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Kino-Eye, Kino-Bayonet:

The Avant-Garde Documentary in Japan, France, and the USSR

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Comparative Literature

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Kino-Eye, Kino-Bayonet:

The Avant-Garde Documentary in Japan, France, and the USSR

Abstract

This dissertation considers a grouping of films in the former USSR, France, and Japan from the perspective of the political aesthetics they aim to create. These films, usually considered avant-garde documentaries, provide complementary and transnational examples of a freer and more affect-driven Marxist political filmmaking practice that likely originated with Dziga Vertov in the USSR. Rather than simply *transmitting* a tendentious political message, Vertov and others try to *emancipate* the viewer's political sensibility through a series of disruptive and playful aesthetic techniques. By utilizing what Friedrich Schiller and Jacques Rancière call 'free aesthetic play,' these documentaries free the viewer from the ballast of habit. This emancipatory political filmmaking did not end with Vertov, and forms a trajectory: importantly, it reappears with the failure of political change on a mass societal scale. Faced with the disappointment of political movements which emphasize a simple transmission of text from government and citizen, artists instead attempt to use cinema as a tool for a personal, and political, transformation.

This tendency thus re-emerges in France and Japan in the 1960s during their own failing revolutionary moments: *Mai '68* in France, and the protests against ANPO (the US-Japan Security Treaty) in Japan. However, the films created from these political avant-garde movements vary in success: while many Japanese filmmakers from the 1960s (e.g. Matsumoto Toshio, Hani Susumu, Imamura Shohei, Wakamatsu Koji, Terayama Shuji) exhibit the playful and estranging qualities of Vertov's films, French filmmakers post-1968, especially the Dziga

Vertov Group, are quite didactic, and differ significantly from free aesthetic play, and from Vertov's own productions; although they aim to emancipate, the films' anti-pleasurable tendencies serve instead to alienate the viewer. This dissertation thus unearths a political avant-gardist tendency that highlights a politics of emancipation rather than transmission, and is defined by play, affect, and formalist estrangement. It is grounded in theories of politics and aesthetics, especially Walter Benjamin and Jacques Rancière, and stems from archival research in the National Diet Library and the Sogestu Art Center in Japan.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Affective Acrobatics of the Kino-Eye

This dissertation considers a grouping of films in the former USSR, France, and Japan from the perspective of the political aesthetics they aim to create. These films, usually considered avant-garde documentaries, provide complementary and transnational examples of a Marxist political filmmaking practice. These films are much more playful and affect-driven than traditional political documentaries, which tend to align with the ideological party line, or proletarian narrative productions, which tend toward socialist realism. The iconoclastic films of Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), considered avant-garde documentaries *avant la lettre,*[1]were the first to introduce this playful and more affective interpretation of actuality footage. His films aim to emancipate the viewer's political sensibility, heretofore chained to the "ballast of habit" (in the words of Samuel Beckett), through a series of disruptive and playful aesthetic techniques. This filmmaking style—the Kino-Eye—is meant to lead to a freer and more active form of perception in its viewer.

It thus departs significantly from other filmmakers of the avant-garde in the Soviet Union, such as Sergei Eisenstein, whose films utilize montage techniques to violently transmit political messages from the government to its citizens. In the wake of increasingly controlling forces within the Soviet government, Vertov saw his films as the ideal mechanism to reverse a

[1] Although the avant-garde flourished in the 1920s, and included many non-fiction elements, the term 'documentary' was not introduced until the mid-1930s, when John Grierson defined it as the "creative treatment of actuality". However, Grierson considered the European avant-garde dangerous, and consciously repressed the role of the 1920s avant-garde movements (especially from the Soviet Union) within his discussion of documentary forms. The "avant-garde documentary," then, began in the 1920s, but was not categorized as such. See Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary,* 2nd ed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 17 and "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* (27:4, Summer 2001), 582.

dangerous political (and aesthetic) trend. He was disturbed by the latent bourgeois elements in Soviet society—those naïve viewers of Hollywood spectacles—and critical of an increasingly conservative tendency which spurned formal experimentation. To combat these forces, Vertov's work reflects on art's relation to modernity, and its impact on the human sensorium; thus, the Kino-Eye was meant to "[challenge] the human eye's visual representation of the world"[2] and declare its own, distinct, defamiliarizing "I see" (*vizhu*).

Indeed, this call for a freer and more active perception in film recurs across borders and histories, and forms a trajectory; notably, it reappears in the French and Japanese political avant-garde of the 1960s. Like Vertov's films, many of their striking works prioritized experimental, open-ended formal structures over their opposite: strict political party doctrine at the expense of form. By utilizing what Friedrich Schiller and Jacques Rancière call 'free aesthetic play,' these films—all avant-garde documentaries, loosely interpreted—attempt to free the viewer from habit-dulled perception through film technique. Through a variety of formal interferences, these films meant to sharpen sensibilities and awaken radical political beliefs within their viewers.

This filmmaking practice reappears in the 1960s with the failure of political change on a mass scale: with the aftermath of *Mai '68* in France, and the Japanese protest movements against ANPO, the US-Japan Security Treaty, in 1960, and again in 1968-70. Avant-garde documentarists were disappointed by the apparent inability of art to radicalize and enlighten everyday citizens; art was bound to either capitalist consumerism, or to an increasingly staid communist party. For these filmmaker-theorists, a change in politics necessitated a change in

[2] Tellingly, the "I see" has an exclamation point in the original Russian: "Кино-Глаз, оспаривающий зрительное представление о мире у человеческого глаза и предлагающий свое "вижу!" See "Postanovlenie Soveta Troikh" (Decree of the Council of Three) in Dziga Vertov, *Iz Naslediya: Vol II, Statii i Vistupleniya* (Moscow: Eisenstein Center, 2008), 43. Translation: Dziga Vertov, "The Council of Three" in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov.* Trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 21.

form. To contrast their works with previous political films, many of which emphasized a simple transmission of text from government to citizen, avant-garde documentarists instead attempt to use cinema as a tool for a personal, and political, transformation.

John MacKay marks a similar trajectory of Vertov's reception that overlaps significantly with the trajectory of avant-garde documentaries outlined here. According to MacKay, Vertov's reception had four significant waves: 1954-1961, a largely Soviet recovery of Vertov in the immediate post-Stalinist period, and after the filmmaker's death; 1962-1970, marked by the controversial dominance of "Kino-Pravda/*cinéma-vérité*"; post-1968 through late 1980s, dominated by Vertov as anti-authoritarian or anti-Stalinist; and our current, post-Soviet mode, reflecting once again on communist culture and its makers. These trajectories swirl around three important vortices: Nikita Khruschev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956, *Mai '68* (considered internationally), and the implosion of the USSR at the end of the 1980s.[3] While my own interpretation of these trajectories comes to similar conclusions, it focuses less specifically on Vertov as a historical figure and far more on Vertov as a pioneer and progenitor of a more playful and estranging avant-garde documentary practice. Significantly, my work follows this trajectory into the 1960s, which manifest as the perfect political climate for the recovery and re-imagination of avant-garde documentary (and Vertovian) forms. In addition, my work on Japanese film distinguishes itself from scholars such as Yuriko Furuhata and Mark Nornes, who do not trace different formal or historical trajectories in their accounts of political avant-garde films. My work locates an important rift between works of 1960s art cinema in Japan—crucially, between the playful and anarchic trajectory, more focused on questions of perception, and a more didactic and Brechtian trajectory, more focused on radical politics.

[3] See John MacKay, *Dziga Vertov: Life and Work, Vol. 1: 1896-1921* (Forthcoming through Academic Studies Press, 2017), 34-35.

Indeed, these 1960s movements, as James Tweedie contends, were not isolated events but "a series of interlaced moments," posing an "alternative vision of global modernity" based on a critique of dominant infrastructures.[45] A global, trans-historical analysis of the Kino-Eye, then, has much larger implications than a simple mapping of Soviet influence abroad. Rather, it reflects upon the ability of art to affect both personal and political change; Vertov's Kino-Eye resolutely believes in film's ability to perfect human consciousness—to emancipate the film viewer from the metaphysical drudgery of daily life. Tracing this emancipatory avant-garde documentary trajectory thus reveals the role of aesthetics within an age of political crisis—a role that will, I believe, continue to be evaluated and re-evaluated within the disasters of our own late capitalist moment. Renato Poggioli wrote that "...the avant-garde… can only flower in a climate where political liberty triumphs."[6] The filmmakers of the avant-garde documentary, however, seem to only flower in the precise instance where political liberty is on the verge of crumbling altogether. The artists of this tradition, then, attempt to craft films which liberate the viewer, against all odds. As we will see, this idea of liberty is more porous and multivalent than most liberal thinkers would have one believe.

However, the films created from these political avant-garde movements vary in success: while many Japanese filmmakers from the 1960s, such as Matsumoto Toshio, Hani Susumu, Wakamatsu Koji, and Terayama Shuji, exhibit the playful and estranging qualities of Vertov's films, French films post-1968, especially by the Dziga Vertov Group, are didactic, and differ

[4] James Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves: Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

[5] One must note, however, that Tweedie does not analyze avant-garde documentary cinema but global new wave movements; as such, the "alternative vision of global modernity" he describes is based on novelty and youth; by contrast, the alternative vision fostered by the political avant-garde I describe are less youth- and novelty-oriented, and are more consciously critical of capitalist infrastructures.

[6] Renato Poggioli *The Theory of the Avant Garde,* Trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), 95.

significantly from free aesthetic play, and from Vertov's own productions. Although they aim to emancipate, the films' anti-pleasurable tendencies serve instead to alienate the viewer. This alternate trajectory I have termed the "Kino-Bayonet," and arises from a possible misapprehension of Vertov's own films in the early 1960s, with the advent of *cinéma-vérité*—a translation of Vertov's "Kino-Pravda". Although Vertov appears to be a crucial thread weaving together three seemingly disparate national traditions—Japan, France, and the USSR—I claim that Vertov is less an originator than, in the words of Serge Daney, "a prophet," able to "combine archaism and the future"[7] in a way that supersedes mere formal innovation. Daney contrasts Vertov with Godard, who was seemingly trapped in the muck of his own political present. Notably, Daney's assertion of Vertov as prophet situates the Soviet iconoclast as a spokesman for something other than himself. In this way, Vertov became a mouthpiece for the Kino-Eye: a tendency of filmmaking that highlights a politics of emancipation rather than transmission, and is defined by play, affect, and formalist estrangement.

In this dissertation, I begin with a close analysis of Vertov's own films and theories, identifying characteristics especially common in his 1924 film-manifesto *Kino-Eye*. I then follow Vertov's emancipatory model to 1960s France, with a focus on *cinéma-vérité* and the Dziga Vertov Group. Next, I weave my analysis through 1960s Japan, describing Japanese political avant-garde work that aligns with Vertov's somewhat anarchic tendency. Finally, I return to a discussion of Vertov's animated films, and conceptualize an avant-garde hybrid genre that blends documentary—the ultimate "truthful" medium—with animation, the most "crafted" form.

[7] Serge Daney, "The Godard Paradox," in ed. Michael Temple, James S. Williams, and Michael Witt, *For Ever Godard* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004), 70.

For many of these filmmakers and film theorists, Vertov's Kino Eye was synonymous with a mix of avant-gardist and documentary techniques. It was viewed as the synthesis of the dialectic of film history itself, with Lumière's actuality films as its thesis, and Méliès's fantastical proto-avant-gardist productions as its antithesis. Described by critics and filmmakers as disparate as Siegfried Kracauer,[8] Joris Ivens,[9] Matsumoto Toshio,[10] Georges Sadoul,[11] and Edgar Morin,[12] and especially commonly discussed in the 1960s, this dialectic brought Vertov's films to attention as a particularly affective, and dis-sensual, mode of avant-garde documentary filmmaking. In other words, the avant-garde documentary, epitomized by Dziga Vertov, represented the inevitable end of cinematic history. How this synthesis was actualized in form, however, varied greatly—even among self-styled experts of Vertov's films.

Sensing the Dis-Sensual

Although one can argue that all films can potentially elicit a strong affective response in the viewer—film viewing is ultimately an inherently subjective experience—films of the Kino-Eye trajectory elicit affect of a very particular sort. As I will soon describe, this affect is aligned with philosopher Jacques Rancière's notions of dissensus and aesthetic free play, as well as formalist Victor Shklovsky's concept of estrangement; these three aspects of the Kino-Eye's

[8] See Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 30.

[9] See Nakahara Yusuke, "Zenei eiga ni tsuite: Vertov no koto nado" (On Avant-Garde Film: Vertov and others), *Sekai Zenei eigasai* (*A Retrospective of World Avant-Garde Cinema)* (Tokyo: Sogetsu Art Center, March-April 1966), 106.

[10] See Matsumoto Toshio, *Eizou no hakken (Discovery of the Image): Avant-Garde Documentary,* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1963), 9-12.

[11] See Georges Sadoul, *Histoire d'un art: Le cinéma: des origins à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949), 31.

[12] See Edgar Morin, *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire: essai d'anthropologie sociologique* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1956), 58.

affect-oriented filmmaking are also inherently linked through their emphasis on freedom and unrestricted structures, and what Rancière terms a "redistribution of the sensible". Dissensus is not an "institutional overturning," but "an activity that cuts across forms of cultural and identity belonging… working to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception."[13] The method by which these avant-garde documentaries achieve aesthetic and political dissensus derives from their ability to merge Shklovsky's desire to "increase the difficulty and length of perception"[14] through what Rancière, following Friedrich Schiller, termed "free aesthetic play". A paradigmatic example of this is Vertov's playful use of animation: for example, during a stop-motion animated scene near the conclusion of *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), a tripod, suddenly rendered animate, dances on its own, and places a movie camera on its head. These scenes delight and astonish, appearing to exist for affect alone.

Walter Benjamin refers to this type of filmmaking as eliciting a "therapeutic" effect through "sensory-perceptual shocks". These shocks—which, as we will see, are opposed to Sergei Eisenstein's similarly-phrased, more violent iteration—break down psychopathological barriers imposed upon human experience in the wake of modernity. Vertov's shocks serve to loosen perceptual armors, rather than building up armor for an ongoing battle. As Miriam Hansen writes, on Benjamin's description of cinema in *One-Way Street*:

> …the loosening of psychopathological armors in the cinema… may be triggered by the viewers' mimetic identification with movement, rhythm, and metamorphic transformation; by sensory-perceptual shocks—or counter-shocks—staged by editing or montage; by music; or by diegetic intensities of emotion…[15]

---

[13] Steven Corcoran, "Editor's Introduction," in Jacques Rancière, Trans. Steven Corcoran, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 2.

[14] Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* Trans. Lee L. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12.

[15] Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 100.

Cinema, then, has the singular capacity to loosen "psychopathological armors" through aspects such as editing, music, or montage. The audience's affective response to a certain editing process can single-handedly trigger a perceptual, and political, awakening. Cinema becomes a corrective to an experience of modernity that tends to dull emotional capacities, and, by the process of viewing works on screen, reawaken them.

Benjamin was not alone, however, in his assertion of cinema's ability to supply "counter-shocks". His contemporary in Japan, 1930s aesthetic philosopher Nakai Masakazu, also saw great social significance in film's affective and sensorial potential. Both Nakai and Benjamin believed that film's ability to transform mass sensation was an affective, and deeply politicial, process; this contrasts with classical arts such as painting, for instance, which were much more tied to passive, individual contemplation.[16] Nakai likewise saw in the technology of the movie camera a medium which had become a mediator—specifically, one between humans and nature. As sociologist and media theorist Kitada Akihiro wrote, on Nakai's view of cinema:

> Technology… is rather a (physical) thing that initiates the trial-and-error process of interaction between the human and nature, as well as, within this process, the transformation of its own functions/abilities. Technology is not a tool enabling the human manipulation of nature but rather a medium that enforces both reflection on and renewal of the very relationship of humanity and nature.[17]

For Nakai, technology should not be romanticized in and of itself; rather, technology is used for its ability to act as a literal mediator between human beings and nature. Technology, then, is singularly capable of enforcing reflection and renewing humanity's relationship with the world.

[16] Aaron Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention: Nakai Masakazu's Theory of Technology and Critique of Capitalism" in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* (17:1. Spring 2009), 146.

[17] Kitada Akihiro, Trans. Alex Zahlten, "An Assault on 'Meaning'": On Nakai Masakazu's Concept of 'Mediation'" in *Media Theory in Japan*, ed. Marc Steinberg and Alex Zahlten (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 287.

Its properties are inherently transformative. The only technology capable of this, however, was that of mechanical reproducible art—likewise a fascination for Benjamin.

Although Nakai and Benjamin do not always specify the types of films which evoke this interaction, I argue that certain films are more likely to elicit this "transformation of… functions/abilities". These are films of the Kino-Eye trajectory, whose sensory-perceptual shocks are rooted in pleasure, wonder, and delight, rather than emotional manipulation. Vertov's films use the apparatus of the movie camera to investigate the relationship between human beings and the world[18]—echoing Nakai's view of technology as a mediator between humanity and nature. In so doing, according to Oleg Aronson, Vertov's films exemplify a new type of sensuality (*chuvstvenost'*), opposed to a cold and restrictive bourgeois art.[19]

As we will see in subsequent chapters, this sensuous and affective avant-garde documentary filmmaking trajectory is defined by highly experimental montage and editing, as well as "tricks" that engage Benjamin's notions of "movement, rhythm, and metamorphic transformation." In Vertov's films, a filmmaker sets up his tripod within a mug of beer (*Man with a Movie Camera*); a bust of Lenin appears in a rushing dam (*The Eleventh Year)*; bread slices itself and multiplies (*Stride, Soviet!*); a slaughtered bull comes back to life and rejoins its herd in a pasture (*Kino-Eye*). Such experiments, which appear distanced from strictly Marxist dialectical materialism, create "sensory-perceptual shocks" and "intensities of emotion," whose ultimate goal is Rancière's "redistribution of the sensible". Akin to Hansen's interpretation of Benjamin's writings on film, these films revolutionize our perceptive capacities by emphasizing

[18] Sergei Drobashenko, "Teoretichiskie Vzglyadi Vertova (Vertov's Theoretical Gazes)," in Dziga Vertov, *Statii, Dnevniki, Zamisli* (Moscow: Izdvo Iskusstvo, 1966), 5.

[19] In Russian, *chuvstvenost'* has a more carnal and animalistic connotation. Aronson's interpretation of Vertov therefore emphasizes directness and unmediatedness. See Oleg Aronson, *Metakino* (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2003), 77.

experience as such. As Vertov writes, "The main and essential thing is: The sensory exploration of the world through film"[20]: film in its capacity to elicit sensorial experience, affective response, and personal transformation.

Indeed, Vertov's own film theories emphasize these selfsame playful, estranging, and dis-sensual modes. In "We: Variant of a Manifesto," Vertov, the self-styled "Kinok" (cinema-eye man[21]), writes:

> Saws dancing at a sawmill convey to us a joy more intimate and intelligible than that on human dance floors.[22]
>
> …WE sing of earthquakes, we compose film epics of electric power plants and flame, we delight in the movements of comets and meteors and the gestures of searchlights that dazzle the stars.[23]

The Kino-Eye abandons an emphasis on human beings as a central subject of cinematic inquiry in favor of the "intimate" and "intelligible" joy of machines: "saws dancing at a sawmill." Vertov's films and fellow Kinoks "delight" in both the extraterrestrial—comets and meteors—but also the seemingly banal, such as "searchlights that dazzle the stars," whose movements are personified as "gestures". Yet this emphasis on the machinic is not distanced and critical, but rather, in full futurist fervor, emphatic, and ecstatic. Vertov's viewer is meant to feel "joy" and

---

[20] In the original, this phrase is rendered in bold, with the latter phrase capitalized. More literally, the latter phrase can be translated: "kino-feeling of the world": Основное и самое главное: КИНООЩУЩЕНИЕ МИРА. See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya, 38.* Translation: Vertov, "The Council of Three," 14.

[21] Although the translation of Kinok as "cinema-eye man" is standard in translations of Vertov's works, the original Russian does not imply a gender; nor is *Man with a Movie Camera* necessarily a man. Given that "Cinema-Eye Person" or *Human with a Movie Camera* appears rather awkward, I have retained the standard translations. Nonetheless, the non-gender-specific aspect of Vertov's theories and works must be noted, especially given that Elizaveta Svilova was one of the most essential Kinoks of the group.

[22] In the original Russian, "human dance floors" is written in a sarcastically dismissive way: *chelovechikh tantsulek":* "Нам радость пляшущих пил на лесопилке понятнее и ближе радости человечьих танцулек… … поем землетрясения, слагаем кинопоэмы пламени и электростанциям, восторгаемся движениями комет и метеоров и ослепляющими звезды жестами прожекторов." See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 16. Translation: Dziga Vertov, "We: Variant of a Manifesto" in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov.* Trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 7.

[23] Ibid., 8.

"delight" at his cine-experiments, along with his band of Kinoks. These affects, rooted in Vertov's playful and estranging experiments, are then meant to transition into social practice by provoking, disrupting, and re-orienting our preformed ways of thinking and feeling: in other words, an experience of dissensus.

This reorientation, disruption, and redistribution are inherently tied to the concept of affect itself. Taking its cue from Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks, my use of affect is distinguished from emotionality, sentimentality, or feeling; as we will see, affect has the potential to be more radical and profound. My definition draws from Brian Massumi, influenced by the writings of Deleuze and Guattari: "a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another, and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act."[24] In their writings on cinema, both Marks and Sobchack propose a mode of viewership based on this same prepersonal intensity, which is unconscious, unformed, and unstructured.[25] In contrast to emotion, which Massumi claims is the broadcast or display of a feeling into the social world, or feeling, a sensation checked against previous experiences and already labeled, affect has a certain revolutionary potential. In the words of Eric Souse, "affect is what makes feelings feel."[26]

Eugenie Brinkema notes that affect, being "all formless-feeling/what-is-not-structure," has become "a general term for any resistance to systematicity, a promised recovery of contingency, surprise, play, pleasure, and possibility."[27] Affect's very lack of structure becomes

[24] Brian Massumi, "Annotated Translation with Critical Introduction of *Mille plateaux* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Volumes I-III)" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1987), 84.

[25] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 30.

a mode of revolutionary resistance. Its inherent "formlessness" and "structurelessness" creates a potential for radical reawakening and behavior. In Vertov's films, this "formlessness" might manifest as children running gleefully across a hill, slow-motion sequences of divers, or intoxicated old women dancing to an accordion. Just as Benjamin conceptualized cinema's unique capacity to recover human sensorial modes from the psychopathological bombardments of modernity, so too does Brinkema note that affect implies recovery "of contingency, surprise, play, pleasure, and possibility." Affect, then, removes form from sentimentality, and engages with playful and pleasurable modes—and herein lies its revolutionary potential, its ability to blend sensual pleasure with political freedom.

Although Vertov is usually presented as a Marxist propagandist, the editing of his films declares an even more embodied, more affecting, and more "unsettling" dialectical materialism than the strict dogmas of Soviet political infrastructure. As Vlada Petric notes, neither Vertov nor Vladimir Mayakovsky, to whom the Soviet filmmaker is often compared, ever placed political [read: Stalinist] dogma above their artistic visions and their humanistic attitude toward freedom of expression.[28] Although one can argue against Petric's analysis of Vertov's filmmaking as "humanist"—especially given his futurism and fascination for all things non-human—as his films and writing make evident, Vertov's filmmaking aims toward a reinvigoration of human sensibility. The estrangement induced by the Kino-Eye was meant to resist the everyday and reconfigure perception, allowing the new Soviet citizen to draw cinematic relations outside of the movie theatre.[29] Although Brinkema does not refer to Vertov by name, she describes Soviet

[28] Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera: A Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 35.

[29] Sergio Delgado, "Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and the Phenomenology of Perception," in *Film Criticism* (34:1, Fall 2009), 5.

montage as an "affective *techne*"[30], demonstrating the inherent affectivity of experimental and avant-garde montage techniques. However, as we will continue to see, this affect might slip into emotional manipulation: a model of heart-rendering Eisenstinian agitprop over the breathless spinning of the Kino-Eye's animated camerawork.

Kino-Eye, Kino-Fist, Kino-Bayonet

From the perspective of the 1960s, the Soviet 1920s were defined by two competing avant-gardes, representing the two main rivalling filmmakers of the period: Vertov and Eisenstein. Not only were the two rivals in personal and aesthetic matters, but they fundamentally differed in theoretical outlook. Though both stressed a filmmaking devoted to affective response mechanisms, their interpretations of the function, and experience, of cinema are radically opposed. As Rodhie notes, Vertov's films are more heterogeneous and more actual (more document, less narrative) than Eisenstein's, whose material was subordinate to a discourse and shaped for a story. Vertov's 'realities' derive from disparate times and places, and are distinct in their relation—and lack of relation—to each other.[31] Vertov's constructs an assembly, while Eisenstein's stronger narrative line and fictional setting create a unity. Where a unity is a closed construction, an assembly is open—a free and mobile construction.[32]

Rancière aptly summarizes this rivalry as follows:

> Eisenstein saw cinema as a language of ideograms expressing thought directly as palpable stimuli tilling the soil of Soviet consciousness like a tractor; and Vertov

[30] Brinkema, *Forms of the Affects,* 41.

[31] Sam Rodhie, *Montage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 82.

[32] Ibid., 83.

> saw cinema as the thread stretched between all the acts that were building the palpable reality of communism.[33]

Vertov's cinema showed viewers communism as a "palpable reality"—something to be sensed with the body, intuitively. Eisenstein's view of cinema was of "ideograms" "tilling the soil of Soviet consciousness." In other words, as strict agitational propaganda, film must plant revolutionary seeds within the Soviet mind. But it is no accident that the phrase "like a tractor" makes the reader wince, imagining a machine plowing over a cerebrum. Eisenstein's film theory is violent, his cinema weapon-like. So too is his "montage of attractions": as Eisenstein declares, "the moulding of the audience in a desired direction (or mood) is the task of every utilitarian theatre…"; this leads to the common quality of "attraction", defined as:

> …any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or political influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion.[34]

Cinema's "attraction" is therefore "aggressive": it "subjects the audience to emotional or political influence." This subjectification is "calculated" so that the audience arrives at the same "final ideological conclusion." There is no space for discussion, no freedom for interpretation. Affect is used to "emotionally shock"—not in the Benjaminian sense of a shock rupturing the armors of modernity, but a crippling aggression, thematically calculated.

This shock is quite different, then, from Vertov's trick-filled, animated delights. And it is no surprise that Vertov and Eisenstein were vehemently opposed (at least in public) to one another's work. Vertov's reliance on tricks was heavily criticized by Eisenstein, who declared in

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[33] Rancière, *Intervals of cinema,* 9.

[34] Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Attractions," 1923 in S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works, Vol 1: Writings, 1922-34,* Ed. Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), 34.

1929 that his rival's filming techniques were "simply formal trifles and pointless mischief with the camera," which obscured the ability of the medium to sway audiences[35]—ignoring the possibility that this lack of outright emotional manipulation was, in fact, the point. Both filmmakers use montage techniques to convey violent, breathtaking speed, but Vertov is far more concerned with perception and analysis. Instead, Eisenstein draws on his montage of collision to express injustice and violence. One might recall the juxtaposition of civilians running away from gunfire with the slicing of a cow's throat in *Strike* (1925), or the montage of a mechanical peacock alongside a shot of Alexander Kerensky in *October* (1928). Both sequences exemplify intellectual montage according to Eisenstein, although their meaning is all but subtle. In contrast to Vertov's vision of a Soviet cinema able to uncover the hidden reality of modern life, as Harte writes, Eisenstein's images are more forceful and overtly propangandistic; his quick images compel the viewer to side with the Bolsheviks without a second thought. [36]

It is not surprising, then, that Eisenstein frequently disagreed with Vertov, most famously in his essay "On the Question of a Materialist Approach to Form" (1924), which begins as a formal analysis of *Strike* and develops into a dissection of Vertov's views of cinema. In the essay's conclusion, Eisenstein declares that cinema does "not need a 'Film-Eye,' but 'Film-Fists' [*kinokulaki*]!"[37] Vertov's Kino-Eye is thus diametrically opposed to a Kino-Fist: a "montage of attractions" that forcefully manipulates, however beautifully and expertly, the viewer to formulate an ideologically correct conclusion. As Petric notes, Eisenstein did not believe that the camera itself—a mere instrument—could penetrate reality or reveal hidden meaning. He

[35] Tim Harte, *Fast Forward: The Aesthetics and Ideology of Speed in Russian Avant-Garde Culture, 1910-1930* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 187-188.

[36] Ibid., 208.

[37] Petric, *Constructivism in Film,* 55.

considered the Kino-Eye, and "Film-Truth" (Kino-Pravda) an artistically useless, purely mechanical device.[38] Indeed, contributing to the eventual prosecution of Vertov as a "formalist" filmmaker, Eisenstein denounced the Kinoks—in typical anti-Semitic fashion[39] —as the "Talmudists of pure film form" and the "Talmudists of 'Film-Truth' documentary" [*talmudisti chistoi kinoformy i talmudisti 'kinopravdy' dokumentalizma*].[40] The radical filmmaking of Vertov, the avant-gardist Jew behind the "Kino-Eye", and Eisenstein, creator of aggressive "Kino-Fists" of attraction, could not be further apart.

Because of these opposing ideologies, and especially postwar theorists' somewhat-exaggerated linkage of Eisenstein with Stalinism, in the 1960s global movements began to side with Vertov over Eisenstein. As Godard stated, on the ideology of the Dziga Vertov Group: "We think Dziga Vertov was a real Bolshevik movie maker, while Eisenstein was always a bourgeois movie maker—progressive, but still a bourgeois."[41] Vertov's separation from Eisenstein was well-known in both France and Japan. However, as stated previously, filmmakers and theorists differed in their interpretations of the Soviet avant-garde documentarist. Although filmmakers might not have seen more than a single Vertov film, nor read any of his writings, Vertov was the counter-Eisenstein, and that might have been enough. Indeed, as I elaborate in Chapter 3, Godard spends much time in *Le Vent d'Est* (Wind from the East, 1970) detailing Eisenstein's faults, with little more than a portrait on a book cover to attribute to Vertov's own filmmaking practice.

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[38] Ibid., 51.

[39] Here I would not necessarily like to argue that Eisenstein is anti-Semitic (such a statement would require a more detailed historical analysis), but rather to indicate his overt usage of anti-Semitic terminology to argue against Vertov's filmmaking.

[40] Ibid., 57.

[41] Quoted in Michael Goodwin, Tom Luddy, and Naomi Wise, "The Dziga Vertov film group in America" in *Take One: the Film Magazine* (Vol II, no.10. Canada: March/April 1970, pp 8-27), 16.

One common misconception of Vertov's films in the 1960s—made worse by the misapprehensions propagated by the Dziga Vertov Group productions—was the idea of the camera-weapon, often assumed to be a mainstay of the Kino-Eye while nonetheless never appearing in his theoretical writing.[42] Indeed, journals in both France and Japan are full of illustrations of a gun strapped to a camera; filmmakers from Godard to Adachi Masao conceived of their filmmaking as a weapon in service to the revolution. It is therefore no surprise that Godard/Gorin and the filmmaking team Wakamatsu/Adachi both created (extraordinarily didactic and ill-fated) films in the Middle East, while working with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In Adachi Masao's case, this camera-weapon was literal: the filmmaker joined the Japanese Red Army, defected to Lebanon, worked for the PLO, and remained in the Middle East before being captured and sent back to Japan in 2001. His films literalize the blend of gun and camera, or, to use vintage Soviet parlance, camera and bayonet. As Vladimir Mayakovsky famously declared in his poem "Come home" (*Domoi!*): "I want / the pen to be on par/ with the bayonet."[43] So too did many filmmakers in both the 1920s and 1960s hope to equate their poetic filmmaking practices with weapons of war—disregarding the possibility that Mayakovsky's statement was somewhat ironic: the equation of pen (*pero,* or quill, in Russian) with bayonet (*shtik*) was doomed, as Rancière would say, to melancholy.[44]

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[42] Although one of Vertov's posters for *Man with a Movie Camera* (see page 84) depicts what at first glance seems like a weapon, I argue that this is more a surveillance lens than a gun as such. In addition, my argument centers more centrally on *Kino-Eye* as a manifestation of this trajectory, rather than *Man with a Movie Camera*.

[43] *Ya khochu, / chtob k shtiku / priravnyali pero.* Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Stikhotvorenia, Poemi, Pieci* (Poems, Poetry, Plays) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura [Fiction Literature], 1969), 237.

[44] "This means that there is a certain undecidability in the 'politics of aesthetics'. There is a metapolitics of aesthetics which frames the possibilities of art. Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity. That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhat beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfil its political promise are condemned to a certain melancholy." See Rancière, *Dissensus,* 133.

Although this "Kino-Bayonet" is independent of the "Kino-Fist" of Eisenstein's ironic musing, it is even more weapon-like and didactic. Both tendencies are found internationally, and appear to be most keenly felt in France and Japan; although Chapter 4 lists many political avant-garde Japanese directors at length, others, notably Adachi Masao, Oshima Nagisa, and Ogawa Shinsuke, are left out—largely because of their erstwhile "film as weapon" ideology. Although filmmakers such as Oshima created works with more Vertovian techniques as well—for example, *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* (1968) and *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (1970) are notable in their carnivalesque, open-ended, or experimental take on political art—his films do not quite fit into the Kino-Eye characteristics outlined here. Indeed, as Oshima wrote in November 1960, films must be "as weapons used to change reality".[45] In contrast to critics such as Petric, I do not agree that Vertov considered the camera a weapon in the ideological battle;[46] the playful estrangement of Vertov's filmmaking, though permeated with dialectical materialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology, serves to free our thinking, and rehabilitate our senses.

As I will elaborate in Chapter 3, much of the films of "Kino-Bayonet" persuasion abandon an affect-oriented filmmaking, and treat, as Godard did, the pleasure of film viewing with utter contempt. If the Kino-Fist persuades the viewer with a forceful affect and violent rhetoric, the Kino-Bayonet is its more Brechtian iteration: devoid of sentiment, these films attempt to radically distance the viewer from the film, creating an intellectual awareness at the expense of joy. The Kino-Eye, however, leaves "room for play", to quote Benjamin and Kracauer; as Hansen writes, cinema offers the chance to defuse the pathological effects of a

[45] Oshima Nagisa, *Cinema, Censorship, and the State*: *The Writings of Oshima Nagisa, 1956-1978,* Ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 53.

[46] Vlada Petric, "Dziga Vertov as Theorist," in *Cinema Journal* 18:1 (Autumn 1978), 30.

technology too prone to cognitive and emotional manipulation.[47] If cinema already failed, the Kino-Eye alone can undo it.

Vertov's Interpreters

Vertov's films elicit an affective response, or "sensory-perceptual shock," in its viewers by interrupting how they habitually perceive the world. This interpretation of Vertov is supported by responses to his filmmaking from the 1920s, especially by German intellectuals such as Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. The theories of these two figures, and especially their interpretation by Miriam Hansen, form a major foundation for this dissertation project. As Hansen argues, both Kracauer and Benjamin explored the possibility of a new sensorial experience of the world *through* cinematic aesthetics.[48] Vertov's work echoes this capacity, and it is therefore no surprise that the Soviet documentarist's films inspired both critics.

The result, as Benjamin notes, is the capacity for a renewed, more affective experience of the world: "People… learn to cry again in the cinema."[49] Benjamin and Kracauer emphasize cinema's ability to reawaken capacities for affective response dulled by the "shocks" of modernity. Thus, Vertov's films are sensory-perceptual "counter-shocks" meant to battle against the dulling of the viewer's senses. In other words, Vertov's films teach their viewers how to live again. As Vertov implores in "We": "Come out, please, into life."[50] The rushing pace and fast editing of *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926), for instance, in which the auls (villages) of Dagestan are juxtaposed with the Siberian taiga—four thousand miles within a span of two seconds—jolts

[47] Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, xviii.

[48] Ibid., 3.

[49] Benjamin, "One-Way Street," quoted in Ibid., 100.

[50] Ibid., 20.

the viewer to life, and to attention. Vertov's films accomplish this "return to life" through what Hansen, drawing from Benjamin, titles *innervation*—a neurophysiological mode of adaptation, assimilation, and incorporation of something external and alien to the subject.[51] This concept entails an alternative reception and experience of technology related to what Benjamin terms the "optical unconscious".[52] Although Benjamin's concept, and its interpretation by Hansen, will not be discussed in depth, it is an inherently *affective* procedure; Benjamin is one of the few figures to entwine technological modernity with dimensions of sensorial affect and sentimentality.

For this reason, Vertov became the perfect filmmaker for theorists and filmmakers to latch onto, for he represented the ultimate fusion of theory and practice. Yet his theories are on one hand declamatory, and on another quite vague—thus allowing for a wide array of interpretations. As Vlada Petric notes, *Man with the Movie Camera* remains *the* most avant-garde documentary film which epitomizes a filmmaker's theoretical views.[53] Gilles Deleuze used *Man with a Movie Camera* to describe his concept of the movement-image taken to its utmost extreme: a machine assemblage of movement-images, and a radical film experimenting on its own conditions. Deleuze finds Vertov's "Kino-Eye" a perfect reflection of what Bergson calls an "acentered perception," which merges with all physical interactions. Given Bergson's vital importance for Deleuze, Vertov is at the very heart of Deleuze's reasoning.[54]

Likewise, in *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich uses Vertov as a paradigmatic proto-digital filmmaker. In a move of purposeful, radical anachronism, Manovich links early

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[51] Ibid., 132.

[52] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street," in *Critical Inquiry* (25:2, Winter 1999), 313.

[53] Petric, "Dziga Vertov as Theorist," 37.

[54] François Zourabichvili, "The Eye of Montage: Dziga Vertov and Bergsonian Materialism," in *Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema,* ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 142-143.

cinema to contemporary new media technologies such as computer games. According to Manovich, computer games are currently returning to the "New Vision" movement of the 1920s, of which Vertov was a participant, along with Moholy-Nagy, Rodchenko, and others. Computer games, like Vertov's cinema, "made unconventional points of view the key part of their poetics."[55] Nonetheless, even for Manovich, Vertov's films—especially *Man with a Movie Camera*—produce an affective response: specifically, one that is deeply pleasurable and joyous. Perhaps this pleasure, as MacKay contends, is the reason Vertov continues to be a perennial favorite of the young. Vertov's cinema stood for "a kind of pure possibility," "cinema as something for *them* to create, endlessly."[56] Manovich agrees with this contention, writing that *Man with a Movie Camera* "…proposes an untamed, and apparently endless unwinding of cinematic techniques, or, to use contemporary language, 'effects', as cinema's new way of speaking."[57] Much of Manovich's argument relies on Vertov's "effects"—Tim Harte and Vertov call them "tricks," or *triukhi*, using the parlance of the period—and their "untamed… apparently endless unwinding." Although Manovich does not center his argument on 'affect', his writings suggest that Vertov's effects *affect* the viewer in a particularly potent manner.

Manovich claims that Vertov's film attempts to mirror Vertov's own excitement about the potential of cinema. He writes:

> As the film [*Man with a Movie Camera*] progresses, "straight" footage gives way to manipulated footage; newer techniques appear one after one, reaching a roller

[55] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 91. I mention Manovich here not to analyze his theories in depth, but to demonstrate the immense appeal of Vertov's affective modes. Although Manovich's use of Vertov is an extremely intriguing way of contextualizing digital art forms within early avant-garde techniques, his analysis is less a new analysis of the Soviet filmmaker than a repurposing of older models for new forms. As a result, *The Language of New Media* says much about new media, but not much about Vertov (although one can argue that this was never Manovich's point to begin with). However, it is quite fitting that Manovich "discovers" Vertov at yet another juncture of political crisis, and a key transitional moment from "content" to "information" at the dawn of the new millennium.

[56] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov,* 16-17.

[57] Manovich, *Language of New Media*, 211.

> coaster intensity by the film's end, a true orgy of cinematography. It is as though Vertov re-stages his discovery of the kino-eye for us. Along with Vertov, we gradually realize the full range of possibilities offered by the camera. Vertov's goal is to seduce us into his way of seeing and thinking, to make us share his excitement, his gradual process of discovery of film's new language.[58]

Vertov's films are thus defined by a "roller coaster intensity," even "a true orgy of cinematography." This is done for the audience to "gradually realize the full range of possibilities offered by the camera." Yet Vertov's goal is "to seduce us," "to make us share his excitement." In other words, the goal of Vertov's films is to produce an affective response in his audience, who would then be seduced by the camera apparatus, and as fascinated as Vertov by its dexterous, multivalent capabilities. Putting aside Manovich's claim that the effect—and affect—of *Man with a Movie Camera* is a "seduction" or quasi-sexual "orgy," he highlights an "intensity" produced entirely from cinematic means, from tricks and manipulated footage alone.

As I will continue to assert, the Kino-Eye's "intensity" is inherently joyous and playful, striving to dehabituate. Yet these aspects, and affects, are ignored by one of Vertov's most outspoken recent interpreters: Jacques Rancière. In his many writings on cinema, from *Cinematographic Fables* (2001) to *The Intervals of Cinema* (2011), Rancière frequently refers to Vertov. Indeed, he appears to recur in Rancière's discourse more often than any other filmmaker, and Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* was the subject of a series of his talks in 2012 and 2013. Given that the interrelation between politics and aesthetics is so integral to Rancière's thinking, the attention given to Vertov's political avant-garde films is not surprising. Nonetheless, Rancière's analysis of Vertov's highly complex works appears yet incomplete: Rancière has not yet linked Vertov's cinematography to his own concepts of dissensus and aesthetic free play. As he writes in "The Monument and its Confidences": aesthetic free play defines a "liberty and

[58] Ibid., 212.

equality that [is] no longer abstract but sensible."[59] As such, the playfulness of art is both ethical and political; it exists to reconfigure the fabric of sensory experience. This, for Rancière, is the politics of aesthetics: a revolution of the human sensorium.

In his theoretical work, Rancière discusses *Man with a Movie Camera* exclusively, barely touching upon the differences between this now-iconic film and Vertov's more meandering earlier works, and even more challenging later films. Generally focusing on the fusion of man and machine in Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, Rancière defines the film as cinematic communism. Writing of Vertov's link between life, art, and politics, he notes: "Vertov's films offer the finished example of cinematic thought as real communism, identified with the very development of the links between all three movements."[60] The equation of Vertov's cinema with communism has been explored by Oleg Aronson, who notes that Vertov's films give us the opportunity to touch (*prikosnut'*) communism not as an ideal or abstraction but something palpable, of the "here and now" (*zdes' i seichas*), at the moment of its first perception.[61] Aronson's view does not approach Vertov's films as closed, abstracted forms, but as open assemblies; however, Rancière assumes Vertov's film to be a "finished example," a perfectly edited Utopian city-symphony of cinematic thought. As he writes, "The machine-eye achieves naturally what literature had to achieve through artifice: the disappearance of any obvious sign of art in its product."[62] Rancière's interpretation of the Kino-Eye is the disappearance of aesthetics within the technology of the movie-camera, and the apotheosis of cinematic communism.

[59] Rancière, *Dissensus,* 176.

[60] Rancière, *Intervals of Cinema*, 12.

[61] Aronson, *Metakino,* 84.

[62] Ibid., 32.

However, this interpretation falters when analyzing many of Vertov's other works, and indeed, even *Man with a Movie Camera* was criticized for its excessive aesthetic flourishes. One must admit that the dancers, beach-goers, and drunken carousers in the film do not add to the film's materialist dialectics; neither does a tripod come to life, or a box of cigarettes packing itself. Such moments are plentiful in Vertov's films, especially in his playful, meandering 1924 film-manifesto *Kino-Eye*, which Rancière does not discuss. Indeed, the techniques of playful estrangement used in *Kino-Eye* are at odds with Rancière's analysis of Vertov. In scenes we will analyze in Chapter 2, such as a time-reversal of skilled and unskilled divers, or a hand writing the intertitle cards, there is no outright agitational propaganda; nor do these moments consistently present the futurist paradise of Rancière's description. These scenes are, however, deeply affecting: they "disrupt, demand, reinsert, provoke," as Brinkema describes. They are endlessly visceral, and "thaw the [viewer's] critical cold."

Kino-Eye uses time-reversal on several occasions. In its most famous sequence, analyzed in depth in Chapter 2, a woman buys meat from a non-cooperative market; time reverses and we see the meat return to a bull, which comes back to life and rejoins its herd in a pasture. Another time-reversal shows bread returning to dough, and once again becoming grain. These are frequently interpreted as Marxist attempts to resolve alienation from one's labor.[63] Yet strictly Marxist interpretation of Vertov's films can only go so far. Numerous moments like this occur throughout the film—moments which seem somehow wondrous, magical, and playful, while not perfectly aligned with proper socialist newsreel cinema, and with the perfection of Rancière's "finished example of cinematic thought". They are, however, a perfect encapsulation of Rancière's own concept of dissensus, as we shall see. In fact, along with documentaries, Vertov

[63] Petric, "Dziga Vertov as Theorist," 32; Harte, *Fast Forward,* 185-186.

also produced drawn animations, such as the ten-minute long "Soviet Toys" advertisement, also made in 1924.[64] If the Kino-Eye is meant, as Vertov constantly claimed, to "catch life unawares," to be a perfect mode of mechanical perception, the desire to include animation in his films seems ambivalent and not quite in line with much of his reasoning. What these animated "tricks" accomplish, however, is a fresh perspective, and a return to joy and sensory delight.

Indeed, given the abundance of Vertov's tricks, Rancière could have easily used his own concept of aesthetic free play to analyze them within the context of cinematic communism. He discusses play specifically in the essay "The Monument and its Confidences"; here, aesthetic free play is of prime importance, and becomes the embodiment of freedom and equality. He writes:

> Aesthetic free play involves the abolition of the opposition between form and matter, between activity and passivity... Aesthetic free play and the universality of the judgment of taste define a new kind of liberty and of equality different from those that the revolutionary government had tried to impose under the form of the law: a kind of liberty and equality that was no longer abstract but sensible. Aesthetic experience is that of an unprecedented sensorium in which the hierarchies are abolished that structured sensory experience. This is why it bears within it the promise of a 'new art of living' of individuals and the community, the promise of a new humanity.[65]

Playfulness in art exists in a liminal space between form and matter, between activity and passivity; playfulness even bears within it the essence of freedom and liberty. It is also inherently lawless, independent of an elitist "judgment of taste"'; "hierarchies are abolished," and any "structured sensory experience." It renders liberty and equality "no longer abstract but sensible"—sensible in Rancière's definition, as palpable, and experienced by the human sensorium.[66] It is a freedom conveyed through affect and emotion, experienced fully. The

[64] Vertov's use of animation is analyzed in this dissertation's conclusion.

[65] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 176.

[66] The 'sensible' is not that which shows good sense or judgment, but what is *aestheton* or capable of being experienced by the senses. See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006), 85.

playfulness of Vertov which renders the viewer breathless with its speed, or fascinated by its cinematography, is thus the very embodiment of freedom made sensible and sensorial. It is also fundamentally political in its leanings: Rancière's "new art of living" and "promise of a new humanity" recalls Vertov, who claimed the purpose of his films was to "prepare audience for the reception of new things." It was, in other words, the very project of the Soviet avant-garde: to revolutionize human consciousness.

This Soviet project defines Rancière's concept of dissensus, which exists in both art and politics. As he writes: "Art and politics each define a form of dissensus, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible."[67] For Rancière, the politics of aesthetics lies in its potential to reconfigure the fabric of sensory experience—a feat actualized by Vertov's experimental films, along with other works of the 1920s avant-garde. Vertov was surely not alone in this re-configuration of the sensible, and indeed, Rancière defines this as the ultimate purpose behind aesthetic experience itself. In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière defines aesthetic experience as "a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that changes the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible."[68] Art, therefore, fundamentally disrupts the way we think and perceive, and what we envision as possible. But in its capacity for the dis-sensual, art also changes how we *feel.*

This dis-sensual aspect of the aesthetic is emphasized in Benjamin's writings as well: art in Benjamin must be understood not as a theory of the *beaux arts* but rather in terms of the original meaning of the Greek term *aisthetikos*, or "of sense perception," deriving from *aisthanesthai,* "to perceive."[69] Thus, Benjamin identified aesthetic theory as a theory of

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[67] Ibid., 140.

[68] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator,* Trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 72.

[69] Thomas Y. Levin, "Film," in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings,* Ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Belknap Press,

perception, and his writing on art is entirely suffused with questions of sense perception and human experience. Rancière therefore shares Benjamin's preoccupation with aesthetic sense perception, and sees in cinema the radical potential to reconfigure how we *sense* and *feel* our way through life. Vertov's version of this mode of dissensus was a radical experimentation that used new cinematographic technologies to re-craft our experience of the world: to "re-configure the common experience of the sensible."

