed.,

Fitzpatrick, Sheila,
Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934, Cambridge
University Press, Cambridge, 1979

Freilikh, S.,
Fil'my i gody. Razvitie realizma v kinoiskusstve, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1964

Fülöp-Miller, René,
The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: an examination of cultural life in
Soviet Russia, G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd., London and New York, 1927

Garrard, John and Carol,
Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, I. B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., London and
New York, 1990

Geiger, H. Kent,
The family in Soviet Russia, Harard University Press, Cambridge
(Mass.), 1968
Geller, Mikhail,

*Mashina i vintiki. Istoriia formirovaniia sovetskogo cheloveka*, MIK, Moscow, 1994

Gillespie, David,


Gogol', N. V.,

'Nevskii Prospekt', in *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh*, Moscow, 1994, vol. 3, pp. 7-37

Golub, Spencer,

*The Recurrence of Fate. Theatre and memory in twentieth-century Russia*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1994

Gombrich, E. H.,


Gor'kii, M.,

*Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow, 1949-1955

Günther, Hans,


Heil, Jerry,

'Jurij Tynjanov's film-work. Two filmscripts: "Lieutenant Kize" (1927, 1933-34) and "The Monkey and the Bell" (1932)', Russian Literature, vol. 21, 1987, pp. 347-558

'Theme and style, and the "literary film" as avant-garde', Avant-Garde, no. 5-6, 1991, pp. 137-62

Holz, Wolfgang,

'Allegory and iconography in Socialist Realist painting', in Art of the Soviets: Painting, sculpture and architecture in a one-party state, 1917-1992, Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, eds., Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1993, pp. 73-85

Hughes, Albert,

Political socialization of Soviet youth, Edwin Mellen, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1992

Iastrebov, I. I.,

Pavel Petrovich Sokolov-Skalia, Sovetskii khudozhnik, Moscow, 1959

Il'inskii, Igor',


Il’in, R. N.,

Iurii Ekel’chik, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1962

Ivanov, S.,

'Kriticheskii smotr', Kino, 21 March 1936, no. 15 (727)

Ivanov, Vladislav,

'Bunt marginala. Analititcheskii teatr Boris Ferdinadova' in Mnemozina, V. V. Ivanov, ed., GITIS, Moscow, 1996, pp. 211-41
'The Rhythmometric theater of Boris Ferdinandov',

Experiment/Eksperiment, no. 2, 1996, pp. 489-507

Jackson, Robert Louis,

Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature, Mouton, The Hague, 1958

Kaplunovskii, V.,

'Khudozhnik v kino', Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 1, pp. 38-39

Kemenov, V.,

'Vystavka kartin P. P. Sokolova-Skalia', Pravda, May 1935, no. 128 (6374)

Kenez, Peter,


Kepley, Jr., Vance,


Kepley, Jr., Vance and Kepley, Betty,

'Foreign Films on Soviet Screens, 1922-1931', Quarterly Review of Film Studies, vol. 4, 1979, no. 4, pp. 429-42

Khan-Magomedov, O.,


Kino. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar',

S. I. lutkevich, ed., Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, Moscow, 1986
Kiziria, Dodona,


Kuz'mina, E.,

O tom, chto pomnui, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1976

Leyda, Jay,


Livshits, I.,

'Protiv formalizma i naturalizma. Diskussiia na Ukraine. Nastoiaishchikh vyvodov ne sdelano', Kino, 21 March 1936, no. 15 (727)

Lobanov, V. M.,

Pavel Petrovich Sokolov-Skalia, Iskusstvo, Moscow and Leningrad, 1940

London, Kurt, The Seven Soviet Arts, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, [1937]

Lukhmanov, Nikolai,

'Pervye shagi' in Kino i zhizn', no. 32-33, December 1930, pp. 16-17

McCannon, John,


Maiakovskii, Vladimir,

Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, Moscow, 1955-1961
Margolit, Evgenii and Shmyrov, Viacheslav,

(Iz’iateo kino) 1924-1953, Dubl’-D, Moscow, 1995

Mayne, Judith,

Kino and the Woman Question, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1989

Miczka, Tadeusz,


Migaiushchii cinema. Rannie godv russkoi kinematografii. Vospominaniia, dokumenty, stat’i,

M. I. Volotskii, comp., Rodina, Titul, Moscow, 1995

Mikhailov, Vladimir,

‘Stalinskaia model’ upravleniiia kinematografii’ in Kino: politika i liudi.
30-e gody, L. Kh. Mamatova, ed., Materik, Moscow, 1995, pp. 9-25

Mil’don, V. I.,

‘Metafizika golovnogo mozga. O nekotorykh osnovnykh metaforakh sovetskogo kino 30-4—kh godov. (Nabliudeniia filologa),

Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 33, 1997, pp. 160-72

Milner, John,


Mindlin, Em.,

Neobyknovennye sobesedniki. Literaturnye vospominaniia, Sovetskii pisatel’, Moscow, 1979
Naiman, Eric,


' Odnazhdy letom. Novaia kartina "Ukrainfil’m",

Rabochaia Moskva, 11 May 1936, p. 4

Papernyi, Vladimir,

Kul’tura "Dva", Ardis, Ann Arbor, 1985

Paradoks o drame: perechityvaia p’esy 1920-1930-kh godov.

