Reading Viktor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" in the Context of Early Cinema

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Introduction[1]

The Russian writer Maxim Gorky in his essay, "Last Night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows", suggested that the Lumière's cinematograph proved to be a machine that created distortions and disproportions in the representation of people and things, making them look "strange", if not "grotesque".[2] For Gorky, the images created by the new cinema machine had an abundant expressive potential – the potential that soon was unleashed to the fullest by the Futurist performances adding to the already existing "craze" of the early film shows.[3]

This chapter will argue that Viktor Shklovsky's key text "Art as Technique", which revolves around the famous key term *ostran(n)enie* ("making strange"), points at two related phenomena: the way in which the early film show exploited the expressive potential of the new cinema machine to make humans and objects look "strange" if not "grotesque", as Gorky had aptly argued in 1896;[4] and the ways in which this inspired the avant-garde performances celebrated by Shklovsky's Futurist friends (e.g., the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky) from 1909 onwards. These two phenomena form the context for the inception of "Art as Technique".

To make this point, I will reread "Art as a Technique" within the historical context of the effects of the early film shows and address the question how the new cinema machine functioned

to make Maxim Gorky label it as a "grotesque creation."[5] This chapter attempts to create an understanding of Gorky and Shklovsky's relation to the "strangeness" of the early film shows. Therefore, it will present specific fragments of a cultural archaeology of the then new medium and an excavation of its novelty effects. This method is chosen in an attempt to avoid the misunderstandings created by the retrospective perspective. From this perspective, one tends to overlook the novelty experiences triggered by a new medium. As is so aptly explained by Shklovsky in "Art as Technique", novelty/strangeness experiences vanish overtime. Thus, excavations such as in this chapter are needed to remind us of them and to reinvigorate the context from which "Art as Technique" emerged.

If You Only Knew How Strange It Was

Gorky famously described his first "film experience"[6] in 1896 as completely novel and exciting at the same time. As he explained, the new medium provided movement and thus a sudden taste of the animated, of life and of the real. Seeing this completely mute, two-dimensional greyish world made all what's shown seem strange, dead, uncanny, and ambiguous, as if the world were animate and inanimate, proportionate and disproportionate, and real and dreamlike. As Gorky explains in his essay, all those things that in themselves were familiar to the audience were "made strange" by the Lumière's new "cinema machine".[7] Paris, the people, the horses, carriages, the trembling leaves on the tree…. If you only knew how strange they were to these early cinema audiences. Echoes of Gorky's words and remarkably similar observations can be

found in many turn-of-the-century descriptions of the early movie-going experience, as film scholar Yuri Tsivian has posited.[8] Since 21st-century movie-goers are distanced from this moment in time[9], it seems constructive to cite him once again in an attempt to evoke the taste of an experience of awe and excitement at seeing the first moving images:

> If you only knew how strange it felt. There were no sounds and no colours. Everything – earth, trees, people, water, air – was portrayed in a grey monotone: in a grey sky there were grey rays of sunlight; in grey faces – grey eyes, and the leaves of the tree were grey like ashes... Silently the ash-grey foliage of the trees swayed in the wind and the grey silhouettes of the people glided silently along the grey ground, as if condemned to eternal silence and cruelly punished by being deprived of all life's colours.[10]

In retrospect, it is very difficult, almost impossible, to understand such experiences and exclamations when viewed from our current perspective, as viewing practices have radically changed since 1896. Judging from reception documents, it seems that early movie-goers' experiences were "strange" (Gorky), "uncanny", "astonishing" (Gunning) and often even "stupefying".[11]

Shklovsky and Mayakovsky

"New phenomena accumulate without being perceived, later they are perceived in a revolutionary way.", as Shklovsky wrote in his book on Mayakovsky.[12] "[T]he new arrives unnoticed," he wrote on another occasion.[13] The "new", as early cinema scholar Tom Gunning

argues, needs a discourse to be perceived.[14] Hence, very often the "new" cannot be "seen" in its first moment of confrontation. Only much later can we begin to fully understand the extent of its revolutionary impact. Nevertheless, Shklovsky helped provide the discourse to frame the experience of the new by labeling it as essentially estranging.