Vertov's relation to the technology of the movie camera is often more subjective than objective: the camera, like a human, thrusts itself into our world, looks around, and creates a new, fantastical world with the aid of tricks—tricks which allow us to perceive or own environments anew. Vertov's camera, less focused on Marxist orthodoxy than Rancière assumes, experiments and plays, and in so doing, avoids the muck of daily life. This does not mean that the Kino-Eye avoids the quotidian entirely; Vertov's films are full of representations of Soviet daily life in all its forms. But the Kino-Eye drops into a world and feels its surroundings without getting tangled irreparably—a Rancièrean emancipated spectator imbued with feeling. As Michelson notes, Vertov's Kino-Eye relocated the frontier between the representation of reality and "the feel of the world," echoing Shklovsky's command: "We must recover the feel of the world; we live as if coated in rubber."[70] Rancière, however, largely ignores the subjectivity of the Kino-Eye, as well as the ethical potential of its playfulness, discussed in Chapter 2. Like Papazian, who described Vertov's lens as a "policing eye,"[71] Rancière claimed that Vertov's film

2008), 315.

[70] Quoted in Annette Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera*: From Magician to Epistemologist," *Artforum* (March 1972), 64.

[71] See Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

illustrates the tension between the "panoptic eye" and the "free communication of movements."[72] I claim, however, that Vertov's films are less panoptic and restrictive than both Rancière and Papazian suggest, and instead unshackle the viewer from routine perceptions.

Given that Rancière did not study film theory extensively, it seems a bit unfair to take him to task on his analysis of a single filmmaker. As he states in the preface to the *Intervals of Cinema:* "Cinema is not an object on which I could have leaned as a philosopher or critic. My relationship with it is a play of encounters and distances..." [73] Given these "distances," it is therefore quite possible that Rancière did not encounter other works by Vertov—especially works that challenge the idea of Vertov as perfected cinematic communism. Yet even from his "play of encounters and distances" one can glean the core foundations of his philosophical work. Cinema, although a late arrival to his philosophical output, has come to dominate his current research, and thus deserves to be analyzed. And Rancière's film-philosophy, even though incomplete, can find contributions from his philosophical work, especially in its account of dissensus and aesthetic free play. A Rancièrean analysis of Vertov, then, might find more ambiguity, more play, and more revolutions of the human sensorium—indeed, more freedom—in Vertov than Rancière himself discovered.

Reading Freedom in Film

How, then, does one understand freedom within filmmaking practices? How is it possible for a filmmaking technique to evoke the freedom to think and act? In this dissertation, my definition of freedom follows Svetlana Boym's in *Another Freedom*. As Boym writes:

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[72] Jacques Rancière, Trans. John Howe, *The Intervals of Cinema* (London: Verso, 2014), 35.

[73] Ibid., 1

> The experience of freedom is akin to adventure: it explores new borders but never erases or transcends them. Through adventure we can test the limits but also navigate—more or less successfully—between convention and invention, responsibility and play.[74]

Boym's concept of freedom is bound to exploration, adventure, and play. Navigating "between convention and invention," this experience of freedom is multivalent, in a perpetual state of change. Her definition approximates the experience of human perception after its exposure to the strange and rapturous Kino-Eye: "exploring new borders" without erasing or transcending them. The Kino-Eye allows space for an adventurous freedom of human perceptive abilities.

This does not mean, however, that the Kino-Eye does not anticipate certain results. It is a Marxist aesthetic: its ultimate end goal approximates (albeit in less direct terms) a freedom from capitalist and bourgeois tyranny. It is no surprise that Marx writes of communism as a freedom from private property, from alienated labor that is akin to servitude, and from alienation between human beings.[75] As such, the Kino-Eye is not without ideologies. Its conception of liberty aligns with what Isaiah Berlin described as "positive liberty" rather than "negative liberty" in his 1958 lecture at Oxford. Haunted by a terror of Stalinist autocracy, Berlin highlighted two inherently incompatible concepts of liberty: negative and positive liberty. In Berlin's conception, "negative liberty" conceives liberty as the freedom to do what one wishes, within a certain boundary of possible behavior, and without encumbrance. Meanwhile, "positive freedom" entails a liberation or unchaining—the turning of an object into subject. As Berlin writes:

> The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master… I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect

[74] Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 5.

[75] Karl Marx, in "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" in *The Marx-Engels Reader,* Second Ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 79-81.

> me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realising them.[76]

Berlin's idea of "positive liberty" thus is the transformation of a being from object to subject. Turned from passive to active, she becomes a "doer deciding… self-directed," "an instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will". Unsurprisingly, Marxist (and Rousseauvian, and Hegelian) notions of freedom are positive, accentuating the need for humans to take their lives into their own hands: for the slave to become "his own master". In other words, positive liberty aligns with humanity's emancipation. However, for Berlin, this notion of positive liberty has a dark underbelly, for what he witnessed in the Stalinist USSR indicated that positive liberty could be corrupted: what happens, he wondered, when a human being refuses liberation and a newly-offered subjecthood? What happens when 'subjecthood' is itself defined by a figure of authority, when collective struggle entails the repression of certain individual liberties?

Horrified by this notion, Berlin decided that only "negative liberty"—a far less idealistic freedom from encumbrance—could curtail the totalitarian threats of "positive liberty". However, as journalist-filmmaker Adam Curtis describes, negative liberty rids human beings of agency, and is equally capable of being perverted by outside forces, such as the capitalist market.[77] A politics of emancipation necessitates an ideology of "positive liberty" that situates human beings

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[76] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958) in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 8.

[77] Adam Curtis explores the enormous influence of Berlin's thinking in the First World during the Cold War, especially in his BBC documentary *The Trap: What Happened to Our Dream of Freedom* (2007). In this journalistic foray, Curtis relates Berlin's notion of negative liberty to domestic and international policy in the United Kingdom and the United States, describing how negative liberty came to represent the freedom provided by free market systems. As Curtis describes, this conception of negative liberty perverted Berlin's initial conceptualization in favor of viewing human beings as perpetually self-interested, almost robotic, forces of structures of capital. See Adam Curtis, "Part III: "We Will Force You to Be Free," in *The Trap: What Happened to Our Dream of Freedom*, Television Series (London: BBC Two, Air Date: 25 March 2007)

as free agents— as "subject, not an object". The point is not a life without restrictions but a turn from passivity to activity: from the passive Lotus-Eaters of consumerism, to a clear-headed social being. This is the goal of the Kino-Eye: to create a free, and therefore active, way of thinking: "A free, which means an active, conception of even the most mundane things."[78]

Rancière describes this idea within the works of Bertolt Brecht, within whose plays one finds a similar impetus to create an active, and engaged, spectator. Rancière praises Brecht's desire for a "theatre without spectators", where "those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs."[79] For Rancière, as for Brecht, emancipation begins when the viewer challenges the opposition between viewing and acting, when she begins to view herself within the previously-invisible structures of domination and subjection, inherent even in a work of theatre.[80] We can imagine a similar desire for emancipation—that is, positive liberty—within cinematic works. For this reason, Brechtian alienation and Shklovskian estrangement are both emancipatory, both desirous to elicit the freedom of the spectator. As we will see, the Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet can occasionally overlap; for instance, Japanese Pink Film director Wakamatsu Koji's films, especially his collaborations with the film-as-weapon devotee Adachi Masao, can have deeply violent undertones, and often utilize distancing methods. Nonetheless, other films by Wakamatsu might be playful or even nonsensical, seemingly miles away from Adachi's (and Brecht's) staunch Marxist-Leninism. Similarly, Godard's films might toe the line between winking, Vertov-like self-referentiality (especially in his pre-1968 works) and grim, Maoist self-criticism.

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[78] Dziga Vertov, "Novoe techenie v kinematografii", *Pravda* (Moscow: July 15, 1923), 7. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 84.

[79] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 3-4.

[80] Ibid., 13.

The two trajectories appear to spring up in tandem, crisscrossing in chaotic and unforeseen ways. Although their methods and results differ vastly, they manifest within similar moments of history, wrought with tension and desirous of liberation.

Within the next four chapters, this dissertation will analyze this Vertov-like trajectory of filmmaking, curiously seldom researched—an anarchic and destabilizing thread within the political avant-garde. This trajectory is designed to liberate: first by dehabituating human perceptions, then by allowing a clearer, more collectively-minded, thrust into political life. The avant-garde documentary embodies Nakai's description of media: not as an apparatus that transmits meaning *through*, but a site prioritizing the possibilities *within* media itself.[81]

My study spans the six thousand miles between Paris and Tokyo, with Moscow and Kiev in between—Vertov acting as a hinge between the East and West. This trajectory, however, is found in certain other works of the avant-garde documentary, and is not limited to the regions analyzed here; indeed, it might be found in regions as disparate as Brazil, the United States, and former Czechoslovakia.[82] My configuration of the USSR, France, and Japan in the 1920s and 1960s, however, is unique due to the striking historical and theoretical overlaps between these three nations, immersed in a conversation on the form and theory of political aesthetics.

Kitada notes that Nakai's work, as well as Benjamin's, is repeatedly called upon when "society goes astray amidst the dynamics of the media environment." There is, perhaps, no better way to describe our own turbulent era of "alternative facts" in the United States, with its conspiracy theories directed at the media. Scott MacDonald notes that in recent years, the combination of social and environmental anxieties energized an increasingly widespread desire

[81] Kitada, "Nakai Masakazu's 'Mediation'", 295, 298.

[82] Ibid., 298.

to combine cinema's ability to engage serious political issues (documentary) with its capacity for retraining perception (avant-garde).[83] It should therefore not surprise us that Vertov, as MacKay notes, has never been more popular than he is right now.[84] In such an age, the avant-garde documentary poses an alternative framework to both Hollywood escapism and strictly objective observational modes, provoking the viewer into personal—and political—transformation.

[83] Scott MacDonald, "Avant-Doc: Eight Intersections," *Film Quarterly* (64:2, Winter 2010), 57.

[84] As MacKay notes, in 2012, *Man with a Movie Camera* reached eighth place in the Sight and Sound celebrated decennial poll of the "100 greatest films"; it marked the first time that a non-fiction film made the top 10 in the poll's 60 year history. See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, 29.

Chapter 2

Kino-Eye and the Ethics of Estrangement

Introduction: A Revolution in Seeing

Early Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, a pioneer of avant-garde documentary cinema, sought to enhance human perception through experimental film technique. For Vertov, only such a revolution could craft a newly engaged and enlightened citizenry. As he declared: "We need conscious men, not an unconscious mass… submissive to any passive suggestion."[85] His films emerged out of what he perceived to be a historical necessity: the creation of a new, active, and entirely Soviet, mentality. Like avant-garde documentaries in the 1960s, his films emerged out of a historical moment in which change—from bourgeois conventions, from capitalist consumerism, from proletarian drudgery and "passive suggestion"—felt all too necessary. For Vertov, much of this necessity drew from a cinematic tradition that had recently grown staid, subsumed by melodrama and the conventions of classical Hollywood. As this chapter will demonstrate, Vertov's films aimed to reinvigorate the utopian potential of cinema by eliciting an active, engaged perception, as well as heightened feeling and enthusiasm.

Walter Benjamin shared Vertov's cinematic utopianism, similarly believing in cinema's potential to enhance human freedom. Benjamin, who was fond of examining a film as a historical atlas of a given moment,[86] said the following in his 1936 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction:*

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[85] Quoted in Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera*," 66.

[86] Antoine de Baecque, *L'Histoire-caméra* (Paris : Gallimard, 2009): Walter Benjamin… aimait à « Feuilleter un film comme l'atlas historique d'un moment donné » (36).

> Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling.[87]

This rich statement encapsulates not only Benjamin's fascination with the cinematic medium, but also a certain historical moment—one in which film had the potential not only to entertain but also to "burst this prison-world asunder," to break free from the world of habituation that modernity spun into being. The English word 'habituate' is etymologically related to the French word *habiter*, or to dwell, or live in; in the early 17th century, 'habituate' meant "to settle as an inhabitant."[88] We become habituated to those places in which we dwell, the bourgeois "furnished rooms," the comfort of "offices" and "metropolitan streets." Cinema explodes those areas of modernity we've unconsciously come to inhabit. It is no accident that the "factories" and "railroad stations" referred to in this citation were also the sites for the Lumière brothers' most famous films: *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*) of 1894, largely considered the first motion picture, and *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (commonly known as *Arrival of a Train at a Station*). The latter formed the major foundation myth of early film, in which the first moviegoers were said to have panicked and run away from a shot of a train advancing toward them. Regardless of the truth of this myth, the shock of early cinema shattered the prisons of "metropolitan streets... offices and furnished rooms" to let us "go traveling," allowing viewers of all social classes to view far corners of the world from the seats of their nickelodeon.

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87 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 236.

88 "habituate, v.". OED Online. September 2015. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/Entry/83001?rskey=4JiOFa&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed December 05, 2015).

Likewise, these Lumière films are works of documentary rather than fiction, works whose ability to break through a prison, whether factory or railroad station, is also contingent on the ability to depict the actuality of this location. For Benjamin, as well as a host of other media and cultural theorists during the first half of the twentieth century, such as Henri Bergson, Siegfried Kracauer, and Dziga Vertov, film—even, and especially, actuality footage—had the capacity to revolutionize not only art but human experience as we know it. As Soviet critic Boltianskii wrote, "…cinema, that new form of art, is the legitimate offspring of our time—in its melody, rhythm, refinement and machine culture—and is thus the central artform of the new epoch."[89] Cinema was unilaterally considered representative of the new modernist era, and had the potential to transform consciousness. In their respective works, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno all wrote of the transformative power of cinema to radically alter human experience.[90] Meanwhile, for classical film theorists and filmmakers such as Jean Epstein, Dziga Vertov, Béla Balázs, and Siegfried Kracauer, cinema is a revelatory medium: certain cinematic techniques (the close-up, slow motion, time-lapse photography, editing, etc) can reveal features of reality invisible to the naked eye. Viewing cinema in a near-religious, almost euphoric capacity, these theorists believed film had the potential to fundamentally improve human existence itself.[91]

Significantly, in their definition of cinema, these early theorists were not yet bound to contemporary distinctions between "documentary" and "avant-garde" film; rather, their writings highlight the aesthetic interpretation and re-working of actuality footage: in other words, what

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[89] G. Boltianskii, "Iskusstvo Budushchego," *Kino* (1: 20 October 1922), 7. Found in John MacKay, "Introduction," *Dziga Vertov: Vol. 2: 1922-1925* (Academic Studies Press, Forthcoming).

[90] For an analysis of these three theorists in conversation, see Hansen, *Cinema and Experience.*

[91] See Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-6.

can retroactively be described as the avant-garde documentary. As described in the Introduction, theorists from Kracauer to Joris Ivens and Matsumoto Toshio envisioned cinematic history as a Hegelian dialectic: the "thesis" of Lumière's actuality footage, and the "antithesis" exemplified by the fantastical experiments of Georges Méliès. Matsumoto viewed the development "avant-garde documentary" as a synthesis of these twin origins of cinematic form.[92] Although Matsumoto viewed his own "neo-documentaries" of the 1960s as typifying this Hegelian synthesis, I argue that the "avant-garde documentary" *avant la lettre* existed in the experiments of the 1920s, which introduced the creative penetration of newsreel footage. Indeed, even in the 1960s, far after the avant-garde and documentary genres were crystallized, Kracauer noted the inherent inter-penetrability of these twin tendencies: "[the filmmaker's] creativity manifests itself in letting nature in and penetrating it."[93] Thus, all film is, to some extent, simultaneously nonfictional and fictional: it "lets nature in" but also "penetrates it," resulting in an endlessly dynamic dialectic of form.

In his far more idealistic writings of the 1920s, Kracauer envisioned film suspending "every habitual relationship among the elements of nature" and "playing with the pieces" of photographic debris to render historical experience *sensible*.[94] The early avant-garde documentary's creative interpretation of nonfiction filmmaking practices served to suspend "every habitual relationship" for a radical, and indeed Marxist, emancipation. And indeed, nowhere is this tendency for radical dehabituation more preeminent, and more commonly practiced, than the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The early years of the USSR became the ideal

[92] Matsumoto Toshio, *Eizou no hakken (Discovery of the Image): Avant-Garde Documentary,* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1963), 9-12.

[93] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 40.

[94] Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 200.

locale to actualize the first avant-garde documentaries.[95] Although 1920s avant-garde movements around the world attempted to reconcile art with political activity by forging radically new aesthetic practices and theories, this drive for a political aesthetic, especially one which would radicalize and perfect human consciousness, was especially strong in the USSR in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. The years immediately following 1917 saw a blossoming of aesthetic practices, and artists were in fierce competition to see who could craft the perfect Soviet citizen and which style and type of art would best aid the construction of communism. Benjamin's bold claim that film "burst this prison-world asunder" with the "dynamite of the tenth of a second," however, is best echoed by Dziga Vertov's concept of the Kino-Eye, which blended both communist ideology and ethics within a manifesto of film form and the invention of new cinematic techniques.[96] This Kino-Eye concept was also echoed in the work of Formalist critics such as Victor Shklovsky and Boris Eikhenbaum, as we will later show.

Dziga Vertov desired film to be a medium for revolutionary perception. His name is both a pseudonym and a cinematic onomatopoeia: it illustrates the "dzig" sound of cranking a movie camera, and the Russian word *vertovat'*, which means to whirr/spin and can describe the spinning of a film reel. Vertov publicized the Kino-Eye concept in an enormous number of theoretical writings and manifestoes, mostly in the iconic mouthpieces of Russian modernism such as Alexei Gan's *Kinofot* and Osip Brik/Vladimir Mayakovsky's *LEF*. These writings sound many of the key terms of the Soviet avant-garde—a break with tradition and art as such, the prioritizing of "truth" and actuality footage over bourgeois narrative, and a reconsideration of the

[95] It is important to note that the avant-garde could only flourish as such after film became conventional. Much of very early cinema is rather experimental, but by the 1920s had been codified and institutionalized, especially by Europe and Hollywood. Soviet film thus consciously placed themselves as counterparts to the newly-institutionalized, conventional Western filming techniques.

[96] Another opposing method of "burst[ing] this prison-world asunder" was Sergei Eisenstein's "Kino-Fist"—a decidedly more violent iteration and less focused on human capacities for perception, discussed in Introduction.

artist as scientist-engineer—but are perhaps best defined by a concern for a renewed, mechanically perfected perception. Blurring the line between politics and aesthetics, Vertov's cinema aimed to teach modern Soviet citizens to see and perceive properly—freely, actively, politically—in order to experience life anew, a revolutionary seeing for a revolutionary time.

Indeed, the Soviet 1920s saw cinema as the ultimate revolutionary art form: key for the dissemination of vital propaganda, and vital for the country's re-imagining of its own identity. The medium of photography, as well as actuality footage and newsreel cinema, furnish evidence of revolution. Photography and motion pictures, the two most eye-catching technological innovations, emerged especially well suited to reflect and embody the spirit of modernity.[97] For Mayakovsky, life itself became cinematic: "...The rhythm of life has now changed. Everything now has become lightning quick, rapidly flowing like on a film strip."[98] Soviet life mirrored film in its speed and mutability. Significantly, it was also cinematic in its emphasis on documentary fact, its insistence on truthfulness and reality. Vertov, similarly minded about cinema's pivotal role in the new Soviet society, developed his theories in this light. The aesthetics of cinema would be both a reflection of modernity, and communism's, new, *cinematic* existence. And, vice versa, the imprints on celluloid would reflect a new Soviet reality.

Of course, this investigation into the new, modern, cinematic life was not limited to the USSR, or even Europe; the mass media, opinion magazines, and films of interwar Japan were also vigorously debating "modern life" and the large metropolises where it was all occurring. Most thinkers and writers interested in modernity indeed saw that their experiences resembled what was taking place in the West.[99] Indeed, Japan's modernization in the 1920s often resembled

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97 Harte, *Fast Forward*, 11.

98 Ibid., 3.

99 Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New

what was being envisaged in the Soviet Union, and Japanese thinkers of this period often employed the theoretical apparatus of Russian avant-gardists within their own works.[100] In both Europe and Japan, it was clear that modernity was firmly enmeshed within its new media practices, and that everyday life itself was significantly altered—and often improved—as a result. As described earlier,[101] Philosopher Nakai Masakazu claimed that media was not a means of message transmission but a site where humanity progressively renews, reestablishes, and renegotiates its connection with nature; film constructs a new way of looking at this new nature, which, in contrast to literature, evokes an immediate and transparent relationship.[102] Nakai's statement recalls Benjamin, for whom film gives rise to "a new realm of consciousness."[103]

Vertov was thus one of many theorists internationally, including Nakai as well as Benjamin, Kracauer, and others, who saw in cinema a radical potential to reawaken human consciousness. Even if Vertov did not himself launch this impetus to refresh perception with cinematic means, his avant-garde documentaries exemplify this ambitious modernist attempt. As this chapter will demonstrate, Vertov's films are unique in their crafting of perception as both an *ethical* and *political* concern; in the wake of a political infrastructure, sliding slowly into Stalinist autocracy by the 1930s, Vertov saw in film an ability to revolutionize the individual mind. His work was conceived as an intervention that aspired to change the nature of humanity.[104] His works, though agitational-propaganda, highlighted the individual perceptive capacities of his viewers, and the freedom to find the unexpected through the techniques of the movie camera.

York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 60.

[100] Ibid., 67-68.

[101] For more information on Nakai Masakazu, see Chapter 1.

[102] Kitada, "An Assault on "Meaning"', 287.

[103] Walter Benjamin, qtd. In Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 165.

[104] Delgado, "Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*," 3.

Estrangement and the Freedom from *Byt*

In 1923, a year prior to his film-manifesto *Kino-Eye*, Vertov wrote the following on the Kinoks, his organization of filmmakers who made it their goal to abolish fiction filmmaking[105]:

> Our programme: the organization of the observations of the human eye… A revolution in seeing, and therefore in man's reception of the world in general. A free, which means an active, conception of even the most mundane things.[106]

A year before his manifesto-film, Vertov outlined his main goal as filmmaker to be a "revolution in seeing," a drive which would form the crux of his career as a documentary filmmaker. Indeed, Yuri Tsivian recounts that at one point in his life, Vertov, who had a hobby of writing mediocre poems in the Futurist style, attempted writing a lengthy, ambitious poem entitled *Vizhu* ("I can see", in Russian), of which only the prologue survives[107]—pointing to the centrality of perception for his lifelong project. His films are particularly unique in their ability to call our attention to our act of seeing, thus actualizing Walter Benjamin's analysis of cinema as a "decisive refunctioning of the human perceptual apparatus."[108] This perception, or "decisive refunctioning," is both *free*, thus retaining the agency of the film-viewer, and *active*, thus tied to the social and political worlds. For both Benjamin and Vertov, cinema was the dynamite of a tenth of a second which, in its free, and active, process of re-perception, would lead to the new conception of "even the most mundane things". These were the railroad stations, factories, the

[105] Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance*, 24.

[106] Dziga Vertov, excerpt from "Novoe techenie v kinematografii", *Pravda*, 15 July 1923 in Tsivian, ed. *Lines of Resistance,* 84.

[107] Tsivian, "Dziga Vertov and His Time," 4.

[108] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2008), 316.

offices and furnished rooms that became a "prison-world" for thinkers such as Benjamin, burst asunder by freedom of thought in which the viewer went "traveling."

Although written 13 years prior to the Benjamin essay, Vertov's equation of freedom and mental activity formed a particular paradigm for the early Soviet period, especially in the avant-garde art that flourished before Stalinist Socialist Realism began to take hold in the early 1930s. Indeed, what we perceive to be the difficulty of the avant-garde had a purpose: to revitalize a human consciousness deadened by habit. Thus, like revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky's war on *byt*, the Russian word for the habitual dullness of the quotidian[109] (claimed by Roman Jakobson to be untranslatable in any Western language),[110] Vertov fought for the belief that his cinema would radically benefit Soviet society by "preparing the viewers" for the "reception (*vospriyatiye*) of new things."[111]

Indeed, the war against *byt,* which the critic Boris Arvatov called "an extra-ordinarily conservative force" in 1925,[112] was shared by many thinkers of the time. It was not, however, a new invention of the Soviet period; Soviet cultural identity depended on the heroic opposition to *byt*, but it was also heavily featured in the late 19th century. Svetlana Boym notes that everyone from nineteenth-century Westernizers to Slavophiles, Romantics and modernists, aesthetic and

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[109] The writer Anya von Bremzen describes *byt* particularly astutely as "the metaphysical weight of the daily grind, the existentially depleting cares of material living" that the Bolsheviks tried to eliminate. See Anya von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing* (New York: Broadway Books, 2013), 39.

[110] Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 3. Interestingly, Boym also claims that, according to Jakobson, only Russians among the European nations are capable of fighting "the fortresses of *byt*" and of conceptualizing a radical alterity to the everyday *(byt).* It is unclear whether Jakobson found a non-European language capable of conceptualizing such a radical alterity; one wonders if certain moments in Japanese history might have been a fitting contender.

[111] Interestingly, here reception—*vospriyatiye*—might be better translated as "perception," pointing to the primary importance of perception for Vertov. See "O s'emke kinosiuzhetov v khronike" in Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 23. Translation: Tsivian, ed. *Lines of Resistance,* 81.

[112] Boris Arvatov, trans. Christina Kaier, "Everyday Life and the Question of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question)," *October* (81: Summer 1997), 121.

politican utopians, and Bolsheviks and monarchists all engaged in battles with *byt.*[113] Although idealists might expect the problem of *byt* to be declared solved after the revolution, the "Soviet Way of Life"—a New *Byt*—became a new source of constant debate and controversy. Arvatov claimed that *byt* must be turned from a conservative force to a progressive one by creating "a systematically regulated dynamism of things."[114] But according to Andrei Sinyavsky, this New *Byt,* however dynamic, is "an oxymoron, a marriage of mutually exclusive concepts" since "a way of life" suggests something enduring and stable, tied to habit, to traditions and to basic forms of existence. It therefore cannot be revolutionary. [115] Within this context of the oxymoronic New *Byt*, Vertov urged for a more complete rupture from this habitual daily life, however Soviet: a continuing revolution of our perceptive faculties.

Vertov's statement on the Kinoks' programme and "revolution in seeing," written for the pages of *Pravda* in the early stage of his career, hinges on the notion of perception (*vospriyatiye*) that was crucial to the work of the Formalist critics, and especially Victor Shklovsky's theory of *ostranenie*, or estrangement. Shklovsky desired to estrange the familiar to create a way of perceiving that engages with the world and looks at it anew. Meanwhile, as Aronson notes, Vertov's "microrevolutions in the frame" are meant to overcome human attitudes, and return to a perception not held captive (*zakhvachenom'*) by ideology.[116] For both theorists, engaging with perception meant awakening the reader-viewer to first experience, free from restraints. Although Vertov did not cite Shklovsky's *ostranenie* directly as a source of inspiration, the similarities

[113] Boym, *Common Places,* 3, 31.

[114] Arvatov, "Everyday Life," 121.

[115] Qtd in Boym, *Common Places*, 33.

[116] "Момент изменчивости для него-- микрореволюция в кадре, преодоление человеческих установок на уровне психофизики восприятия, способ приблизиться к восприятию, не захваченному идеологией." Aronson, *Metakino,* 86.

between Shklovsky's concept and Vertov's "Kino-Eye" theory are striking: both attempt to "revolutionize seeing" by de-automatizing perception.

Shklovsky's seminal text *Art as Technique* first introduced this concept of *ostranenie*, which became integral to Formalist theory. He writes:

> Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impact 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...[117]

Practicing *ostranenie* de-automatizes life and art. Shklovsky aimed to "increase the difficulty and length of perception" for the reader/audience in order to revitalize the way we view things as common as a stone; he desired to imbue objects with the "stoniness" of their first sensation—to sense an object as it is perceived, and not as it is commonly known. Like Vertov, Shklovsky calls for a perception that is free and active, capable of sensing the "stoniness" of the most mundane stone, the apple-ness of the most common apple. This is true in art as well: particularly in literature, traditions are subject to petrification. Style also becomes automatized: expressions and constructions become predictable and stereotyped, and thus lose all visibility and concreteness. Shklovsky's "stone" in the earlier quote ceases to be "stony". The quality of stoniness is effaced by routine, as literary language tends toward the self-effacing banality of everyday discourse. The poet must de-automatize his medium by subjecting it to syntactic, semantic, and metaphorical shifts; constructions become unhinged, expressions are wrenched out of their accustomed prosaic contexts. As Holdheim notes, such interruptions render discourse "palpable, opaque, provisionally absolute," foiling our expectations.[118] Through this estrangement of the

[117] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 12.

[118] W. Wolfgang Holdheim, "The Concept of Poetic Estrangement" Comparative Literature Studies, Vol. 11, No. 4 (December 1974), 324.

familiar—a recreation of the pre-routine uncanny experience, a constant breaking away from the expectations produced from over-familiarity— the "thing itself" is again made visible.

Svetlana Boym describes Shklovsky's *ostranenie* as estrangement *for* the world, versus estrangement *from* the world. Specifically, *ostranenie* exists "for the sake of the world's renewal"[119]: a permanent revolution of consciousness which can revitalize the world as we know it. Rather than something to be overcome, estrangement was "constitutive of the modern condition, of worldliness, and of human freedom."[120]Thus, Shklovsky's estrangement is a practice meant to be constantly repeated. A prerequisite for "worldliness" and constitutive of "human freedom" itself, such a practice—one might call it, in contemporary parlance, aesthetic mindfulness—is meant to return "sensation" and "feeling" into the automatized daily grind endemic to modernity.

As we will later see, this engaged, mindful, and worldly perception in both life and art recalls the work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for whom awareness of perception is not an intellectual distancing qua Bertolt Brecht, but a way of engaging with an object anew. For Merleau-Ponty, all that is perceived immediately becomes an impersonal, acquired experience; without the aid of what Merleau-Ponty calls "phenomenological reflection", we forget the need to give perceived objects a fresh meaning.[121] Likewise, Vertov's own attempt to estrange perception anticipates Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception,* especially in its concern with how we should properly perceive. Merleau-Ponty's theories of perception are driven by an ethics which calls for an active, interested perception that engages with the world.

[119] Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom*, 224.

[120] Ibid., 228.

[121] Eran Dorfman, "Freedom, Perception and Radical Reflection," in *Reading Merleau-Ponty: On* Phenomenology of Perception, Ed. Thomas Baldwin (pp.139-151) (London: Routledge, 2007), 148.

In addition, the sense of playfulness that Vertov's films exude, particularly his manifesto-film *Kino-Eye*, recalls philosopher-poet Friedrich Schiller's concept of the play-instinct as described in *The Aesthetic Letters*, and the importance of nurturing this play-instinct through the human being's interaction with art. In Schiller's view, the aesthetic experience alone allows a human being to have the capacity for moral thinking and freedom of thought-- a line of thought derived from Immanuel Kant's "free play of imagination and understanding."[122] As I will later show, Schiller's concept of the aesthetic experience is firmly oriented towards politics. Thus, following Schiller's argument, as well as Kant's, in this chapter I argue that the desire to estrange the mundane for the purpose of a renewed, active perception has not only a political but also an ethical function. By emphasizing freedom of thought, by elevating playful cinematic and literary techniques, and by bringing emotion and dynamism into the world of the seemingly mundane, both Vertov's Kino-Eye theory and Shklovsky's Formalism create an aesthetics that has a pertinent ethical strain. It is an ethics built out of a deep immersion in both serious Marxist ideology and the aesthetic project of the avant-garde—a project that moves away from familiar routine and towards difficulty.

Indeed, Dziga Vertov's documentary and newsreel films appear uncanny and "difficult" even to twenty-first century viewers, for whom cinema has long ceased to be novel or strange. Fast cuts, playful and experimental editing, and lack of narrative coherence in Vertov's films create an avant-garde distancing effect. Even though contemporaneous viewers of Vertov's films in the twenties no longer saw the film medium as a bizarre novelty, Vertov constantly attempted to reawaken the uncanny quality inherent in film as medium. In films like *Kino-Eye* of 1924 and

[122] Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/kant-aesthetics/>.

Man with a Movie Camera of 1929, Vertov's editing appears as "unfamiliar" and estranging as the prose and poetry of the Soviet avant-garde, and shares Shklovsky's desire to de-automatize human perception.

This playfully estranging avant-garde documentary style did not stop with the Soviet period, however. Indeed, interest in the Soviet avant-garde revitalized abroad in the 1960s and 1970s as student protests spread internationally. The avant-garde documentary, as affective and playful as Vertov's own films, emerged with political crisis and failure. Distrustful of a model of transmission, wherein the government propagated ideologically correct information to the public, artists instead attempted to transform human consciousness through art itself. Although later chapters will analyze the avant-garde documentaries of the French and Japanese political avant-garde, this chapter sets the ground by initiating a discussion of Vertov—the first filmmaker demonstrating this drive for an affective, and estranging, avant-garde documentary style. This chapter will begin with an analysis his early newsreels, and will use his 1924 film *Kino-Eye* as a film-manifesto for his aesthetic practice.

In our discussion of Vertov's films leading from approximately 1922 to 1934, four characteristics of the avant-garde documentary become apparent, distinguishing Vertov from other filmmakers of the period; they separate him especially from Sergei Eisenstein, his most obvious contemporaneous competitor, with whom he was especially combative—causing Eisenstein to develop a "Kino-Fist" in response to Vertov's Kino-Eye, as described in the introduction. Keeping Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ethics in mind, we can note that Vertov's films generally tend to incorporate the following four characteristics:[123]

[123] Annette Michelson also defined characteristics of Dziga Vertov's films, narrowed down to six: 1. The continual reminder of the presence of the screen as a surface; 2. The intrusion of animation techniques into the action; 3. The alternation within one large sequence of slow and "normal" speeds; 4. The subversion and restoration of filmic illusion acting to distend and contract the filmic image; 5. The subversion of the cinematic illusion,

1. Documentary/actuality footage with minimal dating/technical explication.
2. Highly varied mix of media and filming techniques within the same documentary film, including what Vertov calls "tricks" in his theoretical writings.
3. A sense of estrangement resulting in the audience becoming hyper-aware of their own act of viewing, but without being distanced from it critically in the Brechtian mode.
4. A strong sense of *play* that goes beyond militant Bolshevism and keeps Vertov's agitational propaganda films from excessive didacticism, thus separating him crucially from figures such as Sergei Eisenstein and his concept of dialectical montage.

Beginning with his theoretical underpinnings, this chapter will analyze the simultaneously playful and estranging nature of Vertov's films, focusing especially on the leap from the *Kino-Nedelya* (Cine-Week) newsreels in the years 1918-1919 to his feature film length "film-things," beginning with his film-manifesto *Kino-Eye* and continuing through his last silent film, *Man with a Movie Camera*. Focusing especially on *Kino-Eye* for its groundbreaking avant-garde documentary qualities, we will parse these films in order to localize these four characteristics—actuality footage, mixed media and technique[124], estrangement, and play—and consider the ethical implications of the use of such cinematic tricks, and how the intended viewer's response to such tricks mirrored the goals of the Formalists.

The Artist-Engineer from *Kino-Nedelya* to *Kino-Pravda*

through processes of distortion and/or abstraction; and 6. The process of intellection constantly solicited by the complex structure. See Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera,*" 69. However, there is a great deal of overlap between my four characteristics and Michelson's six: for one, the presence of the screen as a surface is a highly used technique of estrangement, as are the fifth and sixth characteristics: subversion of illusion, and the process of intellection. In addition, her second, third, and fourth characteristics describe a great variety of the "tricks" Vertov uses. However, Michelson does not discuss the importance of actuality footage in Vertov's films—of such primary importance for his avant-garde documentaries that it is often taken for granted. And, importantly, Michelson does not describe the sense of playfulness exuded in his films, often brought about through the technical and cinematographic tricks she describes.

[124] This is an altogether different concept from the "media mix" described in Marc Steinberg's *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), which instead defines media mix in its relation to capitalism—a marketing across different consumer media. Vertov's use of different media and technique is of course limited to the field of filmmaking.

There is no shortage of biographical work on Dziga Vertov, thanks to the pioneering studies of John Mackay.[125] As this analysis focuses on the analysis of his films rather than a historical survey, I will begin with only a brief introduction of Vertov's career trajectory. Vertov, originally David and then Denis Kaufman, worked extensively with his brothers Boris and Mikhail, who were also talented filmmakers. Along with Vertov's wife Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov and his brothers formed the collaborative group of Kinoks, or "cinema-eyes," a neologism using the words *kino* (Cine-) and *oko*, an archaic and poetic Russian word for "eye."

Vertov's group of Kinoks intended to eventually abolish the idea of the Great Artist, allowing Soviet workers to create their own revolutionary films. In the ideal world of the Kinoks, art and politics would be perfectly intertwined. Art would cease to be bourgeois indulgence and would instead permeate, and in fact be indistinguishable from, daily life in the Soviet Union. Vertov's filmmaking arose from a deep distrust of traditional art as a means of exploitation; it was an "opiate of the people" equated with religion.[126] Instead of relying on traditional artistic methods, Vertov's films had an origin that was deeply scientific. His films must then be viewed from this context of serious revolutionary Marxist intention, in which the role of the Artist was meant to eventually disappear, to be replaced by an artist-engineer. As Elizabeth Papazian notes, the Soviet artist was no longer conceived as a solitary figure, whose gaze is turned inward

[125] See Mackay, *Dziga Vertov*, 2017.

[126] As Tsivian writes: "Art... becomes otiose in a society where everyone works, and will be banished from such a future republic, where the only form of art will be the art of the artisan. Art, he would add, may have been there from the dawn of humankind—all the worse for humankind, if, as you say, from the outset art was reduced by the exploiters to petty pottery patterns, or worse, used as an object of worship, in order, no doubt, to fool the exploited and divert them from their plight. Your art is no more than a lie, as are your "images", and, like religion, art is (to use Vertov's favourite phrase) the opiate of the people. Not of Eisenstein's philosophical ken, Vertov instead was actually a better Marxist than Eisenstein, and often a better Marxist than Marx." See Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance*, 8.

toward his soul; instead, the artist-engineer became a person with a specific technical assignment to engage and influence the imagined received of the text. Authorship and art, then became a higher form of civic participation, even duty, enmeshed in social and political life.[127]

For many creative thinkers of the avant-garde, from Brik to Mayakovsky to Vertov, this was the perfect solution to the problem of the ambivalence of the artist-figure in Soviet society: the artist, via art, could serve socialism by engineering the new Soviet mind. The scientism was shared by many avant-garde artists of the period, and was one of the many streams that converged in the 1920s to give Soviet culture—and Vertovian cinema—its particular character.[128] Vertov shares this deep distrust of traditional art with Victor Shklovsky, who wrote in his experimental novel *Third Factory* that he had "no desire to be witty… no desire to construct a plot."[129] Shklovsky therefore discards a wit associated with aestheticism and the elite, rejecting plot and fictional narratives alongside Vertov. Both thinkers felt more at home in the Futurist and Constructivist desire to "engineer" and "experiment" in a scientific fashion.

Dziga Vertov began his career with this idea of the artist-engineer in mind—first as secretary, and then head, of the *khronika* (newsreel) division of the All-Russian Photo Cine Department (VFKO),[130] editing the first Soviet newsreels, *Kino-Nedelya* (Cine-Week). Initially working on titling the material, by the end of 1918, as a 22-year old, he was more or less in charge. However, Vertov actually had little to no control over how the material was filmed. The camera operators of *Kino-Nedelya*, many of whom had worked for pre-Revolutionary newsreel

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[127] Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth*, 3.

[128] "...A certain scientism—charged with heavy doses of fantasy and longing—was one of the many streams that converged in the 1920s to give Soviet culture, and Vertovian cinema, its peculiar character." See John MacKay, "A Revolution in Film: John MacKay on the Cinema of Dziga Vertov," *Art Forum* (April 2011), 199.

[129] Victor Shklovsky, Trans. Richard Sheldon, *Third Factory* (Translated by Richard Sheldon. Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 1977) 3.

[130] Maxim Pozdorovkin, "Khronika: Soviet Newsreel at the Dawn of the Information Age" (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2012), 24.

journals, continued to cover events with a certain protocol, filming without giving any thought to how and for what purpose the material would be used. Vertov's role at *Kino-Nedelya* was largely as administrator and annotator—receiving scenes brought back by cinematographers and writing titles, usually based on notes provided by the shooters. As a result, Vertov was disappointed with the series of 43 newsreels. He noted: "*Kino-Nedelya* differed from other newsreel only in that its titles were Soviet."[131] Vertov was instead faced with an entrenched mode of production, the persistence of old viewing habits, and, most importantly, a lack of resources.

The difference between *Kino-Nedelya* and a Vertov-filmed and Vertov-directed newsreel—such as his next venture, the *Kino-Pravda* series—is extreme. A quick shot-by-shot analysis of an exemplary newsreel, *Kino-Nedelya 33*, illustrates this difference. Considered by Tsivian to be one of the most complete and untampered of these early newsreels,[132] *Kino-Nedelya* encompasses a few disparate scenes in its 8 minutes and 20 seconds, separated by intertitles: a funeral procession, a country estate converted into a people's museum, and citizens responding to a snowstorm by clearing train tracks. With only 39 shots, and an astoundingly long average shot length of 11 seconds, *Kino-Nedelya* appears too drawling and slow for the contemporary (and, one must assume, contemporaneous) viewer. Adding to this dulling effect is the lack of variety in camera movement, as most shots are either still or pan-left/pan-right. Likewise, the angle or position of the camera is relatively unvaried, with a preponderance of medium shots and none of the low-angle shots or rapid-fire editing synonymous with the Kinoks. Indeed, Vertov had no ability to revolutionize the editing process: an anecdote from these years

[131] Quoted in Pozdorovkin, "Khronika," 46. The concept of Soviet intertitles, or the lack thereof, as in *Man with a Movie Camera*, would continue to absorb Vertov throughout his career; he would move from two extremes--from animated intertitles penned by Rodchenko, such as in *Kino-Pravda* no. 14 in 1922, to their purposeful lack in 1929.

[132] Vertov would return to other *Kino-Nedelya* newsreels and edit them to his liking later in life. See Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 403.

describes the editor girls at *Kino-Nedelya* throwing a few 2- or 3-second shots (characteristic of Vertov's style) into the dustbin, mistaking the short films strips for errors.[133]

On June 27, 1919, the Civil War made regular production and distribution impossible, and *Kino-Nedelya* ended its run after 43 issues. Between the end of *Kino-Nedelya* and the first issue of *Kino-Pravda* on May 21, 1922, almost three years later, there was no regular newsreel journal. Within this time, however, Vertov worked to solidify and develop his theory of filmmaking, traveling with the *October Revolution Agitational Train* and the *Red Star Agit Steamer.*[134] The former, an example of an *Agit-Poezd* (Agit-Train), was the materialization of the bold propagandistic vision of Lenin and the Bolsheviks: Agit-Trains transported films between agitational centers (*agitpunkty*) scattered throughout the country, bringing films to rural areas and especially to the largely illiterate masses.[135] They relayed their propagandistic message to rural audiences unfamiliar with the new medium of cinema.

Vertov's next project *Kino-Pravda* launched his career as a filmmaker, and marked the beginning of his mature theories on film, the phenomenology of its viewing, and the effect of his filmmaking style on the viewer—along with, as I will continue to argue, his concern with a free, active, and ethical perception. Around this time, the beginning of his film career, Vertov wrote the poem "Start" (titled in the anglicized *CTAPT* instead of the Russian word *nachalo*). Although the poem's manuscript is dated to 1917, Tsivian notes that it is very unlikely that it was written at this date. Rather, Vertov meant to tie its message to the year of the Bolshevik revolution, to make the two new eras coincide.[136] Thus, we can assume that this poem was written after

[133] Pozdorovkin, "Khronika," 48.

[134] Ibid, 50.

[135] Harte, *Fast Forward*, 174.

[136] Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance*, 35.

Vertov's Kino-Eye theory has already crystallized, making this a poem-manifesto of sorts. The translation by Tsivian reads:

Not like Pathé.

Not like Gaumont.

Not how they see,

Not as they want.

Be Newton

to see

an apple.

Give people eyes

To see a dog

With

Pavlov's

eye.

Is cinema CINEMA?

We blow up cinema,

For

CINEMA

to be seen.

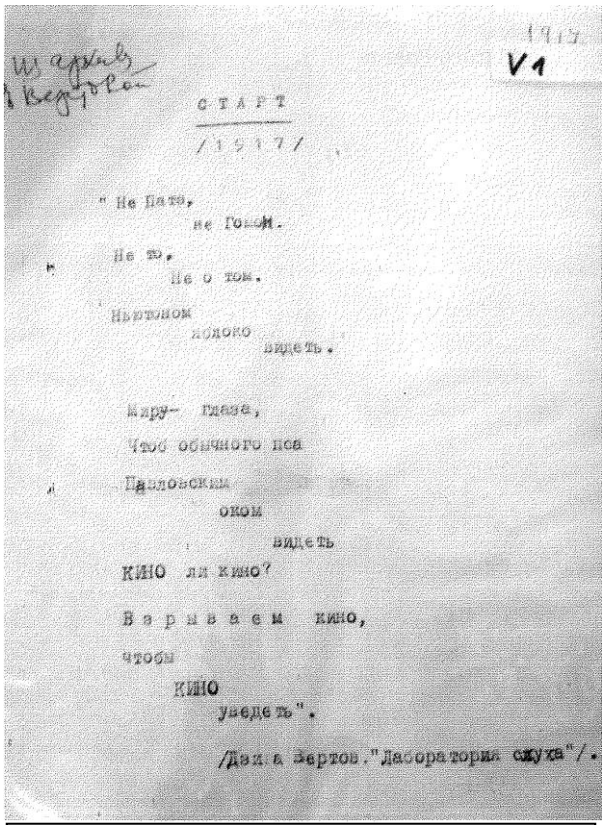

Figure 1: scan of manuscript of Dziga Vertov's *Start,* from Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 35.

First, one notes that this poem mimics the formal tropes of modernist poetry from T.S. Eliot to William Carlos Williams and especially to Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vertov's idol,[137] with the exaggerated indentation and placement of phrases on the page. In the original manuscript, these modernist moves are even more pronounced.[138] Next, one notes the foremost importance placed on sight and vision; the reader is incited to "see an apple" with Newton's eye, or a dog through Pavlov's: an enhanced, perfected, and scientific eye. Since both Newton and Pavlov are scientists, albeit in widely different fields, what links Newton and Pavlov is what makes the Kino-Eye appealing: its scientific, all-knowing nature. Likewise, one must remember that Newton and Pavlov could be viewed as the elite, or the intelligentsia. Vertov's poem might thus be an effort to bridge the gap between the masses and the elite—for anyone who can see a dog or apple can, with the help of cinema, see it with an expert's knowledge. Vertov attempts to bring perfect perception to everyone's doorstep.

On the other hand, this poem appeals to the drive to show the thing itself—cinema. For cinema to function correctly—or, we might say, ethically, devoid of the familiarization imposed by the bourgeoisie, a cinema which must "Start" anew alongside socialism—cinema must show itself as it truly is, laying bare its device. The machine of the *kinoapparat* must be made evident and aware of itself. In addition, cinema must be "blown up"—that is, radically transformed, and taken to the limits of its own technique. Vertov's films are made to bring one to attention in the manner of an explosion. This is cinema's bombastic claim to its own existence.

As noted earlier, Vertov's call for perfect perception recalls phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, highly influenced by the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.[139] Though

[137] See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, Chapter 3.

[138] See Figure 1.

[139] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century Thought* (Berkeley: University of

a critic of Cartesian ocular-centricism—the privileging of sight above all senses—Merleau-Ponty instead searched for a new ontology of sight, one less reliant on claims to objectivity. As Merleau-Ponty once stated, "I would like to see more clearly, but it seems to me that no one sees more clearly."[140] Indeed, the evocation of "an apple seen with Newton's eye" in Vertov's poem recalls the apple described in Merleau-Ponty's seminal essay on Cezanne's paintings, entitled "Cezanne's Doubt." In this essay, he praises Cezanne's work as an "exact study of appearances" rather than a "projection of dreams outward" or the "incarnation of imagined scenes."[141] Although the claim that Cezanne was the ultimate painter of "truth" might sound a bit absurd given his rejection of mimesis, Merleau-Ponty writes, "…Cezanne was always seeking to avoid the ready-made alternatives suggested to him: sensation versus judgment; the painter who sees against the painter who thinks; nature versus composition…"[142] Thus, Cezanne, in abandoning the conscious knowledge of how things are supposed to be represented, was able to paint them in the way he truly saw them at first glance—exactly what Shklovsky praised Tolstoy for doing in "Art as Technique." In a striking similarity to Shklovsky's call for a "stony stone," Merleau-Ponty praises Cezanne's painting style for returning something that might be called, following D.H. Lawrence, the "appleyness of the apple"[143]:

> If one outlines the shape of an apple with a continuous line, one makes an object of the shape, whereas the contour is rather the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede in depth… To trace just a single outline sacrifices depth—that is, the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as an inexhaustible reality full of reserves. That is why Cezanne follows the swelling

California Press, 1993), 265.