E. I. Strel’tsova, ed., Nauka, Moscow, 1993

Paradzhanov, Georgii,

'Lik chelovecheskii', Kinostenarii, 1993, no. 3, pp. 134-43

Pervyi Vsesoiusnyi S’ezd pisatelei SSSR. Stenograficheskii otchet.

Sovetskii pisatel’, Moscow, 1990

Petrie, Vlada,


Pil’niak, Boris,

Rasplesnutoe vremia. Rasskazy, povesti, romany, Sovetskii pisatel’,

Moscow, 1990

Ratgauz, M. G.,

'Kuzmin — kinozritel”, Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 13, 1992, pp. 52-86


Anna Lawton, ed., Routledge, London and New York, 1992

Riordan, James,

Rodchenko, Aleksandr M. and Stepanova, Varvara F.,

The Future Is Our Only Goal, Prestel, Munich, 1991

Ronen, O.,


Rosolovskaia, V.,

'Izofil'm Skalia', Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 60-61

Sartorti, Rosalinde,


Segel, Harold B.,

Twentieth-Century Russian Drama. From Gorky to the Present, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1993

Shentalinsky, Vitaly,


Shub, Esfir',

Zhizn' moia — kinematograf, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1972

Shuvaeva, T.,

'Priezd Maksa Lindera v Moskvu', Iskusstvo kino, 1997, no. 8, pp. 120-22

Paolo Cherchi Usai, Lorenzo Codelli, Carlo Montanaro and David Robinson, eds., British Film Institute and Edizioni Biblioteca dell’Immagine, London and Pordenone, 1989

Šimenc, Stanko,

Panorama Slovenskega Filma, DZS, Ljubljana, 1996

Sokolov, I.,

‘Charli Chaplin’, Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 46-54

Sokolov-Skalia, P.,

‘Kinematograf i zhivopis’, Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 8, pp. 57-59

Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil’my. Annotirovannyi katalog. 1. Nemye fil’my (1918-1935),

A. V. Macheret, ed., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1961

Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil’my. Annotirovannyi katalog. 2. Zvukovye fil’my (1930-1957),

A. V. Macheret, ed., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1961

Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil’my. Annotirovannyi katalog. 3. Prilozheniia,

G. K. Elizarov, comp., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1961

Sovetskie khudozhestvennye fil’my. Annotirovannyi katalog. 4. (1958-1963),

N. A. Glagoleva, comp., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1968

Sovetskoe kino,

P. Poluianov, ed., Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1937

Stalin, I. V.,

Sochineniia, vol. 13, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, Moscow, 1951,
Taylor, Richard,


Tsiv'ian, Iu. G.,


Vernye syny nashei rodiny,

Partizdat TsK VKP(b), Moscow, 1937

Volkov-Lannit, L.,


Youngblood, Denise J.,


'Zakliuchitel'naiia rech' tov. I. M. Gronskogo',

Novy mir, 1933, no. 2, p. 257

Zamiatin, Evgenii,

Sochineniia, Kniga, Moscow, 1988

Zemlianukhin, Sergei and Segida, Miroslava, comps.,

Zolotonosov, M. N.,

'Park totalitarnogo perioda i sovetskaia sadovo-parkovaia skul’ptura 1930-kh godov: (nomenklatura, semantika, kul’turnyi kontekst)', Russian Studies, 1996, vol. 2, pp. 48-157

Zorkaya, Neya,

The Illustrated History of the Soviet Cinema, Hippocrene, New York, 1989

IV. Theory of film and literature

Books and articles

Alov, Aleksandr and Naumov, Vladimir,

Stat’i. Svidetel’stva. Vyskazyvaniya, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1989

Andreev, V.,

'Chudotvorets byl vysokogo rosta', Molodezh’ Estonii, 16 May 1992, p. 3

Anninskii, L. A.,

Lev Tolstoi i kinematograf, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1980

Armes, Roy,


Baak, J. J. van,
'Avangardistskii obraz mira i postroenie konflikta', Russian Literature, no. 21, 1987, pp. 1-9