1909-1912: A Slap in the Face of Public Taste

Vladimir Mayakovsky and his Futurist friends had a strong impact on Shklovsky, which his memoir, *Mayakovsky and His Circle,* attests to. Moreover, in his *The Hamburg Score*, published in 1928, Shklovsky confirms that film also had a revolutionary impact on him and his Futurist friends. Looking back on the previous decades, Shklovsky writes that the cinema and his work on the cinema "probably modernized me".[15] But in 1928 he had already written, produced and edited films in the 1920s collectives, who made films together.

Much earlier, in the completely different era of the early 1910s, Shklovsky had been a witness to the Futurists' poetry performances. His friends had started "reading" their poetry typically incorporating some of the "crazy" elements of the popular film shows into their avant-garde performances. Yuri Tsivian deemed the Futurists part of the cultural reception of early cinema in Russia, pointing out that they responded in different ways than the Symbolists did. The cultural reception of the Symbolists (who were far more established in the literary world) stayed within the realm of literary tradition, and sometimes well within its margins, as the word

'clichés' used by Tsivian already indicates. In contrast, the Futurists broke with tradition in a rather brisk and bewildering way.[16] Their role in the public debate was radically different: more disruptive, more captivating, more memorable. They moved center stage with great turmoil in the very year Russia's "general craze about the cinema" reached a peak in the year 1913.[17] In the midst of the excitement triggered by the film shows, the Futurists succeeded in captivating the attention of the public once again. They also did so in December 1912 presenting one of their stunningly aggressive manifestos, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste.* According to Futurism expert Markov, the "aggressive tone of the manifesto and its attacks on everyone from Puškin to its contemporaries" shocked "everyone" as everyone got a "slap in the face".[18] The Futurists' performances by then were infamous and "crazy". They liked to provoke their audiences and shocking them in a direct address had quickly become one of their specialties. Creating disturbance was an essential part of their poetics and performances. They wanted to trigger a strong audience response and often succeeded, as newspaper articles of the time attest to. According to an influential conservative newspaper, the Futurists stood out as "a bunch of half-wits," in that "crazy" year when cinema was most impressive.[19] So by 1913, the Futurists were closely identified with the cinema, as Tsivian argues, the cinema and the Futurists, together, triggered a sense of "general craze".[20] Both cinema and Futurist poetry were associated with something feverish and vague, with something "incoherent, spasmodic, senseless", with the "[u]ngrammatical, asyntactic"; "these are only some of the features that Futurists and cinema were found to have in common."[21]

Whereas the Symbolists, who "thematized"[22] the uncanny or simply unfamiliar aspects of the viewing experience by attributing meaning to them, the Futurists rather responded to the

performative and expressive potential of the new technique itself and mostly with great appreciation for the disruptive perceptual experiences the technique was able to create.

December 1913: The Cabaret The Stray Dog

In December 1913, the young Shklovsky, still a freshman at the University of Saint Petersburg, presented a lecture to his Futurist friends in The Stray Dog, an avant-garde cabaret frequented by the prominent artists of St. Petersburg. It was there "that Shklovsky read a paper entitled 'The place of Futurism in the History of Language'. In his talk he maintained that futurist poetry emancipated words from their traditional significance and *restored them to perceptibility* by calling attention to their sounds."[23] This is to say that Shklovsky provided the theoretical framework for explaining the impact of the new techniques used by the avant-garde poets by drawing from the revolutionary new perspective of perception studies, which was still a very young discipline in academia at that point in time. Interestingly, he came up with a theory the Futurists themselves were not able to provide. It has been argued by Markov that the Futurists in these early years quarreled too much and theorized too little, and that in fact they were not very theoretically proficient,[24] or at least not half as accomplished as the older and much more established Symbolist movement in Russia at that same point in time. They had Andrey Bely and other strong figures to support Symbolism from a theoretical angle. As Richard Sheldon wrote, amongst the Futurists "[o]nly Khlebnikov had some training in linguistics."[25] Via Shklovsky,