[140] Qtd. in Ibid., 263.

[141] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt," *Sense and Non-Sense*, Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 11.

[142] Ibid., 13.

[143] D.H. Lawrence describes the "appleyness of the apple" in his text on Cezanne's paintings. See D.H. Lawrence, "Introduction to These Paintings," in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence (1936)* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp.578-9.

> of the object in modulated colors and indicates *several* outlines in blue. Rebounding among these, one's glance captures a shape that emerges from among them all, just as it does in perception.[144]

The apple as Cezanne paints it thus represents an apple as it is perceived by consciousness, without the harmful influence of mimetic techniques of realism. These realistic techniques dull the senses and do not incite wonder, and are instead "spread out before us" without differentiation. The several outlines of the apple represent the "glance" of the human eye—painted as we perceive it, rather than how it is known (that is, the Kantian idea of the apple). Merleau-Ponty praised Cezanne's ability to "look at everything with widened eyes"—forgetting what he learned from science to recapture the structure of things as an emerging organism.[145] Although Merleau-Ponty's apple rejects a "scientific" perception dear to Vertov, the eye of the Kinoks is not altogether objective. As we will later see in the discussion of the film-manifesto *Kino-Eye,* Vertov's eye is often quite subjective, even lyrical and fantastical. And of course, Cezanne's ability to perceive "with widened eyes," untainted by habit, is nonetheless similar to another widened eye: the camera lens. Like Merleau-Ponty's evocation of Cezanne's portrayal of the subjective perception of the apple, Vertov's technique renders the camera subjective; for example, in *Man with a Movie Camera*, the film speeds up with the speed of trains, buses, and carriages racing through a Soviet city, but slows to a crawling pace as the workday ends: speed as it is perceived, rather than as it is known.

"Suddenly Everything Starts to Move"

[144] Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt," 14-15.

[145] Ibid., 17.

By 1922, as the newly formed country began to recover from the Civil War, it also began to feel stable and permanent; that year, the launch of Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* brought the Soviet newsreel journal back to the screens. Favorable reviews began appearing in *Pravda* a month into its run, including several by famed journalist Mikhail Koltsov, Vertov's influential patron: he originally invited the young Vertov to join the VFKO,[146] and continued to support Vertov's work until 1927.[147] In a November 28, 1922 article in *Pravda*, Koltsov stated the following:

> The screen has a terrible quality: everything that is most real, that has been seen a thousand times, that has even become boring, becomes, in its representation, important, significant, somehow especially clear and instructive. As you watch you seem to reassess things, to live through them again, acutely and watchfully, through the eyes not of a participant and a contemporary but of an outsider, a foreigner, someone from a later generation.
>
> *Kino-Pravda* is made skillfully adroitly, professionally. The time when our newsreels were made in a careless and primitive way, with exhaustingly long passages, is now past. We have already learned American montage, the variegated and dynamic packing together of scenes, elements, and intertitles.
>
> Suddenly everything starts to move. Red Square is swaying with flags and a surge of people. The demonstrations, the speakers, the Komintern delegates, the troops, all the magnificent attributes of celebrations in the proletarian republic.[148]

As Koltsov writes, *Kino-Pravda* marks when "everything starts to move" in Soviet cinema; distinguishing itself from drawling, earlier newsreels and "exhaustingly long passages," *Kino-Pravda* could reflect Soviet life back to its own citizens, but with an added freshness. Koltsov's claim that even mundane things "seen a thousand times" become "important, instructive." You can live through them again, "acutely, watchfully"—a fresh perspective on what can so easily become habitual, unthinking, monotonous. This argument recalls the Vertov claim quoted

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[146] N.P. Abramov, *Dziga Vertov* (Moscow: Academia Nauk [Academy of Sciences], 1962), 10.

[147] Pozdorovkin, "Khronika," 137.

[148] Mikhail Koltsov, "U ekrana" (In Front of the Screen), *Pravda*, 28 November 1922, in Tsivian, ed. *Lines of Resistance,* 45.

earlier: that the Kinoks desired "a free, which means an active, conception of even the most mundane things." Although the early issues of *Kino-Pravda* were still somewhat far from "A revolution in seeing, and therefore in man's reception of the world in general," Vertov's Kinoks were certainly on the right path to instilling a fresher, renewed perspective in their viewers.

Likewise, they had "already learned American montage, the variegated and dynamic packing together of scenes, elements, and intertitles." Vertov, like other Soviet filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Kuleshov, praised American cinema for its rapid pace and quick montage. In the Kinoks' *We: Variant of a Manifesto* of this same year (1922), Vertov and his group write:

> To the American adventure film with its showy dynamism and to the dramatizations of the American Pinkertons the kinoks say thanks for the rapid shot changes and close-ups. Good... but disorderly, not based on a precise study of movement. A cut above the psychological drama, but still lacking in foundation. A cliché. A copy of a copy.[149]

Here, Vertov's team indicates their appreciation of American cinema, especially their showy action sequences, while also criticizing it for its "disorderliness"—its supposed lack of theory or "foundation." American cinema, to Vertov's kinoks, lacks the Marxist ideology which gives Vertov's films their order, foundation, and *raison d'être.* Without this ideology, films are mere "Pinkertons," a common term for "detective story" (*detektiv*) in Soviet Russia during the early 1920s; the word referred to fictional detective Ned Pinkerton, hero of a popular series of *detektiv* novels.[150] Otherwise stated, a film lacking a (Marxist-Leninist) political ideology is reduced to mere aesthetic "showiness" and entertainment. Yet between the lines of such criticism is a

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[149] "Американской фильме авантюры, фильме с показным динамизмом, инсценировкам американской пинкертоновщины — спасибо кинока за быстроту смен изображений и крупные планы. Хорошо, но беспорядочно, не основано на точном изучении движения. Ступенью выше психологической драмы, но все же бесфундаментно. Шаблон. Копия с копии." Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 15. Translation: Vertov, "We," 6.

[150] Harte, *Fast Forward*, 170-171.

sincere appreciation of the techniques of the American film aesthetic: the rapidity and range of shot types that Vertov would emulate, increasingly, in his own films.

Vertov was certainly not the only Soviet filmmaker aspiring to beat the Americans at their own game. Kuleshov, for instance, declared his technical admiration for *Amerikanshchina* (Americanism), stating his preference for Hollywood's vitality over Russia's slower pre-revolutionary fare.[151] This evocation of *Amerikanishchina* was common not only in film but in literature as well—and was in fact shared by many thinkers worldwide. For instance, Harootunian notes that in Paris and Tokyo as well, the appeal to "Americanism" signified speed, technology, and new modes of producing commodities. While the Italian playwright Pirandello announced in 1929 that "Americanism is swamping us. I think a new beacon of civilization has been lit over here," the Japanese writer and playwright Kikuchi Kan confidently declared in 1927 that "Americanism" marked the beginning of modernity and a new civilization in Japan.[152] However suspicious the attitude toward *Amerikanishchina* became worldwide, it was a source of fascination for many critics, who saw it as synonymous with modernity itself. Criticizing pre-revolutionary Russian film for its bourgeois melodramatic plots and slow pace, Vertov and others drew toward American works such as D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* of 1916*,* an astounding hit in the early years of the USSR.[153] For reviewers such as Koltsov, Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* was a step in the direction of the dynamic, fast paced world of American montage—but with a proletarian sensibility.

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[151] Ibid., 161.

[152] Harootunian, *History's Disquiet,* 67.

[153] Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 143. Ironically, in *Vent d'Est* (1970), Godard would describe the USSR's fascination with *Intolerance* as the end of a truly Marxist-Proletarian avant-garde culture. Unknowingly, his favorite Soviet directors, including Vertov, were no less guilty of a fascination with Griffith's film. (See my description of *Le Vent d'Est* in Chapter 3)

At first glance, however, there does not seem to be much difference between the first *Kino-Pravda* and its *Kino-Nedelya* predecessors, at least in terms of shot length: shots are highly varied, but still around 9 seconds in length on average, and without very much camera movement: not a large improvement on the pan-heavy, 11 second long average shot in *Kino-Nedelya.* However, on second glance, *Kino-Pravda #1* speaks volumes about what will eventually become trademarks of Vertov's filmmaking. For instance, although the average shot length is not particularly shortened from the newsreel's earlier iteration, it is quite varied throughout, and entirely dependent on the content. For example, the first *Kino-Pravda* begins with harrowing scenes of starving children. Some of the longest takes in the 10-minute-long cine-journal, these shots, averaging around 10 seconds, are shown without unnecessary cinematography, and allow the Soviet viewer to confront her country's social problems head-on, to perceive them fully. The next segment, on the re-purposing of church artifacts for Soviet use, is quick; averaging 4 seconds per shot, its scenes of priests discussing topics with Soviet bureaucrats carry a sense of efficiency. After a few minutes of these shots, an intertitle: "Every gemstone saves a starving child," thus linking the two disparate segments into a single agitational purpose. Variety in shot length not only leads to a more engaged viewing experience, but increases perceptive abilities—like Koltsov and Vertov claimed, to experience it anew.

Likewise, Vertov's intertitles in the first *Kino-Pravda* are used far beyond mere description or explication; they are a way of increasing affect, and allow the viewer to embody and viscerally experience the events described. After six months of intense experimentation with the placement of titles, Vertov theorized a breakthrough while working on *Kino-Pravda:* similarly to the way sound will eventually come from either diegetic or non-diegetic worlds, information issued by the film can come either from the image itself or from the world outside of

it.[154] For instance, in *Kino-Pravda #1*, between shots of starving children gathering crumbs and small insects, the intertitle "No More Strength!" appears in constructivist script, spanning the full size of the screen. Not only a visual description of mass starvation, this scene is a direct simulator of the starving orphans' experience. This rhetorical device, which Vertov called a "slogan intertitle," integrated text and subject matter into a comprehensive whole, straddling the divide between information and emotional appeal. As Pozdorovkin claims, affect is transferred between text and image, creating a reciprocal relationship between them. In identifying with the perspective of the starving children, the intertitle evoked greater emotional appeal, and rejuvenated the image.[155] The viewer was meant to feel that she was experiencing the events on screen actively, participating within them. The effect must have been strong and mesmerizing.

Kino-Pravda's appeal, however, is not merely the pathetic, and its purpose is not always exclusively political. For instance, *Kino-Pravda #1* takes the viewer on a flight on a German aircraft: "Moscow from a height of 750 meters," reads the intertitle. Here the shots are quite varied as well, and likewise dependent on content: a longer take shows a plane cutting across the horizon while landing, appearing to slice the shot in two; another long take shows Moscow from within the airplane, providing what must have been the first aerial view of their city that Soviet citizens had ever seen. The effect must have been one of awe and wonder—an effect increased by the two most playful and estranging shots in the cine-volume: 1) a shot of the ground approached while landing, which whizzes by the viewer at a rate too fast to be perceptible as anything other than swift-moving white noise, and 2) a barely perceptible moment of stop-motion animation, in which the airplane's propellers begin their motion from two separate

[154] Pozdorovkin, "Khronika," 99.

[155] Ibid., 100-101.

positions. These two moments, although brief, are what Vertov called his cinematic "tricks," and would become characteristic of his dynamic, playful style in just a few short years.

In an article from 1922 entitled "On Filming Newsreel Subjects," two years before *Kino-Eye* and contemporaneous with the launch of *Kino-Pravda*, Vertov attempts to respond to the question, "What must and can be done now in Russia?" He answers:

a) Tricks and a maximum of invention during all kinds of filming.
b) Improvement and invention in laboratory work, trick printing of the positive from the negative (dual and triple printing), printing various negatives into the positive (aperture inventions—laboratory montage).
c) Innovation and tricks in the area of our montage.
d) The repertoire: (1) production and machine studies; (2) Trick comic studies both today and tomorrow (through the method of the hyperbolic trick); (3) Newsreel from montage studies to montage of events… A complete refusal to stage literary works.
e) Preparation of the viewers and the reception of new things.
f) The exposure of cinematography, instilling a feeling of revulsion towards *kino-drames* and *kino-dames.*[156]

As witnessed here, "tricks" are key to understanding Vertov's theories of cinema; the four first goals for Soviet cinema revolve around tricks, while the fifth— "preparation of the viewers and the reception of new things"—is ostensibly created by using tricks in cinema. The link between these implies that it is through tricks that human perceptive abilities can be enhanced. The playfulness of tricks, whether it is through printing, montage, and other editing techniques, leads to a more refined, exclusively Soviet mental activity—distinct from the "literary works," *kino-drames,* and *kino-dames* of a bygone era.

Interestingly, the Russian term for trick—*triuk*—initially signified a stunt, such as those used by Hollywood adventure films, but by the mid-1920s the term had evolved to include established filming techniques that could be used to generate a startling visceral effect in the

[156] Dziga Vertov, "O s'emke kinosiuzhetov v khronike," in *Iz Naslediya,* 22-23. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 81.

viewer, which might also be ideological. Technical innovation became a potent tool for propagandists. For example, the popular conventions of accelerating or decelerating (cranking the film reel either faster or slower, to a usually unnatural-seeming pace) provided Soviet filmmakers with powerful creative potential: even the slightest distortion of pace could impart special significance to a given sequence.[157] Aside from this, there was also superimposition, dissolves, fades, and animation—all fully utilized by Vertov, especially in later works, in increasing amounts. Focusing on the importance of speed, Harte claims that cinematic tricks, because of their very means of distorting reality, allowed filmmakers to present a world where speed, be it mechanical or physical, was abundant, well-coordinated, and perfectly intertwined with the Bolsheviks' goals of rapid industrialization and social transformation.[158] The new Soviet audience, in becoming adjusted to this new dynamism and rapidity in cinema, would be able to better understand the change occurring around them: the "preparation for new things," simultaneously political, technological, and artistic.

However, one must not forget the ethical dimension of tricks: they were crucial in aiding not only the perception of speed, but also of truth. In an article entitled "What the Eye Does Not See" (*Chego ne vidit glaz*), Formalist critic and avant-garde writer Osip Brik discusses *Kino-Eye*'s technique in terms of human and machine perception:

> The task of the film and photographic camera is not to imitate the human eye, but to see and capture what the human eye usually does not see... The camera can act independently. It can see in ways in which man is not accustomed to see. It can suggest a point of view to man. Suggest looking at things in a different way.[159]

[157] Harte, *Fast Forward*, 184.

[158] Ibid., 185.

[159] Osip Brik, "Chego ne vidit glaz," *Sovetskoe kino*, no. 2, 1926, pp. 22-23, in Tsivian, ed. *Lines of Resistance,* 265-266.

Far beyond a simple understanding of speed and dynamism, for thinkers such as Brik, tricks allow the camera to reveal "what the human eye usually does not see." Unique cinematography and editing techniques shake human beings from their routine perceptions, and can allow us to perceive things differently, anew. Although surely Harte is correct in his claim that tricks amplified visual reality, "offering an ideal vehicle for Bolshevik propaganda,"[160] they were beyond merely persuasive tools. For formalists and avant-garde writers, and Vertov as well, they were a means for a new awareness—a new ethics of sight and perception.

Not all critics and viewers, however, appreciated such tricks. Some critics objected to the subjectivity of the camera, which they perceived as antithetical to Vertov's alleged "life as it is." As Aleksandr Kurs, Soviet journalist and screenwriter, wrote in 1927: "...in no way does Vertov show life as it is, but rather life as it is caught at a certain point by a fixed camera and pointed in a certain way."[161] The camera, in other words, is far less objective than it appears; it is immensely edited and manipulated. Vertov's films are documentaries favoring radical experimentation and avant-garde techniques. They are full of "tricks"—which, although largely used for agitational purposes with a deep ideological content, are also playful. Sometimes they exist purely for their own shock or novelty content—a freshness to enhance the perceptive abilities of viewers for the "reception of new things." In an article on *Kino-Pravda,* a satirist called A. Zorich describes their viewing experience:

> ...The picture of our life is relatively full. On the screen we saw terrible footage of places where there is starvation, the removal of church valuables, the arrival of Vandervelde, the trial of Right Socialist Revolutionaries. But to tell the truth, this entire picture does not become any weightier through the insertion of "Views of the Caucasus", with ladies relaxing in the sunshine, or of various horse races with betting, and the excited physiognomies of *Nepmen*, and so forth. This film stock could have been used successfully to shoot, for example, the daily life of the

[160] Harte, *Fast Forward*, 186.

[161] Qtd in MacKay, "A Revolution in Film," 199.

> workers, their rest homes, various processes of work in the factories (inasmuch as economic calculations allow), and so on.
> The film is made much more lively through the insertion of elements of everyday life, though not all of these are equally successful. For example, in the picture of the trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries, the footage of two young "gentlemen" betting on whether the men will be shot or not is not at all serious, and quite inappropriate.[162]

This critique anticipates many of the criticisms what will be launched at Vertov's films in the future—especially in their occasionally "not at all serious" aspects, which are deemed "quite inappropriate." Although the first two scenes of *Kino-Pravda #1* are indeed serious—starving children and the re-purposing of church valuables are rather straightforward cultural criticism and current affairs—other scenes are fair game. At first glance, much of Vertov's imagery does seem somewhat unserious, or at least not explicitly propagandistic; remember, for instance, the scene of the airplane ride immediately following the re-purposing of church valuables: whizzing camerawork to the point of complete abstraction, the hint of estranging stop-motion propellers, a breathtaking long-take of an aerial view of Moscow. Although these are not explicit moments of agit-prop, nor notes of historical import (it is not, for instance, a "trial of Right Socialist Revolutionaries"), I believe these playful moments, even the "gentlemen" betting on the result of a trial, are some of the most Marxist in Vertov's repertoire. Playfulness—what critics such as Rancière termed aesthetic free play—has a surprisingly serious purpose, and is intertwined with politics, ethics, and aesthetics, as we will discover.

It is no wonder, then, that certain Bolsheviks did not take too kindly to Vertov's playful experiments. When Zorich writes that the film "does not become any weightier" through the footage of "ladies relaxing in the sunshine," or two "gentlemen" (in quotation marks) betting on the outcome of a serious trial, it is clear that many Soviet critics missed Vertov's point entirely—

[162] A.Z., "Na vechere 'Kino-Pravdy'", *Pravda*, September 2, 1922. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 41.

and the Marxist idealism inherent in his use of aesthetic free play. Ultimately, because its goal was a revolution of human perception, Vertov's playfulness was radically political in its ideology—and explicitly so. Vertov's films merged what Sonja Foss describes as an "aesthetic response" and a "rhetorical response": the former consisting of a viewer's direct perceptual encounter with the sensory aspects of a given thing, experiencing it aesthetically, enjoying or valuing its form, colors, and texture. It is an experience of the sensible. The latter is associated with a given meaning and rationality, its sense of purpose.[163] While the latter would have most likely been approved by the Bolshevik government, the former was seen as illogical, unnecessary—something as unserious as "two ladies relaxing in the sunshine." As we will see later in the chapter, both the aesthetic and rhetorical responses could be bridged by using cinematic techniques of estrangement, guided by what aesthetic philosopher and poet Friedrich Schiller named the "play-instinct". This play-instinct also recurs in the work of German phenomenological idealist Eugen Fink, for whom "...play is an essential element of man's ontological makeup, a basic existential phenomenon."[164] As we will see, although Fink does not consider play the only such phenomenon, it is intimately related to all phenomena, with which play interacts and interpenetrates. Indeed, Fink even concludes that "play can become the symbolic theatrical enactment of the universe, the speculative metaphor of the world... [it is] both a cosmic *symbol* and a symbol of the *cosmos.*"[165] For critics such as Fink and Schiller, play is of utmost importance—instinctual and essential to humankind.

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[163] Sonja Foss "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory," in *Defining Visual Rhetorics* eds. Charles Hill and Marguerite Helmers (New York: Routledge, 2004), 306, quoted in Pozdorovkin, *Khronika*, 37.

[164] Eugen Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play," Trans. Ute Saine and Thomas Saine. *Yale French Studies* (No. 41 Game, Play, Literature. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 19.

[165] Eugen Fink, qtd in Stuart Elden, "Eugen Fink and the Question of the World," *Parrhesia* (No. 5: 2008), 49.

The structuralist Yuri Lotman, whose theories on semiotics derive from the works of Russian Formalists, wrote in 1967: “Play is, without a doubt, one of the most serious and organic necessities of the human psyche.”[166] Although his views on play are more analytical than the often transcendent view of play described by Fink, he asserts a vital connection between art and play relevant to Vertov's playful aesthetics: although art is “not a form of play,” both play and art “[work] towards the important goal of getting a grasp of the world, both share the common trait: the conditional solution of situations.”[167] Art and play are tied in their particular potential for finding solutions, and invite possibility for change within the world.

Although the playful aspects of Vertov's films were regarded suspiciously by many Soviet critics and authorities, Vertov's political aesthetics veered away from the power-seeking, didactic world-building associated with the avant-gardist project in the early Soviet period. In so doing, they actualize the playfully estranging tendency of avant-garde documentaries, evoking a sense of freedom from quotidian existence. These moments of aesthetic free play in Vertov, seen as early as *Kino-Pravda #1*, instill a sense of wonder and fascination in the viewer—a breath of life in which “everything starts to move.”

Masters of Vision and Organizers of Seen Life

In 1923, Vertov writes of the Kinoks' role as “masters of vision and organizers of seen life”[168]; however, the work Vertov created served less to control the vision of a hapless,

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[166] Juri Lotman, “The Place of Art Among Other Modeling Systems,” *Sign Systems Studies* (39:2/4, 2011), 252.

[167] Ibid., 264.

[168] “мастера зрения—организаторы видимой жизни…” Dziga Vertov, “Novoe techenie v kinematografii”, 7. Translation: Tsivian, 84.

uneducated proletariat by mesmerizing their senses. Compare Vertov's emphasis on the mastery of sight with Sergei Eisenstein's Montage of Attractions: “the socially useful emotional and psychological effect that excites the audience and is composed of a chain of suitably directed stimulants.”[169] Eisenstein's Montage of Attractions is meant to captivate the viewer, who becomes an object of scientific study to whom a “stimulant” is “suitably directed.” Vertov, by contrast, seeks to liberate the viewer from her habits and predilections. Although both filmmakers incorporate scientific language to further their viewpoints (a scientist-engineer in Vertov's laboratory, a film composed of directed stimulants in Eisenstein), Vertov's theories treat the filmgoer as a subject who uses the camera-eye to see, literally, for herself. Armed with the concept of the Kino-Eye, Vertov's group would lift the veil of realism from actuality footage in order to teach the new Soviet citizen how to *see*.

By 1924, Vertov and the Kinoks desired a move further away from *Kino-Pravda* and the cine-journal, and toward even more ambitious experimentation. *Kino-Eye* was the result of this fervent experiment in cinematic form. Although the cinematographic tricks of *Kino-Eye* would later be overshadowed by *Man with a Movie Camera*, the roots of Vertov's well known masterpiece are all found in this work, a film-manifesto for Vertov's theories. The “tricks” used in this film number the following: acceleration and deceleration of film stock, extremely quick cuts, superimposition, use of the iris, reversing the reel, footage of a hand writing an intertitle, stop-motion (such as the hands of a clock seeming to move forward or backward by themselves), animation with the use of silhouette paper cutouts, and a diagram illustrating its working parts in stop-motion. Most of these are used several times in the film and are immensely important for

[169] Sergei Eisenstein, “The Method of Making a Workers' Film” in *S.M. Eisenstein: Selected Works*, 65.

the ideological bent of the film. Indeed, it is from these wide-ranging tricks that the film's affective potential arises.

These varied tricks occur more often in *Kino-Eye* than any other film until *Man with a Movie Camera*, which begins to use more fantastical superimposition for an estranging effect, and whose ethos is rather different; a more tightly edited film, *Man with a Movie Camera* is breathlessly quick, full of tricks at every corner. *Kino-Eye* is more meandering, seeming to discover these varied tricks as the film progresses. The films created between these two—*Stride, Soviet!*, *A Sixth Part of the World,* and *The Eleventh Year*—still incorporate these tricks, but in less abundant numbers. Mainly using the trick of the double- or triple-superimposition, these three films usually incorporate one surprising moment of stop-motion animation, such as a slice of bread suddenly multiplying into an entire loaf, and then a table of loaves (*Stride, Soviet!*), or fruit miraculously packing itself into boxes (*A Sixth Part of the World*). The principal trick of *Kino-Eye,* however, is the time-reversal—rare in these later three films (with only one brief instance in *Stride, Soviet!*), but occurring no fewer than three times throughout the course of *Kino-Eye*. It is in these instances of time-reversal where playful estrangement is most keenly felt; although time-reversal rather rare in cinema, it comprises a significant percentage of *Kino-Eye*: the approximate 10 minutes and 15 seconds of time reversal in the film comprise about 13 percent of the entire feature-length film. It is thus possible that *Kino-Eye* represents the most extensive use of this technique in film history.

The first time-reversal segment is the most memorable: a bull appears to come to life. From 9:50 to 13:30 in the film, Vertov plays the slaughter of a bull in reverse. Not just any bull, however: this segment begins when the mother of a young Pioneer buys meat from a place which is not run by the cooperative (the correct place to buy meat, dictates the film's propagandistic

message). The Pioneers attempt to correct her unethical, uncooperative behavior via the tricks of the Kino-Eye. By the end of this segment, the butchered bull is brought back to life, and the mother enters the cooperative butcher instead.

This segment is one of the most dazzling in all of Vertov's oeuvre, as the Kino-Eye moves from being purely theoretical in Vertov's writings to seemingly having an agency of its own. It is capable of reversing an action it deems improper, and is even able to bestow life upon a creature once dead. The intertitles carry a hint of the magical or biblical: "we dress the bull in its skin"; "the bull comes back to life." Devoid of religious dogma, the mechanical eye, the perfect perception, becomes the new God, capable of showing man his true face. It is even able to resurrect the dead.

The Kino-Eye is also able to show, in the truest Marxist sense, the process of labor through its cinematographic tricks. The second time-reversal occurs in the baking of bread. We see it regress from the stores to the bakeries and back to the dough, and to grain. We see bread rise up an inclined plane as if by magic—an uncanny moment. But folded within this strangely charmed scene is an ideological exercise, as the viewer comes to understand the labor hidden behind a common loaf of bread. Dziga Vertov meant his films to incite socialist fervor, but without an Eisensteinian model in which information is transmitted from screen to citizen. Instead of this model of information transmission, Vertov desired a reawakening of perception through film techniques. Here, he accomplishes this by guiding the viewer to an engagement with the mode of production. By using the techniques of playful estrangement, Vertov is capable of awakening perceptive capacities on both the personal and global scales.

This estrangement, however, is quite different from Marx's concept of a worker's alienation from one's labor, although the terms appear synonymous at first glance; indeed,

estrangement is meant to be its opposite. Although both require a kind of distancing, Shklovsky's estrangement is a beneficial force that does not alienate, but instead tears away the binds of habit from perception. To use Trotsky's popular phrase, it is a permanent revolution of the mind. In *Kino-Eye*, Shklovskian estrangement is even able to defeat this Marxist alienation by reuniting the worker with the total labor of his product. Estrangement becomes the antidote to alienation from one's labor. In its uncanny ability to captivate the viewer while simultaneously promoting freedom of thought and worldly play, this estrangement becomes what Svetlana Boym describes as estrangement *for* the world, instead of estrangement *from* the world.[170]

Vertov's techniques of estrangement, exemplified by reel-reversal, use actuality footage to craft a new perception of the world; his films, devoid of actors or a clear comprehensive narrative, typify the creative repurposing of nonfiction. However, Vertov was constantly criticized for not being loyal enough to the artifact of the newsreel. Putting his manifestoes aside, there is certainly an element in his cinematography that is not always strictly party-line Bolshevik in tone—similar to the aforementioned scenes of "ladies bathing in the sunshine" in *Kino-Pravda*, which were criticized for their alleged frivolousness. In *Kino-Eye*'s third moment of time-reversal, Vertov shows the viewer ideal Soviet men and women diving into water; he then reverses this and we see them fly back up into the air, with the intertitle: "Kino-Eye shows you how to dive properly." Here there is no heavy Marxist overtone, no proper Soviet message (unless one was training divers for the Olympics). It is, however, rife with experiment and play. Vertov and his Kinoks delight in the camera's potential and relish its more surprising qualities. This is a more ambiguous segment than the previous time-reversals because of its sheer humor

[170] See Chapter 5 of Svetlana Boym, *Another Freedom.*

and ludicrousness; at one point in a slow-motion time-reversal, a woman jumps back onto her diving board, and the camera passes directly between her legs—a cinematographic sex joke.[171]

Numerous moments like this occur throughout the film—moments which seem somehow wondrous, magical, and playful, while not perfectly aligned with proper socialist newsreel cinema. Also included are moments emphasizing an almost auratic sense of construction and aesthetics within the film, such as footage of a hand drawing a phrase in cursive signifying the end of each reel. The cursive, essentially handmade, script contrasts with the machinic eye for which his "Kino-Eye" theories are usually known. This handmade aspect is no accident—an actual *hand* is filmed drawing the intertitles—and its almost quaint, old-fashioned aesthetic reminds the viewer of devices used to encourage children to read. Along with documentaries, Vertov also produced drawn animations, such as the ten-minute long "Soviet Toys" advertisement, also made in 1924.[172] Although at first animation seems a far cry for the "factory of facts" for which the Kino-Eye theories are usually known, what these animated "tricks" accomplish is a fresh perspective, and a return to sensory delight.

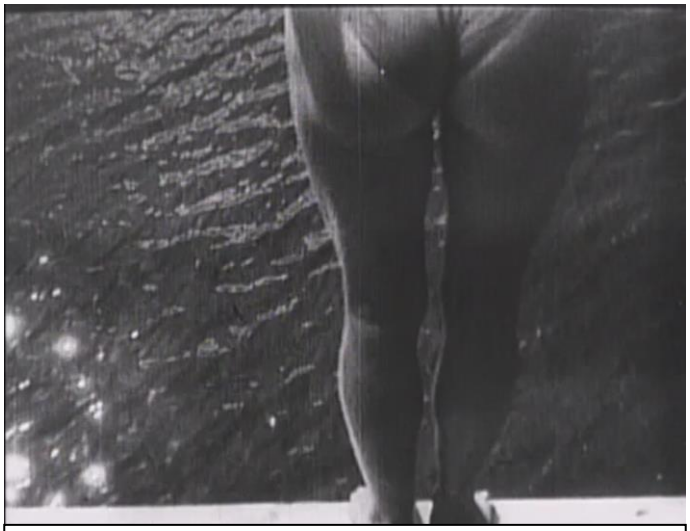

Figure 2: Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye* (1924)

The Sensory Exploration of the World Through Film

[171] See Figure 2. Vertov's sexual metaphors are not constrained to women: indeed, the last diver pictured in the sequence appears to be a man. With the exception of bourgeois women, who are often shown indulging in consumerism, Vertov's idealized Soviet men and women participate in largely the same activities. This would contrast greatly with the portrayal of women in Godard's Dziga Vertov Group, as we will see in Chapter 3.

[172] Vertov's animation is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

At one time, the Presidium Committee suggested that Vertov add dates and locations to every filmed image. He responded: "I cannot fulfill your instruction to add in chronological data (the time of year) since this would go against the way the film is constructed and is essentially impossible."[173] This is surely a bold statement. Of course it was technically possible for Vertov to add dates to his "film-things"; however, something about the preciousness of the archival impulse as opposed to the creative one, or its chronological concretization, bothered Vertov to the extent that he deemed it "essentially impossible." Vertov's hesitation at outrightly labeling or dating his "film things" indicates that Vertov's Kino-Eye is not meant for scientific/mechanical exactitude, nor for the newsreel archive alone, but for something more. As we shall later see, this "something more" is a sense of wonder that Vertov wanted his audiences to retain; if he had labeled his images and transformed them into mere archives, the "wonder" would disappear. It would appear, then, that the "factory of facts" produces not scientific evidence, nor objective "slices of life," but an entirely new, constructed reality. As Vertov wrote in "The Council of Three": "I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them."[174] Indicating the time and place of the footage does not matter as much as its ability to affect the viewer in a concrete way; indeed, such calculated measures "go against the way the film is constructed"—that is, aesthetically, and subjectively. This aesthetic construction is meant to produce wonderment, especially through the camera's ability to represent what the naked eye cannot experience. Merleau-Ponty, too, desired this state of wonder, where the viewer is "*being*

[173] Dziga Vertov, "Vertov's Response to the Cuts Suggested by the Presidium Committee," March 1926, RGALI 2091-1-8, in Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 177.

[174] In the original, the first phrase— "я сопоставляю любые точки вселенной—is bolded, and therefore appears central. See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 41. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 18.

filled with wonder at it [the world] and conceiving the subject as a process of transcendence toward the world."[175]

Vertov's term for this feeling of wonder was a "sensory exploration," and, beyond cinema's scientific impulse, it is cinema's affective potential that is given primacy. In "The Council of Three," Vertov declares: "The main and essential thing is: / The sensory exploration of the world through film."[176] Here is film's statement of purpose: an exploration of the world through the senses, a revitalized perception of our own time and space. Kino-Eye, both an end and a means, revolutionizes consciousness through the restoration of feeling to the human sensorium. Many critics of Vertov's time and after have praised his films for their ability to provide a "fresh perspective" to the seemingly mundane. Indeed, through the labor of the Kinoks, the camera "experiments, distending time, dissecting movement... the presentation of even the most ordinary things will take on an exceptionally fresh (*neobichaino svezhee*) and interesting aspect."[177] Vertov's filmmaking techniques are the means for the ends of this renewed sight, an "exceptionally fresh and interesting aspect." Vertov thus actualizes Benjamin's conception of the cinema as an art that "bursts our world asunder," providing the humans of modernity with the capacity to look at seemingly dull things—a railroad, a factory—anew, with a

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[175] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* Trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1945) xv (emphasis Merleau-Ponty's)

[176] О сновное и самое главное: КИНООЩУЩЕНИЕ МИРА. The phrase is bolded, and the latter clause appears in capital letters in the original. See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 38. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 14.

[177] Here, "exceptionally" might also mean "extraordinarily," which has a connotation of strange/out-of-ordinary. There is also a sense of "therefore": "extraordinarily fresh, and therefore interesting, aspect". In the original: "…экспериментирует, растягивая время, расчленяя движение...увится необычайно свежее, а потому интересное, представление даже о самых обыденных вещах.." See Ibid, 41-42. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 19.

revitalization of sensory capabilities. *Byt,* the dullness of the quotidian, is vanquished by the Kino-Eye.

Figure 3: Dziga Vertov, *Stride, Soviet!* (1926)

Figure 4: Dziga Vertov, *Stride, Soviet!* (1926)

Often referred or alluded to in Vertov's films, *byt* is equated with pre-Vertovian bourgeois filmmaking, as well as a state of being from which Soviet citizens desire to escape. In the 1926 film *Stride, Soviet!,* an intertitle reads: *s smertelnoi skhvatke ot gnilim otzhivayuschim bytom,*[178] or "a mortal combat against a rotten, obsolescent daily life," preceded and followed by quick, ecstatic shots of Soviet citizens enjoying themselves in leisure activity, often incorporating the editing trick of triple superimposition.[179] Vertov's film shows us how Soviet citizens attempt, usually unsuccessfully, to avoid the drudgery of daily life. "Come out, please, into life" (*Pozhaluite v zhizn*)[180] implores Vertov in his manifesto, as if to enjoin the viewer to cast off the veil of *byt* and experience the world anew.

Vertov's emphasis on tricks for the purpose of a renewed perspective is illuminated by an early scene of *Kino-Eye*. Here, a young Pioneer girl puts up an agitational poster, but

[178] с смертельной схватке от гнилым отживающим бытом. See Figure 3.

[179] See Figure 4.

[180] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 42. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 20.

accidentally places it upside down.[181] The film cuts to reaction shots of people gathered around her. We assume someone has told her that it is upside down, because she quickly corrects it. Finally the sign is legible: "The Cooperative is Fighting the High Cost of Living--Will You Help It?" The people around her laugh joyfully, and the scene ends on a whimsical note. This aside about a young girl's careless mistake is so lighthearted and jovial that it seems to exist purely for the pleasure of the spectator. However, this moment is a metonymical representation of the Kino-Eye wholly perceived. When the girl places the poster upside down, there is a moment of incongruity in a standard representation of Soviet Civil War-era agitprop; a moment of uneasiness is followed by laughter, and the problem is corrected.

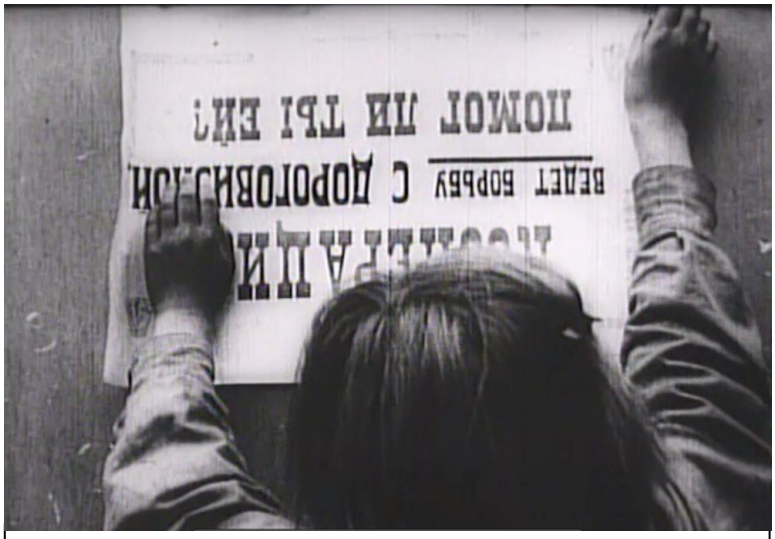

Figure 5: Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye* (1924)

Here we find yet another example of Shklovskian estrangement, as the Kino-Eye's often uneasy, uncanny tricks elevate our perceptive abilities. Would we read this poster as closely had it not been placed in such an unfamiliar way? Surely its dry, monotonous Public Service Announcement would have been long ignored. By placing the poster first upside-down, we become hyper-aware of its presence, and are able to perceive, describe, and "reflect" (to use Merleau-Ponty's terminology) more consciously, and more appropriately. Vertov's cinematographic tricks, even when they do not materialize purely socialist order, revitalize our

[181] See Figure 5.

perceptive capacities and teach us how to see. As Yuri Tsivian notes, "Vertov's tricks may look odd, but they are never inconsequential."[182]

The scene with this young Pioneer girl points to a highly important fact about *Kino-Eye* which has heretofore been ignored: the importance of children, and the merging of the Soviet Pioneer with the playful, wonder-inducing, mechanical Kino-Eye.[183] MacKay notes that the viewer never sees the Kinoks and Pioneers working together, nor do the Pioneers seem to acknowledge the existence of the camera.[184] This, however, is intentional: the Pioneers are represented as the new human manifestation of the Kino-Eye. Every section in *Kino-Eye* is oriented around the experiences of a troupe of Pioneers, who correct the often-deleterious behavior of adults with the aid of the Kino-Eye (such as the aforementioned scene with the bull). One intertitle reads, "Kino-Eye Continues the Pioneers' Thought," thus merging the camera with the mind of a child. Indeed, the mind of Kino-Eye is more childlike than adult, more concerned with play and experiment than the humdrum repetitiveness of daily life. Describing Brian Massumi's concept of affect in his translation of Deleuze's *Mille Plateux*, Eric Shouse writes:

> The transition from childhood to adulthood is one in which we partially learn how to bring the display of emotion under conscious control. Affects, however, remain non-conscious and unformed... [Affect] is what determines the intensity (quantity) of a feeling (quality), as well as the background intensity of our everyday lives (the half-sensed, ongoing hum of quantity/quality that we experience when we are not really attuned to any experience at all).[185]

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[182] Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 19.

[183] As we will see in Chapter 4, children also took center stage in many works of the Japanese political avant-garde documentary tradition, especially through films by Hani Susumu. In Hani's work, children represented a pure, aesthetic playfulness, untainted by capitalist or imperialist forces.

[184] This is with the exception of two girls putting up an agitational poster, who glance at the camera very briefly. See John MacKay, "Vertov and the Line: Art, Socialization, Collaboration," *Film, Art, New Media: Museum Without Walls?* Ed. Angela Della Vache (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 91.

[185] Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect."

Here, childhood is defined by its unbridled emotion; only adults have the capacity to keep this "emotion under conscious control." Affect, nonetheless, remains unformed through adulthood; childhood retains itself in the guise of emotional intensity. It determines the affective flavor of our everyday lives, from the powerful to the everyday. Nonetheless, hidden within this "half-sensed, ongoing hum... when we are not really attuned to any experience at all," is the assumption that this milquetoast affect comes with the overwhelming noise of adulthood, and with inattention. Affect, or "intensity," is by nature unformed, non- and pre-conscious, and full of untapped potential. Herein lies the purpose of Kino-Eye's alliance with children: unburdened by the aspects of everyday life which create "the half-sensed, ongoing hum" of passive experience, the uncontrolled emotional displays of children have revolutionary potential. Children allow space for the Kino-Eye to play.

Similarly, Eugen Fink allots special meaning for children in their ability to play:

> It is frequently said that play is "purposeless" or "undirected" activity. This is not the case. Considered as a whole it is purposive and each individual phase of play action has its own specific purpose, which is an integral part of the whole. But the *immanent* purpose of play is not subordinate to the ultimate purpose served by all other human activity. Play has only internal purpose, unrelated to anything external to itself... In the autonomy of play action there appears a possibility of human timelessness in time. Time is then experienced, not as a precipitate rush of successive moments, but rather as the one full moment, that is, so to speak, a glimpse of eternity. The child still has this experience of time more than other men, since he engages primarily in play...[186]

Play is thus the only activity whose purpose lies in itself, "unrelated to anything extenal." Such an autonomy creates a "possibility of human timelessness in time," a "glimpse of eternity." Children, since they engage primarily in play, have this experience of time due to their indulgence in an allegedly "purposeless" activity.[187] Vertov and Fink both understand the

[186] Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness," 21.

[187] I would argue, however, that this "purposeless" activity in Vertov's *Kino-Eye* is distinct from the praise of "purposeless" art and "art for art's sake" during the Symbolist period. Vertov's children might engage in

importance of childhood as a locus for an experience of time that is *without* time. *Kino-Eye* includes an extensive segment showing children watching the performance of a Chinese magician, with close-ups of their enraptured expressions. It is therefore no accident that Vertov chooses to freeze the image in *Man with a Movie Camera* during this same scene of children viewing a magician: a scene of playful abandon in which both child and spectator share "a glimpse of eternity." As Fink states: "...we will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven, if we do not first become as children."[188] In other words, regardless of the immanent purpose of children's play being for itself alone, its potential is transcendent—a requirement for the "kingdom of heaven," although Fink utilizes the term with a great deal of irony. *Kino-Eye* might not be as self-reflexive as *Man with a Movie Camera* (there is no scene of the editor Svilova cutting up film stock in the editing room), but its privileging of childhood crafts a Kino-Eye which is decidedly childlike, and thus capable of a certain transcendence.

As a result with this emphasis on children, *Kino-Eye* has a wandering, playful, and at times, somewhat disorganized quality which might appear "purposeless," especially compared with later films such as *A Sixth Part of the World* or *Man with a Movie Camera*. I claim, however, that this searching, incomplete aspect of *Kino-Eye* lends it to even more fruitful comparison with Vertov's theories. It is also the first of his "film-things," and first encapsulates the elements of his filmmaking which I claim to be most aligned with the playful estrangement outlined in this dissertation. Indeed, Vertov, cognizant of the film's potential drawbacks as well as its merits, picks up this wandering aspect of *Kino-Eye* and describes it "Kino-Eye feeling its way," after a critic's assessment. He writes:

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undirected play, but it is not exactly purposeless—and indeed, Vertov and other Futurists heavily criticized the Symbolists. Paradoxically, purposeless play has a purpose: to "glimpse eternity," as Fink stated, and to transcend humdrum daily life.

[188] Ibid., 30.

> One of the *kinoks* very correctly called the first part of *Kino-Eye* "Kino-Eye feeling its way". It is a careful reconnaissance mission by one movie camera, the main purpose of which is not to get entangled in the chaos of life and to orientate itself in the circumstances which the Kino-Eye has got into.[189]

Vertov uses what might be a criticism of the film to his advantage: the film's slightly disorganized quality is a testament to its truthfulness. The quality in *Kino-Eye* which seems to be "feeling its way" becomes a careful reconnaissance mission by the movie camera. This mimics the reconnaissance mission[190] taken up by the Pioneers in *Kino-Eye*, in which young children patrol their rural town in search of enemies of communism, from uninformed mothers buying non-cooperative meat to poor hygiene habits to alcoholism, the "friends of tuberculosis". Here Vertov seems to contradict the alleged perfection of the Kino-Eye: in this film, a more humanoid camera avoids getting "entangled in the chaos of life" and begins to "orientate itself in the circumstances which Kino-Eye has got into." In other words, it experiments and plays, and in so doing, avoids the muck of daily life. It drops into a world and looks at it anew, feels its surroundings without getting tangled irreparably—a Rancièrean emancipated spectator imbued with feeling.

Other links between children and the Kino-Eye abound, and are particularly prevalent in Vertov's choice of intertitles. For example, the Soviet Pioneers introduce themselves to the villagers. The intertitle reads: "We're Pioneers—New People. You can trust us." By labeling themselves New People, Vertov links them with his new aesthetic. The first human beings born

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[189] Dziga Vertov, "Otvet na pyat voprosov" (An Answer to Five Questions) in *Iz Naslediya*, 62. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance*, 95.

[190] One must admit that Vertov's use of the "reconnaissance mission" in Kino-Eye is rather warlike, and many critics from Lotman to Fink describe the importance of children's play for later adult tasks, including warfare. Lotman notes that play gives "a person the chance of a conditional victory over an unconquerable (for instance, death) or a very strong (the game of hunting in a primitive society) opponent". Play is taken as essential for, when mastered during childhood, can be recreated in military or hunting formations later in life. See Lotman, "The Place of Art Among Other Modeling Systems," 253. Fink's idea of play is less militaristic, yet nonetheless quite serious: Fink, after Hegel, notes that play is the most sublime form of seriousness, and quotes Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*: "I know of no other way of coping with great tasks, than play." See Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness," 25.

into a Soviet world, the Pioneers cast aside old trends in favor of new Soviet behaviors and new Soviet modes of representation. It is the editing techniques of the Kino-Eye which have crafted these new perfect beings into existence.

In his early declamatory essay "The Council of Three", Vertov highlights this desire to create a new, perfect Soviet man:

> I am kino-eye. I create a man more perfect than Adam... From one person I take the hands, the strongest and most dexterous; from another I take the legs, the swiftest and most shapely; from a third, the most beautiful and expressive head—and through montage I create a new, perfect man.[191]

Kino-Eye is thus able to perfect human bodies, creating a camera/man cyborg which will take literal form in *Man with a Movie Camera*, as witnessed by the tricks of the cinematographer as well as the film's posters[192]: in one, a woman's legs are collaged underneath a tripod, atop which the ubiquitous Vertovian symbol is placed, a literal Kino-Eye: a movie camera with a human eye instead of a lens, alluding to one of the most famous instances of superimposition in *Man with a Movie Camera.*[193] Behind this Kino-Eye is half of a woman's smiling face, eye parallel to the camera lens. Such collaging and montaging of body-parts in Vertov clearly indicate his interest in building a new, perfected Soviet citizen through the aid of technology. Nonetheless, although *Kino-Eye* does anthropomorphize the camera in a similar vein, its machine-body is not perfectly swift, nor strong, nor dexterous. It is, however, rather like a child, inquisitive, participating in the joys of everyday life without being burdened by them.

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[191] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 40. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 17.

[192] See Figure 6.

[193] See Figure 7.