Bagrationi-Mukhraneli, Irina,

'Kinematograficheskaiia stilistika "Egipetskoi marki" O. Mandel’shtama', 
Iskusstvo kino, 12, 1991, no. 12, pp. 150-61

Balázs, Béla,


Banjac, Zorica,

'Izmedju kosmara i sna', Komunist, 27 May 1988

Baskakov, V. E.,


Bazin, André,

Qu'est-ce que le cinema?, vol. 1, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1958

Beatie, B. A. and Powell, P. W.,


Beja, Morris,


Bilbow, Marjorie,

'The Master and Margarita', CinemaTV Today, 29 March 1975, p. 18

Bleiman, M.,
'Beg: stil', otvechailshchii teme', Iskusstvo kino, 1971, no. 4, pp. 110-22

Bluestone, George,

Novels Into Film, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968

Boggs, Joseph M.,


Boglić, Mira,

'Neobičan izlet u avangardu', Vjesnik, 26 May 1988

Bogomolov, lu.,

'Kraeuöol'nyi kamen' pretknoveniia', Iskusstvo kino, 1983, no. 8, pp. 67-76

'Kak nakrenit' frazu?', Iskusstvo kino, 1987, no. 10, pp. 93-104

Booth, Wayne C.,


Bordwell, David,

Narration in the Fiction Film, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1985

Boyum, Joy Gould,

Double Exposure: Fiction into Film, Mentor, New York, 1985

Branigan, Edward,

Narrative comprehension and film, Routledge, London and New York, 1992
Burgin, D. L.,

'Bulgakov's Early Tragedy of the Scientist-Creator: An Interpretation of


Bywater, Tim and Sobchak, Thomas,

_An Introduction to Film Criticism: Major critical approaches to narrative film_, Longman, New York, 1989

Carr, E. H.,


Cassedy, Steven,


Chatman, Seymour,

_Coming to Terms: the Rhetoric of Narrative and Fiction in Film_, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1990

Cherniaev, Petr,

'Cynics', Kino glaz/Cine-Eye, no.3, 1992, p. 33

_Cinema and Fiction: new modes of adapting 1900-1990_,


Cohen, Keith,
'Novel and Cinema: Dynamics of literary exchange', Film Reader, no. 2, January 1977, pp. 42-51

Cook, David A.,


The Culture of the Stalin Period, H. Günther, ed., Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1990

Cvijanović, Milan,

'Slućaj Harms', Jufilm Danas, 1988, no. 2-3, pp. 103-05

Dementyev, Andrei,

'The Master and Margarita: no passage!', Kino glaz/Cine-eye, no. 3, 1992, pp. 16-17

Döring-Smirnova, J. R. and Smirnov, I. P.,

'"Istoricheskii avangard" s tochki zrenia evoliutsii khudozhestvennych sistem', Russian Literature, no. 8, 1980, pp. 403-68

Doyle, Peter,

'Bulgakov's Ivan Vasil'evich: Light-hearted comedy or serious satire?', Journal of Russian Studies, no. 43, 1982, pp. 33-43

Durgnat, Raymond,

'Film Theory: From Narrative to Description', Quarterly Review of Film Studies, vol. 7, Spring 1982, no. 2, pp. 109-29

Early Cinema: space, frame, narrative,


Ehre, Milton,

Eidinova, V. V.,

Eikhenbaum, Boris,
'Literatura i kino', Twentieth Century Studies, no. 7-8, December 1972, pp. 122-27


'Literatura i Kino', Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 5, 1990, pp. 3-8

Eizenshtein, S. M.,
'Dikkens, Griffit i my', in his Izbrannyie proizvedeniia v shesti toakh, vol. 5, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1968, pp. 129-80

The Film Sense, (transl. Jay Leyda), Faber and Faber, London and Boston, 1986, pp. 13-59

'Gogol' i kinoiazyk', Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 4, 1989, p. 94-112

Elley, Derek,

Encyclopedia of European Cinema,

Faiman, G.,

'Kinoroman Mikhaila Bulgakova', Iskusstvo kino, 1987, no. 7, pp. 75-91

Flaker, Aleksandar,


Fleishman, Avrom,


Frankel, Edith Rogovin,


Fusso, S.,


Galan, F. W.,

'Film as Poetry and Prose: Viktor Shklovsky's contribution to the poetics of cinema', Essays in Poetics, vol. 9, 1984, no. 1, pp. 95-104

'Film and Form: Notes on Boris Eichenbaum's stylistics of cinema', Russian Literature, no. 19, 1986, pp. 105-42
Galassi, F.,