they too were suddenly able to at least establish a connection with the Department of Philology at the University of Petersburg, which in fact made Shklovsky an even more interesting "ally". He was properly academically trained, and on top of it, he was brilliant and brash, as they were soon to find out. Until that moment, their poetical reflections were not half as competent as the best-known works by the Symbolists, whose ideas clearly dominated the thinking on poetry and art of the day. In the early 1910s, the Futurists were not yet ready to properly theorize their own radical poetic experiments themselves which was understandable: as part of the broader cultural reception of the technological innovations created by early cinema, these new phenomena easily and almost inevitably escaped conceptualization. Their own reflections on the novel were still a bit poor in these early years, but this does not imply that the poetic experiments themselves or their performances were not interesting, effective, or successful. From Shklovsky's own notes on the period (in his memoirs on Mayakovsky, in *Sentimental Journey*, and other books), it is obvious that it was his great Futurist friend Vladimir Mayakovsky, whose presence, poetry, and poetics had a tremendous and pivotal impact on him, on so many other avant-gardists and on the larger youngster audience of the day (the slightly younger Sergei Eisenstein would be included in the circle of *LEF* about ten years later, when he became Russia's most famous film director).[26]

At the time, Mayakovsky and his Futurist friends had created a revolutionary new performative practice: they were reciting poetry in a way that might remind us of rappers' rhythms. Mayakovsky was showing the audience that a poet need not use meanings, symbols and metaphors in poetry to have an instant impact on his audience; that language itself, its nonsensical sounds and its silly words, could themselves shock & thrill an audience the way an early film show could. Shklovsky provided the conceptual space for framing and explaining the

impact in the form of a theory of *ostran(n)enie* - a theory the Futurists themselves were unable to formulate at that point in time, and so Shklovsky filled the niche. Mayakovsky is said to have accepted the new theoretical input gracefully, while also being puzzled and surprised by it.[27]

December 1913, in his Stray Dog talk, Shklovsky introduced the term *samovitoe slovo*.[28] Later, he deepened his thoughts in his 1914 text *The Resurrection of the Word* under the same label of the 'self-oriented word'. Shklovsky's good friend Boris Ejchenbaum commented on this crucial point in time – crucial to an understanding of Shklovsky's thinking: he now approached the problem of the arts from the perspective of perception studies and he tried to understand the techniques used in the arts to create a specific perceptual experience.[29]

December 1916: "Art as Technique"

"Art as Technique" was written in late 1916 and first published in 1917.[30] The text presents Shklovsky's reflections on the twin mechanisms of automatization and de-automatization at the time; today, the two terms are alternatively translated as (de)familiarization or (de)habituation, whereas *ostran(n)enie* is often translated as alienation or estrangement.

> We do not experience the commonplace, we do not see it; rather, we recognize it. We do not see the walls of our room; and it is very difficult for us to see errors in proofreading, especially if the material is written in a language we know well, because we cannot force ourselves to see, to read, and not to "recognize" the familiar word.[31]

What is already familiar to us because we have seen it over and over again, we process habitually, and this process does not really leave much of a trace in our consciousness. However, in the arts, specifically in poetry, where things are made unfamiliar or strange, the smooth and swift process of perception is obstructed, slowed down, deepened and prolonged. This is typical of artistic perception (or what he would label the "art experience", in "Art as Technique"):

> If we have to define specifically "poetic" perception and artistic perception in general, then we suggest this definition: "Artistic" perception is that perception in which we experience form – perhaps not form alone, but certainly form.[32]