Figure 6: Poster of Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

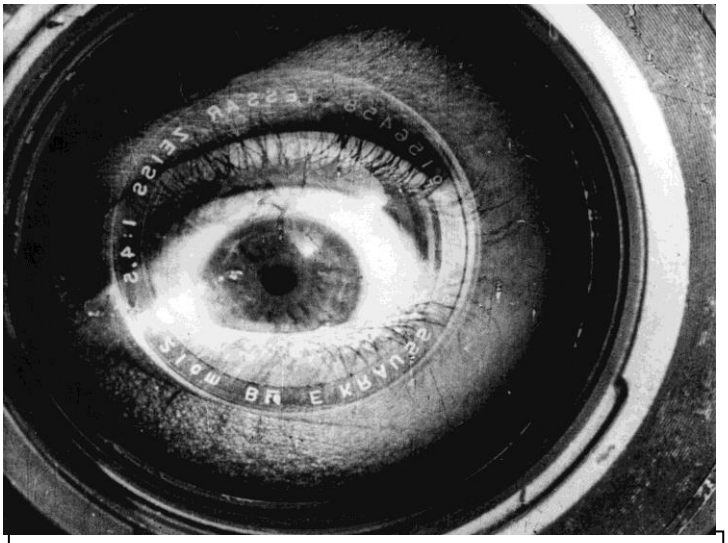

Figure 7: Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Playful, childlike behavior—the camera's many "tricks"—existed to show things as they were, especially if this was a world we cannot ourselves see. According to Vertov, these "tricks" were a way to depict the world without masks—a common statement among the early Soviet avant-garde. In an unpublished poem, he writes:

> There's sometimes a need
> to show a new plane of reality,
> free from banality.
> Upside down, juvenile.
> Human
> and Soviet-style.
> Cine-Eye is not the aim. Cine-Eye
> is a means.
> To show without masks.[194]

[194] Qtd in Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 32.

Here, we can glean numerous aspects of the Kino-Eye theory. For one, Cine-Eye is "Upside down, juvenile"—childlike, for only this age has the potential to avoid humdrum reality and show its "new plane of reality / free from banality." We have already mentioned that he desired to rid cinema of traces of theatricality and literature—the "masks" mentioned here. The "unmasking" of Soviet cinema shows the world as it truly is, invoking the perfect, mechanical perception of the Kino-Eye. However, this perception is not objective: Vertov's is a "new plane of reality" aligned with imagination and creativity. In addition, the masks also refer to Lenin's infamous 1908 article "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," which claimed that Tolstoy's prose was useful in its ability to show the world by "the tearing away of all and sundry masks." Although Vertov was surely consciously aware of Lenin's piece on Tolstoy (whom Shklovsky also praised highly in "Art as Technique" for the use of estrangement in his "tortured prose"), Vertov emphasizes a need for a new plane of reality, one that the eye itself can never see—a truly creative act.

Indeed, for Vertov, the very nature of filmmaking is creative; although his films are "film-things," they are consciously made, organized by the Kinoks. He writes in his manifesto:

> Cinema is... the *art of inventing movements* of things in space in response to the demands of science; it embodies the inventor's dream—be he scholar, artist, engineer, or carpenter; it is the realization by kinochestvo of that which cannot be realized in life.[195]

The purpose of cinema is to invent movement—that is, to edit, and to create. Once again merging the artist with the engineer, invention becomes the goal of this experimental pursuit; it is "the realization... of which cannot be realized in life." Vertov's filmmaking, between art and engineering, animates inanimate objects with the trick of stop motion, and "embodies the

[195] "Art of inventing movements"—искусство вымысла движений вещей –is also highlighted in the original. See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 17. Translation: Vertov, "We," 9.

inventor's dream." This one statement, light years away from *cinema-vérité*—which, as we will see in the subsequent chapter, is fundamentally realist—aligns Vertovian filmmaking with fantastical futurism over realism. Vertovian filmmaking uses actuality cinema not to document our own reality but to create a "new plane of reality" for the viewer. It is a fantastical world, invented rather than seen, created for the purpose of viewing our own.

At first this emphasis on creative, fantastic elements seems highly contradictory to Vertov's repulsion for theatre and masks—notably, the place where people jump around "free from banality," "upside down", is the space of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, rather than the "stern originals" of which Vertov speaks. And indeed, there is a circus-like sense to his poetry. Yet Vertov is not invoking theatrics—it is a means of showing *without* masks—but the notion of play itself. Vertov's film, as is Shklovsky's prose, is playful and experimental. Even more so than Vertov's later works, *Kino-Eye*, lacking any particular structure, unfolds by constantly going to unexpected places and doing unexpected things.

In fact, for Vertov, Shlovsky, and Merleau-Ponty, the concept of play becomes integral to the pursuit of ethical perception. Merleau-Ponty, quoting an assistant of Edmund Husserl, writes that the suspension of an object's recognition—that is, estranging the object—produces a "wonder" in the face of the world.[196] Eran Dorfman claims that Merleau-Ponty's "wonder" is tied with his notion of a "radical reflection," which is in turn understood as "freedom, an invention and appropriation of meaning."[197] Merleau-Ponty's reflection is also what he terms "phenomenological thinking," and occurs when reflection is aware of its own process: "my reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event," he writes, "and so it appears to itself in the

[196] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* xv.

[197] Dorfman, "Freedom, Perception and Radical Reflection," 141.

light of a truly creative act, of a changed structure of consciousness."[198] We must be entirely aware of our own perception—and it is only through this awareness that we can create a "changed structure of consciousness." This "changed structure" mirrors the goals of Shklovskian estrangement, and the "active" and "freer" perception resulting from Vertov's experiments. Merleau-Ponty highlights that this renewed, self-aware perception can occur "in light of a truly creative act"—perhaps, a truly creative act such as Vertov's, who estranged the elements of his own environment with the use of the Kino-Eye's tricks. Radical reflection is equivalent to perceptual estrangement: both are revolutions of the mind; they are the act of engaging in philosophy itself, "an ever-renewed experiment in making its own beginning."[199]

In the terms of Erwin Straus's *Phenomenological Psychology*, this perceptual engagement is both a *gnostic* and *pathic* phenomenological activity: it is both intellectual (resulting in knowledge and understanding, therefore *gnostic*) and sensorial (a characteristic feature of primordial experience, or *pathic*).[200] Estrangement is therefore not an emotional distancing, but a way of incorporating both gnostic and pathic perception. As we will discover, estrangement results in an ethics not based on rules and judgment but wonder, play, and the ambiguities that unfold within this space between the gnostic and pathic worlds. These two modes of perception are integral to Schiller, for whom free aesthetic play is capable of merging sensorial and rational modes to produce a fundamentally ethical exercise of consciousness.

This emphasis on play and wonder, however, gets a notably different treatment in the 1929 work *Man with a Movie Camera*, the film for which Vertov is best known. Although *Man*

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[198] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xi.

[199] Ibid., xv-xvi.

[200] For a discussion of these terms, see Erwin W. Straus, *Phenomenological Psychology*, trans. Erling Eng (New York: Basic Books, 1966) 11-21.

with a Movie Camera is surely a more perfectly organized film—and indeed its rush of techniques in breathless succession has inspired a great number of critical thinkers, from Godard and Matsumoto to Deleuze and Rancière—it loses *Kino-Eye's* meandering quality. As Annette Michelson notes, although the themes and structure of the two films have many parallels, their execution is worlds apart.[201] *Kino-Eye* is defined by a curious observation of the world, while *Man with a Movie Camera,* however breathlessly playful, can often seem dystopian in its technological syncretism and panoptic sensibilities. However, this view of *Man with a Movie Camera* as panoptic ignores the more prevalent theme of play and affect that permeates Vertov's oeuvre and his theoretical writings.

"A True Orgy of Cinematography"

Although *Kino-Eye* is of primary importance in our analysis of Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* is also vital to our analysis, for *Man with a Movie Camera* uses more cinematographic tricks than any other in Vertov's oeuvre. In addition, *Kino-Eye* and *Man with a Movie Camera* can be viewed as important counterparts. For one, the two films share a great deal of the same footage, such as laughing children and a Chinese magician; indeed, both have an extensive scene involving bathers, and are inundated with scenes of health, sport, and virility. However, their most important similarity is their variation in tricks: in fact, the two films are the most technique-heavy and playfully estranging films in Vertov's oeuvre. As stated earlier, the films created between them—*A Sixth Part of the World* (1926), *Stride, Soviet!* (1926), and *The Eleventh Year* (1928)—have significant fewer variations in technique; these films were dominated by

[201] Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera*," 64.

superimposition and double exposure, with an average of one short stop-motion animation per film: nowhere near the range of technical output in both *Kino-Eye* and *Man with a Movie Camera.* However, *Man with a Movie Camera*, as its (intertitled) introduction states, is "a film without intertitles." It is therefore important to delineate the differences between the two films, and then re-evaluate the ways *Man with a Movie Camera* either aligns, or renders more problematic, theories of play and estrangement.

Although *Movie Camera* is supposedly a film "without scenario, without sets, actors, etc," the "man" that the title suggests— "played" by Mikhail Kaufman—actually functions as a protagonist in a fiction drama. The cameraman looks through the camera, and we imagine that we are seeing life through the camera's eye—the Kino-Eye. This, however, is the fictional conceit of a nonfiction film. Except for rare moments in which Vertov shoots the camera's reflection in a mirror, occurring for just a few short seconds, we rarely see the cameraman filming the cameraman. Meanwhile, the eponymous cameraman is fully immersed in the world around him—he chases a speeding car, places his tripod between several of the film's many trains,[202] even enjoys a soak in the Black Sea, gleefully mimicking the motions of the bathers he is filming. Meanwhile, the subjects filmed often exhibit clear awareness of the camera's presence. In one section, Vertov shows us a couple applying for a marriage license, followed by application for divorce. This is then followed by even a third option: a woman holding a purse to her face to hide herself from the camera.[203] This awareness is scattered throughout; in another moment, a bourgeois woman in a streetcar sees the cameraman filming her, and mimes spinning an imaginary reel—perhaps an allusion to Vertov's own name. Not only a film which plays, *Man*

[202] See Figure 8

[203] See Figure 9.

with a Movie Camera is a pioneering film blending the objective (nonfiction) and subjective (fictional conceit of the cameraman) worlds.

Figure 8: Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Figure 9: Dziga Vertov, Man *with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Structuralist Yuri Lotman would describe such a doubling, much more than mere meta-cinematic filmmaking, as a "play effect": an instance when "different meanings of the same element do not appear in static coexistence but 'twinkle.'"[204] Upon viewing the film, the memory of the fictional camera-man actor within the "nonfiction" film "twinkles": the two types of film (fiction and nonfiction) coexist simultaneously. The play-effect is purposeful, and Vertov's introduction to the film, which "aims at creating a truly international absolute language of cinema based on its total separation from the language of theatre and literature," must be taken with a grain of salt. Theory aside, Vertov must have known that artifice will always be involved in the organization of footage, and especially in the use of such an aesthetic conceit.

[204] Lotman, "The Place of Art," 264.

More so than *Kino-Eye*, *Man with a Movie Camera* is fast-paced and trick-filled. Every shot seems to have an element of cinematic estrangement. The film begins by a superimposition trick—the cameraman is setting up his device and tripod on top of another camera.[205] From there, the tricks continue: stop-motion animation (even including a pile of moving lobsters, chalk transforming into a mini-factory, and a tripod and camera suddenly given life), split-screen, shooting from extreme camera angles (and again the typical Vertovian trademark of shooting from beneath a moving train), slow-motion, fast-motion, pauses, freeze-frames; in several moments throughout the film, Vertov shows us the device of the film itself, and its editor (Svilova),[206] in pure formalist and constructivist fashion. One has the sense in which Vertov attempts to reach the endpoint of cinema, exhausting its range of editing techniques. Although, as we will see, groups bearing the Vertov moniker—*cinéma-vérité,* or the Dziga Vertov Group—would highlight actuality footage and rigorous nonfiction filmmaking, *Man with a Movie Camera* appears to exhibit the exact opposite: a ferociously edited, fervently *aesthetic* film, rather a strict non-fictional film "catching life unawares".

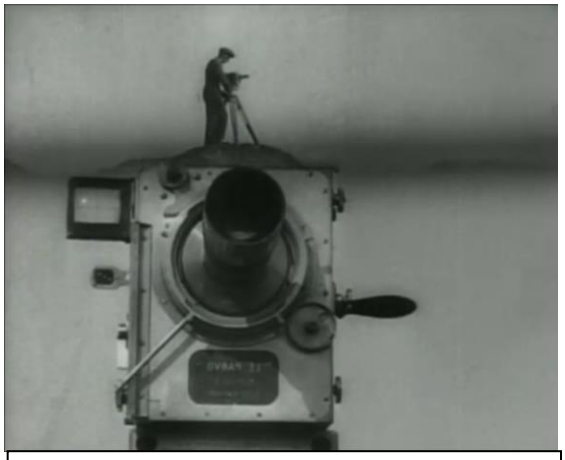

Figure 10: Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Figure 11: Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

[205] See Figure 10.

[206] See Figure 11.

In *Man with a Movie Camera*, the camera is omniscient and omnipresent, witnessing a birth, a funeral procession, mines, factories, streetcars, buses, beaches, roads, and ambulances. It sees from all angles, and penetrates all depths, even a mug of beer.[207] It gives us every aspect of Soviet and human life, both positive and negative; some individuals are undeniably bourgeois, while others are the perfected new Soviet citizens. Contemporaneously in Japan, the architect Kon Wajiro formed the discipline *kogengaku*, translated by Kon as "modernologio," which would engage with the performative present of the city-space, desiring to catch hold of and experience the actuality of city life. Harootunian notes that Kon's work, "recording and composing continuously the manifestation of Tokyo as it is being made anew," closely recalls the documentary montage of *Man with a Movie Camera.* Again recalling Vertov, the result of such an investigation would result in "living in the moment," and the experience of what Kon called a "life revolution." Kon appealed to the implementation of a modernizing process aimed at socializing people into an "attitude toward everyday life" based on actually experiencing it.[208] This same juxtaposition of a "life revolution" with the modernization of fast-

Figure 12: Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

[207] See Figure 12.

[208] Harootunian, *History's Disquiet*, 131-133.

paced city living is expressed in *Man with a Movie Camera*, indicating a coeval global movement investigating a revolution of everyday life through modernity.

Along with its "life revolution," *Man with a Movie Camera* revolutionizes the senses. Lev Manovich focuses on the affective potential of *Man with a Movie Camera*, which he claims to be "a true orgy of cinematography." He continues:

> It is as though Vertov re-stages his discovery of the kino-eye for us... Vertov's goal is to seduce us into his way of seeing and thinking, to make us share his excitement, his gradual process of discovery of film's new language. This process of discovery is film's main narrative and it is told through a catalog of discoveries being made. Thus, in the hands of Vertov, a database, this normally static and "objective" form, becomes dynamic and subjective.[209]

Putting aside Manovich's claim that Vertov's film is the first "database film,"[210] one notes that Manovich claims that Vertov's techniques subjectivize the camera—taking a normally static and allegedly "objective" form and rendering it "dynamic". The camera allows us to re-discover our previously habituated world; it stages this discovery with radically aesthetic, trick-filled forms. It is telling that Manovich places objectivity within quotation marks, as if highlighting the inherent impossibility of an "objective" camera. This statement recalls Matsumoto Toshio's dialectic of the "created" with the "found" image: every film retains characteristics of these twin tendencies of the moving image. The camera is, as a mediator of reality, subjective; footage is manipulated, and newer techniques continue to unfold until the film becomes "a true orgy of cinematography."

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[209] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 212.

[210] Manovich argues that Vertov's techniques are similar to ones used in New Media, especially in the direction of the camera, which he links to controlling the hero's actions in a computer game: "computer games are returning to "The New Vision" movement of the 1920s (Moholy-Nagy, Rodchenko, Vertov and others), which foregrounded new mobility of a photo and film camera, and made unconventional points of view the key part of their poetics." See Ibid., 91. However novel Manovich's arguments are, I believe his theories accomplish more by shedding light on aspects of database theory and its tie with early film, but does not significantly improve the analysis of Vertov's filmmaking.

This inherently subjective and affect-driven aspect of film becomes problematic for Paul Virilio, for whom this *phatic image*—the image used for social or emotive purposes, "a targeted image that forces you to look and holds your attention"—is much more than the result of cinematic or photographic technique. The phatic image is "the result of an ever-brighter illumination... the context mostly disappearing into a blur."[211] The affective image that holds the attention of the viewer now becomes forceful, devoid of context; for Virilio, the illumination of photography and film becomes oppressive, technology a step away from war.

Likewise, Virilio might follow Papazian in interpreting Vertov's film as panoptic: the camera becomes a mode of surveillance, even a weapon. Papazian describes "the constant, uniquitous surveillance of the kino-eye," which Vertov compared to a "secret police agent".[212] Vertov's pioneer-scouts, the "reconnaissance mission" of the *Kino-Eye*, lead inevitably to the Stalinist cinema of socialist realism in *Three Songs About Lenin.* The cameraman poised on top of a building through Vertov's use of superimposition, or a lens rotating to face various parts of a city, zooming in at will, carries "sinister overtones" for Papazian,[213] and recalls, for Virilio, Foucault's infamous prison. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish,* the panopticon is effective in prescribing to the inmates a "state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."[214] The permanent visibility Virilio locates in documentary film thus acquires an omniscient, invisible power structure, in which any mechanism of objectification could be used as an instrument of subjection.[215] Thus Virilio notes that after the

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[211] Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine,* Trans. Julie Rose (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 14.

[212] Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth*, 123.

[213] Ibid., 122.

[214] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 201.

[215] Ibid., 224.

1848 Revolution, the revolutionary police chose the *eye* as its emblem: "the invisible police, the police spy, replaced the evident, dissuasive police force."[216]

However, it is important to note that Virilio's argument relies on the opposition of avant-garde art and documentary. Indeed, Virilio notes that the term documentary was created in opposition to a vast aesthetic movement. For Virilio, the policing eye would be realized in the (anti-aesthetic) documentaries of John Grierson, who would declare in August 1939 that "the documentary idea should simply enable everyone *to see better.*"[217] Although Grierson's evocation of perfected sight might at first seem synonymous to Vertov's, it is important to remember that Vertov's camera does not claim an objective gaze. His camera surveils its surroundings less than it reorganizes them, placing them in an unexpected, montaged state. Its perfected vision exists for human beings to recover their abilities to regard habituated objects anew. Its gaze is subjective, and indeed, Vertov's films are far from the "objective" gaze of Griersonian documentary.

Papazian succumbs to similar—albeit understandable—pitfalls. Although Papazian does admit that meaning is constructed in Vertov, that it is "impossible to discern what… images are supposed to 'mean'" without extensive editing,[218] she imagines Vertov as an archivist, or secret service agent, recording individual events. Her argument hinges on the primacy of technology, that the Soviet subject would "become the object of technology" due to the "complete transparence" and "free transmission of information through the constant surveillance of the kino-eye."[219] This, however, is an oversimplification. As Papazian herself notes, and as we have

[216] Ibid., 33.

[217] John Grierson, quoted in Virilio, *Vision Machine,* 25.

[218] Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth*, 87-88.

[219] Ibid., 21.

discussed previously,[220] Vertov resolutely refused to date, or even specify the location for, his "film-things"—indeed a strange tactic for an archivist. All recorded events are raw, aesthetic material—undated, uncategorized, ready to be re-purposed by the Kinoks. For Vertov, Soviet citizens were not the object of the Kino-Eye, but its subjects. Reaping the benefits of the Kino-Eye's delights, the Soviet citizen would then see the world anew. Indeed, MacKay suggests that Vertov's cinema was not meant to align to a technological post-humanism, but marks "the possible beginning of a truly human perception."[221] Its techniques were meant for humans all along: as Zourabichvili notes, they are "human, all too human."[222] Consequently, although there is much in *Man with a Movie Camera* that can easily be misinterpreted as panoptic, the playfully estranging Kino-Eye suggests otherwise.

What Makes Art Artistic, What Makes Life Worth Living

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the four characteristics of Vertov's filmmaking, which, united, create an art infused not only with the politics of the early Soviet period but also an ethics of perception and estrangement. These characteristics lend themselves to a freedom of thought even while espousing the joys of Soviet living. Svetlana Boym claims that although *ostranenie* is often seen as a declaration of art's autonomy from the everyday, Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" instead posits estrangement as a device of mediation between art and life. Boym writes:

> By making things strange, the artist does not simply displace them from an everyday context into an artistic framework; he also helps to "return sensation" to life itself, to reinvent the world, to experience it anew. Estrangement is what

[220] See page 69 for a discussion of Vertov refusing to date his "film-things"

[221] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov: Vol. II*.

[222] Zourabichvili, "The Eye of Montage," 146.

> makes art artistic, but by the same token, it makes everyday life lively, or worth living.[223]

Ostranenie is not merely a theory of aesthetics. In Boym's definition, "making things strange" via *artistic* estrangement also helps to "return sensation" to everyday experiences which have previously been under the yoke of automatization. Therefore, the techniques of the Kino-Eye, although fundamentally aesthetic, are intended to fundamentally change not only how we perceive, but, correspondingly, how we ought to live. For this reason, critics such as Aronson noted that in Vertov's work, ethics, worldview (*mirovozzrenie*), theory, and cinematic experiment are inextricably linked.[224] It is a philosophy in praxis: through estrangement in art, one would practice estrangement in the mind, and in life.

According to Shklovsky, when we encounter things that are not difficult and estranging, such as "ordinary" prose, we are not likely to feel that anything is wrong. Words wash over us; life returns to normalcy. Only with the literary or artistic practice of estrangement are we likely to notice the problems of everyday life, contradictions that we are trained to ignore—both by the State and by the (perfectly healthy) psychological process itself that tends to familiarize. In "Art as Technique," Shklovsky writes that "Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war."[225] The mention of war is important—Shklovsky's early formalist writings, and even his prose works such as *Zoo: Or, Letters Not About Love* (1922), are littered with this same "fear of war." Becoming habituated to the terrors of war allows its atrocities to occur; the ethics of Kino-Eye keep war at bay by keeping the inherent uncanniness of violence against others alive. Thus Eisenstein's "Kino-Fist," representative of a cinema of transmission

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[223] Svetlana Boym, "Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky," *Poetics Today* 17:4 (Winter 1996), 515.

[224] Aronson, *Metakino,* 87.

[225] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 12.

from state to citizen, misses the point entirely: the playful, estranging tricks in Vertov's films do not elicit violence but entreat the viewer to *notice*.

Alongside estrangement, another important characteristic of Vertov's films—playfulness—can also be viewed in a particularly ethical light. The potentially moral dimension of play was first posited by German philosopher-poet Friedrich Schiller, for whom "the play instinct" is of utmost importance in its ability to promote freedom of thought. Not only this, but "[man] is only completely a man when he plays."[226] Just as Boym claimed estrangement "makes art artistic," the play instinct allows human beings to be their complete selves—complete in their ability to balance emotion and intellect. Otherwise put, play humanizes the human. Similar to Straus's claim that perception is simultaneously a gnostic (intellectual) and pathic (emotional-sensorial) experience, Schiller argued that play unites the dichotomy of "sensuous impulsion" and "formal impulsion," resulting in a free, and moral, human being:

> The sensuous impulsion excludes from its subject all autonomy and freedom; the formal impulsion excludes all dependence and passivity. But the exclusion of freedom is physical necessity; the exclusion of passivity is moral necessity. Thus the two impulsions subdue the mind: the former to the laws of nature, the latter to the laws of reason. It results from this that the instinct of play, which unites the double action of the two other instincts, will content the mind at once morally and physically. Hence, as it suppresses all that is contingent, it will also suppress all coercion, and will set man free physically and morally... In proportion that it will lessen the dynamic influence of feeling and passion, it will place them in harmony with rational ideas, and by taking from the laws of reason their moral constraint, it will reconcile them with the interest of the sense.[227]

Schiller's play-instinct logically leads to both freedom and moral constraint. It results in the best of both worlds: from the "sensuous impulsion" the playful human retains a deep, natural

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[226] Friedrich Schiller, Trans. John Miller Dow Meiklejohn, "The Aesthetical Essays," Letter XV, Guteberg Project Ebook (Oct 26, 2006), 46.

[227] Ibid., Letter XIV, 43-44.

feeling—a "dynamic influence"—and places these feelings "in harmony with rational ideas." The delicate balance of the sensory and intellectual spheres is navigated by the liminal space of play, able to force both "passion" and the "laws of reason" into coercion. Such a balance reconciles freedom with morality—a seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition that Schiller navigates with ease. It is this same paradox of freedom and ethical constraint that one sees in the films of Dziga Vertov, films whose estranging, playful manner creates an aesthetic, deeply sensorial logic as well as an active, engaged perceptive feeling. As a result, this play instinct "suppress[es] all coercion and set[s] man free."

For Schiller, the ultimate goal of play was freedom—a moral and political freedom. Schiller's letters are intended as a guide to the education of a man who is expected to enter into politics in adulthood. After devoting himself to aesthetic free play in childhood, Schiller's ideal citizen "...gives himself a choice of which he was not capable before, and sets to work just as if he were beginning anew, exchanging his original state of bondage for one of complete independence, doing this with complete insight and of his free decision."[228] Schiller's argument that indulging in play allows work to be "as if... beginning anew" of course recalls Vertov, Shklovsky, and Merleau-Ponty's call for a renewed perception. Play, like the device of estrangement, is capable of reliving this sense of "newness," whose ultimate purpose is freedom of thought: "...a people in a state of manhood is justified in exchanging a condition of thraldom for one of moral freedom."[229] It is therefore within the act of play where humans exchange their condition of "thralldom" for one of correct politics, guided by the "complete insight" and "free

[228] Ibid., Letter III, 22.

[229] Ibid.

decision" inherent in moral freedom.[230] In Schiller, freedom, independence, and ethics were crucially interwoven within the act of play, resulting in a renewed perception.

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Conclusion: An Ethics of Play and Wonder

Vertov's Kino-Eye concept was one of many in the Soviet avant-garde that aimed to make art walk alongside politics, to make the two virtually indistinguishable. Yet after the childlike wonder inherent in *Kino-Eye,* Vertov appears to depart from Shklovskian ethics in later films such as *Man with a Movie Camera*. And indeed, Shklovsky disagreed with early Soviet utopianism. In his prose work *Third Factory*, he discusses how an artist should function in the new Soviet society. The first alternative is to "retreat, dig in, earn a living outside literature." The second is to "have a go at describing life, to conscientiously seek out the correct world view." There is no third alternative. Yet, according to Shklovsky, "that is precisely the one that must be chosen. An artist should avoid beaten paths."[231] This seems to have been written directly for Dziga Vertov, who tried, far more than Shklovskian ethics could have allowed, to "seek out the correct world view."

This does not mean, however, that estrangement is itself abandoned in Vertov's later films. Vertov lays bare the device of cinema itself and plays with scale in an extremely volatile way. Like the spinning top implied by his name, everything in Vertov's films seems to be constantly whirling and veering out of control. What tantalizes us about Vertov's films is not the

[230] Here, moral freedom is not freedom *from* morality, but freedom *within* morality: an ethical thinking at which the free citizen arrives independently, "with complete insight and of his free decision". This type of morality is therefore not a burden imposed by religion or cultural norms, but one reached through freedom, in harmony with rational ideas.

[231] Shklovsky, *Third Factory*, 51-52.

way the camera acts as a panopticon or clandestine voyeur, sneaking into girls' bedrooms or showing us a live birth in *Man with a Movie Camera*, but their sense of wonder and joy. Indeed, Elizabeth Papazian notes that *joy* is the crucial emotion throughout the film.[232] This joy is felt especially keenly in *Kino-Eye*, which depicts, alongside bathers, pioneers, and magicians, an elephant, introduced to a small Soviet town for the first time. As common citizens throw open their shutters and view an enormous elephant—"heavy as 350 men," as the intertitle reads—being ridden through their streets, the viewer imagines herself seeing this strange, vast creature for the first time as well.

At the end of *Man with a Movie Camera*, the cameraman disappears, and the tripod and camera itself begins to move via stop-motion animation. It seems to tilt its mechanical head to the side and observe the audience of people around it. Such strange and playful moments occur throughout, that seem to have very little bearing on some of the rigid scientism of his actual Kino-Eye theory. By filming such events in stop-motion animation, Vertov is not really catching life unawares; objects cannot move on their own. Cigarettes do not pack themselves; chalk does not spontaneously arrange into chimney-like formations (another stop-motion event in the film). However, one must again note that Vertov's relation to science is deeply subjective rather than objective: the camera, like a human, thrusts itself into our world, looks around, and creates a new, fantastical world with the aid of tricks—tricks which allow us to perceive or own environments anew. As in Shklovsky, they exist to craft the intellectual mind of its audience.

Papazian, following Virilio, used the example of a "policing eye" in discussing Vertov. I would like to replace this moniker, which I find too dystopian in its emphasis on State-

[232] Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth*, 96.

sanctioned surveillance, with a more apt one: magician.[233] However, he is not a magician who plays tricks on the viewer, but one who, as Lucy Fischer describes, "performs tricks only to reveal to us how they are done; only to instruct us against falling for tricks in the first place."[234] He can destroy illusion in the interest of heightening consciousness.[235] The magician, a key to both *Kino-Eye* and *Man with a Movie Camera*, constantly supplies us with the unexpected. In *Kino-Eye*, an extended sequence shows the Chinese magician performing a series of magic tricks, interspersed with intertitles which play on his Chinese accent—substituting "l" sounds for "r" sounds as he announces his feats in broken Russian. *Man with a Movie Camera* reuses this same footage, but here the magician is a personification of the camera, with the children as spectators.

Rancière discusses the magician as both a figure producing capacities for amazement, and a manipulator: the main contradiction in Vertov's thinking discussed earlier, between a controller of movement and an inventor of new realities—a propagandist and a proponent of "fresh perspectives."[236] I claim, however, that his first "film-thing" *Kino-Eye* balances these two seemingly contradictory viewpoints with its focus on playfulness and wonder. It is in *Kino-Eye* where the works of Shklovsky and Vertov coincide: both theorists discuss a "fresh perspective," or "seeing life anew," "as it really is." Indeed, the eyes of a magic trick's recipient—the child—give us the ultimate "fresh perspective." The audience returns to childhood, and to the very first moment that the child encounters a particular object. This is in fact the moment to which

[233] Many have already linked Vertov to a magician, including the first scholar of Vertov in the USSR, Sergei Drobashenko, who deemed Vertov a "magician of the movie-camera" in the introduction to the first collection of Vertov's writings in the USSR. See Drobashenko, *Statii, Dnevniki, Zamisli*, 4.

[234] Lucy Fischer, "'Enthusiasm': From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye," in *Film Quarterly* (31:2, 1977-1978), 29.

[235] Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera*," 66.

[236] Rancière, *The Intervals of Cinema*, 29-30.

estrangement, as perceptual exercise, aims to return: *first* perception, untainted by habituation, imbued with the capacity for play.

Of course, in discussing Vertov and Shklovsky in this way, one assumes that the two writers would have approved of each other's work. This, however, is not always the case. Shklovsky wrote quite a few biting remarks about Vertov's films; it seems that however much Shklovsky wanted to write a book without plot, he hated "plotless cinema" even more. Nonetheless, we must note that Shklovsky did admire Vertov for what he called the "poetic nature" of his films. Shklovsky distinguishes between "prose cinema" and "verse cinema" by the prevalence in verse cinema of technical and formal over semantic features. Although he criticized Vertov's films for being "plotless," he also noted their "pure formal poetry."[237] Vertov's films are thus oxymorons: films claiming to be a mechanical observation of life as it is, while also intricately constructed, a deeply artistic and fundamentally *invented* world that seems somehow deeply poetic. Although attempting to argue a grand answer to the problem of theatre and arts in Soviet society, Vertov still tries to instill in his viewers a sense of marvel or wonder. For this reason, tricks such as animation occur so often in his films. Shklovsky wrote that "*ostranenie* is a form of world wonder, an acute and heightened perception of the world."[238] Similarly, Vertov writes: "My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception (*svezhevo vospriyatiya*) of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you."[239] Thus, even when Vertov's films appear to glorify the new Soviet state, an essential strangeness and world-wonder is preserved that echoes Shklovsky's appeal for an ethical perception. Kino-Eye's interest

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[237] Victor Shklovsky, "Poetry and Prose in Cinema," trans. Richard Taylor. *Poetika Kino* (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1984), 89.

[238] Victor Shklovsky, qtd in Boym, "Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt," in *Poetics Today* (26:4, Winter 2005), 599.

[239] See Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 41. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 18.

in scientific experiment and "deciphering" is not robotic objective fact-gathering but is instead deeply subjective and invented, created, and meticulously organized. Kino-Eye shows us its own peculiar world, a strange, playful, and estranging world that exists only as a means with which to view our own, dulled as it is by the banality of daily existence.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology attempts this same ethical perception that could easily be mapped onto Shklovsky and Vertov's works: "It [phenomenology] is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry or Cezanne—by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being."[240] Merleau-Ponty's perspective on phenomenology can easily be bound with Shklovsky's estrangement; in fact, estranging perception is in itself a phenomenological ethics. Shklovsky's prose and Vertov's films both attempt to "demand awareness" and are attentive to wonder. They demand a better, and more ethical, perception that is able to "seize the meaning of the world… as that meaning comes into being"—that is, in Shklovsky's terms, to seize the meaning of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. This estrangement, more inclined to wonder rather than to classify, recovers the sensation of life itself.

[240] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* xxiv.

Chapter 3

French Afterlives: *Cinéma-Vérité* and the Dziga Vertov Group

Introduction: Godard's Contempt

In 1972, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin disbanded the Dziga Vertov Group, their communist filmmaking collective allegedly inspired by the films of Dziga Vertov, after four tumultuous years of filmmaking. Jane Fonda, who worked with the two directors for the Dziga Vertov Group production *Tout va bien* (1972), criticized the hypocrisy of their radical politics. Humiliated by Godard and Gorin's authoritarian attitude, she noted: "To be a revolutionary, you have to be human… and Godard has contempt for people."[241] Evidently, Godard and Gorin did not find their authoritarianism contradictory to the Group's revolutionary goals, for their movement is largely defined by a filmmaking that purposefully ignores audience enjoyment, and is actively contemptuous of emotions, feelings, or modes of identification.

As Peter Wollen notes in his article on *Vent d'Est* (Wind from the East, 1970), the Dziga Vertov Group films define a "counter-cinema whose values are counterposed to that of orthodox cinema."[242] Godard and Gorin's refusal of the "values" of "orthodox cinema," exemplified by their contempt for affect and human experience broadly considered, certainly played a role in the group's disastrous outcome. In the end, aside from a select few American screenings of their films, the public generally ignored them; meanwhile, the French television studios which helped

[241] de Baecque, *Godard*, 505.

[242] Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 499.

fund these productions left the many canisters of Dziga Vertov Group films unopened.[243] These films continue to be rarely analyzed in the context of Godard's storied career, and perhaps for good reason: the bulk are didactic, difficult, and defined by a Brechtianism striving to alienate the viewer. These films are more aligned with the "Kino-Bayonet" than the "Kino-Eye", as described in the introduction: their films imbue their emancipatory politics with a certain violence, in which films become camera-weapons on the battleground of ideology. This approach criticized what they claimed to be passive emotionalism in film-viewing.

Indeed, as their films' voiceover, and their directors' interviews demonstrate, the Dziga Vertov Group is evidently extremely antagonistic—if not outright belligerent—towards an affect-driven experience of film. It also explicitly tends toward misogyny. In the last official work affiliated with the Dziga Vertov Group, *Letter to Jane* (1972), the Group shows a deeply problematic treatment of Jane Fonda, and women generally. Not only did Fonda find the filmmakers authoritarian and even hostile on the set of *Tout va bien*, but she was also the focus of a great deal of their criticism afterwards—*Letter to Jane* is simply a photographic image of Fonda in Vietnam, with Gorin and Godard supplying 52 minutes of oral criticism: a vicious lampooning coupled with visual analysis. The result is nothing short of hateful; in any event, the filmmakers could have chosen both Fonda and Yves Montand, her famous costar in *Tout va bien,* for their analysis. Instead, the attacks leveled at Fonda—a self-proclaimed leftist and humanitarian—assume her politics are insincere. Unsurprisingly, Fonda is not given a right to respond to these allegations. As Yugoslav filmmaker Dušan Makavejev pithily noted, *Letter to Jane* became "a double rape—two men taking turns assaulting one woman."[244] This treatment of

[243] Marc Cerisuelo, "Jean-Luc, Community, and Communication," in ed. Tom Conley and Jefferson Kline, *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard* (Malden, Ma: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 297.

[244] Dusan Makavejev quoted in MacBean, *Film and Revolution*, 176.

Fonda in *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane* reveals a deep misogyny in the Dziga Vertov Group, and a deeply problematic relation to affective experience.

Given these tendencies, Godard and Gorin's films are difficult to place alongside Vertov's works. Vertov's films exemplify the the playful and estranging tendency of certain avant-garde documentary films, and are fundamentally opposed to the alienating viewing experience espoused by the Dziga Vertov Group. Rather, Vertov's own films are rooted in affect, as the Soviet filmmaker explicitly attempts to elicit a sense of joy, wonder, and excitement in his viewing public. Godard's knowledge of the filmmaker—as we will see, deeply indebted to critic Georges Sadoul—is replete with false conclusions and inconsistencies, and ignores the most important elements of Vertov's filmmaking practice. Undoubtedly influenced by the misapprehensions of Vertov's theories in the French 1960s, and coupled with the lack of availability of the Soviet experimental director's films, the name "Dziga Vertov" thus became akin to a blank slate, upon which the French political avant-garde projected its own needs and desires. However, it was this French reception of Vertov that proved immeasurably important for the renewed interest in Vertov's films. As MacKay notes, the seeds of a particularly lively and complex reception of Vertov were planted in Paris in the 1960s.[245]

Indeed, although filmmaking projects such as the Dziga Vertov Group appear quite different from Vertov's own productions, they offer an alternate emancipatory politics—one more aligned with the "Kino-Bayonet". The avant-garde documentaries of this tradition still aim to emancipate the viewer, but forcefully, with the aid of Brechtian distancing. Unaligned with Shklovsky's estrangement, nor with Schiller and Rancière's aesthetic free play, the filmmakers of the Kino-Bayonet are instead deeply distrustful of affect and sentiment. For these filmmakers,

[245] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov,* 57.

the ideal interlocutor is intellectually distanced from their object of criticism. However, by contrast with Eisenstein's "Kino-Fist"— a more manipulative filmmaking technique serving to relay political messages from government to citizen—the films of the "Kino-Bayonet" nonetheless still form a "dissensus". Rancière defines this as an organization of the sensible where there is no single reality concealed behind appearances, nor a single regime of presentation and interpretation.[246] The Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet thus both aim to disrupt our conceptions of truth, but to varying degrees of success. As we will see, the Dziga Vertov Group films are fundamentally anti-Eisensteinian; their concern with critical questions of freedom and agency align with the emancipatory rhetoric of Vertov's own productions—although their methodologies are wildly different.

Picking up a topic almost unanimously ignored by scholars of Godard, and entirely avoided by scholars of early Soviet film, this chapter takes a cross-cultural approach in analyzing the influence of Dziga Vertov's name in the French 1960s, especially by traversing the alienating, anti-affective films of Godard's Dziga Vertov Group. In so doing, the chapter returns to the concepts of the "Kino-Eye" and "Kino-Bayonet" put forth in the introduction. As I will demonstrate, Godard's interpretations of Vertov produce an alternate, and far more Brechtian, emancipatory ideology. The films of these French afterlives did not emerge out of thin air; indeed, much of Godard's "Vertovianism" was rooted in earlier, generally incomplete, analyses of Vertov's films, oriented especially around the genre of *cinéma-vérité*. This chapter will provide a brief survey of these early departures from Vertov's avant-garde documentaries in the 1960s, before analyzing what Godard specifically gleaned from the use of Vertov's name; we will then uncover the aspects of early Soviet filmmaking he aimed to co-opt in his collective

[246] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 49.

filmmaking experiments after May 1968. Alongside this deep immersion into Godard's filmmaking, the chapter will also briefly investigate the "Brechtian" turn of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the chapter will demonstrate that this turn follows a larger misreading of Brecht as an inherently anti-pleasurable and anti-affective theorist—a misreading that has larger implications for the political avant-garde in the 1960s and 1970s. First, however, we must analyze Vertov's actual reception in the USSR to trace how his Kino-Eye theory evolved into the 1960s, and what effect these had on the political aesthetics of the avant-garde documentary genre.

Truth and Reality: *Kino-Pravda* versus *Cinéma-Vérité*

At the time of his premature death from cancer in 1954, Vertov was largely forgotten in the USSR. Stalinist realism was still the official government-sanctioned art *par excellence*; even when Stalin died a year later, Vertov's films still did not find the receptive audience he so fervently desired in the 1920s, although his writings began to proliferate.[247] Nonetheless, in contrast to his virtual invisibility in the USSR towards the end of his life, Vertov's reputation was actively sustained in France by certain leading cinephile-intellectuals, especially by Marxist cinema historian Georges Sadoul, sociologist Edgar Morin, and filmmaker Jean Rouch. Indeed, Georges Sadoul had been working on a book about Vertov, but died in 1967, before the monograph was complete. Extracts of the unfinished document were published posthumously in 1971 under the humble title *Dziga Vertov*. Regardless of this active inquiry into the Soviet avant-garde documentarist, Vertov's films remained difficult to view, and, as we shall see, neither the

[247] MacKay notes that Vertov's name appeared in Soviet periodicals of the 1950s much more quickly than his films appeared on Soviet screens. Gradually, his films were pulled from the vault and exhibited. See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov,* 51.

cinéastes Sadoul and Morin, nor the Nouvelle Vague pioneer Jean-Luc Godard, had more than a very limited understanding of what Vertov actually meant by the terms "Kino-Pravda" and "Kino-Eye" in practice. The result is a transformation of Vertov's techniques of formalist estrangement, as defined by Victor Shklovsky, into techniques of alienation inspired by Bertolt Brecht. Where films such as Vertov's emphasized world-wonder, fresh perception, and an affective experience of film, Sadoul, Morin, Rouch, and Godard were unaware of these characteristics of the Kino-Eye.[248] Although their films sought to emancipate their viewers, these directors—especially Godard—were not able to reconcile their attempt to transmit Marxist-Leninist ideology, especially Maoism, with a truly free critical analysis their subject matter.

According to Paul Henley, the aspect of Vertov's theory most prized by Sadoul, Morin, and Rouch—as well as the many filmmakers like Godard who claimed Vertov's influence—was not his formalist, montage-driven methods, but his commitment to everydayness, those moments "captured" from real life as it is lived. Vertov became an objectivist[249] whose *pris sur le vif* (taken from life) quality contrasted with the actors and studio sets of Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eistenstein. In the early 1960s, Sadoul situated *cinéma-vérité*—a literal translation of Vertov's *Kino Pravda*—in a realist tradition of cinema initiated by the Lumières. This was no accidental misunderstanding: after Vertov's death, as well as Stalin's, Vertov's friends and former collaborators in the USSR attempted to spread word of his masterpiece films and theories

[248] Here it is more useful to use the French term *ignorer* because of its twin meanings of "to ignore" and "to be unaware of", for most of Sadoul, Morin, Rouch, and Godard's misapprehensions stemmed from a simple unawareness of his filmmaking practice, most likely stemming from poor translation of his theoretical output and a lack of availability of his films.

[249] As MacKay notes, the interpretation of Vertov as an (often naïve) "objectivist" was erroneous, but largely understandable. In French, *objectif* has a double meaning of both lens and objective (both in the sense of "goal" and "impartial"). Given that the word *objectiv* is a cognate in Russian, also meaning lens, French critics were often tempted to merge the "Kino-Eye" with the *objectif,* heightening the epistemological superiority of the camera lens. See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, 62.

abroad. However, given that the official Soviet art form was still Socialist Realism (the 1950s were no friend of the avant-gardist either), they attempted to mold Vertov into a far more acceptable Soviet figure, more focused on realism and "life as is".[250] However, as Delgado notes, Vertov did not conceive of cinema as an epistemologically naïve recording of reality "as is," but instead conceived of the relationship between the camera and reality as dynamic and mutually determining. The camera was not a static witness to reality, but changed the constitution of reality by modifying how it is seen.[251]

In 1959, Vertov's widow and fellow Kinok/editor Elizaveta Svilova transferred a large amount of Vertov's documents, largely unedited, to Sadoul; in 1963, Sadoul slowly began a translation of these documents with his wife Ruta.[252] Thus, buttressed by the efforts of Vertov's Soviet compatriots who desired to keep his works in circulation at any cost, Sadoul ignored the Méliès-like strains in Vertov's experimental camerawork. Likewise, Morin associated *cinéma-vérité* with the work of Jean Renoir, Robert Flaherty, and Italian Neorealist Luchino Visconti.[253] As we shall see, both Morin and Sadoul's analyses of Vertov were wrought with misunderstandings, but these led directly to the creation of several new modes of nonfiction filmmaking practices—from the ontologically realist (*cinéma-vérité*, object cinema, direct cinema) to almost unapproachably avant-garde (the Dziga Vertov Group).

The first mention of *cinéma-vérité* occurs in Edgar Morin's article-manifesto entitled « Pour un nouveau cinéma-vérité » in the *France Observateur*. Here, he refers to *Kino-Pravda*

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[250] John MacKay, "To Dziga Vertov, Artist of the Revolution" (Lecture, Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia, New York University, February 24, 2017).

[251] Delgado, "Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera,*" 9.

[252] Jean Rouch, "Preface" in *Dziga Vertov* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1971), 55. This was very likely a team effort. According to John MacKay, the documents were given to Sadoul by Lilya Brik, Vladimir Mayakovsky's muse, and Osip Brik's wife. MacKay, "To Dziga Vertov."

[253] Paul Henley, *The Adventure of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 246.

directly, praising a "cine-truth" for abandoning the *romanesque* world; according to Morin, contemporaneous films might have documentarian aspects but lack its special *pris sur le vif* quality. Vertov, as a "camera-thief," is unique in his ability to "catch life unawares":

> Cinema cannot itself penetrate into the intimacy of daily life. This remains the resource of the camera-thief [*caméra-voleuse*], that of Dziga Vertov camouflaged in a car and stealing snatches of street life... but one can only seize scattered instants. The only resource left is to hide the camera behind two-way mirrors... but indiscretion stops the filmmaker, lest he become a spy.[254]

Although Morin is fascinated by Vertov's ability to snatch "scattered instants," his portrait of Vertov is not entirely positive. He clearly praises the "camera-thief" for his singular ability to "penetrate into the intimacy of daily life" by hiding in a car and catching life unawares, but in his clandestine behavior, Vertov becomes a filmmaker-spy. Disagreeing with Vertov's theories, which indicate the Utopian potential of the camera's technological apparatus, Morin writes that the camera cannot itself "penetrate into the intimacy of daily life"; it must be coaxed into revealing itself.

Thus, as Morin continues, the true filmmaker of *cinéma-vérité* is not even Vertov but Jean Rouch: "a new type of filmmaker, a filmmaker-diver [*cinéaste-scaphandrier*] plunging into a real environment." One must remember that the article's title calls for a *new* cinema-truth, rather than simply repeating Vertov's important early contributions; Rouch, therefore, is an answer to this evolution of *cinéma-vérité* from camera-thief to filmmaker-diver. Rouch's method of eliciting "film-truth" abandons "formal aesthetic" and embraces the "virgin land" of a certain clumsiness and imperfection in the image. For both Rouch and Morin, the revealing of "film-truth" is best accomplished by a certain lack of editing in favor of "real life", which has its own

[254] Edgar Morin, « Pour un nouveau cinéma-vérité », *France Observateur* (11: 506, January 14 1960), 23. All the translations in this chapter are by me, unless stated otherwise. All citations on this and the subsequent page are from this article, unless stated otherwise.

"aesthetic secrets". The goal of the new *cinéma-vérité* wielding its camera-pen (*caméra-stylo*)—a technique whose "real father is probably much more [Robert] Flaherty than Dziga Vertov"—is to enter into the "unknown universe of the everyday" (*l'univers inconnu du quotidien*). Therefore, although Vertov gave *cinéma-vérité* its name, their theories, methods, and goals differ fundamentally—a topic to which we will soon return. Less a misreading, Morin's early use of Vertov's Kino-Pravda was explicitly more aligned with filmmakers such as Flaherty, who offer a more explicitly narrative-driven mode.[255]

Although the article did not elicit any immediate reaction,[256] it received attention after the release of *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961), the first film to call itself *cinéma-vérité*. Created by both Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, *Chronique d'un été* actualizes the arguments of Morin's article-manifesto: during the first few minutes, the narrator states, "This film was made without actors, but lived by men and women who devoted some of their time to a novel experiment of 'film-truth' (*cinéma-vérité*)."[257] However, although *Chronique* was inspired by Vertov's ideas as interpreted by Morin, it never attempted to reproduce them entirely. Rather, commentators used the term *cinéma-vérité* to indicate cinema's general evolution towards an increased "fidelity to realism."[258]

In Rouch and Morin's film, "cinema-truth" is not the truth of the camera apparatus itself, but a political and sociological truth of contemporary France. Although a great many of Vertov's films were highly ethnographic—his *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926) and *Three Songs About*

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[255] Of course, Flaherty's films are no less "creative" than Vertov's in their complete restructuring of reality. Indeed, it is difficult to call Flaherty's films, such as the infamous *Nanook of the North* (1922), documentaries, as much as ethnographic fictions, or at most, docudramas with nonfictional characteristics.