Garcia, Alain,

*L'Adaptation du Roman au Film*, I. F. Diffusion, Paris, 1990

Gaudreault, André and Jost, François,

*Le Récit Cinématographique*, [Cinéma et Récit — II], Collection Nathan-Université, Paris, 1990

Gems, Vadim,

"'Starukha" Kharmsa. Rezhisserskii stsenarii polnometrazhnogo khudozhestvennogo fil'ma (po motivam odnoimennoi povesti Daniila Kharmsa)", unpublished

Giddings, Robert, Selby, Keith and Wensley, Chris,


Giuliani, Rita,

'Zhanry russkogo narodnogo teatra i Master i Margarita M. A. Bulgakova', *Russian Literature*, vol. 21, 1987, pp. 37-58

Goscilo, H.,

'Point of view in Bulgakov's Heart of a Dog', *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, no. 15, 1978, pp. 281-91

Goulding, Daniel J.,

Greenleaf, Monika Frenkel,

'Tynianov, Pushkin and the Fragment: Through the Lens of Montage',

_Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism from the Golden Age to the Silver Age_, Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds.,


Griffith, James,

_Adaptations as Imitations: Films from Novels_, University of Delaware Press, Newark and London, 1997

Grigor'ev, E. and Nikich, O.,

'A zachem? Zametki ob ekranizatsii', _Iskusstvo kino_, 1986, no. 7, pp. 74-84

Grøngaard, Ragna,

_An Investigation of Composition and Theme in Isaak Babel's Literary Cycle KONARMIJA_, Arkona, Århus, 1979

Günther, Hans,

'Literatura fakta', _Russian Literature_, no. 17, 1985, pp. 21-28

Gurevich, M. I.,

'Pokadrovoe chtenie: literatura i animatsiia', _Kinovedcheskie zapiski_, no. 6, 1990, p. 100-11

'The Old Woman', _Kino glaz/Cine-Eye_, no. 3, 1992, p.33

Gurevich, S. D.,

_Sovetskie pisateli v kinematografie (20-30-e gody)_, Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi institut teatra, muzyki i kinematografii, Leningrad, 1975
Hawk,


Heil, Jerry,

'Russian Futurism and the cinema: Majakovskij’s film work of 1913',

*Russian Literature*, vol. 19, 1986, pp. 175-92

'Isaak Babel and his film work', *Russian Literature*, vol. 27, 1990, no. 3,

pp. 289-416

Henderson, Brian,

'Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes after Genette)', *Film Quarterly*,

vol. 36, 1983, no. 4, pp. 4-17

Henry, Richard,

'Master and Margarita', *Moscow Magazine*, June-July 1993, pp. 72-77

Hetényi, Z.,

'Fatal Hearts of the 1920s (On Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Heart of a Dog*),


Iampol’skii, M. B.,

'O voobrazhaemom prostanstve fil’ma', *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo
gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 831, *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, 22,

1988, pp. 127-42

'Platonov, prochnyj Sokurovym', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 5, 1990,

pp. 53-67

Ingdahl, Kazimiera,


Ioffe, S.,

Jaccard, Jean-Philippe,
Daniil Harms et la fin de l'avant-garde russe, (Slavica Helvetica, Bd. 39), Peter Lang, Bern, 1991

Jacobs, Lewis,

Jameson, Fredric,

Jovanović, Milivoje,
Utopija Mihaila Bulgakova, Institut za književnost i umetnost, Belgrade, 1975

Kartseva, E.,
'Doktor Zhivago: "roman i fil'm", Iskusstvo kino, 1990, no. 2, pp. 120-26

Keijser, Ted,

Kejna-Sharatt, B.,
Kline, T. Jefferson,

*Screening the Text. Intertextuality in New Wave French Cinema*,


Kolkotin, Il’ia,

' Tsinkii', Seans, no. 5, January 1992, pp. 6-7

Komarov, V.,

' Chudotvorets byl vysokogo rosta', Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 28 November 1991

Kozhinov, Vadim,

*Razmyshlenia o russkoi literature*, Sovremennik, Moscow, 1991

Kracauer, Siegfried,

*Theory of Film: the redemption of physical reality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960

Kuznetsov, Mikhail,

' Flight', Soviet Film, 1971, no. 6, pp. 4-8

L. T.,


Lary, N. M.,


*Le Cinéma Russe et Soviétique*,

Le Cinéma Yougoslave, Zoran Tasić and Jean-Loup Passek, eds.,
Cinéma/Pluriel, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1986

Liehm, Mira and Liehm, Antonin J.,
The Most Important Art: East European film after 1945, University of

Likhodeev, L.,
'Literaturotsentrizm i kinotsentrizm', Iskusstvo kino, 1988, no. 7, pp. 17-21