Ejchenbaum added an explanatory note to the word "perception" in his 1926 reflections, realizing that most contemporary readers might easily misunderstand Shklovsky's words on perception and form. (In 1926, they were already misread as so-called "Formalists", a term coined by Lenin who meant to debunk them, and a label they themselves refused to use without quotation marks).[33] Ejchenbaum's explanatory words show that they themselves were keenly aware that the new "Formalist" approach to art, from the perspective of perception, was new and even revolutionary, and in fact implied the radical rejection and abduction of the traditional and unfortunate dichotomy of form and content, replacing the "muddled" notion of "form by the notion of "technique" (*priom*).[34] "Perception" here is clearly not to be understood as a simple psychological concept (the perception peculiar to this or that person) but, since art does not exist outside of perception, it should be understood as an element belonging to art itself. Furthermore, Ejchenbaum explains that the notion of "form" here acquires new meaning; it is no longer an envelope, but a complete thing, something concrete, dynamic, self-contained, and without a correlative of any kind.[35] This is to say that the "self-contained word" is a term used in an

attempt to get rid of the notion of "form" (it is such a muddy concept, as they kept repeating). Shklovsky tried to pull it out of the mud by replacing "form" by "technique" a few years later, in "Art as Technique". As so often in his life, Shklovsky kept going back to these decisive moments and to his rethinking of the problem of "form". He also had a tendency to rethink and rephrase certain problems over and over again, sometimes in slightly varying formulations. It seems to me that he did not do so to repeatedly stress the same point, but rather to unfold his thinking which he (like Nietzsche) presented in his work, as a process in *statu nascendi*: something happening on the spot, open, never finished, and always open to further rethinking in connection to life itself. He kept returning to one or two fundamental problems, in particular the techniques used in the arts to make the familiar "strange". Throughout his career Shklovsky revisited and reconsidered the (aesthetic) principle and the techniques of *ostran(n)enie* many times, not only in "Art as Technique", but also in a dazzling diversity of works such as *Theory of Prose*, *A Sentimental Journey*, in the memoir written for his Futurist friend, *Mayakovsky and his Circle*; in *Literature and Cinematography*; in his contribution to *Poetika Kino*;[36] in his book on Eisenstein, and so on and so forth. It was not until 1983, however, that Victor Shklovsky reflected on that very moment some seventy years earlier, when he had introduced the term *ostran(n)enie* and had accidentally unleashed a revolution in thinking about the arts. In 1983, he remarked that perhaps he "could now admit to having made a spelling mistake", as he had erroneously spelled *ostranenie* "with one *n*", though the Russian word *stannyi* (strange) is written with a double *nn*.[37] That is how the word entered the history books, with a single *n*, to roam about like "a dog with a ragged ear," as Shklovsky would have it.[38] In "Art as Technique", Shklovsky explored and explained his thoughts on what he was now to call, with an evocative neologism, *ostran(n)enie*.

"Art as Technique" as an estranging avant-garde manifesto

Though theoretically sound and even brilliant, "Art as Technique" is also quirky and its rhetoric is rather baffling, as if he refused to write a proper academic text and chose to make an avant-garde manifesto for his Futurist friends, in line with the needs of the times. If anything, "Art as a Technique" is a manifesto, in the tradition of the Futurists: scanty, brazen, and provocative by its very generic nature.[39] With brashness,[40] Shklovsky presented his new ideas to the outside world on behalf of a group that was close enough to the Futurists to also be considered as "half-wits", but they did not seem to care. Boldly and with great polemic ardor, Shklovsky - now the leading figure of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language, OPOYAZ - presented his (or their) thoughts in the form of a radical attack on the traditional premises held by the Symbolists and on their idealist poetics. Characteristically, the manifesto is evocative as well as provocative, although not very didactic or impressively coherent. The argument presented is a bit hard to follow, though some parts are solid and of lasting value, in particular the part on "making strange" and its perceptual impact. As he wrote in "Art as Technique":

> If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. Thus, for example, all of our habits retreat into the area of the unconsciously automatic.
>
> […]

> The process of "algebrization," the over-automatization of [the perception of] an object, permits the greatest economy of perceptive effort. Either objects are assigned only one proper feature - a number, for example - or else they function as though by formula and do not even appear in cognition.
>
> […]
>
> After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it -hence we cannot say anything significant about it.[41]

The most cited part of the text is on how art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.[42]

To remove objects from the automatism of perception, the so-called techniques of “deautomatization” are used, the techniques which make objects “strange” (*ostran(n)enie*) or “unfamiliar”, as the older translations have it. In this way, art creates the typically prolonged and deepened perceptual experience.