[256] Séverine Graff, *Le cinéma-vérité: Films et controverses* (Rennes: Presses Université de Rennes, 2014), 48.

[257] « Ce film n'a pas été joué par des acteurs, mais vécu par des hommes et des femmes qui ont donné des moments de leur vie à une expérience nouvelle de cinéma-vérité.»

[258] Graff, *Cinéma Vérité,* 213.

Lenin (1934) are exemplary in this tendency to examine the cultures of far-flung Soviet states—they accomplish this with aesthetic experimentation and cinematographic vigor. This is in great contrast with Morin and Rouch's much later film, which uses (or appears to use) a bare minimum of editing techniques. Although *Man with a Movie Camera* ends with the film-audience viewing the film itself, there is no analysis or conclusion; the film concludes in an apotheosis of playful cinematic tricks and rushing speed.

Near the end of *Chronique*—a film entirely composed of interviews—Rouch and Morin sit in a dark screening room with their actor-interviewees: a similarly meta-cinematic ending to *Man with a Movie Camera*. When Morin and Rouch ask for feedback from the film's crew and interviewees, the participants tear the film apart, arguing about its flaws and inconsistencies. After this meta-cinematic experience, Rouch and Morin emerge from the dark screening room and back into sunlight; although somewhat perturbed by the film's critical reception, the two men agree that this "novel experiment" has been fruitful. Morin notes, "This film, unlike standard cinema, places us back into life." This statement echoes the fundamental exigence driving Vertov's work, especially during the filming of *Kino-Eye*: to strive "even deeper into life."[259] This appeal to a "life" experienced fully is mirrored in Vertov's "Council of Three": "Come out, please, into life,"[260] he implores his readership. Both Vertov and the two directors of *Chronique,* then, echo a similar desire to plunge viewers into a fuller experience of life.

However, Vertov's methods diverge vastly from Morin and Rouch's analytical style; their manner of placing the viewer "back into life" are diametrically opposed. Although both *Kino-Pravda* and *cinéma-vérité* overlap in their "complete refusal to stage literary works," and

[259] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 61. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance*, 94-95.

[260] Ibid., 42. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 20.

although Vertov is surely committed to the theory of dialectical materialism, Vertov's methods are significantly more aesthetic. The "Kino-Eye"—more affect-driven and pre-conscious than intellectual—uses, in Vertov's words, "innovation and tricks" to "prepare the viewers for the reception of new things."[261] Morin and Rouch uncover the root of many socio-political concerns, but their analyses remain enclosed within journalistic pursuits. They do not attempt Vertov's revolutions of phenomenological perception, and ignore the avant-garde characteristics of his filmmaking. As discussed in Chapter 2, the work of Dziga Vertov is at its core *aesthetic*; its playful sensibility and tendency towards techniques of formalist estrangement create a world outside of the audience's experience. By contrast, Rouch and Morin's *cinéma-vérité* emphasizes the viewer's familiar quotidian existence; as Graff notes, the term Kino-Pravda became reduced to a paradigmatic example of a cinema of ontological realism.[262] In other words, the French term *cinéma-vérité* asserted the real of the "what there is"; the "reality" represented in cinema is thus assumed to truly exist. Vertov's films, rather, *create* a reality unable to be witnessed by the naked eye: "I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you," he states in "The Council of Three".[263] Thus, Vertov's oeuvre and that of *cinéma-vérité* are ontologically opposed: because Vertov's filmmaking is fundamentally oriented towards a realism only witnessed by the "camera-eye," it is grounded in a super-realism beyond the capacity of human beings to fully comprehend. Ultimately, the world of *Man with a Movie Camera* is a fantastical space, a collage and montage of three separate cities—Kiev, Odessa, and Moscow—that does not exist within the world of our daily experience. The universes of *Man with a Movie Camera*, *A Sixth Part of the*

[261] Ibid., 23. Translation: Tsivian, ed. *Lines of Resistance,* 81.

[262] «le "cinéma vérité" étant réduit à un accomplissement ultime de la vocation ontologiquement réaliste du cinéma». Graff, *Cinéma Vérité,* 27.

[263] "Вот я и расшифровываю по-но-вому неизвестный вам мир..." Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 41. Translation: Vertov, "The Council of Three," 18.

World, and *Enthusiasm* are fundamentally aesthetic and imaginary, crafted by editing techniques—in contrast to the realistic "everydayness" so prized by Morin, Rouch, and Sadoul.

Nonetheless, after the release of *Chronique d'un été,* a boom emerged in the interest in Dziga Vertov, whose films were still relatively unseen,[264] although a copy of *Man with a Movie Camera* did exist in the French Cinémathèque by the 1960s,[265] and although at least one Vertov film was shown in a Soviet cinema retrospective in Spring 1955.[266] In November 1963, the French *Cinématheque* gave the first retrospective devoted to the Soviet filmmaker, beginning with a "Conference on the Oeuvre of Dziga Vertov," most likely led by Sadoul.[267] Although French cinephiles since the 1920s were not often privy to a screening of Vertov's films, his name was easily recognizable, especially due to early film critics such as Léon Moussinac. Moussinac played a fundamental role in presenting the filmmaker to a large public, publishing *Le Cinéma soviétique* in 1928, after returning from a voyage to the USSR. The French critic devoted an entire chapter to the young Vertov, especially presenting the concept of the *Ciné-oeil*.[268]

After this early period, Moussinac was replaced by Georges Sadoul, who self-consciously styled himself as the foremost expert on Vertov, disregarding the largely erroneous analyses of Vertov's work that he began to circulate. Sadoul, as previously noted, was the main expert on Dziga Vertov in Paris; his book *Dziga Vertov*, posthumously released (albeit in an incomplete version) in 1971, is the first original French-language book-length analysis of Vertov's oeuvre and theories. In addition, he published a translation of a manifesto of Vertov's entitled "Kinoks-

[264] Graff, *Cinéma-vérité,* 15.

[265] Ibid., 72.

[266] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, 57.

[267] Graff, *Cinéma-vérité*, 67.

[268] Ibid., 55-57.

Revolution" in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in the 1963 June and August issues.[269] Thus having crafted himself in the image of Vertov's foremost expert, Sadoul felt himself obliged to comment on Morin and Rouch's film—and while he claimed to find *Chronique d'un été* interesting, his first response was deeply skeptical. For Sadoul, once the camera is put into full view of its subjects, even interviewees become "actors, giving themselves to the spectacle, knowingly or not."[270] Despite the desire of both subject and interviewer to remain outside the realm of fiction, they are nonetheless crafted into characters.[271]

Sadoul's criticism, then, was tied to a belief in the inherently *realistic* aspect of Vertov's films: the nonfiction lineage of the Lumière brothers. Indeed, even Sadoul's earliest writings on Vertov, appearing in the 1949 edition of *Histoire d'un art: le cinéma*, emphasize Kino-Pravda over the Kino-Eye. A short entry on the Soviet filmmaker reads:

> This operator of actualities was instructed to found and direct a film-diary, the *Kino-Pravda*, a supplement to the largest daily newspaper, *La Pravda* [sic]. The words that mean cine-truth [*cinéma-vérité*] were taken by Vertov as a slogan, by which he meant to ban from film anything that was not "taken from life" [*pris sur le vif*]. As the Lumières had before him, 23 issues drove the "Kinoks" to a conception even more extreme, that of the Kino-Glaz or Cine-Eye [*Cinéma-Oeil*].[272]

In this short text, Sadoul erroneously equates the meaning of *Pravda* with a metaphysical "truth," ignoring the fact that Vertov adopted the title of the daily newspaper. Indeed, MacKay notes that Vertov did not use the term "Kino-Pravda" as a theoretical term (rather than as a title of a series of newsreel films) until 1934, at the tail end of his once-robust filmography; analyses of "Cinema

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[269] Bernard Eisenschitz, "Avertissement" in Georges Sadoul, *Dziga Vertov* (Paris: Editions champ libre, 1971), 9.

[270] Georges Sadoul, «Cinéma-vérité et cinéma-oeil», *Les Lettres françaises,* no.875, May 18, 1961.

[271] Graff argues an even more extreme position: that Sadoul disagreed with Morin and Rouch in order to appear a "good historian," and that the minute *cinéma-vérité* suddenly became a respectable cinematic genre, Sadoul backtracked and began praising this usage.[271] Although initially attempting to sever Kino-Pravda from *cinéma vérité,* Vertov was suddenly re-construed as its "visionary precursor. See Graff, *Cinéma-vérité,* 64.

[272] Sadoul, *Dziga Vertov*, 108-109.

Truth" in Vertov before this date must therefore be reconsidered. [273] Deciding to read far deeper meaning into the title "Kino-Pravda", Sadoul opened a space for more complex misapprehensions of (the few available) texts by Vertov. Although these misreadings can be rather productive—in the end, Sadoul became a mainstay of *cinéma-vérité* criticism, thus aiding the study of a remarkable documentary genre—he also allowed Vertov's reception to depart from what he most likely intended. By emphasizing "truth" and "realism", Sadoul disregards the complexity of Vertov's theory of phenomenological perception (as discussed in Chapter 2), simply equating the Kino-Eye with a pure capture of reality.[274] Instead of an affect-driven cinema which prizes avant-garde creativity and experimentation, the Vertov espoused by the founders of *cinéma-vérité* was a "camera-thief," snatching bits of the real world instead of creating his own "cinematic" reality of the Kino-Eye.

Due to this fundamental difference between Vertov's avant-garde documentaries and *cinéma-vérité*, it is no surprise that later works of this new genre—as well as the later genres of observational cinema and direct cinema, developed directly from the former—depart even further from Vertov's films. Albert Mayles, pioneering filmmaker of direct cinema, admitted that although he was impressed by *Man with a Movie Camera*, he was equally struck by how little relation it had to his own techniques.[275] Subsequent generations of this non-fiction filmmaking trajectory, launched by *Chronique d'un été*, deviated increasingly from Vertov's high-octave editing, until the avant-gardist elements of this playful, estranging tendency were largely abandoned. Vertov's name, however, continued to be inexorably tied to these new developments.

[273] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, 79.

[274] Graff, *Cinéma-vérité*, 213.

[275] MacKay, *Dziga Vertov,* 61.

From Rouch to Godard, from *Cinéma-Vérité* to the Kino-Bayonet

As we have seen, it is through the contributions of Edgar Morin, Georges Sadoul, and Jean Rouch that the films and theories of Dziga Vertov began to proliferate in postwar French *cinéaste* culture, especially during the 1960s—and is thus through this lens of the newly-formed *cinéma-vérité* movement that Jean-Luc Godard took interest in Dziga Vertov. Although the term *cinéma-vérité* itself retreated from the fore in 1964, and the name of Vertov was generally avoided except for occasional statements by Rouch, Godard named his post-May film collective the Dziga Vertov Group in homage to the Soviet filmmaker.

Before this, however, Godard praised the works associated with *cinéma-vérité,* especially films by Jean Rouch. Godard wrote no less than three notices about Rouch's *Moi, un Noir* (*Me, a Black*, 1958) in *Cahiers du Cinéma,* which received an outstandingly positive critical welcome. In April 1959, Godard wrote a particularly eulogistic full-length review in *Cahiers* entitled "Africa Speaks to You about the Ends and the Means"; here, Godard praised especially the effects Rouch managed to achieve by relying on improvisation by nonprofessional actors[276]—a quality he would no doubt attempt to emulate in his early films such as *A bout de souffle* (Breathless*,* 1960) and *Le Petit Soldat* (The Little Soldier, 1963). According to Godard, where others such as Stanislavsky, the Italian Neorealists, and Pirandello sought to achieve an improvisational effect by careful calculation, Rouch actually entrusted chance. Playing on the fact that in French the name of Joan of Arc is written as Jeanne, the female form of Jean, Godard declared that Rouch, like the national heroine, would rescue French cinema (if not France itself) by opening the door of a completely new cinematographic method.[277]

[276] Henley, *The Adventure of the Real*, 91.

[277] Ibid.

These accolades, however, were given before the (tenuous) construction of *cinéma-vérité.* Although great interest was shown to the movement at its conception, it fell apart by 1964, with the majority of its films panned by critics. As befits the splintering political movements of the mid-1960s in France, *cinéma-vérité* was attacked by critics from all sides of the political spectrum: from anti-PCF (French Communist Party) *gauchistes,* especially those affiliated with the journals *Positif* and *Miroir du cinéma*, for being too close to the party (and thus not sufficiently radicalized or leftist), and from Nouvelle Vague filmmakers and those affiliated with *Cahiers* (especially François Truffaut, Jacques Baratier, and Roberto Rosselini) for being too fundamentally un-aesthetic.[278] These criticisms, however, were largely a reaction not to the filmmakers (many of whom, like Morin, were actually expelled from the PCF), but to the PCF-affiliated scholars (Georges Sadoul, Marcel Martin, Albert Cervoni Samuel, Michel Capdenac) largely responsible for the heavy media coverage surrounding the *cinéma-vérité* films.[279] Ironically, Sadoul's sudden support of the movement would eventually lead to its downfall.

However, the status of *cinéma-vérité* in relation to the Nouvelle Vague is far more ambiguous. Graff argues that certain filmmakers—notably, Roberto Rosselini—were overtly hostile to the movement, but she folds him within the Nouvelle Vague: a deeply problematic gesture. Truffaut treated the movement with condescension, while Godard parodied the "crooks" of *cinéma-vérité* with a short 1963 cinematic sketch entitled *Le Grand Escroc* (*The Great Crook*)*,* starring a filmmaker-journalist (Jean Seberg) named Patricia Leacock—an obvious reference to the American *cinéaste-vérité* Richard Leacock.[280]

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[278] Graff, *Cinéma-vérité,* 287.

[279] Ibid., 289.

[280] Ibid., 306.

While Graff finds in this sardonic take on the "crooks" of *cinéma-vérité* to be an outright dismissal of the cinematic movement, I argue that the overt criticisms present in Godard's short film—a minor work almost never discussed within the context of Godard's career at large—must be treated with a grain of salt. For one, Godard is mostly parodying North American filmmakers such as Leacock, Drew, and Pennebaker, while his treatment of Rouch remains more ambiguous. In addition, one must not forget that Godard's films themselves began to amass negative reviews precisely around this period, and his critical portrayal of other contemporaneous film movements might be a somewhat reactionary and territorial gesture. Also, Nouvelle Vague films were not in themselves vastly different from the early *cinéma-vérité* works: Antoine de Baecque, for instance, sees Godard's *Masculin, Féminin* (1966) as the final film in the trilogy formed by *Chronique d'un été* and Chris Marker's *Le Joli Mai* (1962).[281] Similarly, the Nouvelle Vague and *cinéma-vérité* shared certain key characteristics, such as cheap productions *(A Bout de souffle),* often improvisational dialogues *(Les Quatre Cents Coups*)[282]*,* and ethnographic/sociological interests (*Vivre sa vie*)*.* Finally, Godard collaborated with the American *cinéma-vérité* filmmakers Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker in 1969 on an unrealized militant film—*One American Movie,* or *One A.M.*—although the project ended catastrophically. However, this attempt at collaboration occurred during Godard and Gorin's attempt to screen the Dziga Vertov

[281] Ibid., 304. Although I will not discuss Chris Marker's excellent film *Le Joli Mai* in this dissertation, I would argue against Graff's firm inclusion of the film within the *cinéma-vérité* genre. Although formally similar to the general construct of *Chronique d'un été* in a number of ways, Marker never claimed participation in the movement, and never participated in any roundtables on the subject. *Le Joli Mai* was released in theatres without the PR flurry that normally accompanies such productions. Also, Marker's film is far more aesthetically driven, and far more playful, than the other films of the *cinéma-vérité* genre. Although it shares with *Masculin, Féminin* and *Chronique d'un été* a deep sociological concern, it is nonetheless separated from Rouch's film by its wealth of editing techniques and aesthetically-driven structure—in other words, by its quintessentially Vertovian qualities.

[282] Morin himself noted, in an interview in *France Forum*, that Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (The 400 Blows, 1960), a film whose success at Cannes essentially launched the effluvium of international accolades centering on the French Nouvelle Vague, contained many elements of *cinéma-vérité*, as do the films of Godard. See Graff, *Cinéma-vérité*, 127.

Group films in the US and raise funds for future productions. In other words, if Godard occasionally criticized the filmmakers of the *cinéma-vérité* movement, he doth protest too much.

Rather, I would argue that Godard gleaned a great amount of inspiration from the movement, which launched his interest in Dziga Vertov. Through reading Sadoul's writings, Godard associated Vertov with certain key correlations: for one, the key association between the *Cinéma-Oeil* and the *Caméra-Stylo* (Camera Pen) concept developed by Alexandre Astruc.[283] Thus the Kino-Eye became interpreted, by both Godard and Sadoul, as the cinematic "writing" of reality, instead of a revolution of perception. Godard also took from Sadoul an obsession with "image and sound" that was not present in the actual 1920s Soviet avant-garde. This emphasis on sound drew from Sadoul's great emphasis on the aural aspect of Vertov's work, although the majority of Vertov's films did not yet incorporate audio recordings.[284] Lastly, Sadoul's emphasis on the *pris sur le vif* avoided an analysis of the aesthetically-driven, fantastical, and fundamentally avant-garde elements of Vertov's filmmaking. Godard's understanding of Vertov therefore avoided any discussion of the affective, emotional, or psychological effect of his filmmaking on the viewer; Vertov's films were assumed to be objective moments gleaned from reality. But, as we will see, although Godard's view of Vertov departed from the Kino-Eye theories of the avant-garde documentarist, it produced another, alternate avant-garde documentary style: what I have termed the Kino-Bayonet.

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[283] Sadoul, *Dziga Vertov*, 131.

[284] One can, however, certainly claim a deep interest and importance of music and sound in Vertov's theories. Vertov was very involved with the composition of live music accompanying his silent films. His interest in sound is especially evident early in life with his boyhood idea for the "Laboratory of Sound". Yet before his sound films, *Enthusiasm* (1930) and *Three Songs About Lenin* (1934), visual perception and aural perception are not analyzed on equal terms (indeed, the "ear" of the camera, which Sadoul discusses at length, was not yet discovered). In April 1971, Godard presented *Enthusiasm* (here translated as *La Symphonie du Dunboass*) to a crowd at the Cinematheque, thus continuing and over-valuing of Vertov's sound films which began with Sadoul. See Antoine de Baecque, *Godard: biographie* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), 498.

Before analyzing what Godard specifically gleaned from the use of Vertov's name, and before uncovering what purpose the Kino-Bayonet served in his collective filmmaking experiments after May 1968, we must first analyze Godard's films from this highly contested period in his cinematic oeuvre. Specifically, we will look at his films in their relation to the affective modes of the Kino-Eye, and their refusal by the French filmmaker. Instead, as we will see, the Kino-Bayonet purposefully frustrated the audience, utilized modes of distancing then considered 'Brechtian', and sought to free the viewer from an emotionally-involved experience of the film. It accomplishes this by utilizing Maoist self-criticism, and constantly tears down the walls of its own productions. By looking at the Dziga Vertov Group films which explicitly refer to Vertov alongside important historical moments (especially May 1968), and in relation to one another, we will be able to make an informed analysis of the Kino-Bayonet qualities of this little-discussed Marxist filmmaking collective.

Godard in Transition: Revolutionizing Aesthetics in 1968

Godard's first film claiming Vertov's influence is a short section from the collaborative film *Loin du Vietnam* (*Far From Vietnam*, 1967), produced by Chris Marker and also including a short work by Marker himself, as well as short films by Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, Joris Ivens, William Klein, and Claude Lelouch. It is no accident that many of these filmmakers were avant-garde documentarists: Marker, Resnais, and Ivens, for instance, fall especially well under this categorization.[285] In comparison to these great icons of the French 1960s avant-garde, particularly the "Left Bank" of the Nouvelle Vague (Varda, Resnais, Marker), Godard's film is

[285] The conclusion to this dissertation highlights Chris Marker, not only as an avant-garde documentary filmmaker, but an ideal example of the French afterlife of the "Kino-Eye," not the "Kino-Bayonet"—especially with regard to his use of animation techniques.

an aesthetic departure in favor of increasing abstraction. His film is titled "Camera-eye"—an ode to Vertov's *Kino-Eye* film and theories. Curiously, although it would begin a series of films referring to Dziga Vertov, Godard's short film moves even further away from an affect-oriented filmmaking than his earlier films, and purposefully frustrates the viewer. Instead of Vertov's use of Kino-Eye to refer to a utopian sensibility of aesthetic form—a Shklovskian estrangement which, as described in Chapter 2, is an estrangement *for* the world instead of *from* the world—Godard's Kino-Bayonet aesthetic is defined by Brechtian alienation.

One must admit, however, that the film does exhibit a certain Vertovian influence, albeit on a somewhat superficial level. Like Vertov's 1929 masterpiece *Man with a Movie Camera*, in "Camera-Eye", the camera—and the director at its helm—are the subjects of the film itself. Although Godard often introduced the camera as a topic in his narrative—for instance, the 'Lumière' sequence in *Les Carabiniers* and the film-within-a-film in *Le Mépris*—it was not until *Loin du Vietnam* that he took the decisive step of simply showing the camera on screen.[286] The film lays bare the device of cinema, in all of its technological apparatuses, and the usually hidden director. Other meta-cinematic techniques proliferate: a clapperboard,[287] calls of *Action* and *Cut,* frequent shots of the camera's technological apparatus, and constant shots and zooms into the camera lens. As the viewer gazes into the meta-cinematic void of

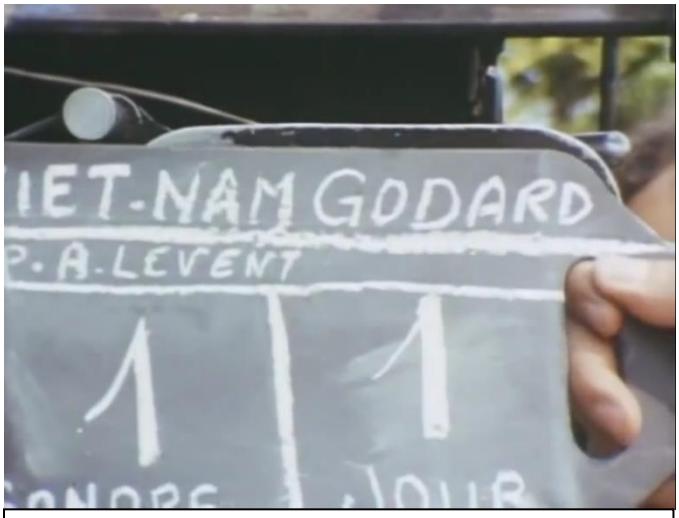

Figure 13: Jean-Luc Godard, "Camera-Oeil" from *Loin du Vietnam* (1967)

[286] Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema," 501.

[287] See Figure 13.

the camera lens, she sees Godard mouthing the words of his interview in the distance, his eyes covered by the viewfinder. Or, as is more common: a still shot of a camera lens.[288]

Figure 14: Jean-Luc Godard, "Camera-Oeil" from Loin du Vietnam (1967)

In addition, by contrast to the other films in the *Loin du Vietnam* compilation, Godard's film is autobiographical, constituting a director's monologue in the form of interview-like responses. In other words, the film is not about Vietnam, but about the director's relationship to leftist struggle, Vietnam as a broader cultural concept, and fears of participating in a "falsely noble" filmmaking enterprise. This self-questioning mirrors a lengthy scene in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her,* 1967) in which Godard reflects on his role as both sociologist and filmmaker—whether he uses the right images, the right words, the right perspective—while shooting a close-up of a cup of slowly swirling black coffee. Here too, Godard, attempting to produce a cinema aligned with "truth" (here broadly defined as an ideologically Marxist-Leninist truth), turns to interview and even Maoist self-criticism as a truth-making procedure. As Peter Wollen notes, "Interviewing is, of course, the purest form of linguistic demand, and the demand Godard makes is for the truth."[289] Thus, interviewing, because it is the "purest form"—entirely devoid of acting, and appearing a spontaneous elucidation of meaning—becomes the only form from which "truth" can be elicited.

[288] See Figure 14.

[289] Ibid., 506.

One must note, however, that because the interview is self-imposed, it is also constructed and edited by its own author; although Godard's interview techniques generally aim for "truth"-telling, the construction of his own truth must be taken with a grain of salt. In addition, this interview structure again aligns Godard with Rouch and Morin's techniques rather than Vertov's aesthetic creations. At any rate, Vertov's films, even his sound films, do not include interviews, as the "truth" presented by Kino-Eye techniques shows little resemblance to our actual quotidian existence. Like *Chronique d'un été,* Godard's "Camera-Eye" aims to expose a "truth" found within our world, rather than created through the cinematic apparatus.

Given these techniques, it is rather difficult to establish anything particularly Vertov-like about the film aside from its meta-cinematic nature and the title. By focusing so intensely on a static series of shots of camera apparatuses, the film departs significantly from the breathtaking speed of Vertov's cinematography, and the short shot length his films are known for. However, the majority of the film's characteristics—interviews, simple editing, actuality footage, and a meta-cinematic approach—do align with the *cinéma-vérité* movement, and forms a crucial hinge between the Kino-Eye, *cinéma-vérité,* and Godard's Dziga Vertov Group productions. From here, however, Godard's quasi-formalist gaze into the camera lens will generally slide further into the Kino-Bayonet tradition, in favor of increasingly less cinephilic, and increasingly more abstract, Brechtian forms.

This leap from *cinéma-vérité*-influenced documentary form into increasing abstraction coincides with the political turmoil (and revolutionary potential) of May 1968, occurring a year later. However, the historical event of May 1968 did not cause an outright upheaval of Godard's cinematic technique; rather, it continued an evolution of filmmaking that, as we have seen in the short film "Camera-Eye," tended towards increasing meta-cinematic and Brechtian aesthetics.

Although many of his films of this era, including the Dziga Vertov Group period, claim to reduce filmmaking to its "Year Zero", these films are less a definitive break than a continuation of Godard's filmmaking since its inception. The character Juliette concludes *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* with the notion of "starting again at zero," and it recurs repeatedly in *La Chinoise* (1967): Véronique, the militant student played by Anne Wiazemsky, wants to close the French universities and bomb the Louvre and Comédie Française so that education and the arts could begin from zero. Similarly, her love interest Guillaume (Jean-Pierre Léaud) develops a notion of "The Theater of the Year Zero" visualized in cinema by two people attempting to communicate through plexiglass—a kind of "year zero" of the first primitive nonverbal efforts to communicate.[290]

It was *Le Gai Savoir* (The Joy of Learning, 1969), however, where Godard directly fleshes out his concept of a "Year Zero" of aesthetic form. As Rodowick notes, the idea of the epistemological break, a "return to zero," is the central feature of political modernism, especially in its heyday of the 1970s.[291] With this gesture, as Yosefa Loshitzky notes, the film ushered in the "utopian years" and ceremonially announced a new Godard.[292] It is also the film which demarcates a breakdown of audience identification, and depicts Godard's contempt for the audience. Although these characteristics begin early in Godard's oeuvre and develops unevenly afterwards, in *Le Gai Savoir* this breakdown of affective modes reaches entirely new levels, and would continue throughout his immediate post-1968 productions.[293]

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[290] James Roy Macbean, *Film and Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 25-26.

[291] D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), xv.

[292] Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995) 27.

[293] Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema," 500.

Le Gai Savoir—whose title is a reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's *Gay Science* (*Gai Savoir* in French)—was his first film released after the events of May '68, and it certainly shows. The film is Godard's most didactic and most visually stagnant of his oeuvre thus far; as MacBean notes, with a pun on the film's title: "In *Le Gai Savoir...* it is difficult to say whether we are supposed to be learning, and it is questionable whether most people will find the film very joyful."[294] The film entails a young man, Emile Rousseau (named after the text by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and played by Jean-Pierre Léaud) and a young woman, Patricia Lumumba (named for the Congolese Independence Leader and played by Juliet Berto) who meet nightly at a television set for three years and discuss the relation between politics, images, and sounds. The television set is a meta-cinematic gesture, as the film was co-produced by ORTF (The Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, France's national public radio and television station between 1964 and 1974), and was originally intended to be broadcast on television. Unsurprisingly, French television rejected the film, which was simply supposed to be a "loose" adaptation of Rousseau's *Emile*; in fact, the film only had one screening in Europe (at the Berlin Film Festival in June 1969) and one in New York (in September 1969), thus creating the first of the many "invisible" Godard films of this period, as he drew further away from the market.[295] Although *Le Gai Savoir* is the most obtuse and formally alienating of all Godard's films to this date—already grounds for rejection by the ORTF—the film's tendency to constantly refer to May 1968 certainly did not help its case.

The film does not describe Rousseau's ideas on education, but Godard's own *cinematic* education, and its ties to revolution; as James Roy MacBean describes, the film can be subtitled,

[294] MacBean, *Film and Revolution,* 66.

[295] de Baecque, *Godard,* 411.

"How I Studied Image and Sound and Discovered Marxism." Cinematic study necessarily leads to revolutionary activity. In addition, Godard's fable crafts cinema as not only the impetus behind a mass revolt, but also that which would save it. It is not merely the "seventh art," but that which blocks Emile from a bullet wound. In *Le Gai Savoir*, cinema—a true "correct" political cinema—could even save lives; indeed, if we interpret "save" as a religious metaphor, cinema could save the soul of the revolution. *Le Gai Savoir* is thus not a narrative film about two friends meeting at a television studio, but an attempt to discover a cinematic form which could "save" in the manner of a political movement. Thus, both Godard's and Vertov's films attempt to "free" the viewers with their own, albeit widely different, styles of cinematic Marxism.

Unsurprisingly, this is easier said than done. Emile and Patricia craft a plan for "three years" of meeting nightly at the TV studio: in the first, they will pick up images and record sounds to create "disorderly experiences" (*en vrac*), in the second, they will "criticize all that," and in the third they would finally create a few new samples of sound and images. Throughout their efforts, they attempt an extreme anti-realism; Emile states, "we had to be careful not to fall into the ideology of the real"—a real that he (and Godard) claim that many directors from Rossellini to Antonioni and Bresson have tumbled into, despite these filmmakers' evident devotion to the aesthetics of cinematic form. Godard's arguments here, spoken through Jean-Pierre Léaud, reframe the utopianism of 1920s Soviet avant-garde art: "We'll go back to zero," he invokes, again—a possible reference to Kazimir Malevich's "Black Square," and its attempt to return to the "zero" of painting.[296] Godard's film self-consciously mimics the early Soviet desire to rid the world of bourgeois theatricality and traditional narrative—a desire for which Vertov, as

[296] As Malevich states, on his "Black Square": "It is from zero, in zero, that the true movement of being begins." See Jean-Claude Marcade, "Malevich, Painting, and Writing: On the Development of a Suprematist Philosophy," in *Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003), 40.

the most experimental of early Soviet filmmakers, becomes the ultimate incarnation. As Vertov stated in "We," Manifesto of the Kinoks, "We consider the psychological Russo-German film-drama—weighed down with apparitions and childhood memories—an absurdity."[297] Both Vertov and Godard, then, pose their cinema as fundamentally anti-dramatic, and anti-narrative. And indeed, Godard refers to Vertov directly; Emile states:

> How I assassinated Kennedy, by the order of the ghost of the other and love. How, by the order of the ghost of Dziga Vertov, I shot with my Chinese portable Bazooka at the spectators who were there to see *War and Peace*, the Russian Hollywood Film.

It is thus with the "order of the ghost of Dziga Vertov" that Léaud as Emile—a stand-in for Godard himself—"shot" at spectators watching *War and Peace.* Yet Emile does not shoot these spectators in a documentarian sense, but as a militant, armed with a "Chinese portable Bazooka": a reference to Maoism and its importance for the politics of May 1968. In addition, Emile does not shoot at the Russian Hollywood Film itself, but the spectators enjoying it; his filmmaking is a physical attack on the (rather generalized) Western viewer. By contrast, Vertov's actually aimed to destroy all film, and replace it with "film-things" (*kinochestvo*); his manifesto extends a hand to viewers of Hollywood dramas, inviting them to participate in his new radical experiment of form and perception: "My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you."[298] Similarly, as he intones in his manifesto, "Come out, please, into life"[299]—inviting the viewer to join him in repudiating the Western film, rather than attacking the audience for ignorance, or shooting them with Bazookas. Indeed, Godard's more explicitly violent filmmaking practice shoots both film and the audience with a Kino-Bayonet.

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[297] Vertov, *Is Naslediya,* 15. Translation: Vertov, "We," 5.

[298] Ibid., 41. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 18.

[299] Ibid., 42. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 20.

One cannot imagine a more opposing methodology to the joyfulness and delight of Vertov's "film-things" than Emile Rousseau, shooting at spectators and assassinating Kennedy.

As a film, *Le Gai Savoir* enacts this new Kino-Bayonet ideology: although the juxtaposition of sound and image fascinates, the film attempts a rather severe attack on the viewer's senses, including implementing an extremely grating electronic beeping throughout the third part of the film. Thus, the "new images and sounds" created by Patricia and Emile violently, resolutely refuse to please the viewer. Although *Le Gail Savoir* began production pre-May, it announces a more definitive rupture with audience pleasure—and indeed, Godard's post-1968 work is brutally anti-pleasurable. Putting aside the inherent worth of both methods, this anti-affective "order" is radically different from the Kino-Eye, which is rooted in affect and (generally positive) emotional response. Vertov did not despise bourgeois theatre because of its pleasing qualities, but because of its thoughtless stasis and manipulative conventionality. Although Vertov's films are non-conventional, they are still pleasurable, and evoke joyfulness.

Although the Dziga Vertov Group would only organize several months after the completion of this film, and will only name itself as such a year later, Godard has already begun viewing Vertov as the filmmaker whose "order" he seems resolved to follow; indeed, as Antoine de Baecque notes, *Le Gai Savoir* announces the form and "grammatical" didactic quality of the Dziga Vertov Group films.[300] As we will continue to see, however, Godard's conception of this order, though similarly critical of techniques of narrative realism and Hollywood modes of representation, departs from the Kino-Eye in several significant ways.

"You Say Nixon, I Say Mao": Godard and Gorin's Dziga Vertov Group

[300] de Baecque, *Godard,* 411.

In Peter Wollen's 1972 article on Godard's "Counter-Cinema," he compares seven traits of classic Hollywood narrative cinema with the antagonistic traits of Godard's "anti-cinematic" filmmaking. While Wollen specifically discusses the Dziga Vertov Group film *Le Vent d'Est,* the traits described by Wollen define every Dziga Vertov Group production. In his article, Wollen charts seven "deadly sins" and juxtaposes them with the seven "cardinal virtues," as follows:

Narrative transitivity	-----	Narrative intransitivity
Identification	----------	Estrangement
Transparency	----------	Foregrounding
Single diegesis	----------	Multiple diegesis
Closure	----------	Aperture
Pleasure	----------	Unpleasure
Fiction	----------	Reality[301]

Godard's filmmaking is placed in opposition to the standard mode of narrative filmmaking, as honed by generations of filmmakers since the creation of cinema, and as epitomized by the conventions of Hollywood. For every "sin," Godard presents its negation, creating instead a "virtue": aperture (an open plot construction) instead of closure, foregrounding (obfuscation with literary quotations) instead of transparency, narrative intransitivity (difficult to follow plot lines) instead of narrative transitivity. Wollen lists traits ranging from general comprehensibility of storyline ("narrative transitivity") to character identification and transparency. These traits, which create the illusion of a self-enclosed, fictional narrative world in compliance with its own rules, are often taken for granted by audience members who are used to such "closure" in Hollywood filmmaking. These traits, however, are precisely those which Godard attempts to disrupt in his Dziga Vertov Group films, by any means necessary.

[301] Wollen, "Godard and Counter-cinema," 499

Most of the traits Godard attempts to disrupt are *affective* experiences, such as pleasure and audience identification. Similarly, Wollen's listing of "estrangement" is more akin to Brechtian alienation than formalist estrangement, which can introduce an affective experience. As Victor Shklovsky notes in his seminal essay on estrangement, "Art as Technique": "Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony."[302] Estrangement thus exists to recover *feeling* and *sensation* normally forgotten in routine existence. Godard, on the other hand, desires to remove affect from cinematic experience altogether; the only affective response to a Godard film, as Wollen describes, is confusion and displeasure. The operative term, then, is not estrangement, but Brechtian alienation. As Bertolt Brecht describes, the aim of the "alienation effect" is "to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident."[303] In Godard's interpretation of Brecht, as well as Wollen's, this critical attitude precludes the possibility of affective film viewing experiences. In this interpretation, there is no way to reconcile enjoyment and criticism: one engages in one, or the other.

Keeping in mind Wollen's definition of Godard's counter-cinematic unpleasure, we must now turn to the Dziga Vertov Group films themselves, in order to delineate the ways in which they depart from Vertov's affect- and sensation-oriented avant-garde documentary cinema.

Un film comme les autres (*A Film Like Any Other*, 1968) charts a trajectory of radical abstraction which the official Dziga Vertov Group would continue.[304] The desire to move away

[302] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 12.

[303] Bertolt Brecht, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting Which Produces an Alienation Effect," *Brecht on Theatre,* Ed. and Trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 136.

[304] As Antoine de Baecque notes, however, the name of the group was not decided until during the post-production editing of *Le Vent d'Est* in the autumn of 1969, in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin. See de Baecque, *Godard*, 459-460.

from fiction and towards a mostly actuality-oriented filmmaking is evident in this work, and is the first of its kind in Godard's oeuvre. Shot at the end of July[305] and through August 1968, *Un film comme les autres* is also one of the first audio-visual reflections on May.

Although its militant politics appear at first a logical progression into Marxist-Leninism from the short film "Camera-Eye," *Un film comme les autres* presents a far more obscure and abstracted narrative. In the film—conceived as a *contexte 68*—students from the University of Nanterre (where the events of May began) and workers from a Renault factory (where the events of May finished) are filmed in a discussion on a field, situated about 40 kilometers West of Paris.[306] The images of this discussion are intercut with black and white actuality footage from the events in May, mostly filmed by the *Etats Generaux du Cinema*. These two "image-tracks" interweave, and accompany what Godard labels a "sonorous image" made up of quotations from revolutionary texts.[307] *Un film comme les autres* can be interpreted as the inverse of *Le Gai Savoir:* where the latter incorporates audio recordings from May '68 into a mostly abstracted space of images, the former abstracts the audio track into a "sonorous image" and layers this over actuality footage. Both, then, are reflections on the relation between sound and image.

However, this deceptively clear description does not align with the experience of watching the film itself, which is so abstract as to be nearly incomprehensible. The audio tracks are often overlaid, resulting in a cacophony from which the viewer-listener can only discern several key militant leftist statements. Constant audio-visual layering creates a nearly-incoherent mumbling and gray noise which remains constant throughout. It is unsurprising that at the few

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[305] Ibid., 429.

[306] Many sources, including Antoine de Baecque, argue that the events of May finished at the Renault factory in June, where the striking occupants of the factory encountered extremely violent repression by the police. See Ibid.

[307] Cerisuelo, "Jean-Luc, Community, and Communication," 302.

Figure 15: Dziga Vertov Group, *Un film comme les autres* (1968)

screenings of the film—October 1968 at the *Cinéma national populaire* in Paris, and at the end of that year in Lincoln Center in New York—the audience was either extremely angry or at best, severely confused.[308] In addition, the viewer never sees the faces of the students, only their hands occasionally fiddling with blades of grass;[309] she is thus unable to form an empathic bond with any character on screen.

Neither, however, is the structure of the film, or its reception, particularly important to the filmmakers; as Tom Luddy notes, Godard was pleased to hear about the riot panning the film at Lincoln Center. In addition, given that the film is on two reels, the filmmakers suggested that an audience poll or coin flip determine which reel plays first.[310] Such a haphazard relation to the material is starkly different from Vertov's relation to his own films,[311] and indicates a complete antagonism towards the viewer and her film-viewing experience—yet another aspect of the Dziga Vertov Group which separates it significantly from the eponymous Soviet filmmaker.[312]

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[308] de Baecque, *Godard,* 431. According to Tom Luddy, the film's only screening in New York resulted in a small riot inside Lincoln Center. See Tom Luddy, "A Film Like Any Other," *Take One: the Film Magazine.* Vol II, no.10 (Canada: March/April 1970), 14.

[309] See Figure 15.

[310] Tom Luddy, "A Film Like Any Other," 14.

[311] As Lucy Fischer notes, Vertov was extremely controlling about the presentation of his films. When he attended the presentation of *Enthusiasm*, his first sound film, at the Film Society of London in 1930, he insisted on controlling the sound projection. During the rehearsal he kept the sound at a normal level, but during the actual screening, he increased the volume to ear-splitting levels during the climaxes. He was begged to desist but refused. See Fischer, "Enthusiasm," 33.

[312] This disregard for the viewer's experience, however, does not mean Godard shifts centrality to the filmic object. By contrast, the Dziga Vertov Group explicitly aims to disrupt, and displease.

As we will continue to see, this desire to eradicate character identification is one of the most important characteristics of the films from this controversial period; although Godard had been toying with the notion of decreasing the importance of the "character" in his films, this aspect of *Un film comme les autres* is so radically different from *Le Gai Savoir* that it forms a definitive break between periods. In abstracting the discussion from personalities and individuals, Godard removes any potential for the pleasurable, emotional involvement characteristic of even the earliest of films.

Regardless of the film's immensely abstract and significantly anti-pleasurable qualities, however, it is nonetheless deeply interwoven with its historical moment; as stated previously, it is presented as a summation of the context of May '68. Likewise, given that this film is (*ex post facto*) the first film of the Dziga Vertov Group, I claim that the Renault workers are in fact an homage to the first *cinéma-vérité* film *Chronique d'un été*, in which one of the main subject-interviewees is a worker in a Renault factory. Indeed, the factory itself, and its working conditions, are represented at length in the film. Given Godard's penchant for symbolism, this use of Renault workers is no coincidence; rather, his mirroring of the earlier film creates a lineage drawing from the now-abandoned *cinéma-vérité* label to his own collective, which becomes a logical continuation of what Morin, Rouch, and even Sadoul considered Vertov-like characteristics and militant leftist filmmaking. Thus, although the realist films of *cinéma-vérité* are surely different from Godard's experimental productions, his films directly reinforce this lineage from Kino-Pravda through *cinéma-vérité* to the Dziga Vertov Group.

The 1969 film *British Sounds,* Godard's next militant project, continues this trajectory of abstraction and un-pleasure—albeit with a growing concern with the project of documentary

film. Rejected by the BBC, who funded the production,[313] *British Sounds* was mainly directed by Godard with the collaboration of Jean-Henri Roger, with whom he also worked on the Dziga Vertov Group's next film, *Pravda*. *British Sounds* does not have a stable plot structure and instead depicts a series of vignettes, brought together not by their "image" but by their "sound": a man and woman reciting incendiary political statements, as well as a young child reciting historical "lessons" about militant leftism throughout European history (in Tom Luddy's words: "the voice of a little girl memorizing her Marxist catechism"[314]).

The beginning of the film depicts a factory, and incorporates a great deal of the *sounds* created by the machines within it—thus, "British Sounds". Another "sound" is the cacophony of a group of (rightfully) disgruntled working class British citizens, arguing for socialism against capitalism, and discussing their struggle. Yet another sound is Godard's voice, whispering (in heavily accented French) "organize," "unite," and "strike" while the film shows silent documentary footage of British laborers. These sounds are not entirely leftist, however: one sound is a television pundit reading a long diatribe against everything leftists hold dear, reaching an exaggerated bloodlust that exceeds even the rhetoric of ultra-conservative pundits. But the last "sound" is a group of young women listening to Beatles records, and working together to transform the lyrics of songs such as "Hello, Goodbye" into militant leftist songs, e.g. "You say Nixon, I say Mao" instead of "You say yes, I say no," etc.

Beyond this relationship to image and sound, however, the film is invested in the project of its own making, and the concept of Marxist aesthetics itself. As such, although the film is anti-pleasurable (the screeching sounds of the factory described above seem to attack the listener), it

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[313] Cerisuelo, "Jean-Luc, Community, and Communication," 297.

[314] Tom Luddy, "British Sounds," in *Take One: The Film Magazine.* Vol II no. 11 (Canada, May/June 1970 published in June 1971), 12.

attempts a meta-cinema akin to *Man with a Movie Camera*—a lineage Godard refers to in the aforementioned short film "Camera-Eye". As a voiceover states: "Dialectics. Documentary. Fiction. People's War." Godard is thus deeply interested in the interrelation between fiction and documentary, a topic which will recur in other films of the Dziga Vertov Group. *British Sounds* is the first of Godard's films to explicitly place itself in the avant-garde documentary tradition. As another voiceover later in the film states, "Photography is not the reflection of reality, it is the reality of that reflection." Photography—what Godard joins with documentary media—is far more aesthetic, a "reflection," than an actual representation of reality.

As the film intones: "Television and film do not record moments of reality but simply dialectics, areas of contradictions. Let us illuminate these areas with the blinding light of the class struggle." Thus, Godard argues that what we normally perceive to be "recordings of reality" such as documentaries (here defined as the genre of Flaherty or Grierson) do not in fact record "moments of reality" but are areas of contradiction. This "contradiction" within images is defined as dialectics itself, and is interwoven with class struggle. As another voiceover states: "Sometimes the class struggle is about the struggle of one image against another image." Godard, like Kracauer, Matsumoto, Ivens, and a plethora of other critics,[315] thus links Hegelian dialectics with the dialectics of filmmaking procedures: the "recording" or "capture" of reality versus the "creation" and "crafting" of this same reality.

Often in the film, Godard intends to create such contradictions with a certain dialectical relation between the sound and image presented on screen. One example of the tension between sound and image exists in one of the film's most famous sequences, a purposefully unapologetic shot of a woman's pubic area, replete with pubic hair, for a total of two minutes—a surprisingly

[315] For a more extensive analysis of this thesis, see the Introduction.

long, single take which Godard intends to be deeply uncomfortable. The result of this dialectical approach is a reinvestigation of gender roles, resulting in the viewer's eventual discomfort with the confrontation of such issues on screen—although the success of such a tactic might conceivably be questioned. Once again Godard's avant-garde documentary techniques are far more forceful than Vertov's, whose films did not aim to confront the viewer with her own discomfort. Rather, as Manovich describes, *Man with a Movie Camera* is an "orgy of cinematography"[316]; its many "tricks" are so aligned with a pleasurable filmgoing experience that Manovich employs sexual metaphors to describe it. In contrast to Vertov's film, the long take of a woman's pubis in *British Sounds* deliberately produces the opposite effect.

The film's conclusion entails a series of fists[317] punching through paper representations of the Union Jack—the exact image with which the film begins, creating a circular narrative that organizes the seemingly disorganized array of vignettes in between. As MacBean writes, the film's conclusion "does not seek in any way to sum up the film as a whole, but rather to provide us with a 'send-off' *(envoi)* which brings us back out of the internal structure

Figure 16: Dziga Vertov Group, *British Sounds* (1969)

[316] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 91.

[317] One must note that these fists all appear to belong to men, and white men, at that (see Figure 16). Although the sexism of certain of Godard's films will not be treated here—the topic of sexism was treated extensively by Laura Mulvey—the predominance of white fists begs the question: did Godard purposefully use white fists to comment upon the racism inherent in certain leftist movements at the end of the 1960s? Or was this inclusion of white fists rather an inappropriate conception of the British laborer as inherently white? Such questions—especially in relation to the other films in his extensive and wide-ranging oeuvre—necessitate treatments from future theorists.

of the work of art and into our own everyday realm of social praxis."[318] The world of the film, then, places us back into our "everyday realm of social practice." Although it is unclear whether the filmmakers succeeded in their efforts, given that Godard and especially Gorin viewed the film as "not successful on a political level,"[319] the scene with the fists is characteristic of the forcefulness of the procedure of filmmaking itself. With this heavy political statement, the Godard and Gorin lay claim to the violence of their filmmaking technique. Although ironically both filmmakers are deeply critical of Eisenstein's "Kino-Fist" ideology, they view their films as weapons in the revolutionary struggle, rather than tools for personal transformation.

The Dziga Vertov Group continued this anti-pleasurable trajectory with *Pravda* (1969). Filmed in Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia in April 1969 with Jean-Henri Roger and camera operator Paul Bourron from Chris Marker's Medvedkin Group,[320] *Pravda* is an attempt to come to terms with what the narrators of the film term "fighting between difference kinds of red"—a "right-wing red deviationism" and "left-wing red proletarianism"— and the hypocrisies of both liberal democracy and Soviet revisionism. In the film, two invisible narrators, Vladimir (after Lenin) and Rosa (after Luxemburg), discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the 1968 Prague Spring; meanwhile, documentary footage from the region plays on the image track. The result is a film tinged with a great deal of melancholy as the two revolutionaries discuss the "treason against Marxism" committed by "pseudo-communists".

[318] MacBean, *Film and Revolution*, 114.