Literatura i Kino. Sbornik statei v pomoshch' uchiteliu,
N. S. Gornitskaia, ed., Prosveshchenie, Moscow, Leningrad, 1965

Lotman, Iu. M.,
Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1970

Semiotika kino i problemy kinoestetiki, Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1973

Semiotics of Cinema, Michigan Slavic Contributions, 5, Ann Arbor,
Michigan, 1976

Lotman, Iu. M. and Tsiv'ian, Iu. G.,
'Priroda kinosiuzheta', Daugava, 1989, no. 7, pp. 97-104

'Zvuk kak element kinoizazyka', Rodnik, 1989, no. 5, pp. 48-51

M. T.,
'Majstor i Margarita na poklon', Politika, 23 February 1990

Macdonald, Scott,
56-66

MacPherson, Kenneth,
'Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney (The Love of Jeanne Ney) and its Making',
Close Up, vol. 1, 1927, no. 6, pp. 17-26
'As is', *Close Up*, vol. 2, 1928, no. 3, pp. 5-10

McDougal, Stuart Y.,

*Made into Movies: from literature to film*, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Fort Worth, 1985

McFarlane, Brian,

'The Write Stuff', *Cinema Papers*, no. 65, September 1987, pp. 30-33; no. 66, November 1987, pp. 50-52

'Literature-Film Connections', *Cinema Papers*, no. 89, August 1992, pp. 32-35

Metz, Christian,


Michalski, Milena,


Mihajlov, Mihajlo,


Miller, Gabriel,

*Screening the Novel: Rediscovered American Fiction in Film*, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1981

Nakhimovsky, Alice Stone,

'The Ordinary, the Sacred and the Grotesque in Daniil Kharms's *The Old Woman*', *Slavic Review*, vol. 37, 1978, pp. 203-16
Neuhäuser, Rudolf,

"Avangard" i "avangardizm" (po materialam russkoi literatury)',

_Umjetnost rijeci._ vol. 25, 1981, pp. 21-37

Nikitina, E.,

'Classic Russian Literature and Film', _Soviet Film._ 1988, no. 10, pp. 28-29

Nilsson, N A.,

'Avant-garde poetry and the cinema', _Voz’mi na radost’. To Honour Jeanne van der Eng Liedmeier._ B. J. Amsenga, J. Pama, W. G. Weststeijn, eds.,

Slavic Seminar, Amsterdam, 1980, pp. 125-37

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey,

'Introduction: Tzvetan Todorov', _Film Reader._ no. 2, January 1977, pp. 15-18

Ognev, Vladimir,

'Dvadtsat’ let nazad…', _Iskusstvo kino._ 1988, no. 1, pp. 32-39

Oulanoff, Hongor,

_The Serapion Brothers: theory and practice._ Mouton & Co., The Hague,

Paris, 1966

Passek, Jean-Loup,

'La Fuite', _Cinéma._ no. 183, 1974, p.122

Pearce, C. E.,

'A closer look at narrative structure in Bulgakov's Master and Margarita',

_Canadian Slavonic Papers._ vol. 22, 1980, pp. 358-71

Perkins, V. F.,

_Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies._ Penguin Books,

London, 1972
Petrović, A.,
'Cenzura u posleratnom periodu: zabran za pokretne slike', Intervju, 19
July 1991

Phillips, Gene D.,
Graham Greene: The Films of his Fiction, Teachers College Press,
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York & London, 1974

Plakhova, Elena,
'Pominki po detskoj krovinke', Iskusstvo kino, 1991, no. 1, pp. 92-95

Portnoy, Kenneth,
Screen Adaptation: A Scriptwriting Handbook, Focal Press, Boston and
London, 1991

Proffer, E.,
'Bulgakov's Master and Margarita: genre and motif', Canadian Slavic

Prokopenko, L.,
'Kuprin i kino', Iskusstvo kino, 1960, no. 8, pp. 119-21

Rentschler, Eric,
German Film & Literature: adaptations and transformations, Methuen,
New York, 1988

Rifkin, Benjamin,
'The Reinterpretation of History in German's Film My Friend Ivan
3, pp. 431-47
Semiotics of Narration in Film and Prose Fiction. Case Studies of
"Scarecrow" and "My Friend Ivan Lapshin", Peter Lang, New York etc.,
1994

Robbe-Grillet,

Rohdie, Sam,
11-13

Ropars-Wuilleumier, Marie-Claire,
De la littérature au cinéma, Colin, Paris, 1970

Roshal', Lev,
'Boris Pasternak i neigrovoe kino', Iskusstvo kino, 1992, no. 1, pp. 78-87
'Stikhi kinopoeta', Kinovedcheskie zapiski, no. 21, 1994, pp. 80-96