The examples Shklovsky came up with in “Art as Technique” have been studied over the decades with some puzzlement and, at times, even downright irritation,[43] since some of them are “harsh”, a fact for which Shklovsky himself apologizes, if only in one particular case.[44] They were taken almost exclusively from the fields of literature (including the folktale) and linguistics,

the two fields the members of OPOYAZ had a bit of training in. The choice of samples comes across as incomprehensible if not grotesque in many ways. They were said to be chosen almost randomly, as a way of testing their theory, as Ejchenbaum points out,[45] and in "Art as Technique" they are inserted to merely illustrate their points, as Shklovsky states: "Here I want to illustrate a way used by Leo Tolstoy repeatedly […]."[46] However, they also seem to be chosen to incite and shock the readers, perhaps to amuse and entertain them as well, bombarding the reader with a set of remarkably incompatible samples, which are taken from Tolstoy and Puškin as well as Gogol; from a collection of erotic riddles as well as the *Decameron* and *War and Peace*. One instance is taken from folk literature and features that memorable passage in which a peasant tortures a bear, a magpie, and a horsefly, while pretending to do something else to them. Next thing we know is that he is torturing his wife, trying to "shove a stick up [her] rump", or so the horsefly assumes, but readers are of course supposed to know better (the many abbreviated versions of "Art as Technique", available in text books and on the internet, were keen to leave these last samples out).

For many reasons, "Art as Technique" can be considered hard to interpret: because it is ambiguous and provocative; because it is not overtly coherent or didactic; because its examples are baffling; because it turns traditional thinking upside down, and so on and so forth. Possibly, it was even harder to understand and appreciate it in the post-war era of New Criticism and French Structuralism. When one expects a tight-knit text, then one may indeed be easily disappointed as a reader, and may indeed find Shklovsky's enterprise "embarrassingly easy to attack", as Lemon and Reis argued in the 1960s.[47] In fact, cutting "Art as Technique" loose from the turn-of-the century's technological transformations and their cultural impact on the avant-gardes does not

help to understand the text. Quite on the contrary: all of Shklovsky's examples expose the potential "ontological instability of all mimetic representation"[48] in the same way new technologies do. As Gunning wrote, new technologies allow for an uncanny "re-animation" of the sense of instability that underlies mimetic tradition.[49] Within this context, it may be argued that Gorky's emphasis on "the uncanny effect of the new attraction's mix of realistic and non-realistic qualities"[50] signaled a crisis in the mimetic functioning of the cinematograph as a new medium. It made most of what was shown appear "alien" or "strange" (note that almost all examples presented by Shklovsky, no less than Gorky's, deal with seeing and the seen and ways of seeing). In effect, the new cinema machine may be said to have caused an epistemological crisis, a crisis for which the cultural explosion of discourses on the shared disruptive viewing experience may well be said to have been symptomatic. Within this historical era and theoretical context, "Art as Technique", stressing the "strange" quality of the seen and its impact on perception, in fact hardly stands out as original. Making strange is basically what the new medium did in the experience of most of its early spectators.

Conclusion

Though the text we have come to know as "Art as Technique" was written in late 1916 and first published in 1917, its preconception took place much earlier; some of the crucial thoughts were already presented by Shklovsky in 1914;[51] and in his lecture in the Stray Dog in December 1913.[52] The year 1913 was a significant year in the early cultural reception of the cinema in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as Yuri Tsivian has noted: that year "the general craze for cinema