[319] Goodwin, Luddy, and Wise, "The Dziga Vertov film group in America," 12.

[320] de Baecque, *Godard*, 448.

One would imagine a film entitled *Pravda* to refer to the Group's eponymous Soviet filmmaker, and indeed the film is peppered with certain visual references to Vertov, especially the Kino-Eye: Godard includes a Czechoslovak television program which uses the eye as a motif,[321] and a reoccurring shot of a traffic circle which strangely approximates the shape of an eye.[322] In addition, the film includes a shot of a building, photographed from below and rotated, in a manner immediately recalling the montage-created collapse of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. Admittedly, however, these references to Vertov are fairly simplistic, and the film shows rather little relation to the Soviet filmmaker. Indeed, the bulk of the film is somewhat sloppy and extremely didactic, with an extreme dearth of editing techniques. At first, it might be easy to rationalize the failures of the film by its difficult production history: in Czechoslovakia, the filmmakers were endlessly supervised for all twelve days of their journey; they were treated with contempt and extreme suspicion, both by Soviets and dissidents, who considered Godard a traitor; their car suddenly disappeared, and their translator was severely suppressed.[323] However, it is evident that the militant group did not understand the complexities of the Czechoslovak

Figure 17: Dziga Vertov Group, *Pravda* (1969)

Figure 18: Dziga Vertov Group, *Pravda* (1969)

[321] See Figure 17.

[322] See Figure 18.

[323] de Baecque, *Godard,* 448.

situation in the immediate aftermath of the Prague Spring, and, rather than introducing this new analysis in their filmmaking, *Pravda* continues the Group's characteristic Maoist self-criticism.

As narrator Vladimir notes, on the film's message: "Beginning to put together the film. Beginning to take apart the contradictions. That's what we've got to do now, Rosa. We've got to do some editing. We have to organize the images and sounds differently." The film attempts, as did *British Sounds*, a radical anti-Hollywood organization of image and sound, and exemplifies the critique of realism inherent in the Kino-Bayonet. Yet the film's own narrators consider it a "step behind." This concluding message branding it a "failure", however, is rather characteristic of the Dziga Vertov Group films, and the filmmakers themselves, who engage in a perpetual Marxist *autocritique*. As Godard stated, on *Pravda*: "It's interesting, but no more than that."[324] The films, normally very cheaply made and explicitly working against the standard Hollywood mode of representation and production, are considered less individual works than sketches contributing to a general politico-aesthetic movement.

Continuing this self-critical gesture, *Le Vent d'Est* (1970) similarly takes up arms against standard Hollywood modes of representation. And, like earlier Dziga Vertov Group films, *Le Vent d'Est* continues a trajectory of anti-affective and anti-pleasurable modes that will continue throughout the Group's existence. Unlike the previous films, however, it does not intend to be an avant-garde documentary; rather, it is more akin to a political treatise couched in an experimental narrative film. Indeed, the film is a self-proclaimed "Leftist Western," and the first costume drama of Godard's career—with the exception of certain similar pastoral scenes in *Weekend* (1967). In the general framework of the film, an haute-bourgeois family finds itself trapped in a country estate; the father-patriarch, who is the boss of a factory, has been locked inside of the

[324] Goodwin, Luddy, and Wise, "The Dziga Vertov film group in America," 12.

factory by striking workers.[325] Ensuing is a series of discussions on strikes and the meaning of political struggle. Meanwhile, the family and its servants—dressed in vaguely nineteenth century garb—walk around a forest, during which class struggles are enacted and performed in various ways. Given this plethora of fictional elements, it is particularly ironic that this film, the least documentarian of the DVG films thus far, refers to Vertov most explicitly: more than any other DVG film, *Le Vent d'Est* is peppered with references to the Soviet filmmaker.

As we shall see, Vertov becomes a solution—albeit a purely symbolic one—to the film's problem of political filmmaking: how do we (as politically engaged leftist filmmakers) position ourselves within class struggle? How do we create a truly revolutionary cinema? Such questions proliferate throughout the film, creating a highly textured and deeply complicated meta-cinematic framework within which many "films" are interlaced. Indeed, there are several films operating simultaneously within *Le Vent d'Est*: the "Western" film of youths engaged in class struggle while decked in nineteenth century garb, the meta-cinematic creation of this very film (as evidenced by cameras, clapperboards, and actors putting on makeup), and the even deeper meta-cinematic analysis of the film's critique, by its own creators.

This *auto-critique* is then transposed back onto the formal elements in the film's second half, as the filmmakers attempt to rework the film in a more proper Marxist-Leninist fashion. A scene near the end allegorizes this attempt for a dialectical synthesis: a character dressed as the Pied Piper plays a recorder in a forest, playing notes pell-mell and evidently with no knowledge of the proper way to create sounds through the instrument. A group of voices from off-screen boo and hiss, yelling at this cacophony. Although he resists initially, after a little while he states

[325] The factory boss trapped inside his office by striking workers is a common trope in Godard's films of this period, culminating in the plot of the last feature length film of the Dziga Vertov Group, *Tout va bien* (1972).

that he has learned from their commentary, and attempts to play the recorder again—this time, rather successfully. He has thus created new and better sounds as a result of Maoist *auto-critique*, although his song is nonetheless rudimentary.

Similarly, the film's second half attempts to rework the form in order to produce a more properly political artwork; the filmmakers scratch into the celluloid and draw thick lines onto its surface, creating radical new modes of representation which echo American experimental filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage. This scratching into the film is a negation of its first creation, the antithesis to a naively-created thesis. Wollen compares this writing-on-images to writing-in-images: the *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen) concept popularized by Alexandre Astruc and then taken up by *cinéma-vérité*. This camera-pen concept was also utilized by Godard during this definitive period—and, just as Sadoul linked Vertov's Kino-Eye with the camera-pen, Godard's use of the term refers to Vertov implicitly. As Wollen writes, "...Once the decision is made to consider a film as a process of writing in images, rather than a representation of the world, then it becomes possible to conceive of scratching the film as an erasure, a virtual negation."[326] Form conveys content; scratching into the film thus negates the film both literally and metaphorically. However, even this experimental new technique is criticized by the voiceover, and the process of *auto-critique* spirals onwards—an endless dialectic which becomes bolder and more manic as the film progresses. The film never stops asking questions of its own creation. As a voiceover states, *la photographie: pour qui? Contre qui*? For whom? Against whom? Thus the film constantly attempts to situate itself, as an aesthetic form and technology beginning with photography, within the history of class struggle. But as the film's ending voiceover states: "You made a film.

[326] Wollen, "Godard and Counter-cinema," 502.

You made mistakes. You corrected some." Perfection is never reached, and a true synthesis remains impossible.

Le Vent d'Est thus reveals its own construction and attempts to change its form from within. Here Vertov is explicitly invoked as the creator of truly revolutionary cinema, which the film attempts to emulate, despite the radical difference between their two styles of filmmaking. Ten minutes into *Le Vent d'Est*, the film depicts actors putting exaggerated makeup onto their faces[327]—a Warholian warpaint in primary colors; meanwhile, a lengthy voiceover intones:

> Victory of revolutionary cinema, July 19, 1920. After the speech by Comrade Lenin at the Second Congress of the Third Internationale, Dziga Vertov declares to the tribune: "We Bolshevist filmmakers know it is impossible for a film to exist outside the context of the class system. We know film production is a simple task, and our program is very simple: to see and show the world in the name of the people's world revolution. The people make history. The films of the Western hemisphere only portray elegant ladies and gentlemen. The requirement is always imposed on the actors, under the pretext that they must accent feelings and instincts, to manifest only ideas accented by the bourgeoisie, to unscrupulously represent the degenerate bourgeois way of life, under the cover of their makeup."

Thus Vertov becomes, as he is for *Le Gai Savoir*, the specter haunting the work of *Le Vent d'Est*. Upon further investigation, however, the Vertov described here is revealed to be mostly imaginary—a historical mouthpiece through which Godard's cinema speaks. There is no record of Vertov declaring anything to a tribune in 1920,

Figure 19: Dziga Vertov Group. *Le Vent d'Est* (1970)

[327] See Figure 19.

especially after a speech by Lenin. During this period, Vertov was still in his early twenties, and had not solidified his aesthetic style and theoretical practice. Not yet having launched the newsreel series *Kino-Pravda*, he was busy editing and screening films on Agit-Trains,[328] and had not yet begun extensively publishing his many manifestoes on cinematic style and production.

Although Godard did read certain texts on Vertov—notably, the French translation of the 1962 Vertov biography by Nikolai Pavlovich Abramov, published in French in 1965, and various articles by Sadoul—this tribunal speech was almost certainly invented by Godard. Although certain key phrases do derive from Vertov's own pronouncements—particularly the films of the West and their use of heavily made-up "elegant ladies and gentlemen"—the first half of this statement reads as a text by Godard, not Vertov. The Soviet filmmaker, less concerned with his cinema being necessarily simple or within the class system, instead endeavored to revolutionize the perception of his viewers by creating highly edited works of cinema. It is therefore highly likely that instead of quoting Vertov directly, Godard amalgamated a series of articles on Vertov from journals such as *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Cinéthique,* cherry-picked certain key phrases, and then collaged them to fit his own Marxism.

In a later scene near the middle of *Le Vent d'Est*, while the camera focuses on an American actor fiddling with a few blades of grass, an arm suddenly extends outward, hiding the actor's face with a book onto which the words "Dziga Vertov" are emblazoned:[329] the aforementioned French translation of the Abramov text on the Soviet filmmaker, the first translated text of its kind. This sudden intrusion of Vertov into the diegetic space of the film is preceded by a lengthy voiceover discussion of Stalinism, thus positing the Soviet avant-gardist as

[328] For more on Agit-Trains, see MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, Chapter 4.

[329] See Figure 20.

a radical alternative to Stalinist aesthetics. For Godard, then, Vertov represented an alternative to the "emotion-oriented" and manipulative natures of both capitalist and Stalinist aesthetics (for Godard, Mosfilm produces as many fictions and fantasies as Paramount). For Godard and Gorin, Vertov becomes a paradigmatic example of a filmmaker who could *lutter contre le concept bourgeois de la répresentation*—fight against the bourgeois concept of representation. And indeed, Godard's interpretation of Vertov as a filmmaker of experimental aesthetics—the creator of films whose very form fights against the bourgeois artificiality of narrative fiction filmmaking—is what links the two concepts of Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet. The alienating Kino-Bayonet, however, unlike the playfully affecting Kino-Eye, serves to sever emotion and affect from the viewing experience altogether. Although the Kino-Bayonet's relation to Brecht will be analyzed later in this chapter, it is worth noting that the patron saint of this tradition is not the Soviet avant-gardist, but the German theorist and playwright, whose works are more aligned with Godard's own anti-pleasurable, purposefully distancing aesthetic experiments.

Figure 20: Dziga Vertov Group, *Le Vent d'Est* (1970)

Lutte en Italie (Struggle in Italy, 1971) continues this march into Brechtian alienation. Like *Le Vent d'Est*, it appears to be an entirely fictional film, and a political treatise simultaneously: a militant leftist student, Paola, slowly discovers herself less militant and more bourgeois than she assumed. Once again, progression and self-analysis is presented as a dialectic, which is synthesized by Paola's—and the film's—investigation of her separation of theory and practice in the latter half of the film. This organization echoes the structure of *Le Gai Savoir* and many subsequent Dziga Vertov Group films: image/sound portrayal and organization leads to their criticism and deconstruction, and then finally new image/sounds are created.

The film incorporates both French and Italian, which overlap and often remain untranslated. Delivered in a bland, affect-less tone, these sounds made devoid of meaning are meant to critique the hypocrisy of a bourgeois militancy; as such, the language is meant to emotionally distance the viewer from the leftist context to which she has become habituated. Indeed, all aspects of the film's editing add to its alienating structure. The two language tracks often overlap, exacerbating the disorienting nature of the film's sound. Similarly, the film's shot sequences, in which the camera is almost completely static, are often separated by solid black and solid red screens. The second and third sections attempt to "fill the black" with more appropriate revolutionary imagery, such as a factory, to link the film with its own means of production. Despite this attempt, the film continues to criticize the militant student Paola, and the film ends with a sense of political impotency. In an attempt to radicalize women factory workers, Paola places a radical newspaper near one of their work desks. The factory worker begins to read it, but then angrily throws it aside after understanding its content. Paola's political intention, however well-meaning, remains impotent even at the film's conclusion. She is still a girl who—as one scene depicts—places stacks of revolutionary posters around her bed and accuses her

family members of tampering with them, all while putting on eyeliner. In other words, she is branded a hypocrite.

There is a clear misogynistic element in this film, as the young student Paola becomes a symbolic and synechdotal representation of New Leftism as a whole, in Italy as well as France. As we have already seen, this misogyny will come to the fore in *Letter to Jane*, the last film affiliated with the Dziga Vertov Group. The first section of *Lutte en Italie* emphasizes interiors and bourgeois domesticity, aligning femininity with reactionary sentiment. In an oft-repeated shot, a hand holds a teacup in the lower left corner of the frame, while the rest of the image is a bright red table, upon which various items associated with domesticity are placed: a bright red teapot, matches, cigarettes, books, miscellaneous boxes, and bottles of medicine.[330] Another frequent series of shots shows Paola shopping for dresses in front of a shopkeeper (Anne Wiazemsky). At one point she even argues over the price of a peasant-style dress, stating that the price need not be so high for such a simple and rustic style. The emphasis on bourgeois domesticity in the first section, in which the human element (a hand, a face) is overshadowed by objects of daily life, is juxtaposed with shots of the female Italian protagonist facing the camera directly, repeating

Figure 21: Dziga Vertov Group, *Lutte en Italie* (1971)

[330] See Figure 21.

militant Marxist propaganda. Even in this short section, a contradiction between form and content is already made apparent—a militant reciting quotes from Althusser should not, theoretically, be haggling over the price of a peasant-style dress in the same breath. A rift is formed between her militancy as evidenced literally *en face* the camera, and the bourgeois existence she leads in the background.

This criticism of women as domestic and prototypically bourgeois was a common occurrence in New Left groups worldwide, in France as well as in Japan—where the ill-fated United Red Army was organizing members contemporaneously with the release of *Lutte en Italie*.[331] Doing nothing to counter the evident misogyny of associating revolution with masculine characteristics, Godard's film thus falls victim to the same pitfalls of 1960s radical leftism internationally.

Interestingly, the The Dziga Vertov Group's next film—*Vladimir et Rosa* (1971)—abandons the dry austerity of *Lutte en Italie*, and introduces a more comedic and light-hearted Brechtianism than the filmmakers previously demonstrated. In characteristic meta-cinematic style, characteristic of both Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet, the feature-length film immediately lays before the viewer the reason for its existence: to fund another picture on the Palestinian struggle. *Vladimir et Rosa* thus immediately presents itself as a fund-raising strategy; in the first several minutes, a voice describes exactly what they are doing (creating a film for money) and what the images presented on screen: a photo of Lenin with “theory” and “practice” written on screen, with first one then the other crossed out.

[331] In Japan's “Asama Sanso Incident” perpetrated by the United Red Army—depicted in Wakamatsu Koji's “docu-drama” *United Red Army* (*Jitsuroku Rengōsekigun Asama-Sansō e no Dōtei,* 2007)—the female leader of a radical leftist organization tortures female members of their group for wearing makeup, deeming it counter-revolutionary.

Although the bulk of the film generally follows this didactic tone, the film does include a narrative, and is a loose parody of the events of the Chicago Eight: a group of American agitators prosecuted for crossing state lines and disrupting the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Thus, the film dramatizes a historical event—a trial—from a very recent past; to use a phrase coined by Yuriko Furuhata, it is an example of the "cinema of actuality" that characteristic of the Japanese political avant-garde cinema during this same period: "The timely appropriation of sensational news, high-profile media events, and other topical images widely circulating in the press."[332] Here too, Godard presents a highly timely parody of this extremely high-profile event, paradigmatic for the anti-Vietnam leftist movements of the period. Although characters do seem vaguely reminiscent of their real-life counterparts, with a twist—Black Panther Bobby Seale is Bobby X, and the presiding Judge Hoffman is Judge Himmler—two are actresses (Anne Wiazemsky and Juliet Berto, playing themselves), and others are Godard's own fabrications. The film thus blends a non-fiction element—a real-life trial—with explicitly fictional elements.

Indeed, the film's two protagonists are fictional characters: although the title of the film might immediately recall the Vladimir (Lenin) and Rosa (Luxemburg) from the aforementioned film *Pravda*, here Vladimir and Rosa are not star-crossed Marxist lovers but another Marxist Duo: Friedrich Vladimir and Karl Rosa, whose names are an amalgamation of Lenin, Luxembourg, Marx, and Engels. These two men are played by Godard and Gorin, respectively. Refusing to take themselves seriously, the directors are shown: 1. stuttering (mostly nonsensically) about political aesthetics, while hovering around the net of a very bourgeois tennis court; 2. jumping and rolling about with an enormous rubber ball, while placing a red

[332] Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 2.

chair and picture frame in the middle of a silent circle; and 3. dressed in either judges' robes (Gorin) or a police uniform with goggles (Godard), while blowing smoke at Judge Himmler.[333] The result is extremely comedic and playful—a surprising turn for the decidedly un-playful Dziga Vertov Group. In another moment of almost unbelievably pedestrian humor, Godard brandishes a small wooden stick in front of his pants, which he pulls until it becomes a large police baton. Although the bulk of *Vladimir et Rosa* is immensely didactic and difficult to watch, these few moments are uncharacteristically lighthearted. Godard and Gorin even include a brief still of the Marx Brothers, thus supporting the notion that the film is imbued with all kinds of Marxian sensibility, whether Karl's or Groucho's.[334]

Figure 22: Dziga Vertov Group, *Vladimit et Rosa* (1971)

However, parody notwithstanding, the film does not come to any conclusions about the future of militant leftism. Like other Dziga Vertov Group films, the production attempts a radical break with realism, but the film's endless self-criticism prevents it from offering any concrete alternatives. In addition, the moments of physical comedy witnessed in *Vladimir et Rosa* are still

[333] See Figure 22.

[334] The film's uncharacteristic (for the Dziga Vertov Group) lightheartedness might be due to its fast-paced production (it was filmed over the course of one summer), and existence as a purely fundraising measure. The comedy of *Vladimir et Rosa*, however brief, serves to subtly mock the distributor (Grove Press), and displays itself as outright entertainment. See David Faroult, "Du *Vertovisme* du Groupe Dziga Vertov," in *Jean-Luc Godard : Documents* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2006), 136, for more information about the film's production.

entirely opposed to “feelings”: as Gorin states, “There are no feelings. Absolutely no feelings in Laurel and Hardy, and only a few in Jerry Lewis.”[335] The film, then, as an homage to these three performers, was meant to exclude all emotion. This gag-filled Brechtian comedy, then, is quite different from the free aesthetic play characteristic of the Kino-Eye.

However, the winking, meta-cinematic tone of *Vladimir et Rosa* does not recur in any film created afterwards, and, compared with the other films of the period, it remains an underappreciated outlier. The group's final feature, *Tout va bien* (All's Well, 1972), would be its swan song, and remains the most well-known of the group's works—no surprise given its two *vedettes*, Jane Fonda and Yves Montand. More a studio film than a Vertovian documentary filmed *en plein air*, *Tout va bien* continues certain tendencies of the Dziga Vertov Group films, especially *Vent d'Est* and *Vladimir et Rosa,* by putting the aftermath of 1968 on a stage—in this case, on a studio set constructed in a factory. In the film's unique studio construction, every room has a transparent wall, creating a veritable cinematographic dollhouse. In this way, Godard could use the aesthetically-constructed studio set to produce a certain “unmasking” sensibility, and thus allowing his camera to travel (pan) from one room to another.[336]

The technique is emphatically Brechtian, and although its sense of “laying bare” social constructions by means of aesthetic constructions has a certain formalist flavor, the bulk is antithetical to the Kino-Eye. Largely abandoning his earlier references to Vertov, Godard now puts Brecht explicitly in the fore: as Yves Montand, Godard's “double,” recounts in the film: “I am only now figuring out things that Brecht knew forty years ago.” Brecht is prized over Vertov,

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[335] Kent E. Carroll, “Film and Revolution: Interview with the Dziga Vertov Group,” in *Focus on Godard,* ed. Royal S. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972), 63.

[336] See Figure 23.

whose endless permutations of cinematographic and editing techniques are nowhere to be found in *Tout va bien*—a film whose only notable camera technique is the slow, horizontal pan. In fact, any mention of Vertov or Soviet aesthetics is definitively absent in the film, aside from a single framed photo of Mayakovsky in Montand and Fonda's bedroom.[337]

Figure 23: Dziga Vertov Group, *Tout va bien* (1972)

Figure 24: Mayakovsky reference in Dziga Vertov Group, *Tout va bien* (1972)

Instead, Godard refers to his previous films: the dialogue between two lovers in the infamous beginning of *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*, 1963), restated between Montand and Fonda in the

[337] See Figure 24.

beginning of *Tout va bien*; the American woman journalist and the French man, a reprisal of Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo's roles in *A bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960); the general plot launching *Le Vent d'Est*, of an Italian factory boss sequestered in his office by the uprising of his staff. I argue, however, that the film's most direct comparison and most significant reference is not even Godard's previous works, and certainly not the works of Vertov, but the earliest of Vertov's French "afterlives": *Chronique d'un été*. The film is a reworking and homage to Rouch and Morin's film, thus closing the circle and returning the French Kino-Bayonet its own *cinéma-vérité* beginnings.

In *Chronique*, the filmmakers interview several working-class factory workers, who discuss their experience with strikes and their union. *Tout va bien* fictionalizes this account, and puts the exact same opinions, lifestyles, and situations from *Chronique* into the mouths of actors and actresses playing factory workers and their families; here, however, the interviewer disappears from the frame, and we can only hear the interview responses themselves. Fusing the documentary and fiction genres, [338] the reference pays homage to a leftist filmmaking which began with Morin and Rouch's seminal production.

Godard Against the Kino-Fist

Cinéma-verité and the Dziga Vertov Group are united in their critique of standard narrative filmmaking modes. Although films like *Chronique* rely on more realistic and explicitly documentarian tendencies, they share with films such as *British Sounds* or even *Tout va bien* a critique of Eisensteinian filmmaking, whose films were especially *de rigeur* during the heyday of the Dziga Vertov Group. Indeed, *Cahiers du cinéma* had been publishing translations of

[338] Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard,* 43.

Eisenstein's texts for the bulk of a year, beginning in February 1969.[339] Theorists during the period looked back to the Soviet filmmaker-theorists of the 1920s in order to re-evaluate France's own aesthetic production. As an article published in *Cahiers* in October 1969, entitled "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" states:

> To us the only possible line of advance seems to be to use the theoretical writings of the Russian film-makers of the twenties (Eisenstein above all) to elaborate and apply a critical theory of the cinema, a specific method of apprehending rigorously-defined objects, in direct reference to the method of dialectical materialism.[340]

The critics post-1968 thus looked to the Soviets to provide clues for a dialectical materialism in art. *Mai '68* created an impetus for the development of a radical film practice, as well as a critical examination of all aspects of existing film production; this examination, of course, had consequences for the development of new art during this period. The desire to create new art forms—radical interventions within existing modes of cultural production—led to a re-evaluation of various assumptions underlying aesthetic practice itself. Specifically, it re-examined some of the debates around questions of culture and class, attitudes to the past, and the development of new aesthetic forms conducted in the immediate post-revolutionary period in the USSR. The French critics looked equally to the radical writings of Europe in the 1930s, by writers such as Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin.[341]

Eisenstein's texts, however, were largely printed without historical contextualization until 1970. Ultimately, the highly literary, theoretically-engaged public of late 1960s France is rather unlike the Soviet public of the 1920s—to quote Lenin, without education, culture, or general

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[339] Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 45.

[340] *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 216, Oct 1969, translated by Susan Bennett in *Screen,* v12 n1, Spring 1971, p35, and *Screen Reader 1,* cited in Ibid.

[341] Harvey, *May '68*, 45.

knowledge.[342] Likewise, the *Cahiers* articles discussing Eisenstein did not mention the opposition to *Proletkult* (proletarian cultural organizations) and avant-garde aesthetic movements (formalism, futurism, constructivism, or suprematism) maintained by Lenin and Anatoly Lunacharsky, first Commissar of Education. The Eisenstein with which Godard was familiar, then, might have been quite different from the more turbulent Eisenstein whom contemporary film critics have grown to appreciate. Instead, Godard discovered in Eisenstein a straw man of "imperialism" against whom he placed Dziga Vertov, the more formalist Bolshevik. Indeed, Godard explicitly used Vertov's name to counter the theory associated with Eisenstein, in an attempt to "make political films *politically*".[343] Perhaps an "Anti-Eisenstein Group" would have been a more appropriate moniker, then, instead of the Dziga Vertov Group.

Godard criticizes Eisenstein for kowtowing to Stalinism, and praises Vertov for resisting the staid forms of Socialist Realism. Regardless of the truth of these statements—notably, Eisenstein's films such as *Ivan the Terrible Part I* (1941) cast a wry and critical eye on the autocrat, and he was prevented from making films for much of the 1930s—Eisenstein's ability to create films at all casts him as a potential co-conspirator in Soviet revisionism. In *Le Vent d'Est*, Eisenstein's films are even equated with fascism, as the voiceover states:

> Defeat for revolutionary cinema, November 18, 1924. A few days after the death of Lenin, Sergei Eisenstein was deeply moved by a performance of *Intolerance*, a film by the American Imperialist Griffith. Result: in 1925, mistaking primary duty for secondary duty, Eisenstein made a film about the sailors of the Battleship *Potemkin*, instead of glorifying the people's struggle of the moment. Result: in 1929, in *The General Line*, on the subject of agrarian reform, while Eisenstein uses new terms to describe the Tsarist oppression, he still uses old expressions to talk about collectivism.
> In his case, the old triumphs definitively over the new. Result: five years later, Hollywood pays for his journey to film the Mexican revolution. While in Berlin, Dr. Goebbels urges the directors of UFA to produce a Nazi *Potemkin*.

[342] Ibid., 46.

[343] de Baecque, *Godard*, 459-461.

Thus, the conflict between Vertov and Eisenstein represents the conflict between avant-gardist aesthetics (whether the Kino-Eye or Kino-Bayonet variety) and a Stalinist Socialist Realism, driven by emotion (Eisenstein was "deeply moved") and influenced by the perversions of imperialist Hollywood filmmaking (*Intolerance*).[344] Godard most likely refers to the emotion-oriented "theory of attractions" perpetuated by Eisenstein during this period of Soviet film, which he nonetheless analyzes as "old expressions," such as those used in *The General Line.* Although Godard is perhaps hyperbolic here in his insistence on Eisenstein's "old expressions" —no film scholar can deny the great influence of Eisenstein's novel concept of dialectical montage in film editing and analysis—he posits a distinction between the "expressions" of Eisenstein and those of Vertov. As described in the introduction, Eisenstein did not share Vertov's avant-gardist interest in honing perception through the use of the Kino-Eye, but instead preferred the violent assault of the "Kino-Fist". Likewise, disregarding the fact that *Intolerance* was an enormous hit in the USSR, beloved of ordinary citizens and filmmakers alike, Godard links Eisenstein with the political oppression of imperialist cinema—to "selling out," in a sense, to major capitalist film production. Then, in one fell swoop, Godard links Eisenstein to German fascism, and in Goebbel's desire to create a Nazi version of *Battleship Potemkin*. The rejection of an avant-gardist aesthetics therefore has far graver consequences than just a different tendency in aesthetic techniques; as Godard claims, a more emotional variety of agitational propaganda such as Eisenstein's "Kino-Fist" can work against revolutionary politics and towards fascism.

[344] Conveniently, Godard also ignores the fact that *Intolerance* was one of the most successful film runs in early Soviet film history; far more filmmakers and audience fell under the spell of the Griffith film than Eisenstein alone. Indeed, Mikhail Kaufman even wrote that *Intolerance,* screened in March 1919, had an extremely powerful effect on the Kaufman brothers—including Vertov—and even justified the latter's editing experiments. See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov: Vol. 2.*

One must note here, however, that the Kino-Bayonet and Kino-Fist, though different Marxist strategies of political aesthetics, are nonetheless united in their insistence and even glorification of violence. One cannot ignore the fact that the Kino-Fist and Kino-Bayonet are both weapons in their own right, and thus distinguished from the perception-oriented "shocks" of the Kino-Eye. In the last scenes of *Le Vent d'Est*, after which the film attempts radical reformation of its own characteristics by scratching on celluloid, everything explodes into violence; the main student activist, played by Anne Wiazemsky, creates bombs from household goods and places them around a city,[345] thus recreating her militant character from *La Chinoise*. The film does not appear to question the idea of extreme violence as an appropriate means of class struggle, and indeed, even aesthetic form is rendered violent: in one pivotal moment, a woman in nineteenth-century dress reads a passage from Proust aloud, while an arm appears to slice her with a sickle and stops just short of her neck, while announcing, *Mort à la culture bourgeois!* (Death to bourgeois culture). This staging of a violent act repeats several times, with almost no variation whatsoever. Even after the repeated attempts at violence, the woman appears to pay the sickle little heed, and continues reading from Proust, while the voiceover continues to announce a death to bourgeois culture.

The link between violence, misogyny, and a radical critique of bourgeois culture recurs throughout Godard's filmmaking of this period, but is made especially apparent in *Le Vent d'Est*—also the film with the most references to the Soviet filmmaker. The Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet occupy the same theoretical placeholder for Godard's radical anti-realist experiments.

[345] This plot element—the placing of bombs around a large metropolis as an act of civilian terror—is recreated in Wakamatsu Koji's 1972 Pink Film *Ecstasy of the Angels*, as we will see in Chapter 4. Although Wakamatsu and his erstwhile scriptwriter Adachi Masao were certainly influenced by Godard's Dziga Vertov Group experiments and self-consciously echoed Godard's narrative in their films, it is also very likely that the militant Marxist-Leninist student attempting to explode urban topographies was simply a common trope of this period in the histories of France and Japan, both marked by radically leftist student movements in the late 1960s.

The sickle about to slice the throat of the bourgeois woman symbolizes Godard's camera slicing the neck of an aesthetics centered around representation—the classic Hollywood model of narrative filmmaking, as well as certain paradigmatic examples of *haute culture* (e.g. Proust, the woman in the old-fashioned dress, etc). Godard's tendency for violence and against affect-driven representational modes thus separates him from the playfulness and estrangement inherent to Vertov's filmmaking, and aligns with what was considered Brechtian alienation in the 1960s.

Reading Bertolt Brecht in the 1970s

In his article on *Le Vent d'Est,* Peter Wollen situates Godard's Dziga Vertov Group period not in the context of Vertov's own works, but definitively within the tradition of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud. Wollen writes:

> Godard's cinema, broadly speaking, is within the modern tradition established by Brecht and Artaud, in their different ways, suspicious of the power of the arts—and the cinema, above all—to 'capture' its audience without apparently making it think, or changing it.[346]

Godard is thus equated with a "modern tradition... suspicious of the power of the arts." Brecht even "establishes" the modernist tradition: self-reflexive, self-critical, and self-aware. For Wollen, Brechtian ideas can be easily transposed into filmic terms, defined by Thomas Elsaesser as: 1. Rethinking the question of pleasure, 2. Developing filmic modes to distance the spectator from the spectacle, and 3. Exploring (and criticizing) mimetic forms of representation in much the same spirit as Brecht reflected on the ideological implications of bourgeois theatrical

[346] Ibid., 500.

traditions.[347] Wollen sees in Godard these same characteristics, thus linking the German playwright with the French filmmaker of the political avant-garde.

Indeed, it is not difficult to find these tendencies in the Dziga Vertov Group films, as we have noted throughout this chapter; in fact, all of his films between 1968 and 1972 are littered with explicit references to the German playwright and theorist. Even a glance at Godard's biography would indicate an obsession with Brecht: he constantly purchases Brecht's books abroad, gives them away to revolutionaries internationally (such as a Palestinian liberation leader in the abandoned film project *Jusqu'à victoire*).[348] This, however, is not the case with Dziga Vertov: Godard does not pass out manifestoes and biographies of Vertov to his compatriots. Although de Baecque notes that the members of the Dziga Vertov Group, especially in the later months of their existence, spent some time burrowed in the analysis of theoretical texts by Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and of course Vertov, they were also translating these texts from English, Spanish, or Italian editions. Unfortunately, not a single member of the Dziga Vertov Group understood Russian,[349] which led to certain important points getting lost in translation. Some misunderstandings were rather blatant, such as Godard's misconception that Vertov's neologism *kinoki* (Film-Eyes) meant Film-Workers.[350]

Disregarding Godard's obvious misunderstanding of Vertov's theories and films, film historical scholarship has definitively aligned Godard's experiments with Brechtian—rather than Vertovian—forms. Godard's particular style of Brechtian filmmaking is explored in detail

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[347] Thomas Elsaesser, "From Anti-Illusionism to Hyper Realism: Bertolt Brecht and Contemporary Film," in *Re-interpreting Brecht: his Influence On Contemporary Drama and Film,* Ed. Pia Kleber and Colin Visser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 170,

[348] de Baecque, *Godard,* 491-496.

[349] Ibid., 482.

[350] Godard: "Kinoki does not mean moviemaker, it means film workers..." see Carroll, "Film and Revolution," 50.

elsewhere, notably Kristin Thompson's article "Sawing through the Bough: *Tout va bien* as a Brechtian Film"[351] and Martin Walsh's (posthumously published and incomplete) text *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema*. Although Walsh also (wrongly) included Vertov, Medvedkin, and Eisenstein underneath the umbrella of "Brechtian" filmmaking, Walsh died tragically before being able to pursue their in-depth analysis of Soviet films. Instead, Walsh's work primarily treats the filmmaking duo, Jean-Marie Straub-Danièle Huillet, "Black Wave" Serbian director Dušan Makavejev, and of course, Godard and Gorin's Dziga Vertov Group. However, Walsh does fundamentally equate Brecht with Vertov, even writing that Vertov's demand for the "dislocation and concentration of visual phenomena" is "analagous, obviously, to Brecht's alienation effect."[352] Thus, Vertov is retroactively analyzed as a Brechtian filmmaker, providing an easy—although misinformed—link to Godard and Gorin's militant filmmaking. This, of course, was not the case, and although Godard's films of the late 1960s and early 1970s were suffused with Brechtian theory, they were far from the fast-paced and joyous films of the Soviet filmmaker.

We must, however, take these references to Brecht with a grain of salt. Godard interpreted Brecht as a model for an anti-affective, anti-pleasurable aesthetic experience, emphasizing what Rancière termed the "emancipated spectator" distancing herself from what she views on stage (or screen). Even Wollen reminds us that Brecht was careful not to turn away from entertainment, and in fact quotes Horace in favor of pleasure as the purpose of the arts.[353] Indeed, recent scholarship has become increasingly attentive to the aspects of Brecht's writings

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[351] See Kristin Thompson, "Sawing through the Bough: *Tout va bien* as a Brechtian Film" in *Wide Angle* (1:3, 1979).

[352] Martin Walsh, *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1981), 53.

[353] Ibid., 505. Although this dissertation does not explore Brecht's own theories in depth, one must note that Godard's "Brechtianism" is less a strict following of Brechtian techniques, but its own form of interpretation which must be taken with a grain of salt. Notably, Brecht, does not himself follow the "Brechtian" techniques of Godard's own fashioning.

that are not necessarily anti-affective, and are, rather, more playful and empathetic than the thinkers of the 1960s and 1970s previously assumed.[354] As Elsaesser pithily stated, "Not all the Brechtianisms in postwar cinema… are true to the spirit of Brecht, and among those who have claimed him for their work, fewer inherited his questions than copied his answers, which, of course, were by then no longer answers."[355]Although it is beyond the purpose of this dissertation to analyze Brecht's own work, Godard's use of Brecht might also be called into question, especially with regard to Brecht's alleged refusal, according to Godard and others, of any affective or playful modes. What resulted from the theories emerging from the Brechtian boom of the 1960s was a simplification of Brecht's own ideology, causing the term 'Brechtian' to be so ubiquitous in contemporary film historical scholarship.

For Godard, Brechtian theory symbolized a drive to dissatisfy the spectator rather than satisfy, to provoke rather than entertain. As Wollen describes, "Entertainment, aiming to satisfy the spectator" is posed against "provocation, aiming to dissatisfy and hence change the spectator."[356] Wollen continues: "Cinema is a... drug that lulls and mollifies the militancy of the masses, by bribing them with pleasurable dreams, thus distracting them from the stern tasks which are their true destiny."[357] Thus, a pleasant film becomes a "drug" which destroys a capacity for radical change. For this purpose, Godard's films from the Dziga Vertov Group take great pains to produce not only a lack of pleasure (boredom) but even an anti-pleasure; indeed, Loshitzky notes that the screeching factory noise of *British Sounds* is almost sadistic.[358]

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[354] In 2017, an entire panel during the Modern Languages Association conference was titled: "Brecht, Affect, Empathy". The speakers emphasized a turn in Brechtian scholarship that reflected on his theories and writings as more oriented around affect and empathy than intellectual distancing.

[355] Elsaesser, "Bertolt Brecht and Contemporary Film," 172-173.

[356] de Baecque, *Godard*., 504.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard,* 30-31.

Although one can make the argument that this quasi-sadistic noise produces an affective response, it is one only rooted in frustration. In this way, the only affect used in the Dziga Vertov Group films aim to frustrate the audience's desire to locate an appropriate, and positive, affective response. The removal of pleasure from the cinematic experience is a central goal, and is one of the key elements separating Godard's "Kino-Bayonet" from Vertov's "Kino-Eye".

Conclusion: The Kino-Bayonet Against Pleasure and Feeling

Having established that the films of the Dziga Vertov Group were not aligned with the playful affects of the Kino-Eye, and were more aligned with the Alienation Effect of Bertolt Brecht, the question remains: why did Godard name his filmmaking collective after a filmmaker whose cinematic works were so formally distant from his own? Setting aside the likely possibility that, as discussed previously, Godard did not have Vertov's theoretical texts available to him, and would not have named his group as such, had he more knowledge, we come to two conclusions. The first is historical: due to Godard's evident admiration of Rouch and Morin's *cinéma-vérité* films and movement in the early 1960s, he attempted a leap in the same direction of cinema-truth, yet with a distinctly more formally experimental bent. Indeed, Godard claimed to choose Dziga Vertov's name in order to "indicate a program, to raise a flag, not just to emphasize one person."[359] Thus Vertov was not only an iconoclastic Soviet filmmaker but representative of a larger historical struggle, which remained pertinent to France around 1968. As the name "Vertov" began to be fused with leftist documentary filmmaking, Godard would waste no time aligning himself with this cause.

[359] Carroll, "Film and Revolution," 50.

The second reason for his choosing the Vertov moniker is political: since Vertov's name began to proliferate in film journals in the mid-1960s in France, Vertov became synonymous with the political intentions of the New Left. Dziga Vertov was thus equated with a political aesthetic which was radically different—and directly opposed to—the socialist realist tendencies of the PCF (*Parti communiste français).* This link between non-Stalinist political intentions and Vertov's aesthetics was especially evident given the ultimate rejection of Vertov's works by Soviet party leaders; although Vertov did not perish in the Gulag and the Purges of the late 1930s like so many of his avant-garde compatriots, he was not given the freedom to experiment with films after Socialist Realism became the Soviet art form *par excellence* in 1934. Where Socialist Realist films (and films generally beloved by communist parties in the 1960s internationally, including Japan) were officially forced to be "proletarian, typical, realist, and partisan,"[360] Vertov's films were seen as a major departure. Although Vertov would begin his experiments far earlier than the advent of Socialist Realism by Maxim Gorky and Anatoly Lunacharsky, in France (and Japan, as we will see), Vertov was linked to a radical break from the Old Left.

There is also considerable evidence, as described earlier, that Godard inherited the theories on Vertov described extolled by Georges Sadoul, thereby avoiding, or ignoring, some of the most important (especially affect-driven) characteristics of Vertov's theories and filmmaking. The French understanding of the Kino-Eye was also quite rudimentary: Godard considers the *Cine-Oeil* a montage of image and sound that could be termed dialectical, a technique which attempts to escape the "tyranny of narrative" with *étincelles de sens,* or sparks of meaning.[361] However, given that the word *sens* in French indicates both "meaning" and "feeling," the *sens,*

[360] Dubravka Juraga and Keith M. Booker, *Socialist Cultures East and West: A Post-Cold War Reassessment* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 68.

[361] de Baecque, *Godard,* 462.

undoubtedly translated from Russian, might have originally been not *smisla* (sense) or *znachenie* (meaning) but *chuvstvo* (feeling) or, most likely, *vospriyatiye* (perception). Thus, Vertov's "sparks of perception" or "sparks of feeling" are completely ignored by Godard's chosen interpretation, "sparks of meaning". For Godard, a tyranny of narrative could not be countered with an affective experience of film, but a complete eradication of feeling from the world of film.

Godard's extreme distaste for "feelings" in the realm of militant filmmaking is evident in many interviews and accounts of the period. For instance, Luddy recounts the following, which occurred during a Q & A at Berkeley following a rare screening of *British Sounds*:

> Someone asked him [Godard] if there was a place in the Revolution for "smoking dope and dancing naked in the streets." Godard replied that while there might be a specific situation in which such action would be a correct tactic, he didn't advocate it as a general movement. He spoke repeatedly about acting from logical analysis rather than from emotional feelings, but this just got people more upset. One young woman began a long, whining statement in which she kept returning to her "feelings," and was just coming around for the third time to, "and I feel," when Godard yelled. "Fuck your feelings!" At the time it seemed like he had just lost his patience, but in retrospect we're not so sure.[362]

One might well imagine that the Godard telling a young woman to "fuck her feelings" is light years away from Vertov's, and the Kino-Eye's, playful, affective approach to filmmaking. Although the context of Godard's outburst is somewhat understandable—Godard, Gorin, and Luddy had been pelted with tomatoes after the screening of *British Sounds* not long before—it indicates a serious refusal of affective responses. If we combine this problematic outburst with Godard and Gorin's brutal treatment of Jane Fonda in *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, described at the beginning of this chapter, we can again see that Godard's anti-pleasurable, anti-affective arguments contain a deeply misogynistic undercurrent. Not only this, but Godard is also known for equating women revolutionaries with revisionism (i.e. the plot if *Lutte en Italie,* the short film

[362] Goodwin, Luddy, and Wise, "The Dziga Vertov film group in America," 24.

Le Grand Escroc, etc); in one interview, Godard notes that a revolution is not "two intellectual old ladies in front of a cup of tea."[363] The fact that these are "ladies" and not men (or even women) is evidently no accident. Although women were occasionally involved in the Group's productions, the rigid authoritarianism of Godard and Gorin, and their caustic attitude to any sort of pronounced "feelings", indicate a sexist streak throughout much of this tempestuous time in the history of the French political avant-garde.

As we will see in the next chapter on Japan's political avant-garde in the 1960s, this misogyny appears to be inherent in many of the most militant of radical leftist groups. Although the gender relations within the political avant-garde movements deserve detailed further study, we must note that this particular type of misogyny is far less prevalent in the more playful and less hardline Marxist political movements of the 1960s: those aligned with the Kino-Eye over the Kino-Bayonet. Indeed, had Godard understood in-depth Vertov's concept of the Kino-Eye, the Dziga Vertov Group might have come to an extremely different conclusion, and might have labeled themselves differently. Instead, in fusing Vertov with a lineage of strict Marxist-Leninism (and even retroactive Maoism), Brechtian alienation techniques, and an anti-pleasurable filmmaking, Godard and Gorin continued a separate lineage of Marxist aesthetics that might have originated with the writings of Georges Sadoul.

It is only fair, then, that the Group would disband almost immediately after the works of Vertov began to finally be made readily available, in good translation, in a series of texts. Although the Dziga Vertov Group would give other reasons for splitting—Godard had just spent a year recovering from a serious automobile accident, Jean-Pierre Gorin began making his own films and was burdened by Godard's fame, and Godard appeared to replace his "romance"[364]

[363] Carroll, "Film and Revolution," 55.

[364] Whether or not Gorin and Godard had a homosexual love relationship remains ambiguous, but the fact that it was

with Jean-Pierre Gorin with Anne-Marie Melville—the times were simply no longer ripe for militant leftism. The political tide was against them, and the Group splintered. Godard and Gorin, having made seven almost entirely invisible works, moved onto other projects, and never collaborated again.

As Gorin noted in an interview in 1974: " The very idea of trying to think through the lenses of a guy who was thinking in the 30s seems to me, now, extraordinarily backward; what kind of madness tries to delay time and space and history?"[365] Although I do not agree with Gorin that it is necessarily "backward" to be influenced by earlier filmmakers, or to even "think through [their] lenses," it is evident that a certain amount of the Group's failings stemmed from a certain retroactive perspective. Thinking "backward" instead of forward, and an attempt to "delay time and space and history," led to an understanding of Vertov that completely ignored the cultural, historical, and political specificity of the USSR in the 1920s.[366] The Kino-Bayonet also entails a rather significant distrust and violence toward the spectator—resulting in a film experience lacking in engagement, world-wonder, or free aesthetic play. The Kino-Eye's Shklovskian estrangement was replaced with Brechtian alienation. However, as we will see, a more playful sensibility would emerge elsewhere, in another turbulent part of the world rocked by mass student protests: Japan in the 1960s.

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somehow sexual is certain. As Gorin famously noted in an interview with Walsh: "With Jean-Luc and me, it was a love story; we really were deeply in love with each other, with no shame, no guilt; it was a very deep involved sexual thing; we played on our fears and neuroses, it was something which went far beyond movies, and that's why it was effective." See Gorin quoted in Walsh, *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema,* 123.

[365] Ibid., 117.

[366] For this reason, among others, Svilova and Vertov's other collaborators and friends, including his brother and director Boris Kaufman, Soviet scholar Sergei Drobashenko, and veteran director Sergei Yutkevich, heavily criticized Godard's use of Vertov's name. Svilova and Drobashenko deemed Godard overly individualistic, and the anti-Soviet commentary of the Dziga Vertov Group films infuriated them. Yutkevich, equally incensed, wanted to cleanse Vertov's name of "Godardism," and Boris Kaufman even considered suing Godard for his mis-use of Vertov's name. See MacKay, *Dziga Vertov*, 100.

Chapter 4

Rebels and Pornographers: The Japanese Avant-Garde Documentary

Introduction: The New Wave and the Political Avant-Garde

The 1960s in Japan are often associated with the flourishing of political art movements; its films are often discussed with the attached moniker of "Japanese New Wave", despite the disapproval of many filmmakers allegedly belonging to this category. Given the all too easy associations between Japan and France's own New Wave, one must make a distinction between these two histories before launching into an analysis of Japan's political avant-gade—especially given their juxtaposition in this dissertation. As we will see, the term Japanese New Wave, loaded with historical and theoretical inaccuracies, misrepresents the complex history of Japanese cinema. Oshima Nagisa, often (unfortunately) compared with Jean-Luc Godard for his intellectual avant-gardism and his start in film criticism,[367] was explicitly hostile to the term, and for good reason. As he declared:

> Stop using the term "New Wave" once and for all! Evaluate each film on its own merits![368]

This statement occurred after Shochiku film studios pulled *Night and Fog in Japan*—his film investigating the 1960 ANPO (US-Japan Security Treaty) protests—from studios. However,

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[367] Although here I note the frequency of comparisons between Oshima and Godard, I have elsewhere argued that these comparisons are rather unfortunate, and imply—as I note on subsequent pages—a causal relationship between the French New Wave and the work of Oshima. Although Oshima did view many of Godard's films, he disliked the comparison between himself and the famous French filmmaker. Indeed, the comparison is especially faulty, as Oshima's 1960s films were far more explicitly political than Godard's New Wave productions. See my article "Two Contentious New Waves: 'Oshima x Godard' at BAM," in *Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Art, Politics, and Culture* (March 2017). Accessed May 20, 2017. http://brooklynrail.org/2017/03/film/Two-Contentious-New-Waves-Oshima-x-Godard-at-BAM.

[368] Oshima, *Cinema, Censorship, and the State*, 57.

Oshima did not only direct his criticism to the studio executives, but the general world of film criticism which had exuberantly co-opted such a title. Oshima states:

> What do you mean, "New Wave"? Have you ever used the term "New Wave" as anything other than a synonym of sex and violence? Where is the sex and violence in *Night and Fog in Japan*? What relationship does that film have to your so-called New Wave? By taking a concept that has already been smeared with your dirty hands and forcing it on *Night and Fog in Japan*, by sweeping the revolutionary aspects of that work into the realm of public morals, you are giving support to the political and artistic reactionaries.
> With unrelenting anger, I protest.[369]

Although Oshima was well aware of the aesthetic upheavals of the French New Wave halfway around the world, he argued against the assumption of this term for Japanese filmmakers. As he rightly noted, "New Wave" became a synonym of (market-friendly) sex and violence, rather than a theoretical and aesthetic revolution of cinematic form. For Oshima, calling his film New Wave was reactionary; it smeared a concept with "dirty hands" by ignoring its revolutionary aspects and instead "sweeping [them]... into the realm of public morals."