Ross, Harris,
Film as Literature, Literature as Film, Bibliographies and Indexes in
World Literature, no. 10, Greenwood Press, New York, 1987

Rubnik, Aleksandr,
'Bez poiska net otkrytii', Pravda Vostoka, 3 February 1968, p.3

Rudnitskii, K.,
Spektakli raznykh let, Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1974

Russian Literature & Psychoanalysis, D. Rancour-Laferriere, ed., John Benjamins,
Amsterdam, 1989

Rzhevsky, N.,
'Magical Subversions: The Master and Margarita in performance', Modern
S. M.,

'Il Maestro e Margherita', Rivista del Cinematografo, no. 2, February 1973, pp. 122-23

S. Dj.,

'Svećana projektsija filma "Majstor i Margarita"', Politika, 1 March 1991

Savel'ev, Dmitrii,

'Oleg Kovalov', Seans, no.4, 1991, pp. 42-43

Schreurs, Marc,


Seger, Linda,

The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1992

Semeka, Elena,


Shepherd, David,


Shindin, S. G.,

Shorokhov, V.,
'Iz pushek po vorob'iam', Teatr, 1968, no. 3, pp. 71-73

Sicher, Efraim,
Style & Structure in the prose of Isaak Babel', Slavica Publishers Inc.,
Columbus, 1986

Sinyard, Neil,
Filming Literature: The art of screen adaptation, Croom Helm, London &
Sydney, 1986

Stam, Robert, Burgoyne, Robert and Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy,
New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. Structuralism, post-structuralism
and beyond, Routledge, London and New York, 1992

'Stserarnye nabroski Aleksandra Bloka (1919-1921 gg.)',
Iskusstvo kino, 1936, no. 9, pp. 52-53

Taranovski Johnson, Vida,
'The thematic function of the narrator in The Master and Margarita',

Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film 1909-1929,
A. Kaes, ed., Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Munich, 1978

Thompson, Kristin and Bordwell, David,

Todorov, Tzvetan,
'Categories of the Literary Narrative', Film Reader, no. 2, January 1977,
pp. 19-37

Torop, P. Kh.,
'Literatura i film', *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, no. 5, 1990, pp. 9-24

Tsiv'ian, lu. G.,

'O doktrinal'nom postroenii teksta v avangardnom fil'me 20-kh godov', *Russian Literature*, vol. 10, 1981, pp. 359-67

'K genezisu russkogo stilia v kinematografie', *Slawistischer Almanach*, vol. 14, 1984, pp. 255-81


'Dvizhenie "na" i dvizhenie "mimo" v rannem kino', *Tynianovskii sbornik*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 120-38

'Istoricheskii fil'm i dinamika vlasti: Trotskii i Stalin v sovetskom kino', *Daugava*, 1988, no. 4, pp. 98-101

'K semiotike nadpisei v nemom kino (Nadpis' i ustnaia rech')', *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 831, *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, 22, 1988, pp. 143-54
Tsiv'ian, Iu., and Toddes, E.,


Uspensky, Boris,


van der Eng, Jan,


Vanoye, Francis,

*Récit Ecrit/Récit Filmique*, [Cinéma et Récit — I], Collection Nathan-Université, Paris, 1989

Vesiolaia, Ie.,

'An Impossible Film', *Moscow News*, no. 37, 10 September 1989, p. 11

Vishnevskii, Ven.,

'Aleksandr Blok i kino (K 15-letiiu so dnia smerti)', *Iskusstvo kino*, 1936, no. 9, pp. 48-52

Vlajčić, Milan,

""Veliko plavetnilo" na početku", *Politika*, 11 May 1988

'Taoci sopstvene dece', *Politika*, 22 May 1988

Wajda,
K. Eder, K. Kreimeier, M. Ratschewa and B. Thienhaus, eds., Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich, 1982

Welch, Jeffrey Egan,


Williams, John,

'The Master & Margarita', *Films Illustrated*, vol. 4, no. 37, September 1975, p. 326

Williams, W. E.,

'Film & Literature', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 4, no. 16, Winter 1935-6, pp. 163-65

Wilson, George M.,


Zalakiavicius, Vitautas,

"Nepogashennaia luna", unpublished screenplay

Zholkovskii, A.,

'Dialog Bulgakova i Olesha: o kolbase, parade chuvstv i Golgofe',

*Sintaksis*, no. 20, 1987, pp. 90-117

Zorkaia, Neia Markovna,

'Kinematograf v zhizni A. Bloka', *Iz istorii kino*, no. 9, 1974, pp. 124-46

'Tynianov i kino', *Voprosy kinoiskusstva*, vol. 10, 1967, pp. 258-95
FILMOGRAPHY