reached its peak in Russia".[53] It has become clear that Shklovsky's attempt to rethink the problem of art – in that very year, in an avant-garde cabaret - was deeply embedded in the avant-garde's rethinking of the perceptual potential of new technologies and techniques, their evocative and revolutionary powers and their sudden and strong impact on audiences. As a friend of the Futurists, he approached the problem from the new and "radically unconventional" (Ejchenbaum)[54] perspective of perception and with a "brash irreverence" (Erlich) towards tradition.[55] This avant-garde project, with which early so-called Russian Formalism has been so closely connected,[56] is itself a crucial part of what we have come to understand as the tremendous cultural impact of early cinema on writers and artists in pre-revolutionary Russia.[57] The growing academic awareness of early cinema's cultural impact on the avant-garde movements triggered an urgent and new question:[58] If Shklovsky's famous manifesto "Art as Technique" was in fact part of the avant-garde's cultural response to early cinema, then how must one exactly situate and understand its key premises and concepts: *ostran(n)enie*, art, technique; its radical opposition to traditional concepts (*form/content*) and practices and methods of interpretation; its new "theoretical principles" (to study the new techniques and their impact) and their implications for the studies of the arts, including the replacement of "form" by "technique"?

Re-read within this very specific context provided by the avant-gardes responding to the transformations technology brought about, it instantly becomes clear that "Art as Technique" is not written in support of a "formal method" to enhance interpretation, as some post-war readers have come to think (and as Ejchenbaum already feared might happen).[59] It also becomes clear that it is relevant to re-evaluate "Art as Technique" as a manifesto, written in a period of

technological transformation, just as the current one, with "new media" and their impact taking centre stage. We can now more easily understand, perhaps, than readers of "Art as Technique" in the 1960s and 1970s, what Shklovsky was pointing at. My short archaeology of *ostran(n)enie* as part of a re-reading of "Art as Technique" will hopefully defamiliarize it from its long history of misreading. "Misreading" here, however, does not express deprecation, but an acknowledgement that each re-reading – including this one – has a specific function in its own context and time. We, 21st-century passers-by in history, are perhaps better positioned to appreciate these reflections on newness and the de-automatization of perception than the 20th-century post-war readers were in the heyday of New Criticism, if only because "Art as Technique" created the conceptual space to reflect on the impact of the "new" in culture. If ever there was a field that might profit from the abduction of the traditional ("clumsy") concept of "form" and its replacement by "technique" (apart from the fields of literature and art studies), obviously, it must be the fields of film and media studies: because Shklovsky's theory helps to open up new ways to frame the impact of new technologies in culture. To fields in which the technologies directly interfere with the process of making art, "Art as Technique" provides the conceptual tools to analyze the processes of mutation and appropriation of new techniques in culture, and it brings to light that the genealogies of art and technique are intertwined because they are inherently connected.

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Notes

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1 In this reflection, I return to the research work done with a team of (early) film scholars, Yuri Tsivian, Ian Christie, and Frank Kessler among them, for the edited volume on Ostrannenie, published by Amsterdam University Press in 2010. This is a rethinking as well as a reworking of my Introduction and my chapter on "Ostranenie, 'The Montage of Attractions' and Early Cinema's 'Properly Irreducible Alien Quality' (*Ostrannenie*, pp.11-20, 33-60).

2 Yuri Tsivian, introduction to *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception,* ed. Richard Taylor (London & Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1- 14.

3 Ibid., 13.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

[6] There were many words for what we call "film" today. See Annie van den Oever, "Introduction: researching Cinema and Media Technologies," in *Technē/Technology: Researching Cinema and Media Technologies - Their Development, Use and Impact*, ed. Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 15.

[7] The term "new cinema machine" was coined by Laura Mulvey, see Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 68.

[8] Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, 1-14.

[9] Contemporary 21st century audiences are distanced from the viewing experiences provided by the early film shows, but this does not mean that they do not have similar experiences with today's new media.

[10] Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, 2.

[11] Tom Gunning described the *stupefying* effect of early cinema on its early spectator in several places. He also described and analyzed other confrontations with the "new" in similar terms. See Tom Gunning, "Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century" in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds. David Thourburn, and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 40-41. See also Gunning's "The Cinema of Attractions. Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." In *Early Cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI), 1990. See also Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator," in *Viewing Positions. Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press), 1994.