In addition, the term Japanese New Wave is problematic because it implies a direct French influence. As we will later see, the films influencing the *Nuberu bagu* were quite varied; Matsumoto Toshio, in his text *Discovery of the Image* (*Eizou no hakken*) of 1964, was far more influenced by Luis Buñuel and the Marquis de Sade than Godard or Truffaut. In addition, even a cursory glance at the repertory of the Art Theatre Guild (ATG), a foreign film distributor which later became a production company and experimental film enclave, indicates that Eastern European and Scandinavian films might have been more influential for young Japanese filmmakers than the French. Indeed, the first film screened at ATG was Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1961)—a Polish film.[370] For Oshima as well as the bulk of

[369] Ibid., 56.

[370] See Sato Tadao, *ATG Eiga wo Yomu: 60 nendai ni hajimetta meisaku no aakaibu* (*Reading ATG films: Archive of*

filmmakers subsumed under this term—Wakamatsu Koji, Suzuki Seijun, Matsumoto Toshio, Imamura Shohei, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Teshigahara Hiroshi, among many others—*Nuberu Bagu* was a moneymaking ploy concocted by the Shochiku studio, which put its energy and resources into attaining younger, more experimental filmmakers. Although first proposed by an editor of the *Weekly Yomiuri*, which published feature articles on Oshima's 1960 film *Cruel Story of Youth*, the term was quickly adopted by Shochiku. Noting the attention Godard, Truffaut, and their ilk were receiving around the world from 1959 onwards, Shochiku lifted the term to apply to its own freshly minted controversial young filmmakers. The term was then promoted by Shido Kiro, director of the production department, to counter a series of box office failures.[371] Desirous of media attention but only to a point, the Shochiku outcrop of the *Nuberu Bagu* was a commercial enterprise from the start.

It is also important to note that the Japanese movement described as the New Wave predates the French by several years. Before the films of Oshima, Suzuki Seijun, Masumura Yasuzo and their ilk began to be called the Japanese *Nuberu Bagu*, Japan saw the popularity of Sun Tribe films in the mid-1950s, epitomized by Nakahira Ko's 1956 film *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta kajitsu).* Four years before Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, or Agnes Varda created their internationally renowned first feature films, Japan was already in the midst of a cultural upheaval; the sensual, youth-focused, decidedly more gritty and violent Sun Tribe films launched a cultural controversy. Thus, although the films of the so-called Japanese New Wave in the 1960s were undoubtedly influenced by various art film movements around the world, France was not its direct progenitor. The Japanese *Nuberu bagu* should instead be seen as a continuation of

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Masterpieces Starting from the 1960s) (Tokyo: Film Art Sha, 1991), 12-13.

[371] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality,* 3.

the growing disruption within Japanese film in the mid-1950s, eventually leading to the collapse of the studio system and the launch of Japanese anime, Pink Film, and the experimental, iconoclastic productions of the Art Theatre Guild (ATG), which would use its resources exclusively to fund experimental art films, and to screen various art films from around the globe.

Not only does the term *Nuberu Bagu* imply a direct line of influence which did not actually exist, but it also negates Japan's own cotemporaneous cinematic revolution, assumes a similar politics, and ignores the historical specificity of both France and Japan. This is not to say that the two historical periods are dissimilar; both were marked by the New Left and blossoming student protest movements. However, it is not their respective New Wave films that indicate a similar aesthetic and political ideology; it is, rather, a grouping of films that scholars like Yuriko Furuhata have termed the Japanese political avant-garde.[372] Indeed, France's own political avant-garde, exemplified by the films of the Dziga Vertov Group, as we have seen, as well as the films of Chris Marker's Medvedkin Group, was a reaction to the events of *Mai '68.* These films attempted a Marxist political aesthetic which would lead to the viewer's personal, and political, emancipation. As we have seen, this political avant-garde had two major tendencies, which this dissertation has termed the "Kino-Eye"—favoring free aesthetic play and undidactic politics—and the "Kino-Bayonet," in which the camera becomes a weapon for political struggle, and serves to disrupt standard modes of representation. Japan, indeed, had its own political avant-garde in the 1960s, which shared these twin tendencies, and reflected its own history.

Japan in the 1960s was enmeshed in its 'season of politics': a tumultuous era seeped in political sentiment, stretching from the failure of the 1960s ANPO protests and ending with the

[372] In *Cinema of Actuality,* Furuhata used the term because it "acknowledges the permeability between commercial and underground forms of filmmaking." See Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 3. Although the political avant-garde is not restricted to cinematic forms—many works of visual art, theatre, music, and even manga can be subsumed under this title—this dissertation will deal primarily with the cinematic iteration of this wide-ranging movement.

hijackings and hostages of the United Red Army's Asama Sanso Incident in 1972, to which we will return at the end of this chapter. The films of this era were extremely stylistically varied, revealing a wealth of experimentation that has not been seen since in Japanese film history—and was perhaps only rivaled in the global experiments of the 1920s. As we have seen, political avant-garde movements often arise in the aftermath of a certain political failure. Films such as Vertov's offered an alternative to an increasingly non-revolutionary Soviet society after the death of Lenin. Mere years away from Stalinism, defined by a rigid transmission-based model of aesthetics, Vertov's films attempted to recover a free and active perception normally subsumed by the drudgery of everyday life. Although Vertov's films were virtually ignored in the USSR after the 1930s, his political avant-garde practice emerged in the 1960s, in regions such as France and Japan. But where Godard's films react to the political failure of *Mai '68*, Japan's history is somewhat more complicated; the Japanese 1960s were bookended by two different political protest movements: the ANPO protests in 1960, and again in the late 1960s, alongside a slew of university occupations. Japanese youth criticized their country's tacit support of the American military—and thus American imperialism—through the US-Japan Security Agreement. Coupled with an increasingly stringent and overcrowded university space, students felt their education would inexorably slot them into allotted posts in an inherently immoral capitalist industrial society.[373] The politically engaged filmmakers of this period responded to this same struggle throughout the 1960s, creating films which aim to disrupt and provoke their viewers.

Unfortunately, the individual filmmakers of this period are often forgotten in the shadow of their historical era, with the notable exception of Oshima Nagisa.[374] For example, David

[373] Oguma Eiji, "Japan's 1968: A Collective Reaction to Rapid Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil," Trans. Nick Kapur, *The Asia Pacific Journal* (13: 12, March 2015), 11.

[374] Oshima Nagisa is one of the few Japanese filmmakers of the 1960s whose critical texts have been translated into English (see Oshima, *Cinema, Censorship, and the State)* and whose cinematic work in its entirety has been the

Desser's text *Eros Plus Massacre* combines many films of what he terms the 'Japanese New Wave' with an eye towards their similarity but not their difference, and ignores many contradictions and intricacies within these disparate works. In addition, while Desser's text focuses primarily on directors beloved by international critics, such as Oshima Nagisa, Yoshida Kiju, and Shinoda Masahiro, he avoids analyzing the form of their films. On the other hand, an opposite tendency of the analysis of the Japanese political avant-garde sublimates the politics of this period under the umbrella of Bazinian auteur theory, thus losing the interconnections between these filmmakers, both aesthetic and political, which resulted in such a rich period of film history. The difficulty becomes: how to analyze the films of the 1960s as individual aesthetic texts, without ignoring the historical moment which allowed such films to come into being, and without succumbing to an over-historicization which sets aside formal analysis?

To remedy this tendency, this chapter analyzes the Japanese political avant-garde—with a focus on avant-garde documentaries—by discussing the cinematic works of several individual filmmakers through an analysis of their disparate but linked formal styles, within their specific historical context(s), with an ear attuned to the inter-relations between both other filmmakers of the period, and similar international movements. In other words, this chapter views the avant-garde documentary through the fraternal[375] twin definitions of the French word *histoire*: story (*monogatari*, in Japanese) and history (*rekishi*): as both something fictive, aesthetically crafted into being (*monogatari*), and something non-fictive, and documenting a historical fact (*rekishi).* We will find that the Japanese filmmakers of this period self-consciously aimed to merge these

study of several monographs (see, for example, Maureen Turim, "The Films of Oshima: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)). Although now there is a resurgence of interest in the Japanese 1960s, one must note that Oshima merited a translation over 20 years earlier than other filmmakers.

[375] My use of the term "fraternal"—which also has the meaning of "brotherly"—is not accidental, as it points to a decidedly male-dominated grouping of films, especially in Japan: "history," rather than "*her*story".

twin meanings of *histoire* within their films; nonfiction is blended with fiction to produce highly crafted, and highly varied, semi-documentary productions.[376] Like the films of Dziga Vertov, and other films of the "Kino-Eye" trajectory, these films are defined by a playful juxtaposition between a highly *crafted* sense of aesthetics and a nonfiction sensibility.

This synthesis of avant-garde and documentary differs, then, from Yuriko Furuhata's definition of "cinema of actuality" in her seminal book of the same name. Furuhata defines the cinema of actuality as the "timely appropriation of sensational news, high-profile media events, and other topical images widely circulating in the press by [avant-garde] filmmakers"... pointing to a "collective concern with journalistic actuality."[377] Although greatly indebted to Furuhata's analyses of 1960s filmmakers, this chapter focuses not on the use of journalistic "actuality" as such. My analysis instead expands Furuhata's study into characteristics of the "Kino-Eye" such as playfulness and estrangement, thus tracing a theoretical line from the Formalism of the Soviet Avant-Garde to the cinematic experiments of the Japanese 1960s.

However, this does not mean that all works of the Japanese Political Avant-Garde were equally imbued with Kino-Eye characteristics. Several filmmakers leaned further towards the "Kino-Bayonet", focusing on techniques of alienation rather than estrangement, and a more hardline political bent. As discussed in the introduction, this was a tendency to favor the concept of film-as-weapon, in vogue during the latter half of the 1960s. By contrast, the filmmakers described in this chapter are notable for their "Kino-Eye" orientation. Focusing on a variety of media and film techniques, and incorporating both fictional and nonfictional modes, these films

[376] Many of the 'semi-documentary' films from this time period combine allegorical narratives with a documentarian perspective. For a more extensive analysis of the semi-documentary genre, see Julia Alekseyeva, "Butterflies, beetles, and postwar Japan: semi-documentary in the 1960s," in *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* (Feb 9, 2017).

[377] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 2.

are especially notable for their playfulness and use of estrangement. Although other filmmakers could have easily been included in this discussion—for example, Teshigahara Hiroshi or Kuroki Kazuo—in the interest of brevity and clarity, our discussion will be limited to those directors that best capture a Kino-Eye sensibility prevalent in Japanese filmmaking in the wake of great political upheaval.

Indeed, in contrast to France, Japan's 1960s had two major political upheavals, both oriented around mass ANPO protests—first in 1960, and then in the late 1960s. In both periods, avant-garde documentary filmmaking practices emerged out of a sense of political failure; strict Communist party-line tactics were exposed as insufficiently radical, and standard modes of representation—both bourgeois Hollywood and left-wing proletarian social dramas—were viewed as inadequate to foster engaged, and critically-minded, citizens. Instead, this movement centered on reviving the human capacity to perceive properly—an estrangement *for* the world—as well as a playful mode focused on an affective sense of wonder.

Towards an Avant-Garde Documentary

A certain additional fallacy of the study of 1960s Japanese film is to indiscriminately call these rich and varied films political. This, of course, oddly mirrors the tendency to analyze Dziga Vertov films solely as Soviet propaganda, albeit an extremely beautiful and experimental variety. Although both the films of Dziga Vertov and the Japanese political avant-garde are engaged in the question of politics, they are not an attempt at a fusion of politics and aesthetics. Rather, both Vertov and these Japanese filmmakers are engaged in an investigation of the politics inherent in aesthetic production—specifically filmmaking, and its ability to revolutionize human perception, as discussed earlier in this dissertation. The Kino-Fist of the Old Left is abandoned in favor of

the Kino-Eye. After what was perceived to be the failure of the 1960 ANPO Struggle (*ANPO tousou),* Japanese filmmakers of this genre desired to separate from the Old Left and its submersion of politics and art. In fact, Matsumoto Toshio's seminal text *Discovery of the Image* (*Eizou no hakken*) devotes an entire chapter to the repudiation of one such film: *Fight Without Weapons* (*Buki naki tatakai*) of 1960 by Yamamoto Satsuo, a fervent member of the Japanese Communist Party.[378] Although certain films of the Japanese 1960s can be viewed as participating in the "Kino-Bayonet" trajectory, such as the Godard-like productions by Adachi Masao and much of the work of Oshima Nagisa, the bulk of Japanese avant-garde documentary was more playful and less didactic than its film-as-weapon iteration. Less interested in a distanced Brechtian formality and didactic Marxist-Leninism, these films instead investigate the politics inherent in aesthetic experience itself.

As Jacques Rancière notes*,* the very term "political art" is unsatisfactory. Which, of course, does not mean that art cannot have political intent, but that it is necessarily, and productively, ambiguous. As Rancière notes:

> This means that there is a certain undecidability in the 'politics of aesthetics'. There is a metapolitics of aesthetics which frames the possibilities of art. Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity. That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhat beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfill its political promise are condemned to a certain melancholy.[379]

An art fused entirely with politics—one in which art fulfills the political promise inherent to all aesthetic forms—is doomed to melancholy, and impossibility: a failure of both art and politics. One recalls Benjamin's claim in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility":

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[378] See Matsumoto Toshio, *Eizou no hakken (Discovery of the Image): Avant-Garde Documentary* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1963), 109-118.

[379] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 133.

an aestheticized politics is the root of fascism—indeed a troubling and melancholy fate. Taking Rancière's claim a step further in our discussion of Japanese cinema, we might note that political content exists in all art, but to varying degrees, and even more varied means—even in the highly politicized 1960s. As Rancière notes, such art involves a metapolitics, in which a political promise lies within the senses. Rancière continues:

> Art and politics each define a form of dissensus, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible. If there is such a thing as an 'aesthetics of politics', it lies in a re-configuration of the distribution of the common through political processes of subjectivation. Correspondingly, if there is a politics of aesthetics, it lies in the practices and modes of visibility of art that re-configure the fabric of sensory experience.[380]

Thus, the very claim for a politics of aesthetics lies in its potential to change the way we experience the world: a revolution of phenomenology. This is the Rancièrian distribution of the sensible, which is reconfigured through an interaction with certain forms of art. However, this concept does not exclusively belong to Rancière; as noted in Chapter 2, theories of aesthetics, sensory perception, and politics are traced through thinkers as diverse as Merleau-Ponty, Benjamin, and even Schiller. The concept of a re-configuring of the human perceptual apparatus through film extends from the early days of cinema. The theory was developed in the days of Shklovsky and Vertov in the 1920s, and re-emerged within the global political battles of the 1960s. In the wake of the failure of the Old Left, its failing proletarian content akin to Stalinist social realism, Japanese filmmakers turned to aesthetic form to revitalize both cinema as a medium and cinema in its ability to cause seismographic changes in the political landscape.

As stated previously, the political avant-garde of this period is defined by the fusion of documentary techniques (the "political") with fiction and a sense of crafted-ness (the creativity

[380] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 140.

of the avant-garde): a defining aspect of Vertov's 'Kino-Eye' theory. Like Vertov's cinema, blending avant-garde and documentary with a trick-oriented, highly involved editing process which creates entire worlds out of documentary footage, the avant-garde documentaries of the 1960s are similarly defined by the twin tendencies of fiction and fact.

Matsumoto Toshio claimed that these twin tendencies were that of "discovery"—nonfiction—on one hand, and "creation"—fiction—on the other. In *Eizou no hakken,* he analyzes all of film history as a Hegelian dialectic: the non-fictive "discovery" of the Lumière brothers was a thesis to which the fictive, avant-garde "creation" of Georges Méliès. He names this "the dialectic of the discovery and creation of the moving image" (*ugoku eizou ni yoru hakken to souzou no benshouhou).*[381] As he writes: "[The Lumières'] camera "finds" from among existing things, while Méliès "creates" from those that do not exist."[382] Unsurprisingly, the synthesis of these is what Matsumoto describes as a "neo-documentary" or "documentary-like avant-garde film" (*kirokuteki zeien eiga*). Unsurprisingly, his book's full title is *Discovery of the Image: Avant-Garde Documentary.* Naturally, Matsumoto's call for such a "neo-documentary" is echoed in his own filmmaking: in the documentary film *Nishijin*, created for television in 1961, Matsumoto shows the viewer the Kyoto-based workplace of the weavers of stunning kimono fabrics dear to Japanese tradition, but in a far more uncanny light. In the bulk of the 26-minute long film, Matsumoto shows these weavers behind their enormous contraptions of wood, string, and fabric while a deep, omnipresent voice narrates in verse-like phrases. The weavers are dwarfed by these gargantuan geometrical structures, and Matsumoto hides the faces of these workers behind the shadow of their tools. In a review in *Eiga Hyouron,* the critic Sato

[381] Matsumoto, *Eizou no hakken*, 12, all texts translated by self unless stated otherwise.

[382] Ibid., 11.

Tadao notes that "the workers are not described in a 'humanlike' *(ningenteki)* manner" although they exist merely as means of production.[383] Meanwhile, the voiceover uses a constant refrain, becoming an ersatz Buddhist mantra: *Rekishi wo mamoru / Nishijin wo mamoru.* Protect history, protect Nishijin. The laborers of Nishijin operate both as the Marxist proletariat—alienated and, indeed, overshadowed by the products of their labor—and as religious figures: workers martyred for the sake of History.

Nor, however, is this the apex of Matsumoto's uncanny surrealism. In one particularly chilling sequence near the end of the film, lacking any diegetic explication, mugwort powder is burned onto the skin of a woman; then the camera is placed at a low angle, showing us a group of male children staring down at the lens.[384] In a sequence of shots barely a second long, they throw nails onto the ground, and when the nails stick into the ground, the camera returns to the shot of the back and burning powder. Then a form wearing a demon mask appears,[385] dances a sequence from a Noh play, then promptly disappears, while Matsumoto resumes the discussion of Nishijin. The audience is left shocked and haunted—but all this, of course, for a purpose.

Figure 25: Matsumoto Toshio, *Nishijin* (1961)

Figure 26: Matsumoto Toshio, Nishijin (1961)

[383] Sato Tadao, "Matsumoto Toshio's Film-Poem "Nishijin" in *Film Criticism* (Vol.18:8, 1961), pp. 66-68.

[384] See Figure 25.

[385] See Figure 26.

Matsumoto desired to reveal the subconscious of Japanese society: the animism and hauntedness that persists even among capitalist gain and excess, the *unheimlich* hiding among the *heimlich.* Sato notes that this sequence echoes a phrase spoken by the narrator, in which the workers of Nishijin "live in a body in which nails are stuck" (*karada no naka ni kugi ga sasatteiru*).[386] The ever-present nails persist from the primordial age and into the present day, stuck regardless of modernist invention: a haunted tradition. As one voiceover states, while the screen depicts images of elderly Japanese people in kimono blowing the smoke of incense onto their eyes, their bodies: "...within the smoke, within the eyes of the elderly... within my body, things unable to be seen (*me ni mienai*) enter into our nightmares." This, then, is the purpose of the demon mask, the children with nails, and the body with burning mugwort power: things "unable to be seen" persist in the subconscious of the Japanese worker, disregarding the dream of the economic bubble.

Continuing the critique of capitalism, in a slightly later sequence, Matsumoto films a group of businessmen discussing, allegedly, profits over a dinner table. He shoots them from above, describing a set of vaguely humanoid abstract geometrical figures, and then films them from behind, masking their faces in shadow, or behind papers. They are given voices, but all dialogue is post-dubbed, creating a diegetic rift between sound and image. Matsumoto also scratches the audio recording purposefully, so the businessmen repeat themselves like a broken record; sometimes even their coughs are repeated eerily, placing old Japanese salarymen within the selfsame animistic context of their exploited Nishijin workers. Matsumoto's filmmaking thus actualizes his call to blend the documentary with avant-garde, to represent both the "visible" and "invisible" worlds.

[386] Sato, "Matsumoto Toshio," 68.

Although in *Eizou no Hakken* Matsumoto specifically discusses his own experimental documentary style, his dialectic holds for much of the avant-garde documentaries of the Japanese 1960s, who looked to integrate significant nonfiction techniques within fiction film, and to fold fictive elements within documentaries, in equal measure. As Matsumoto aptly notes, "A video 'taken' or 'stolen' by a split second, slowly becomes a vividly drawn [or created] object (*taishou*)—and here is the problem."[387] This problematic of the "taken" versus the "crafted" image is, of course, inherent to all cinema which purports to call itself documentary, as Vertov and the 60s filmmakers, and countless others internationally, were well aware. As stated in the Introduction, the concept of a dialectic between documentary and avant-garde filmmaking appears in film theory from Kracauer to Ivens to Sadoul. However, it is only Matsumoto who provides a synthesis for this dialectic, and actualizes it within his own filmmaking techniques.

Notably, this concept of film history, and interest in a more experimental "realism," precedes the French New Wave by several years. In 1958, the journal *Film Criticism* (*Eiga hyouron*) published an article entitled "Documentary's Future Prospects" by Hanada Kiyoteru, Marxist literary critic and pioneer of avant-garde art theory. Hanada, part of the earlier generation of leftist critics,[388] founded the postwar artist collective *Yoru no kai (The Night Organization)* with avant-garde artist Okamoto Taro.[389] Hanada held Soviet avant-garde filmmakers, including Dziga Vertov, in exceptionally high regard.[390] In this article in *Eiga hyouron*, Hanada points to the cinema of Jules Dassin as a pioneer in the new genre of the "semi-

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[387] Ibid., 10,

[388] Here it is important to note that Hanada was a member of the older generation of leftist scholars, which the 1960s generation would label the Old Left. Although generally the New Left saw itself in opposition to the Old, it was nonetheless quite inspired by thinkers such as Hanada, or the aesthetic philosopher Nakai Masakazu.

[389] Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 25.

[390] Yuriko Furuhata, "Refiguring Actuality: Japan's Film Theory and Avant-Garde Documentary Movement, 1950s-1960s" (Doctoral Dissertation, Brown University, 2009), 23.

documentary." According to Hanada, postwar documentary begins with this genre, whose "drier" tactics necessarily creates an extremely contemporary *(kyou-teki*) sensibility.[391] Here, the Japanese term "documentary" has transformed from its Griersonian definition: influenced by both surrealism and neo-realism, documentary in the Japanese 1960s has come to mean the use of realistic documentary-like techniques. This use of the term is quite different, then, from its contemporary iteration in English. This semi-documentary or neo-documentary style also differs from Furuhata's discussion of actuality, especially in the late 1960s. Rather, in this early period, a "documentary" need not incorporate actuality footage as such. A semi-documentary might include a documentarian sensibility without the attributes commonly associated with the genre today: interviews, explanatory voiceover, actuality footage, or an assumption that all aspects are factual unless stated otherwise.

Hanada explains that this "semi-documentary" technique "intends to negate the conventional documentary." This, however, seems to place it in an uncomfortable comparison with the "full" or "real" documentary that Hanada equates with Grierson. Not ready to make the claim for the semi-documentary's superiority over the full documentary, he writes: "These semi-documentary works do not mean that one is tired of the scientific—or rather, objective—approach; I see both adopting an existentialist approach. But here [in semi-documentary]... the object *(kyakutai*) is taken as the subject *(shutai).*" This juxtaposition between object and subject, or rather objectivity and subjectivity, is immensely important for the Japanese filmmakers of the 1960s, and a leap beyond Griersonian forms. Matsumoto would also discuss the *shutai* at length, and its importance in contemporary filmmaking, as we will see. Though both subjectivity and objectivity have a place in the 1960s documentary, it is the coexistence of both which proves

[391] The citations of this and the following page are taken from Hanada Kiyoteru, "Documentary's Future Prospects," *Film Criticism* (Vol. 15, Issue 2. Feb. 1958), 17.

most interesting for many Japanese theorists. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the concept of *cinéma-vérité*, taken from Dziga Vertov's Kino-Pravda series, rids Vertov's films of its playful subjectivity and aesthetic sense, instead assuming all Cine-Truth is inherently objective. Hanada's argument, and the Japanese avant-garde documentary forms, revisit the innate subjectivity of the documentary medium.

Hanada argues for semi-documentary's contemporary relevancy as opposed to purely objective "British Documentary" forms. His argument hinges on the postwar crisis of representation: parallel to Adorno's claim that poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,[392] Hanada claims that purely documentary forms do not do the postwar period justice. As a result, postwar viewers, especially in Japan, can only feel *fuman*—dissatisfaction—with a documentary technique which claims pure objectivity. The solution, of course, was a revolution of cinematic techniques: a new cinema for a new historical time.

Yet Hanada was not the only theorist to opine on the newly-discovered "semi-documentary" genre. Thinking such as Hanada's permeated the world of Japanese film, producing many filmmakers who attempted a more subjective iteration of the documentary format. As aesthetic philosopher Nakai Masakazu wrote in 1950: "that British and Italian cinema are opening up new, living faces as a form of semi-documentary film bodes well for a grand awakening."[393] The semi-documentary was therefore a "grand awakening," able to open up "new, living faces". Nakai then states that this hybrid for "will provide new directions for aesthetics… leading it to new, living form"[394]. The semi-documentary opened up new pathways

[392] Theodor Adorno, "An Essay on Cultural Criticism and Understanding," *Prisms,* Trans. S. and S. Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 34.

[393] Nakai Masakazu, Trans. Phil Kaffen. "Film Theory and the Crisis in Contemporary Aesthetics." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (22: Decentering Theory: Reconsidering the History of Japanese Film Theory, Dec 2010), 85.

[394] Ibid., 86.

within film history, pathways which leftist theorists such as Hanada and Nakai considered to be most crucial for their present political moment, and the most fitting of the cultural and intellectual zeitgeist.

Although the list of filmmakers and works contained in this chapter is not comprehensive, and although there are surely many works of the time which need contextualization and analysis, this grouping of avant-garde documentary filmmakers creates a foundation for a comparative analysis on the basis of the Kino-Eye trajectory. In so doing, it creates a dialogue between two seemingly opposite worlds, which are nonetheless linked in their theoretical and cinematic approaches.

Lifting the Veil off the Soviet Avant-Garde

No analysis of the Japanese avant-garde documentary would be complete without an overview of the reception of the world's first avant-garde documentarist—especially given the newfound relevance of Vertov abroad during this period. However, even if no Japanese filmmaker-theorist from the 1960s had ever heard of Dziga Vertov, there would still be a case for comparison between the Soviet avant-garde documentarist and the cinema of the Japanese 1960s. Although this section deals with Vertov's direct influence in Japan, it is important to note that these filmmakers were not interested in Vertov as auteur, but as a representative of a more radical filmmaking movement. The interest in Vertov that spiked drastically in the 1960s was not, in fact, about Vertov per se, but demonstrated a surge of interest in the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s—an era that symbolized new formal, and political, possibilities.

Vertov's introduction into Japanese film and media history was rather slow, but nonetheless extremely significant. Although Vertov was not screened in Japan during the 1920s, and although very few works of Soviet avant-garde film made the journey to Japan before the notorious restrictions of the 1930s, his theoretical writings were an enormous source of influence for Japanese art historian Itagaki Takao, especially in his 1929 monograph *Exchanges Between Machine and Art (Kikai to Geijutsu to no kouryuu).*[395] As Naoki Yamamoto notes, Itagaki's text introduced Japanese readers to the work of contemporary European artists, architects, and filmmakers such as Le Corbusier, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and, indeed, Dziga Vertov.[396]

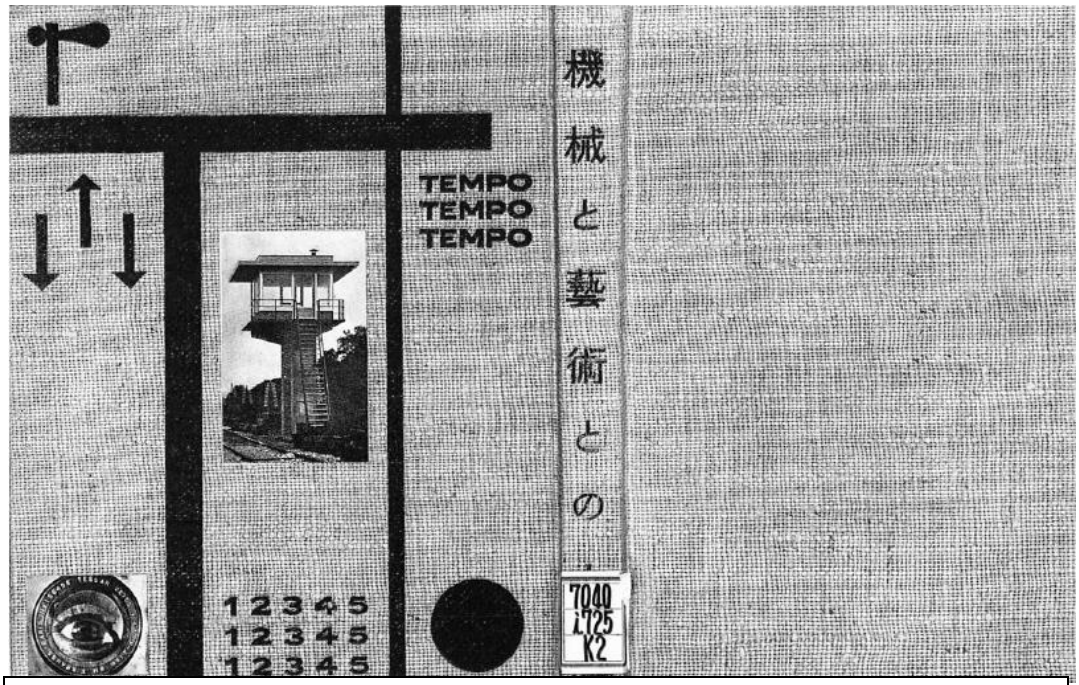

Figure 27: Cover of Itagaki Takao, *Kikai to Geijutsu to no kouryuu* (1929)

Though originally a lecturer of Western art history and neo-Kantian philosophy, in 1924 and 1925 Itagaki took a research trip to Western Europe at the order of the Japanese Ministry of Education, after which he became more interested in accumulating information about the

[395] Even the cover of the book features the famous film lens/eye superimposition shot from *Man with a Movie Camera* (see Figure 27, scan courtesy Naoki Yamamoto, see below)

[396] Naoki Yamamoto, "Eye of the Machine: Itagaki Takao and Debates on New Realism in 1920s Japan," *Framework* (56: 2, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, Fall 2015), 368.

burgeoning world of contemporary art.[397] Itagaki's 1929 text examined the role of "machine aesthetics" in the early twentieth century; for Itagaki, the cinematic apparatus is an example of the machine par excellence. His fascination with cinema derives from its ability to reveal hidden truths about the world and perfect our capacity for sight. As he writes, the camera "possesses a more acute sensibility and subjectivity than the human eye does."[398]

At the point of his writing, however, Itagaki had never seen a film by Vertov. Soviet montage theory in Japan began with Iwasaki Akira's 1928 translation of Semyon Timoshenko's *The Art of Cinema: The Montage of Film*, but screenings of major Soviet films were highly censored. Itagaki thus came across Vertov through art journals imported from Europe, and translated Vertov's 1929 manifesto "From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye" from German.[399] I believe Itagaki's conception of the "Kino-Eye" was not particularly nuanced given the lack of available films; as we have seen, Vertov's theories are much more than a futurist glorification of machinery, and are instead more aligned with formalism and the phenomenology of perception. Although Itagaki discusses the subjectivity of the camera, his rhetoric remains grounded in the camera's machination rather than its ability to radically alter *human* consciousness. Likewise, he was at the wrong place at the wrong time: as the Japanese government used increasingly brutal measures to censor leftist critics such as the proletarian literature movement, and as readers grew increasingly critical of his "machine eye," he refrained from discussing Vertov after 1932.[400]

Outside of Itagaki, there was little critical analysis of Vertov's work. Iwamoto Kenji notes that what did exist was woefully piecemeal, and translated from French: in 1929, Léon

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[397] Ibid., 372.

[398] Itagaki Takao, quoted in Ibid., 376

[399] Yamamoto, "Eye of the Machine," 376.

[400] Ibid., 382.

Moussinac wrote a piece called "Kino Eye," translated by Sumimoto Toshio and published in *Eiga Hyoron* (Film Criticism); in 1930, Asaoka Yoshio translated a text by Jean Renoir entitled "Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye" in the same journal. The writing on Vertov was fragmentary, and the changing political climate in both Japan and the USSR made future transmission even more difficult.[401] However, it does appear that Vertov-like Soviet films were well-received in the 1930s, especially by leftist critics such as the young Nakai Masakazu. Nakai was famously impressed by *In Spring* (*Vesnoi*), a 1929 film by Mikhail Kaufman—none other than Vertov's brother, Kinok cinematographer, and the eponymous cameraman of Vertov's most famous film! Nakai, who loved Kaufman's quick edits so much that he brought a stopwatch to the screening, used the film to develop his burgeoning ideas of technology as the revelation of a non-instrumental, more imaginative time.[402] In fact, there is some speculation that Nakai became familiar with Vertov when reading German sources on Soviet art.[403] Nakai, however, was arrested in 1937—one of the many victims of a regime that banned all overt criticism.[404] Although he was eventually released and continued to publish after the war, Soviet film no longer entered the conversation.

In April 1961, the journal Documentary Film *(Kiroku Eiga*), helmed by Matsumoto Toshio, published a translated article by Dziga Vertov—the first mention of Vertov in the 1960s. However, this article was a highly fragmented and disorganized work published posthumously in the USSR in June 1956 in the journal *Film Art (Isskustvko Kino)*[405]; Vertov had died that

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[401] Iwamoto Kenji, *Roshia Avangyarudo no Eiga to Engeki* (Film and Theatre of the Russian Avant-Garde) (Tokyo: Suisei-sha, 1998), 312.

[402] Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention, 144-145.

[403] Iwamoto, *Roshia Avangyarudo*, 332.

[404] Moore, "Nakai Masakazu's Theory of Technology," 69.

[405] Dziga Vertov, "Ikitaningen he no aijou ni tsuite" (Love Towards the Human that Lived), *Kiroku Eiga* (4:5, 1961), 34-37.

February. Because the article arrived at a time when very few Japanese people had even seen *Man with a Movie Camera*, with no other Vertov films screened, this fragment by Vertov is somewhat of a mystery. However, as it was published in 1961, we can surmise that this sudden interest in Vertov was due to a translated article about *cinéma-vérité* which mentions Vertov—perhaps even Edgar Morin's article infamously coining the term in the January 1960 issue of *France Observateur*. However, given the lack of resources it is possible that this article was the only one the editors of *Kiroku Eiga* found on the Soviet filmmaker. No doubt the article did not leave a favorable impression, as it was the only one devoted to Vertov in the journal's run.

Nevertheless, whether through Morin, Itagaki, or other means, the name "Dziga Vertov" was well known in Japan by the 1960s—although his films were not screened as often as one would normally assume. According to Iwamoto, only *Man with a Movie Camera* was screened (beginning in 1932)[406], and there was no comprehensive book about Vertov.[407] It was only with the resurgence in interest in the Soviet avant-garde, especially in the 1960s, that Vertov was given scholarly attention. Between October 23 through November 3, 1962, Studio 200 in Tokyo Ikebukuro held a retrospective entitled "The Russian Avant-Garde through Film and Lectures" (*Firumu to Rekucha ni yoru Roshia Avangyarudo*), in which Vertov's *Kino-Pravda No. 21, Kino-Pravda No. 22*, and *One-Sixth of the World* were screened.[408] As Iwamoto notes,

> In general, the veil was beginning to be lifted on what was called the Russian Avant-Garde in Europe and America... Although the ideology and theory had already been introduced to some extent, because the films themselves had not yet been shown, [the Japanese people] did not have a sense of their ambitious aim for visual expression. And indeed, is not peeling off a veil in order to see better the code of conduct of the Kino-Eye?[409]

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406 Iwamoto, *Roshia Avangyarudo*, 330.

407 Ibid., 34.

408 Ibid., 336.

409 Ibid., 339.

Thus, it was in the 1960s that the "veil" covering the Soviet Avant-Garde was finally lifted for the cinephiles of Japan—as Iwamoto notes, exactly the "uncovering" of truth that the Kino-Eye claims to accomplish. As the 1960s progressed, Japanese film critics and cinephiles received a more nuanced understanding of Vertovian cinema and its techniques, as well as many other works of the Soviet avant-garde. For example, on September 30, 1958, the film *Chapaev*—a classic 1934 film by the Vasilyev brothers, one of the last films of Vertov, Eistenstein, and Pudovkin's generation—was screened at the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo.[410] In the year 1960, the journal *Eiga Hyouron* (Film Criticism) began to undergo a massive change in material: French film theory became a mainstay (unsurprising given the boom of the French New Wave), and articles on contemporary Soviet film gradually became more frequent. Although part of this massive turn to political theory was due to the popularity of the French New Wave among Japanese film critics, this newfound interest was also representative of Japan's 'season of politics'. During the student protest movement, Japan's intellectual culture became more oriented towards past and present variants on the political film—and what better society than the USSR, in the midst of the post-Stalinist thaw, to (re-)examine the concept of revolutionary politics?

The first Japanese work investigating Vertov was most likely a translation of Vertov's manifesto "We" by Fukushima Noriyuki, published in the journal *Quarterly Film* (*Kikan Firumu*) No.8, in 1971.[411] Similarly, in the same year, the highly political film journal *Eiga Hihyo II*—helmed by such figures as Adachi Masao, Oshima Nagisa, Matsuda Masao, and Matsumoto Toshio—published a series of articles on Soviet cinema, beginning with the works of

[410] Unless otherwise noted, the information in the rest of this sub-chapter was discovered with the great help of Uesaki Sen, archivist at the Sogestu Art Library at Keio University in Tokyo, in November 2015.

[411] Iwamoto, *Roshia Avangyarudo*, 33.

Vertov. The writer of this series, Kobayashi Maki, did not supply any visual or critical analysis of Vertov's films, outside of suggesting a few inaccuracies,[412] although she was incredibly thorough in her paraphrasing of various Soviet critics and biographers. The goal of this series was less an analysis of form than an explication of context: Kobayashi provides an extraordinary contextual framework within which to view Vertov's films, spanning from the very beginning of film culture in Imperial Russia to the end of Vertov's career.[413] The goal of this series was to contextualize Vertov within the movement of political film and the "film as weapon" which was currently surrounding discourses in *Eiga Hihyo.* And of course, the series served to clarify and explain the elusive figure behind Godard's newly formed Dziga Vertov Group. Indeed, Kobayashi's first article on Soviet film was entitled "The Unknown Predecessor Dziga Vertov"—ostensibly a predecessor of Jean-Luc Godard. Later that year, and continuing to 1972, *Eiga Hihyo* would welcome a series of articles about, and written by, Godard and Gorin. Thus, Vertov's inclusion in *Eiga Hihyo,* although important in terms of historical context, was merely a backdrop and historical referent for the more pressing emergence of the Dziga Vertov Group—not an interest in Vertov's films on their own terms. Indeed, even the placement of the articles within *Eiga Hihyo* speak to this: Kobayashi's immensely informative and comprehensive articles are relegated to the last few pages, while Godard is unsurprisingly the first, and usually central, topic of interest. Likewise, given the interest in a film-as-weapon, the Japanese filmmaker-theorists publishing articles in this journal are more aligned with the 'Kino-Bayonet' over the 'Kino-Eye', and seem to generally ignore Vertov's more subtle and anarchic tendencies.

[412] For example, in Kobayashi's first article, *Michi no Senkou-sha Jiga Verutofu* ("The Unknown Predecessor Dziga Vertov"), *Eiga Hihyo* (2:1 1971), 38, she incorrectly surmises that Vertov's surname derives from the German word *Verboten* or to storm/rage, and that Dziga was synonymous with an Irish jig due to its fast tempo.

[413] See Kobayashi Maki in *Eiga Hihyo II* in 1971, especially Vol. 2, issues 1-3.

Thus, although Vertov's name was known, the appreciation of his films was drowned out by the hubbub surrounding the Dziga Vertov Group in the early 1970s. And, by this point, Japanese filmmakers were abandoning the more experimental iteration of the avant-garde documentary. There is, however, indication that during the 1960s, a group of intellectuals found Vertov's films particularly enlightening on both political and aesthetic terms. The Sogetsu Art Center held a Soviet Film retrospective on August 24 and 25, 1967, and a massive "Retrospective of World Avant-Garde Cinema" in March and April 1966. Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* was screened on March 18– translated awkwardly as *Here is Russia!* (*Kore ga Roshia da*).[414] Other filmmakers screened during this retrospective included Man Ray, Jean Renoir, Jean Epstein, Joris Ivens, Hans Ritter, Jean Cocteau, Alain Resnais, Agnes Varda, Francois Truffaut, Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, and others. Whereas most of these filmmakers had several films screened, Vertov had only one—although the organizer, arts administrator Nakahara Yusuke (also organizer of the 10th Tokyo Biennale), held Vertov's film in such high esteem that it was the subject of a crucial article in the catalogue—one of only two.

In this article, Nakahara takes a position exceedingly similar to Matsumoto Toshio, claiming that the art of cinema is divided into two waves: the fantastical and fictive wave of Georges Méliès, of which the most typical representation is in surrealist cinema, and the news film of the Lumière Brothers, actualized in documentary practices. As if echoing Matsumoto's call for a "documentary-like avant-garde film," Nakahara writes, paraphrasing Jonas Mekas:

> Within experimental film there are also two waves: the former being the "experiment within a dream," the latter being the "experiment within reality"... However, today, viewing film with a macroscopic eye, this division between the

[414] The title is strange not only because of its uninteresting grammatical construction but also because of its complete lack of relevance to the original source: not only was Vertov's film created in the Soviet Union, but the bulk of its footage was shot in Ukraine. This indicates how little Japanese critics and filmmakers knew about the history of Vertov's film.

> "experiment within a dream" and the "experiment within reality" is actually not very clear. Take, for example, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera...*[415]

Nakahara goes on to describe his first viewing experience of Vertov's film—not in Japan, but in the Cinemathèque in Paris. Nakahara views Vertov's film as an example of one which disrupts, or perhaps synthesizes, the dialectic of two waves posed by Jonas Mekas, Siegfried Kracauer, and others. He marvels that although Vertov was clearly a documentary filmmaker, even Vertov's documentary film was "nothing less than an 'experiment within a dream'"[416]—in other words, a deeply aesthetic and avant-garde experiment. Vertov thus actualizes the synthesis proposed by Matsumoto: a merging of documentary and avant-garde practices, an experiment that arises simultaneously "from a dream" and "from reality."

As we will see, this typically Vertovian merging of dream and reality, fiction and nonfiction, the world "created" by Méliès and "discovered" by Lumière, is also expressed by filmmakers of the Japanese political avant-garde; it was, indeed, one of its most important characteristics. Vertov, then, represented a trajectory of "dream-like" nonfiction—a synthesis of "creation" and "discovery". Because so few films were available by the Soviet filmmaker, Vertov was less romanticized as a brilliant auteur, but represented the zeitgeist of a general movement. Thus, although most of the Japanese filmmakers described in this chapter did not necessarily look to Vertov as a source of influence, they followed an avant-garde documentary trajectory launched by the Soviet avant-garde. By looking at the oeuvre and critical writings of each individual filmmaker, we can uncover how this trajectory actualized in the turbulent and highly prolific period of the Japanese 1960s.

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[415] Nakahara, "Zenei eiga ni tsuite: Vertov no koto nado," 106.

[416] Ibid.

The Playful Humanism of Hani Susumu

Hani Susumu began his career earlier than many of the filmmakers in this chapter. Notably, he began as a documentarian, and then, in the midst of an illustrious career, suddenly switched to a blend of documentary and fictional modes. In the introductory frames of his first feature film *Bad Boys* (*Furyo Shonen*) of 1961, an intertitle reads: "This is a documentary film, but its characters and events are fictitious."[417] Such a disclaimer could accompany many of the films from Japanese avant-garde documentaries of the 1960s: films which use documentary methods and techniques, and are imbued with a deep political concern, while still partially fictional films. As Hani noted, "There is not a clear difference between fiction and documentary,"[418] thus embodying the zeitgeist of the Japanese political avant-garde.

However, five years earlier Hani created a series of extremely well-regarded documentary shorts for Iwanami Productions such as "Children Who Draw" and "Children in the Classroom". In *Forest of Pressure*, Mark Nornes describes these films as "documentaries that set the film world off balance," writing that "These were the kind of seismographic film events that Bazin describes, where the river of cinema begins carving new routes after the equilibrium of their bed is upset."[419] Similarly, in 1972, reflecting on the history of these short documentaries, Sato Tadao wrote that they played an epoch-making role in postwar Japanese film.[420] After such immense—indeed, seismographic—success, and after having already revolutionized

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[417] The literal translation of the Japanese is "This film was uses documentary methods, but all of the creation and composition are the responsibility of the artist/creator."

[418] Hani Susumu, interview with Rea Amit and Alexander Jacoby, "Susumu Hani," *Midnight Eye: Visions of Japanese Cinema* (22 April 2010), http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/susumu-hani/.

[419] Mark Nornes, *Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 14-15.

[420] Sato Tadao, "*Hani Susumu-Ron"* (A Theory of Hani Susumu), *Eiga Hihyo II* (29:3, March 1972), 28.

documentary cinema, Hani's choice to venture into semi-documentary productions is symptomatic of a larger tendency in documentary filmmaking. As Hani wrote in the pages of *Eiga Hyoron* in 1958 (after having already created these epoch-making short films): "A new era seeks new content, and a new content requires new modes of representation."[421] As we will see in our discussion of Matsumoto, strict documentary formats now symbolized the authoritarianism of the Old Left; a reevaluation of aesthetic formats must necessarily accompany any reevaluation of political structures.

And indeed, compared with more Brechtian aesthetic modes, Hani's films are far subtler in their politics, looser in their narrative conventions, and far more playful and suffused with humanism. His filmmaking embodies an alternative to the didactic filmmaking of the Old Left, and instead reflect on the political and ethical nature of art itself. As such, his films constantly cross the line between fiction and nonfiction to create a more humanistic, and more affective, interaction between film and viewer.

For example, one of the larger characteristics of Hani's filmmaking is a fondness for those rendered powerless while existing in plain sight, often on the fringes of society: young children, animals, women, and teenagers. *Bad Boys* adopts this theme, following a teenage delinquent named Asai as he attempts to steal jewelry, is apprehended, and finally sent to a correctional school with other young rebellious teens. The film's style is reminiscent of Francois Truffaut's *400 Blows*, another film centering on a young delinquent, which screened in France in June 1959 and in March 1960 in Japan (as *Otona ha wakkatekurenai*, or "Adults Don't Understand")—ostensibly, while Hani was working on *Bad Boys.* Although Hani's film is not as concise or as perfectly edited as Truffaut's, it appears more documentary-like, with grittier

[421] Hani Susumu, "*Ashita no tame no eiga"* (A Cinema for Tomorrow), *Eiga Hyoron* (15:2, February 1958), 31.

techniques, such as the inclusion of real footage of the graffiti scratched onto a wall at a reform school, or the faces of passerby on the street. However, this footage is juxtaposed with several highly crafted point-of-view shots: i.e. in which an administrator in the reform school faces the camera directly, pontificating while sitting at a desk, while the audience hears Asai's mumbling, annoyed interior monologue. Likewise, in another scene, Asai reminisces about his youth; meanwhile, his close-up fades into a close-up of a young boy wearing similar sunglasses to Asai, followed by another close-up of teenage Asai, dark with expressionist tones, which fades into a shot of an ocean (echoing the last scene of *400 Blows*: a freeze-frame of Jean-Pierre Léaud standing before the sea). Hani's documentary-like fiction film is interwoven with scenes of Asai's "interior" world, merging moments of avant-garde surrealism with a neo-realist sensibility.

Bad Boys was extremely impressive for the Japanese public; dozens of articles on its technique were published in film outlets such as *Eiga Hyouron.* Hani's next foray into more explicitly political filmmaking was less successful: *A Full Life* (*Mitasareta Seikatsu*) of 1962, in which the protagonist leaves her husband to revisit her career as an actress, becomes involved with the director of an experimental theater troupe, and finally joins the ANPO struggle. The film reads as propagandistic: it follows an Eisensteinian "transmission" model, and does not experiment extensively with cinematic form. The only article on the film in *Eiga Hyouron,* by Japanese poet, novelist, and theorist of modernism Iijima Koichi, echoes this sentiment: "...In the second half of the film, Hani Susumu falls flat... It gives us the impression of being forced to watch an old news film... The second half isn't real (*rearu)* at all."[422] Iijima notes that the film appears "unrealistic" precisely when the film appears like "an old news film"; older media forms can no longer be trusted, and alienates viewers trained to treat PR films with suspicion.