A. ABRAM ROOM

Chto govorit "MOS", sei otgadaite vopros, Goskino (Kul’tkino), 1924 [Lost]
Gonka za samogonkoi, Goskino (Pervaia fabrika), 1924 [Lost]
Bukhta smerti, dir. Goskino (Pervaia fabrika), 1926
Krasnaia Presnia, dir. Abram Room, L. Sheffer and A. Pereguda, Goskino (Pervaia fabrika), 1926 [Lost]
PredateL, Goskino (Pervaia fabrika), 1926 [Partially lost]
Tret'ia Meshchanskaia, Sovkino (Moscow), 1927
Evrei na zemle, Sovkino (OZET), 1927
Ukhaby, Sovkino (Moscow), 1927 [Lost]
Prividenie, kotoroe ne vozvrashchaetsia, Sovkino (Moscow), 1929
Tip-Top — zvukovoi izobretatel', Sovkino, 1929 (animation) [Lost]
Plan velikikh rabot, Soiuzkino (Moscow), 1930 [Lost]
Manometr-1, Soiuzkino (Moscow), 1930 [Lost]
Manometr-2, Soiuzkino (Moscow), 1931 [Lost]
Strogii iunosha, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1936
Eskadril'ia No. 5 (Voina nachinaetsia), Kiev Film Studio, 1939
Veter s vostoka, Kiev Film Studio, 1940
Nashi devushki (Boevoi kinosbornik), TsOKS, 1943
(1. Tonia, dir. Abram Room; 2. Odnazhdy noch'iu, dir. Grigori Kozintsev)
Nashestvie, TsOKS (Alma-Ata), 1944

V gorakh jugoslavii, Mosfil'm, 1946

Sud chesti, Mosfil'm, 1948

Shkola zloslovia, Mosfil'm, 1952

Serebristaia pyl', Mosfil'm, 1953

Serdte b'etsia vnov', Mosfil'm, 1956

Granatovy braslet, Mosfil'm, 1964

Tsvety zapozdalye, Mosfil'm, 1970

Prezhdevremenny chelovek, Mosfil'm, 1972

Broadcast of a discussion of Room's Eskadrija No. 5, after its television premiere in Russia on 17 December 1994

Muzei kino Room broadcast, RTV, July 1994; Naum Kleiman introduction to broadcast of Strogii iunosha

Room started but did not complete the following films:

Odnazhdy letom (1933-34)

Sovest' mira (1950)
B. OTHER KEY FILMS REFERRED TO

i) Soviet/Russian

Aelita, dir. Iakov Protazanov, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1924

Aerograd, dir. Aleksandr Dovzhenko, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1935

Bezhin lug, dir. Sergei Eizenshtein, Mosfil'm (1935-37; unfinished)


Bolotnye soldaty, dir. Aleksandr Macheret, Mosfil'm, 1938

Bronenosets Potemkin, dir. Sergei Eizenshtein & Grigori Alekseyev, Goskino, 1925

Chelovek No. 217, dir. Mikhail Romm, Mosfil'm and Tashkent film studio, 1944

Chelovek s kinoapparatom, dir. Dziga Vertov, VUKFU, 1929

Chelovek s ruzh' em, dir. Sergei Iutkevich, Lenfil'm, 1938

Chertovo koleso, dir. Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, Leningradkino, 1926

Devochka v tsirke, dir. Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg, Soiuzmul'tfil'm, 1950

Ditia bol'shogo goroda, dir. Evgenii Bauer, Khanzhonkov, 1914
Divnyi sad, dir. L. Frenkel', Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1936

Ego prizvy, dir. Iakov Protazanov, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1925

Ego zovut Sukhe-Bator, dir. Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits, Mongolkino,

Tashkent film studio and Lenfil'm, 1942

Ja liubliu, dir. Leonid Lukov, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1936

Iakov Sverdlov, dir. Sergei Iutkevich, Soiuzdetfil'm, 1940

Intrigan, dir. Iakov Urinov, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev) 1935

Kafe Fankoni, dir. M. Kapchinskii, Sovkino, 1927

Kino za 20 let, dir. Esfir' Shub and Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mosfil'm, 1940

Konduit, dir. V. Shelontsev, Ukrainfil'm (Odessa), 1935

Konets Sankt-Peterburga, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1927

Lenin v 1918 godu, dir. Mikhail Romm, Mosfil'm, 1939

Lenin v Oktiabre, dir. Mikhail Romm, Mosfil'm, 1937

Letchiki, dir. Iulii Raizman, Mosfil'm, 1935

Luch smerti, dir. Lev Kuleshov, Goskino, 1925

Mashen'ka, dir. Iulii Raizman, Mosfil'm, 1942

Mat', dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1926

Miss Mend, dir. Fedor Otsep, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1926