[12] See Shklovsky's *Mayakovsky and His Circle*, trans., and ed. Lily Feiler (London: Pluto Press Limited, 1974), 125.

[13] I took this quote from Tom Gunning, who cites Shklovsky's "Electricity and the Theme of Old Newspapers," *Podenshchina* (Leningrad: Pisatelej, 1930), 14-15. See Tom Gunning, "Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds. David Thourburn, and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 44.

[14] Gunning, "Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century," 39-44.

[15] The quote is taken from Shklovsky's *The Hamburg Account,* which The Dalkey Archive Press has recently (2017) translated and re-titled to *The Hamburg Score*, but for the reference of the citation of this quote, see Richard Sheldon, introduction to *Literature and Cinematography*, trans. Irina Masinovsky. (Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008), xvi-xvii.

[16] See, apart from Tsivian, also an expert on the history of the Futurist movement in Russia, Vladimir Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians," in *The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature,* ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982), 171.

[17] Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception,* 12.

[18] See Vladimir Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians," in *The Avant-Garde Tradition in Literature* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982), 171.

[19] Tsivian, 12.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] See Richard Sheldon's "Introduction" to Viktor Shklovsky's *A Sentimental Journey* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), x. [my italics]

[24] See Vladimir Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians."

[25] See Richard Sheldon's "Introduction," x.

[26] The younger Eisenstein became part of the circle surrounding Mayakovsky's LEF in 1923, ten years after Shklovsky's lecture in The Stray Dog, and Shklovsky saw him as a young man, "in wide trousers, very young, gay and with a high-pitched voice", a "versatile" person who brought to this environment of "extreme diversity" his own specialty: "he brought to LEF his ideas on eccentrism." See Shklovsky, *Mayakovsky and His Circle,* 172.

[27] See Wellek, "Russian Formalism," 156-159; and Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians," 168.

[28] Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians," 171. See also Boris Ejchenbaum, "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'", 112.

[30] Svetlana Boym, "Poetics and politics of estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt." In: *Poetics Today* 26: 4 (Winter 2005).

[31] Victor Shklovsky, *Voskresheniye slova* (Petersburg, 1914), 11. See Boris Ejchenbaum's "The Theory of the 'Formal Method,'" (p.112) for a comment and an English translation of this quote.

[32] Ibid.

[33] As they abducted the notion of "form" and replaced it by "technique", they put "form and "formal" between quotation marks and obviously objected to being called "Formalists" since the word carried the wrong connotations of late 19th-century aestheticism and "*L'art pour l'art"*, as preached by some late 19th-century autonomists.

[34] Ejchenbaum, "'The Theory of the 'Formal Method,'" 115.

[35] Ibid.,12.

[36] A new and extended edition of *Poetika Kino* [Poetics of Film] was presented in a German translation in 2005. This interesting volume contains many earlier and later writings on the cinema by the Russian Formalists, apart from the texts published in Russia in 1927 under the title *Poètika kino*. A considerable amount is written by Shklovsky. See Wolfgang Beilenhoff, ed., *Poetika Kino. Theorie und Praxis des Films im russischen Formalismus*, trans. Wolfgang Beilenhoff (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), 2005.

[37] Shklovsky is quoted extensively by Yuri Tsivian in "The Gesture of Revolution or Misquoting as Device," in *Ostrannenie*, ed. Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 21-32.

[38] Ibid., 23.

[39] See Markov on the genre and topic: "Manifestoes in the strict sense of the word were not always concerned with theory. Most of them [by the Futurists of these days] were largely arrogant and vitriolic attacks on proceeding and contemporary literature, more often on fellow-futurists; at other times their aim was to *épater les bourgeois*, rather than declare their aesthetics." Markov, "Russian Futurism and Its Theoreticians," 169.

[40] Victor Erlich. "Russian Formalism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 34, 4 (October – December 1973), 638.