More zovet, dir. Vladimir Braun, Kiev film studio, 1956


Obyknovennyi fashizm, dir. Mikhail Romm, Mosfil'm, 1966

Odnazhdvi letom, dir. Khanan Shmain and Igor L'inskii, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1936
Oktiabr', dir. Sergei Eizenshtein, Sovkino, 1927

Oshibka inzhenera Kochina, dir. Aleksandr Macheret, Mosfil'm, 1939

Padenie dinastii Romanovykh, dir. Esfir' Shub, Sovkino and Muzei Revoliutsii, 1927

Po zakonu, dir. Lev Kuleshov, Goskino, 1926

Polovod'e, dir. Lev Golub and Nikolai Sadkovich, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1936

Posledniaia noch', dir. Iulii Raizman, Mosfil'm, 1936

Potomok Chingis-khana, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpomfil'm, 1927

Potselui Meri Pikford, dir. Sergei Komarov, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1927

Povest' nepogashennoi luny, dir. Evgenii Tsymbal, 'Slovo', Mosfil'm and Goskino SSSR, 1990

Prometei, dir. Ivan Kavaleridze, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev) 1935

Prostoi sluchai, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, Mezhrabpom, 1932

Protsess o trekh millionakh, dir. Iakov Protazanov, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1926

Retro vtroem, dir. Petr Todorovskii, Mirabel', Goskino RF and 'Krug' studio, Mosfil'm, 1998

Rokovye iatsa, dir. Sergei Lomkin, Ada-fil'm, 1995

Rossiia Nikolaia II i Lev Tolstoi, Esfir' Shub, Sovkino, 1928

Semero smelykh, dir. Sergei Gerasimov, Lenfil'm, 1936

Serp i molot, dir. Sergei Livnev, L-fil'm and Roskomkino, VGTRK, 1994

Shchors, dir. Aleksandr Dovzhenko, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1939

Skazka o mertvoi Tsarevne i o semi Bogatyriakh, dir. Ivan Ivanov-Vano, Soiuzmul'tfil'm, 1951

Sluchainaia vstrecha, dir. Igor' Savchenko, Rot-front and Mezhrabpomfil'm, 1936
Sobach'e serdtse, dir. Vladimir Bortko, Lenfil'm, 1988
Stachka, dir. Sergei Eizenshtein, Goskino and Proletkul't, 1924
Tommi, dir. Iakov Protazanov, Mezhrabpomfil'm, 1931
Tri tolstiaka, dir. Aleksei Batalov and Iosif Shapiro, Lenfil'm, 1966
Tsirk, dir. Grigorii Aleksandrov, Mosfil'm, 1936
Turksib, dir. Viktor Turin, Vostokkino, 1929
U samogo sinego moria, dir. Boris Barnet, Ukrainfil'm (Kiev), 1935
Valerii Chkalov, dir. Mikhail Kalatozov, Lenfil'm, 1941
Velikii perelom, dir. Fridrikh Ermler, Lenfil'm, 1946
Velikii uteshitel', dir. Lev Kuleshov, Mezhrabpom, 1933
Veselaia Moskva, dir. Ol'ga Khodataeva, 1934
Veter, dir. L. Sheffer, Sovkino, 1926
Vosstanie rybakov, dir. Erwin Piscator, Mezhrabpom, 1934
Vragi, dir. Rodion Nakhapetov, Mosfil'm, 1977
Vratar', dir. Semen Timoshenko, Lenfil'm, 1936
Vyborgskaia storona, dir. Grigorii Kozintsev, Lenfil'm, 1938
Zakroishchik iz Torzhka, dir. Iakov Protazanov, Mezhrabpom-Rus', 1925
Zastava u chertova broda, dir. Miron Bilinski, Ukrainfil'm (Odessa), 1936
Zhizn' za zhizn', dir. Evgenii Bauer, Khanzhonkov, 1916
Zoia, dir. Lev Arnshtam, Soiuzdetfil'm, 1944
ii) non-Soviet/Russian

L’Année dernière à Marienbad, dir. Alain Resnais, Terra/Tamara, 1961

The Bank, dir. Charles Chaplin, The Essanay Film Manufacturing Company, 1915

The Circus, dir. Charles Chaplin, Chaplin-United Artists, 1927

Frankenstein, dir. James Whale, Universal, 1931

The Gold Rush, dir. Charles Chaplin, Chaplin-United Artists, 1925

The Invisible Man, dir. James Whale, Universal, 1933

King Kong, dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, RKO, 1933

Limelight, dir. Charles Chaplin, Celebrated-United Artists, 1952