[41] Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique." In *Russian Formalist Criticism. Four Essays*. [1917] Translated by Lee T. Lemon, and Marion Reis, 3-57. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, 3-57.

[42] Ibid.

[43] See for instance a critique by Eric Naiman, "Shklovsky's Dog and Mulvey's Pleasure: The Secret Life of Defamiliarization." *Comparative Literature* 50, no. 4 (autumn 1998): 333-352.

[44] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 13.

[45] See Ejchenbaum, "The Theory of the 'Formal Method,'" 115.

[46] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique,"13.

[47]Lemon, and Reis, introduction to *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. & trans. Lee T. Lemon & Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), ix.

[48] Tom Gunning, "Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thourburn, and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 49.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment," 117.

[51] See Boris Ejchenbaum in "Theory of the 'formal method'" on the crucial passages in and impact of Shklovsky's "The Resurrection of the Word," published in 1914.

[52] For a description of Shklovsky's lecture as a freshman in 1913, see Richard Sheldon in his "Introduction" to *A Sentimental Journey* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970).

[53] On the year "the general craze for cinema reached its peak in Russia," see Yuri Tsivian in his *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, 12. For a description of Shklovsky's lecture as a freshman in 1913, see Richard Sheldon in his "Introduction" in *A Sentimental Journey* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970). See also below.

[54] Ejchenbaum refers to their violation of traditional notions, "which had appeared to be 'axiomatic', " in: "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'," 104.

[55] The words "brash irreverence" I took from Victor Erlich"s "Russian Formalism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 34, 4 (October – December 1973), 638. One must doubt, however, that these words are used by Erlich in any positive way. Most contemporaries and many later scholars took note of the "brashness" of the avant-garde attacks on tradition with great reserve.

[56] "Formalism and Futurism seemed bound together by history," as Ejchenbaum wrote in his 1926 retrospective overview of the formative years of Russian Formalism. See Ejchenbaum in "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'," 104-105: "Our creation of a radically unconventional poetics, therefore, implied more than a simple reassessment of particular problems; it had an impact on the study of art generally. It had its impact because of a series of historical developments, the most important of which were the crisis in philosophical aesthetics and the startling innovations in art (in Russia most abrupt and most clearly defined in [Futurist] poetry). Aesthetics seemed barren and art deliberately denuded – in an entirely primitive condition. Hence, Formalism and Futurism seemed bound together by history."

[57] Early cinema studies contributed considerably to our knowledge from this period. Yuri Tsivian is of course of invaluable significance in this field. See in particular his *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*. (Translated by A. Bodger. Edited by R. Taylor. London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 217. One must note that in the last two decades, interesting and highly valuable research in this area – also on the connection between early cinema and the avant-garde - mostly comes from Film Studies and so-called Early Cinema Studies in particular, and less from what is institutionally labeled as (continental) "Avant-Garde Studies."

[58] This question was not yet posed by avant-garde studies or early cinema studies when we embarked on our research project for *Ostran(n)enie* in a 2006 workshop anticipating the publication of the book in 2010.

[59] See, among many others, Victor Erlich, "Russian formalism." In: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (Oct. – Dec., 1973), 630, 634. Interesting, Ehrlich complains about "Art as Technique" not being more helpful in this area of interest and he states that he prefers Roman Jakobson's work for this very reason. Erlich (p. 630): "Shklovsky's key terms, e.g., "making it strange," "dis-automatization," received wide currency in the writings of the Russian Formalists. But, on the whole, Shklovsky's argument was more typical of Formalism as a rationale for poetic experimentation than as a systematic methodology of literary scholarship. The Formalists' attempt to solve the fundamental problems of literary theory in close alliance with modern linguistics and semiotics found its most succinct expression in the early, path-breaking studies of Roman Jakobson. For Jakobson, the central problem is not the interaction between the percipient subject and the object perceived, but the relationship between the "sign" and the "referent," not the reader's attitude toward reality but the poet's attitude toward language." Ironically, Jakobson's perspective today is far more passé than Shklovsky's to many.