[422] Iijima Koichi, "Mitasareta Seikatsu," *Eiga Hyoron* (19:2, February 1962), 24-25.

Hani's next film, *She and He (Kanojo to Kare)* of 1963, neatly solves the quandary of *A Full Life* by finding the most realistic modes of representation—ironically, by eschewing actuality footage altogether. Reminiscent more of Michelangelo Antonioni than any Old Left newsreels, the film allegorizes postwar Japan by limiting its setting to a single nouveau-riche *danchi* apartment complex in the suburbs of Tokyo, in an apartment shared by a recently married couple, Naoko (played by Hidari Sachiko) and Eiichi (played by Okada Eiji of *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Woman in the Dunes*). *Kanojo to Kare* is notable for using no actuality footage, nor any re-enactments of political events, making it a perfect example of fictional film which is nonetheless extremely documentary-like (*kiroku-teki*) in its form and content.[423]

In this film, the housewife Naoko befriends Ikona, who lives in a miserable shantytown (referred to as a *buraku* in the film) across from the *danchi* apartments, with a blind adopted daughter, Hanako, and a dog named Kuma (Bear).[424] This man, a stumbling, bearded wanderer on the fringes of Japanese society, is revealed to be an old classmate of her husband. Throughout the film, Naoko grows increasingly concerned with the fates of the impoverished man, girl, and dog, to the escalating behest of her detached businessman husband. The specific "she" and "he" of the film's title are therefore ambiguous—it may be the seemingly happily married couple, the newly impoverished Ikona-san with his daughter, or, most likely, Naoko and Ikona, whose

[423] One must remember that *kiroku-teki*, or *dokyumentary*, did not mean documentary-like in the contemporary sense of the word. As discussed earlier in the chapter, in the 1960s, this concept was far freer in its interpretation, and might have referred not only to strict documentary cinema and actuality footage but also neo-realist cinema and even later films by Luis Buñuel which describe a more socially-minded and politically-oriented environment. Its opposition was not fiction film per se but classic Hollywood melodrama.

[424] The film's most cathartic scenes actually center on this dog. Notably, all of Hani's films, from purest documentary to purest fiction, include the importance of animal life, and the inclusion of dogs especially can be read as a signature. For example, in *Mitasareta Seikatsu*, much of the plot revolves around a dog show, and the protagonist Junko is occasionally shown feeding a stray dog; likewise, the protagonists of *Morning Schedule* of 1971, discussed later, playfully film a dog romping around near the film's conclusion.

presence slowly sparks a burgeoning class consciousness within the film's immensely likeable protagonist, with whom both camera and audience easily, and naturally, identify.

Although Hani's film lacks actuality footage, it nonetheless appears full of the "reality" Iijima claimed to be lacking in his last film. The plot is ominous and grim, free of the melodrama associated with fiction film, and focused on socially relevant and political themes that are presented in a very familiar setting. Its style is especially documentary-like: there is no musical soundtrack, minimal dialogue, and its filmmaking often appears gritty, purposefully unfocused, or handheld. The cinematography of *Kanojo to kare* can be reduced to two general tendencies: a static camera and controlled *mise-en-scène* focusing on the architectured restriction of the *danchi* space, and an extremely shaking and evocative camera following the protagonist Naoko's psychological state, often accompanied by horror-film-like non-diegetic sound. These two formal elements mirror the blending of exterior and interior worlds in the avant-garde documentary.

Even when the camera is static, its very immobility induces a cinematic claustrophobia, exacerbated by the architectural constructs of the *danchi*. Here, in Hani's hands, a technique normally used for Brechtian distancing becomes a tool for affected embodiment. Naoko's placement within the frame, usually obsessively symmetrical, becomes symbolic of her subjective experience; for instance, early in the film two *danchi* women gossip about Naoko while she excitedly runs upstairs holding balloons. She is, as usual, in the center of the frame, and flanked by the faces of two women on both sides—faces which serve an architectural function to restrain freedom of movement, a kind of death by symmetry. Likewise, the *danchi* indoor scenes usually include a TV directly in the center of the frame, which becomes a glowing,

eerie locus around which characters awkwardly revolve.[425] This negative representation of TV is no surprise, as Hani is known for criticizing a world increasingly drawn to TV and computers, which resulted in an image-centric culture (*eizou no jidai*) and a growing alienation between human beings.[426] Screens and windows also figure heavily in *Kanojo to Kare*, creating a heavily composed and static world in which characters can only be represented as reflections, or placed uncomfortably within gridlines—reminiscent of both Ozu and his greatest interrogator, Yoshida Kiju. To contrast with this claustrophobic indoor space, the deliberately asymmetrical shots of Ikona's shantytown, and his stumbling, unrestrained mannerisms, often flanked by other reminders of the organic world such as dogs and birds, come as a welcome reprieve.

Figure 28: Hani Susumu, *Kanojo to Kare* (1962)

Indeed, the film is perhaps most easily remembered not for this tight symmetry but for its rushing, experimental camerawork, which becomes increasingly mobile as the plot progresses—especially in the last half hour. In one pivotal scene, Hanako the blind child falls ill, and Naoko nurses her to health in her bedroom while Eiichi is away on a business trip. Just as she begins to recover, and she, the misfit Ikona, and Naoko laugh together—a picture-perfect scene of a loving nuclear family, aided by a romantic, wistful soundtrack and soft panning—Eiichi returns. As he walks in angrily, glaring at the scene, the audio cuts off, and the camera, as if noticing itself an unlawful intruder, quickly zooms out of the window, while Eiichi shuts the window screen in a

[425] See Figure 28.

[426] See Chapter 1 of Hani Susumu, *Ningenteki Eizouron* (*A Theory of the Humanistic Image*) (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 1972).

single severe motion. The camera then rests on this gridlike window for several uncomfortable moments, a terrifying ellipsis induced entirely by swift camera movements and a meaningful use of audio.

One 1964 review published in the New York Times describes Hani's film as having a "thoughtful, free-wheeling, highly personalized style", and "a running-jumping candid camera that does everything but fly like a kite."[427] Describing this as a "candid camera" might be a bit of an exaggeration, especially for a cinematography this deliberate, but it certainly evokes the rushing, ecstatic camera movement signifying Naoko's psychological state—mirroring not only her terror and confusion but also a deep tenderness and a palpable sincerity. The film's form, defined both by architectural restrictions and rushing experimental camera movement, creates a perfect recipe for identification within the allegorical narrative.

After making several films abroad—*The Song of Bwana Toshi* (*Bwana Toshi no Uta,* 1965) in Kenya and *The Bride of the Andes* (*Andesu no Hanayome,* 1966) in Peru—Hani continued his investigation of interior, psychological worlds within the external world of realism in later films, especially in *Nanami: Inferno of First Love (Hatsukoi Jikokuhen*, 1968).[428] The film, typical for its ATG production, is full of sexual imagery and experimental editing

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[427] Howard Thompson, "'She and He' Directed by Japan's Hani," *New York Times* (September 26, 1964): accessed January 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9B04E7DE1E3FEE32A25755C2A96F9C946591D6CF

[428] Although Terayama Shuji is listed as the film's co-scriptwriter, Hani emphasizes that Terayama was not actually involved with the writing of the screenplay; his name was included (with his permission) as a way of promoting the film, since Terayama's name would be appealing for youth audiences. If the film contains elements from Terayama's own work—abused young children, sexual themes, surrealist imagery, heavy use of masks and a sense of extreme theatricality—it is historically not because of Terayama's influence on the script, but Hani's interest in Terayama at the time. (See Hani, "Susumu Hani" (interview). Indeed, compared with Terayama's films, Hani's film is more humanistic, its plot more easily recognizable and coherent. Take, for example, a pivotal sequence in the film: Shun dreams of young children, especially boys, naked except for their masks and occasional capes, running around a Japanese shrine. Although appearing Terayama-like in its depiction of the sexuality of young children and the use of masks, the scene has a peculiarly Hani-like flair: the soundtrack is a nostalgic, wistful operatic aria and soft guitar strumming. It is certainly oneiric but not nightmarish, and the children running about—a montage of still photographs, echoing Chris Marker and Matsumoto—have an innocent and playful air.

techniques—a world of difference from the understated Antonioni-esque *Kanojo to Kare*. Nonetheless, both films share Hani's fusion of fictional and non-fictional elements, drawn from contemporaneous Japanese society. They also share his characteristic fondness towards children and teenagers—a trait Hani shares with Dziga Vertov, who saw Soviet children as the ideal representatives of the Kino-Eye. Indeed, both Vertov and Hani were drawn to characters on the fringes of society, Hani's films centering on those that the economic miracle left behind.

In *Nanami,* Shun, a deeply introverted teenage boy whose mother abandoned him in the care of foster parents, falls in love with Nanami, a teenage girl from the countryside who works as a nude model. Both are victims: Shun of sexual abuse, which renders him painfully shy and impotent, and Nanami of sexual objectification, only able to see her body as a tool for capitalist exchange.[429] Their first sexual encounter is a failed sexual act, but both attempt to escape their oppressive conditions through love, which is presented as a form of liberation. Abused by those in power, they subvert objectification and instead recognize one another's subjecthood.

Importantly, it is through play and laughter that Nanami and Shun finally appear to heal their psychological wounds: after Nanami solves a riddle posed by the 5-year old girl Momi, both characters laugh joyously, and Shun is able to consummate their relationship. Love in the film is represented as a lightness and urge to laughter. Indeed, Hani's films, even his most surreal, are more characterized by playful humanism than any other filmmaker of the Japanese political avant-garde—and Hani certainly viewed himself as a humanist, promoting a *ningenteki,* or humanlike, filmmaking in his books and film criticism. Fearful of an increasingly image-dominated culture, an increasingly artificial nature and manmade environment (*jinkou hankyou*)

[429] Interestingly, Nanami's sexual objectification occurs from both men and women: in one scene particularly reminiscent of the framing of *Kanojo to Kare*, Namami is gossiped about by two teenage girls; the audio editing reveals their gossip, especially about Nanami's short skirt and the fact that the probably doesn't attend school. The girl's faces flank her on both sides, with Nanami powerless in the middle.

which permeates modern life, Hani appeals to a more human and affect-driven filmmaking: "Whether to gaze at the humanistic characteristics of the image, whether to create a humanistic image—we must consider it, and today we live in an era where it could be sought."[430] In other words, the 1960s was a fertile period for the reimagining and questioning of image culture, and Hani's films attempt to guide the image toward a reflection of the human sensorium. Briciu terms this "ethical filmmaking," noting that "Hani believes in the filming as a human, taking into account the intersubjective engagement of the director and the filmed persons (objects) in a mutual encounter."[431] Although Hani is certainly engaged in the question of subjectivity in filmmaking, treating his protagonists as documentary subjects with their own interior worlds, Hani's humanism is also childlike and playful. Like Vertov's tendency to use Pioneer troupes in *Kino-Eye*, and his own playful style of film editing which merges the camera-eye with the subjectivity of a child, Hani's and Vertov's camera-ethics double the subjectivity of its child protagonists in the cinematography itself.

As Takuya Tsunoda noted,

> Hani's conceptualization of cinematic experience—as a progressive, participatory and synthetic process of interaction that the subjects go through—seems to echo a phenomenologist approach that stands upon a fundamental distrust of a uniform mode of consciousness based on rational and schematic explanation of human interiority'.[432]

Hani's ethics are fundamentally participatory: the filmmaking participating in its subjects' interior worlds without forcing itself into them. Remember, for instance, the camera which quickly and respectfully leaves the scene when Naoko's husband returns home to find her having

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[430] Hani, *Ningenteki Eizouron*, 32.

[431] Bianca Briciu, "Love and power: The objectification of the adolescent body in Hani Susumu's *Hatsukoi Jigokuhen*/*Nanami, Inferno of First Love* (1968)," in *Journal of Japanese & Korean Cinema* (5:1+2, 2013), 68.

[432] Takuya Tsunoda, conference presentation quoted in Briciu, "Love and Power," 61.

invited Ikona, the blind girl, and his dog into their pristine *danchi* apartment. The result is a filmmaking of interactivity between lens and subject, which Tsunoda describes as a phenomenological approach rejecting uniform conceptions of interiority. Hani's films reject the viewer/viewed dichotomy; Briciu notes that his films reject the "male gaze," instead focusing on a synthetic interaction between these two worlds.

Hani's filmmaking, again echoing Vertov, often incorporates a great deal of meta-cinematic elements which play with the interaction between camera and subject. *Nanami* includes two such scenes: in one, Shun, whom others have (unfairly) accused of molesting the child Momi, is hypnotized by a psychologist, who urges him to imagine his subconscious as a white "cinema screen" onto which his deepest and darkest thoughts are projected. We, the audience of his "cinema screen", see these images through an iris lens, in which elements from Shun's subconscious—a dead pigeon, cheerful Momi, Nanami, and his foster father's sexual abuse—are rendered as if through water and haze. During this simultaneously psychological and cinematic "projection", his foster mother intervenes, tells the projection to end, and physically steps in front of the metaphorical "screen"; the "footage" appears partially on her face, indicating a total merging of real and sur-real, visible and invisible worlds.

In the second meta-cinematic sequence of *Nanami*, the two protagonists attend an amateur film screening, where a former classmate of Nanami's from Shizuoka screens a romantic personal essay film entitled *Hatsukoi no Kiroku* (*Record of First Love)*. The film is projected in its entirety, and its naive and pure-hearted representation of first love become the catalyst for Nanami and Shun's freedom from their repression; they sit enraptured, and clap fervently at its conclusion. Hani depicts filmmaking as the personal, ethical mode which, upon viewing, allows

personal transformation to transpire: the revealing of personal psychological truths, a return to innocence, and even self-actualization.

Hani's last major film, *Morning Schedule* (*Gozenchu no Jikkanwari,* 1972), also deftly integrates meta-film as well as inter-subjectivity between filmmaker and subject. In the film, three teenage friends make a series of 8 mm films, but the death of one—17-year old Kusako—while camping with her best friend Reiko leads the remaining two to re-watch their captured footage to discover clues to her inner life. The footage is also used to reveal a love triangle through the image of another man during their camping trip, with whom Kusako fell in love. This film is the most documentarian of any film Hani made since *Bad Boys*: he used actual footage shot by the teenagers acting in his film, who also collaborated in the film's editing. The result, full of rare actuality footage of youth culture in the early 1970s, produces a highly wistful and nostalgic portrayal of the post-ANPO zeitgeist.

Indeed, the bulk of the film's length is composed of the teenagers' 8 mm footage, focusing especially on the playful interaction between Kusako and Reiko. Reiko is a soft-voiced, gentle character beloved by the film's male protagonist, but the camera focuses especially on freckled, exuberant Kusako, whose playful antics imbue the film with a joyful whimsy: she prances about pretending to be a cat, swims naked in a stream, places clovers all over her body, films her own bellybutton, pretends to be a bull and toreador, and is sporadically subsumed by *warai-byou*, or "laughing sickness". The film's overall tone is comprised of laughter and play, with an undertone of deep melancholy. Before Kusako's mysterious disappearance and death, footage shows her pretending to be Charlie Chaplin on the rocks of a beach,[433] stating, "Chaplin in his movies is sad, somehow" (*nanka kanashisou*). This mention of Chaplin is no accident—

[433] See Figure 29.

Hani, a great admirer of Chaplin, lauded *The Great Dictator* (1940) in an article entitled "The Art and Thought of Chaplin" in 1960; he writes, alongside praising Chaplin's everyman humanism: "A particularly unique and interesting thing about Chaplin... [is that he] represents the dictator himself humorously, but conversely does not laugh before nation or power."[434] Such a view of Chaplin would be echoed in the character of Kusako in *Morning Schedule*—though filmed 12 years later, the 17-year old, in all her playful antics and exuberant sense of humor, also reveals a deep sadness, and sense of non-belonging in a society which scorns her innocent behavior. Yet it is through the medium of film that this inner, invisible world can be revealed—and indeed, the film is full of cameras and lenses of all sorts, a constant source of mediation.[435] Merging with the subjectivity of its teenage filmmakers and protagonists, the eye of the camera-lens is thus equated with the eye of Tokyo youth in 1972.

Figure 29: Hani Susumu, *Morning Schedule* (1972)

Figure 30: Hani Susumu, *Morning Schedule* (1972)

Morning Schedule forms the apex of a career which, through a great variety of genre and style, blends documentary and fiction film, exterior reality and invisible interior worlds. In a colloquium following a retrospective of his films at Harvard in January 2013, Hani emphasized

[434] Hani Susumu, with Eto Fumio and Sato Tadao, "*Chapurin no Gei to Shisou"* (The Art and Thought of Charlie Chaplin), *Eiga Hyouron* (17:11, November 1960), 47.

[435] See Figure 30.

that the distinction between fiction and documentary is in fact quite fluid, and that he meant for his supposedly fiction films to be considered documentaries[436]—echoing the intertitle at the beginning of *Bad Boys*. As Hani noted, "my documentaries are related to my fiction films."[437] As his discussion of Chaplin suggests, and as this dissertation argues, this synthesis of documentary and fiction is imbued with both ethical and political concerns. When reality could no longer be represented through purely "realistic" modes, Hani crafted an ethical means to interrogate politics and contemporary Japanese society through a deceptively lighthearted sense of play. According to Sato Tadao, for Hani, the "main concern was not to project what was in the script but to reflect reality as accurately as he could."[438] In Hani's work, reality could often only be represented allegorically, through the eyes of a nearly powerless protagonist—a woman slowly discovering the horrifyingly unequal, impoverished underbelly of capitalist postwar Japan, a young girl fighting against the objectification of the male gaze, or a group of teenage filmmakers searching for innocence and play within an increasingly deceptive world.

If one follows the claim first made by the Russian formalists—that form cannot be severed from content—one concludes that Hani could only create an effective documentary by using new and uncommon modes of representation. As Victor Shklovsky wrote, "The purpose of the new form is not to express new content, but to change an old form which has lost its aesthetic quality."[439] Alongside other filmmakers such as Matsumoto Toshio, with PR-film documentary filmmaking having exhausted itself of its possibilities, Hani turned to a new form in order to

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[436] Hani Susumu, colloquium and Q & A at Harvard University, January 28, 2013.

[437] Hani, "Susumu Hani" (interview).

[438] Sato Tadao, *Currents in Japanese Cinema: Essays by Tadao Sato,* Trans. Gregory Barrett. (Tokyo and New York; Kodansha International, 1982), 209.

[439] Victor Shklovsky, quoted in Boris Eikhenbaum, "Theory of the Formal Method," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* Ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 118.

regain documentary filmmaking's "aesthetic quality," and therefore heighten its ability to be both an affective and effective political documentary. Just as for Matsumoto and Oshima, for Hani, in the words of Annette Michelson, "questioning the system of production, rethinking spectatorship, meant… a certain flexibility with respect to established genres.[440]" For history to be interrogated as such, the use of its two meanings—story and fact—must be taken in tandem, and narrative codes loosened. Hani's decision to create documentary-like fiction films which were instead reliant on subjectivity, playfulness, and audience identification, without any claims to objectivity, allowed the genre to regain its "aesthetic quality." The documentary genre's function as an inherently discursive form is therefore rendered transparent. Hani's tender humanism, coupled with his loosening of the documentary's cinematic codes, allow the viewer to rediscover those truths about Japanese society that she had long ignored.

Matsumoto Toshio: Theorist of the Japanese Uncanny

Although Hani Susumu was known for writing numerous articles on cinema in Japanese film journals, perhaps no filmmaker of the Japanese political avant-garde was more attuned to the many philosophical and aesthetic currents of the period than Matsumoto Toshio, whose *Discovery of the Image* was already quoted throughout. This work, and the plethora of theoretical essays on cinema published in *Eiga Hyouron* (*Film Criticism*)*, Kiroku Eiga* (*Documentary Film*)*,* and *Eiga Hihyou* (*Film Review*)– the latter of which he brought back into existence in the late 1960s—refers not only to other Japanese filmmakers but international filmmakers from Sergei Eisenstein to Jean-Luc Godard to Luis Buñuel, as well as Marquis de Sade, Pablo Picasso,

[440] Annette Michelson, "Introduction" to Oshima, *Cinema, Censorship, and the State*, 5.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Sigmund Freud, to name only a few. Even his competitor Oshima called him a veritable "opinion leader" of their generation.[441] Matsumoto was the central theorist of the avant-garde documentary in Japan; more than any other filmmaker of this period, he was resolutely devoted to placing the Japanese 1960s into an international and highly theoretical context. In turn, the form of his films actualizes the claims he makes in his many theoretical texts.

An investigation of politics and aesthetics is key to *Discovery of the Image*. Yet Matsumoto did not desire to blend the two indiscriminately; rather, he was extremely wary of an art which claimed to be political, arguing that this would subsume the artwork under mainline political opinion. In Rancièrian terms, it would become an art of the police. Matsumoto writes:

> During the war, (documentary filmmakers) uncritically produced films collaborating with the war, changing course because of absolutely external power and transitively switching directions (*tenko*) without any serious internal criticism. In that period of political promotion they quickly and hysterically, in the manner of a rapidly spreading disease among children, engaged in a biased practice that subordinated art to politics. Lacking principles, they subsequently adapted to the PR film industry in a period of retreat. Here, consistent from start to finish, there are only slavish craftsmen lacking subjectivity. One might say that, from the beginning, there were no artists here.[442]

Subordinating art to politics, then, is "lacking principles." Its directors were merely "slavish craftsmen lacking subjectivity." Art subsumed under politics, according to Matsumoto, voids the work of its own aesthetic sensibilities. Its lack of "serious internal criticism" of an absolute external power—characteristic of the Old Left and Stalinism, as well as the transmission model of the Eisensteinian "Kino-Fist"—is unethical, and contagious. Indeed, Matsumoto even likens it

[441] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality,* 25.

[442] Matsumoto Toshio, quoted in Nornes, *Forest of Pressure*, 20.

to an infectious disease. Thus, the subordination of art to politics rids the work of the political potential inherent in the aesthetic itself (Rancière's Politics of Aesthetics, discussed earlier).

Both Hanada Kiyoteru and Matsumoto therefore claim that documentary filmmaking must necessarily undergo an aesthetic revolution to reflect the changing climate of the postwar. As Adorno wrote, reflecting on the Holocaust and its aftermath, "the traditional transcendent critique of ideology is obsolete."[443] No longer can the artist, politician, or cultural critic claim true knowledge from a "transcendent" viewpoint. The new postwar world is necessarily one of reckoning, especially with ideologies of the past. Hence the barbarism of lyric poetry after Auschwitz: poetry can no longer exist within its previous conditions of possibility.[444] Art itself must necessarily be transformed in light of the trauma of war. This trauma is particularly applicable to Japan in the 1960s, still in the grip of the consequences of its imperial past.[445]

Matsumoto claimed, similar to Adorno, that the cinema of postwar Japan must reflect this new postwar viewpoint, and constantly question its own claims to objectivity. The commitment to realism still held by many Japanese filmmakers, then, was profoundly troublesome. Not only was it too similar to wartime approaches to documentary, but it also resulted in a suppression of the artists' subjectivity.[446] This debate over the state of subject-hood, or *shutaisei*, was deeply enmeshed within discourses surrounding documentary film: specifically, in the documentary image as a document of the relationship between the filmmaker and object (*taisho*) of filmmaking.[447] These debates attempted to develop a mode of filmmaking which highlighted the

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[443] Adorno, "An Essay on Cultural Criticism and Understanding," 33.

[444] Howard Caygill, "Lyric Poetry Before Auschwitz," in *Adorno and Literature*, ed. David Cunningham and Nigel Mapp. (London: Continuum, 2006).83.

[445] And one could certainly argue, in the present as well.

[446] Nornes, *Forest of Pressure,* 20.

[447] Ibid., 26.

relationship between filmmaker and object inherent in documentary production, rather than presenting the object through a seemingly objective approach (the latter would mean alienation from one's labor, in the language of Marxism). Matsumoto, then, follows Hanada in his definition of semi-documentary as a genre which takes the object for the subject; although Hanada used the term *kyakutai* rather than *taisho* in his article, with the former emphasizing the thing-creation of documentary film, both theorists differentiate these from the *shutai* and emphasize the relation between the filmmaker and their object of analysis.

Matsumoto often argued against the suppression of subjectivity over a perceived political objectivity, emphasizing a synthesis of the "interior world" (subjectivity) with the "exterior world" (objectivity). Films must express things which both we see represented reality, as well as things we cannot see (*me wo mienai mono*). Films which ignore the world of *me wo mienai mono* assumes the *mono* apparent in the director's field of vision to be the same reality experienced by all others. As Mark Nornes writes:

> A cinematic style that presents itself as a privileged referential representation of the lived world ultimately rests on a set of conventions. These conventional constructions hide the work demanded by realist styles, and this amounts to a suppression of the subjective procedures at the heart of filmmaking. For Matsumoto, this was both irresponsible and dangerous because it inevitably involved a veiling of politics as well. The realist agendas of nonfiction filmmaking "for the people" hid an authoritarianism Matsumoto associated with a Stalinism at the heart of the JCP [Japanese Communist Party].[448]

The commitment to realism, then, reflected a return to outdated ideology associated with Stalinism and authoritarianism. This was irresponsible and dangerous—a work claiming to "realism" operates under the guise of an objectivity which suppressed "the subjective procedures at the heart of filmmaking." Even when this alleged objective filmmaking assumes itself to be

[448] Ibid.

non-ideological, it still relies on ideological constructions: a dangerous paradox of "realistic" filmmaking. Ironically, this "realistic" filmmaking characterized the *cinéma-vérité* movement in the early 1960s, which took its name from Kino-Pravda by Dziga Vertov: the most playful and least "realistic" of documentary filmmakers, and its most avant-garde.

From this theoretical standpoint, shared by both Matsumoto and Vertov, Matsumoto's films—especially his "neo-documentary" films—reflect a blend of subjective and objective worlds. Yet Matsumoto's films differ from a documentarist revealing her own subjective worldview explicitly, in the way of Agnes Varda's *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2001) or Chris Marker's *Sans soleil* (1983). Michael Raine notes that Matsumoto envisioned the subjective and objective worlds to be in dialectical relation, orbiting around each other, rather than a self-contained subject describing a stable object.[449] This dialectical structure keeps Matsumoto's films from becoming merely documentaries infused with subjectivity. Although a blend of fact and fiction, subjectivity and objectivity, characterizes much of the Japanese political avant-garde, Matsumoto's version blends the aesthetics of Japanese religion, both Buddhist and Shinto,[450] within a larger political and economic context. This results in an investigation of contemporary Japaneseness through the methods of the Freudian uncanny, with a decidedly Marxian twist.

Unlike the earthy and sensual Japaneseness investigated by the filmmaker Imamura Shohei, Matsumoto's Japaneseness is full of ghosts, demons, and mysterious forces outside of a narrator's control. The result is eerie, revealing the uncanny core at the heart of Japanese society. It recalls Freud's description of the *unheimlich,* or uncanny, and his discovery of the inherent

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[449] Michael Raine, intro to Matsumoto Toshio, "A Theory of Avant-Garde Documentary," trans. Michael Raine, *Cinema Journal* (Vol. 14:4, Summer 2012, pp.148-154) 145.

[450] Although I do not discuss use of religion specifically in this text, it is certainly in need of its own analysis in the context of other works of the Japanese Political Avant-Garde; for example, Imamura and Terayama often include an uncanny blend of religious and contemporary symbolism in their films, and include such formal tropes as the chanting of sutras.

ambivalence of *heimlich,* or habitued home-feeling: the *unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich.*[451] Matsumoto's films lay bare such elements in society that are often left untreated. Recall, for instance, the surrealistic uncanny of the otherwise documentary film *Nishijin*, discussed earlier: nails are thrown at the camera lens to echo the "invisible" interior world of the film's subjects (*taisho)*, who feel they live in a world in which nails are stuck, or the broken record-like repetition of the muffled voices of Japanese salarymen.

Repetition, and a diegetic disruption of sound and image, characterize many of Matsumoto's films—even his more fictional works. In his next film after *Nishijin*, the 1963 television documentary *Ishi no Uta* (Song of the Stone), still images of stones and stone-cutters in the Aji village in Shikoku, photographed by Ernest Satow, are constantly manipulated, reversed, spun, zoomed into, abstracted, and made into film negatives—an ecstatic work of editing mirroring Vertov's frenetic manipulation of images in *Man with a Movie Camera*, but with a distinctly eerier touch. The film's use of editing is so wide-ranging that the viewer has the distinct sense of Matsumoto taking these techniques to their farthest limits, sometimes creating forms which appear more like abstract expressionism than a series of photographs of stone. Matsumoto also uses a superimposition of animate and inanimate objects, as the narrator discusses the stone-cutters' treatment of stones as living things. The narrator states that the act of excavating and cutting stone is an act of killing—lending a decidedly eerie and mournful quality to the work. Likewise, sound and image often repeat, resulting in a mantra-like depiction of forms—no accident given the amount of attention Matsumoto gives to the Buddhist sculptures

[451] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII: An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Vintage Books, 2001), 225.

created from these rocks. The result of these juxtapositions is a play of estrangement that uses Kino-Eye techniques in a unique and unprecedented fashion.[452]

Matsumoto's neo-documentary style as inventive in its emphasis on the irrational and the subconscious as an object of investigation: hence his interest in thinkers such as Marquis de Sade, Jean-Paul Satre, and Sigmund Freud. His theories, however, provoked negative responses from the readers and contributors of the film journal *Kiroku Eiga (Documentary Film)*, especially the many who considered nonfiction filmmaking to be an empirical, objective mode of knowledge.[453] This reaction, however, shows the clear difference between Kino-Pravda and *cinéma-vérité*, and the latter's distance from the deeply subjective avant-garde documentary.

Indeed, Furuhata notes that Matsumoto's filmmaking mirrors Victor Shklovsky's concept of the device of estrangement: a key point given both thinkers' desires to dehabituate human perceptive capabilities. As she notes, "Matsumoto introduced a new vocabulary and set of concepts to theorize documentary as first and foremost a method of challenging habituated modes of perception."[454] This is reminiscent of estrangement as the function of "art as a device," as described in Chapter 2: "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception."[455]Although Matsumoto's articles do not refer to Shklovsky's *ostranenie* directly, the concept of estrangement generally perceived must have entered the cultural *zeigeist* of 1960s Japan, especially given the ANPO protests.

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[452] Beyond Vertov, Matsumoto's most direct parallel is Chris Marker, whose short science fiction film *La jetée* of the previous year was entirely composed of still photographs. Although Matsumoto's definition of neo-documentary is quite different from Marker's essay films, there is some overlap—especially, and interestingly, in Marker's works of fiction such as *La jetée.* And indeed, although appraisal of *Ishi no Uta* was divided, Marker himself was one of its most ardent supporters, along with film historian George Sadoul. Marker saw *The Song of the Stone* when he visited Japan in 1964; impressed, he sent Matsumoto a copy of *La jetée* after he returned to France. See Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 25.

[453] Ibid. 28.

[454] Ibid.

[455] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 12.

Ando Takemasa argues that the ANPO protests of the late 1960s/1970 were focused less on repealing ANPO itself, compared with the mass movement of the 1960 protests, and were instead focused on the negation (and reconstruction) of everyday life.[456] This inquiry into everyday-ness, or *Nichijosei*, developed as a critique of liberal democracy in the wake of the high economic growth period in the mid-1960s. After the defeat of the ANPO protests several years earlier, students and intellectuals focused on a revolution in everyday life and perceptive capabilities. For these radical thinkers, both politics and aesthetics served to defamiliarize the everyday, and such a quasi-Nietzschean revaluation of values would in turn lay bare the emptiness of dull, habituated daily life. Although the negation of everyday life is more vague than Shklovsky's argument, ideas of the early Soviet avant-garde—including Shklovskian estrangement—were quickly consumed by the student protest movements 40 years later.

Like Soviet theorists such as Shklovsky, who were in fact dubbed "formalists"—a derogatory term—by their many critics, Matsumoto was often (unfairly) criticized for putting formal experiments ahead of content. Sato Tadao's otherwise rave review of *Nishijin* nonetheless chides Matsumoto for "the importance of the pursuit of precise details," although he prizes Matsumoto for being a step in the right direction for a documentary filmmaking which "emphasizes abnormal events."[457] One must admit that Sato's analysis is quite astute: in all of Matsumoto's films, from his abstract and highly conceptual video projections from the 1970s and 1980s, to neo-documentaries in the mid-1960s, to the frenetic, epic comedy-drama of *Funeral Parade of Roses*, to his *jidaigeki* (Japanese historical drama film) *Shura* (translated either as *Demons* or *Pandemonium*) created two years later, Matsumoto's films are all defined by an

[456] Ando Takemasa, "The absence of the new left: the (un)changing cultures of activism in Japan." Lecture, "ANPO Revisited" Workshop in the ICC Workshop Series on Youth Activism in Post-War Japan, Sophia University, Tokyo, November 14, 2015.

[457] Sato, "Matsumoto Toshio," 68.

extremely precise attention to detail, especially in his film editing technique and composition of shots. Although filmmakers such as Ozu Yasujiro are known for their obsessively composed *mise-en-scène*, Matsumoto's version strove to dehabituate—and thus his films, from the most commercial to the most abstract, focus on mirrors, doubling, and illusion. The irrational always presides over the rational, the subconscious always holding court.

This does not, however, mean that Matsumoto's films all exhibit the same formula of irrationality, abstraction, and uncanniness. The film *Mothers (Hahatachi*, 1966) signified a turn towards a more emotionally-driven filmmaking for Matsumoto—an emotive style which derives its potential for estrangement in its element of hidden darkness. The film, a short documentary film made for television, spends the first half of its length juxtaposing mothers and their children in Paris and New York City. Meanwhile, a poem by Terayama Shuji, the last filmmaker discussed in this chapter, is recited in the background. The poem itself incorporates Matsumoto's much-beloved trope of repetition: each line has the same poetic construction (*A mother is a [noun] only a child can [verb]*), a play on difference and repetition. This first half has a soft, nostalgic quality, and function as city-symphonies in miniature. The tone suddenly shifts drastically, however, in the film's portrayal of mothers in Vietnam, in the middle of a bloody war. The music skips, creating a sound akin to gunfire. At other moments, the music stops entirely, while the camera pans over a woman's napalm-scarred back. Another scene refuses the pan entirely, and is composed of a collection of photographs of victims of the Vietnam War.

Matsumoto's emphasis on the brutality in Vietnam must be contextualized within the larger historical context of ANPO and the Japanese public: Matsumoto's film is not only a criticism of the ill-fated American war, but of the Japanese people and especially its government, which continues to implicitly support military endeavors due to the continuance of the US-Japan

Security Treaty. By juxtaposing an extremely emotive and sensual mode of filmmaking in the earlier section of the film, Matsumoto's criticism of Japan's role in the violence in Vietnam during the second half becomes much more a(e)ffective. Matsumoto thus actualizes Shklovsky's claim of the implicit violence in habituation: one becomes increasingly habituated to war and violent imagery the more one is exposed to it. He therefore returns the inherent violence of war to images by juxtaposing them with other, softer images. In other words, by comparing violence with love. Indeed, the last few scenes of the film, this time depicting mothers in the Ibo tribe of Nigeria, become a manifesto for a return to love: a pregnant woman is shown standing at a beach, flanked by children. As the narrator concludes: "Now is the time to think about love. (*Ai ni tsuite kangaeta hi no yo).*" In the context of the beach scene depicted, the "time to think about love" is juxtaposed with scenes of Vietnam only minutes earlier: scenes in which a mother wails while holding a child presumed to be dead. Such juxtapositions and variations in filmmaking style retain the estranging qualities present in even the most disparate of Matsumoto's films, although *Hahatachi* remains one of the most embodied and emotive films in his repertoire.

Although a different genre entirely—a feature-length mostly-narrative film produced by ATG—the film *Funeral Parade of Roses*, filmed three years later, continues this tendency to juxtapose the emotive and personal within politics. It also includes a great deal of nonfictional components. The film loosely adapts Sophocles' Oedipus myth in the queer counterculture of late 1960s Tokyo, with Oedipus recreated as "Eddy," a transgender[458] male-to-female prostitute who

[458] Although I use the term "transgender" here, the term most often used in the film is "gayboy"—not a direct translation to the English. The film represents many individuals of fluid gender, some what contemporary society might term transsexual or transgender; one must be wary, however, of transposing these terms of Western origin onto a cultural context halfway around the world—especially in a context such as Japan, with its own rich history of gender fluidity, including the *onna-gata* in Kabuki plays, or the fluid sexual politics of the Edo period. As a result my use of "transgender" here is a placeholder for an overarching sense of gender fluidity, rather than necessarily pertaining to strict Western cultural guidelines.

unknowingly sleeps with her father, the owner of a transgender nightclub. *Funeral Parade* is a jumble of media, a frenetic mix of techniques: comic arts are combined with poetry and myth, television is juxtaposed with film, Eastern setting and characters with Western literature, philosophy, and music. It is unsurprising that the film became an important source of influence for Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange,* made two years later.[459]

The camerawork in *Funeral Parade* is immensely varied, and uses as many techniques as a film by Vertov: e.g. playing the film in fast forward, quick strobe-like shots which appear in rapid succession, warped footage, overexposure, freeze-frame, movie-within-a-movie, stills, advertisement posters, lens flare, curtains on a make-believe stage, cartoon word bubbles with curse words during freeze-frame, and the use of film negatives. Generally, close-ups of the body, especially Eddy's body, take precedence. Matsumoto never provides a long shot portraying Eddy's entire naked body, instead showing fragments of body parts. One of these shots is a clear homage to the first shot of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour*, beloved by Matsumoto and many of the Japanese Political Avant-Garde: "feminine" hands grasp and caress the back and

Figure 31: Matsumoto Toshio, *Funeral Parade of Roses* (1969)

Figure 32: Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959)

[459] Richard Smirke, "Film: Funeral Parade of Roses," *Metro UK* (21 July 2008): http://metro.co.uk/2008/07/21/film-funeral-parade-of-roses-293580/.

shoulder of a man in soft focus.[460] The erotic body is both unmediated and fragmented—simultaneously evoking a sense of haptic connection, but also estranging this connection and defamiliarizing the human body entirely. What results is a sense of dehabituation in the Shklovskian sense: identities merge into chimeras, and truth becomes illusory.

This inquiry into identity and illusion is reflected in a short art film created by Matsumoto in the same year and excerpted in *Funeral Parade,* titled *Ecstasis.* In this film, Eddy rolls her head from side to side in slow motion in a moment of ecstasy, while Guevara—a filmmaker character in *Funeral Parade* who wears a fake beard and mustache—holds out his arms while the camera pans toward him, cut with poster advertisements. Although it might seem difficult to glean meaning from such abstraction, one might turn to the etymology of *Ecstasy* or *ekstasis*, which, from the Ancient Greek ἔκστασις, means "to be or stand outside oneself, a removal to elsewhere" from ek- "out," and stasis "a stand, or a standoff of forces."[461] This theme—that a feeling of "ecstasy" entails a removal outside oneself—pertains to *Funeral Parade* as well, and its simultaneously ecstatic and tragic focus on illusions, chimeras, and masks. And it is no coincidence that "ecstasy" was also a key concept for Eisensteinian theory.[462]

Along with the theme of illusion, another important filmic trope in *Funeral Parade* is the frequent use of mirrors. The camera is often fixated on a single baroque mirror in the nightclub, reflecting the bodies of both Leda (the older, more traditional transgendered proprietress, who dons kimonos and traditional Kabuki-esque *Onna-gata* garb), and Eddy, who slowly transforms into an increasingly glamorous version of herself, and becomes the club's "Mama". The film's cine-poetic intertitles constantly quote Snow White ("mirror, mirror on the wall...") and the film

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[460] See Figures 31 and 32.

[461] Douglas Harper. "Online Etymology Dictionary." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, 2001. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

[462] David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

becomes a parody of the fairy tale, with Leda as the destroying witch-stepmother and Eddy as the "fairest" new generation of free-spirited youths. Likewise, the mirror also symbolizes ego and sexuality; in one scene, we see a young teenage version of Eddy (still a boy) discovering her sexuality by putting on her mother's lipstick and erotically kissing her image in the mirror, which Matsumoto films in extreme close-up: a literalization of the meaning of ecstasy.

This use of mirrors, in relation to gender identity, evokes questions of the virtual and the actual, the "real" and the "artificial". This relation between the mirrors and virtuality recalls Deleuze's concept of the crystal-image in film, of which mirrors are the most familiar example.[463] Mirrors in film replace the actual with the virtual, blurring the lines between the two, and breaking down the boundaries between fact and fiction, the real and the represented: "The crystal-image is, then, the point of indiscernibility of the two distinct images, the actual and the virtual."[464] The use of the crystal-image is perfectly suited to Matsumoto's avant-garde documentary style, which consistently questions this boundary.

Figure 33: Matsumoto Toshio, *Funeral Parade of Roses* (1969)

Notably, *Funeral Parade* includes a film-within-a-film (indeed, another type of crystal-image[465]) in which Eddy plays the main character—an experimental work that is almost entirely composed of clips

[463] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 70.

[464] Ibid., 82.

[465] Ibid., 77.

from Matsumoto's short films *For My Damaged Right Eye* and *Ecstasis*. Interestingly, although the film-within-the-film is more "underground" (according to Eddy) than Pink Film, both are similar in their use of fragmented, close-up driven sex scenes. In fact, much of the plot of *Funeral Parade* revolves around the filming of these scenes. We are often presented with erotic close-ups of Eddy only to find that, upon a zoom-out and the word "Cut!", Eddy was simply "acting" for the diegetic camera;[466] in fact, the only time Eddy is *not* filmed (diegetically) while having sex is when she commits incest. Contributing to this confusion of real and filmic spaces is the inclusion of significant documentary footage in *Funeral Parade*, such as interviews with gay cast members and Tokyo youths. In Matsumoto's signature avant-garde documentary style, reality and fiction are intertwined, thwarting the viewer's expectations.

Metafilm investigates multilayered and infinite registers of montaged 'realities.'[467] The use of the film-within-a-film reveals the creative and "edited" aspects inherent to all filmmaking: even documentaries. According to Oishi Masahiko, the film about film, an actualization of film's inherently self-analytical nature, appeared first in Vertov.[468] Although there is a plethora of such films which entail what Oishi claims to be an Ouroboros-like structure, he singles out Matsumoto's *Funeral Parade of Roses* as the true inheritor to Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, rejuvenating its techniques.[469]

Oishi's analysis of *Funeral Parade* and its Vertov-like characteristics are mostly limited to the camera's self-referentiality, such as when Matsumoto interviews Peter on her role as Eddy. Yet Matsumoto's film has even more in common with Vertov's "Kino-Eye" than first meets the

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[466] See Figure 33.

[467] Felicity J. Colman, *The Deleuze Dictionary,* ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 60.

[468] Oishi Masahiko, *Higa toi: Nihon Modanizumu/ Roshia avangyarudo* (Tokyo: Suisei-sha, 2009) 269-270.

[469] Ibid., 277-278.

eye: characteristics such as playfulness, estrangement, actuality footage, and an abundance of cinematographic tricks are frequently located in Matsumoto's films of the 1960s. Matsumoto's films are united in their estranging techniques and fervent interest in human perceptive processes.[470] In fact, the eye is one of Matsumoto's most oft-used filmic tropes: for example, his three-projector film installation *For My Damaged Right Eye* (*Tsuburekakatta migime no tame ni)* refers to the eye not only in title but in theme; the film emphasizes visuality and perception, such as footage of a body scanner "undressing" a clothed female body, the use of advertisements, and footage of older men with right eyes covered in black tape. Likewise, his short art film *Phantom* (1975) includes an eerie single eye hovering over a series of Japanese landscapes: office buildings, lanes flanked by blooming cherry trees, or temples,[471] as if reflecting on perception and the concept of Japaneseness. And of course, one must not forget that the Oedipus myth retold in *Funeral Parade* ends with the protagonist blinding herself, in a surrealistic and melodramatic scene immediately recalling the infamous eye-slicing razor of Luis Buñuel's *Un*

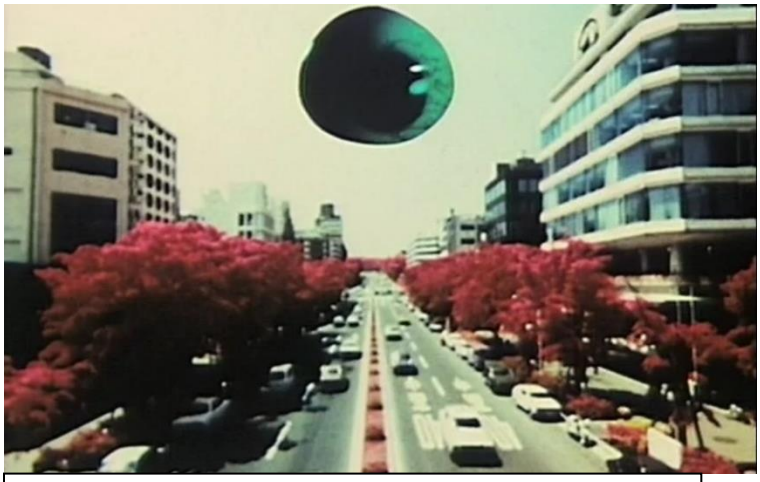

Figure 34: Matsumoto Toshio, *Phantom* (1975)

Figure 35: Matsumoto Toshio, *Funeral Parade of Roses* (1969)

[470] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 28.

[471] See Figure 34.

Chien Andalou.[472] The inquiry into human perception, clearly central to Matsumoto's film theory and practice, resulted in a wide range of works, from abstract film projections to short documentaries and feature-length fiction films—all resolutely analyzing the estranging and uncanny hidden in plain view.

The Scandalous Aesthetics of Wakamatsu Koji

Alongside Matsumoto, another Japanese filmmaker-iconoclast consistently blurred the virtual and actual, fiction and document—albeit in a much more controversial and scandalous way. In a June 1965 article in *Film Art* (*Eiga Geijutsu*), notorious Pink Film director Wakamatsu Koji discussed the role scandal played in his films—namely, the controversy over his film *Affairs Within Walls (Kabe no naka no himegoto).* The film was submitted to the Berlin Film Festival—predictably, to the great shame of the Japanese government—without the endorsement of Eiren, the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan. Eiren was dominated by the major studios, and therefore did not recommend independently produced films to international film festivals.[473] The scandal shone a spotlight on Pink Film, which was suddenly seen as avant-garde within a certain international context. But much more than capitalizing on the fame brought by such a scandal, Wakamatsu desired to use the concept of 'scandal' as a revolutionary weapon:

> Scandal, like a stone thrown onto the surface of still water, inserts foreign matter into a chaotic situation, defeats this chaos, creates confusion, and then, by allowing each person to choose one's own standpoint, exposes its true nature (*honshitsu*), and sheds light onto friends and foes. With this method, through the creation of foes, true allies are created, and from within these allies, hiding foes emerge.[474]

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[472] See Figure 35.

[473] Alexander Zahlten, "The Role of Genre in Film From Japan: Transformations 1960s-2000s" (PhD diss., Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, 2007), 108-109.

[474] Wakamatsu Koji, *Wakamatsu Koji Zenhatsugen (The Collected Writings of Wakamatsu Koji)* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2010), 11.

Wakamatsu's filmmaking method was anarchic and resolutely anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian; if a scandal emerged, it was used to lay bare the "true nature" of a political situation. Scandals served to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, by clarifying the stance of each member of a community. The shock to the establishment causes ripples within calm waters, out of which the "true nature" has the potential to emerge. Wakamatsu describes this by the common phrase *Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru* (literally: allow your flesh to be cut, then cut the bone)—allow yourself to be hurt (your own flesh cut) in order to defeat your enemy (cutting deeper than the flesh, to the bone).

Such was Wakamatsu's use of the genre of Pink Film, and the controversial films he created: an aesthetic weapon against Japanese establishment politics. Although this sentiment might at first appear more aligned with the "Kino-Bayonet" than the "Kino-Eye," many of Wakamatsu's films are more ambiguous and estranging than alienating. And while many films by Adachi Masao, Wakamatsu's erstwhile collaborator, easily align with Godard's didactic and overly-cerebral productions from the late 1960s, as we will see, Wakamatsu's films frequently employ more playful techniques, and evoke more affective, corporeal responses in their viewers. What Furuhata termed Wakamatsu's concern for journalistic actuality allowed him to create films which straddle fictional film and journalistic analysis—and all reflected through the strange, fragmented prism of experimental soft-core pornography.

It might at first seem counterintuitive to place a director of Pink Film—technically, a low-budget sexploitation genre[475]—alongside film directors of the 1960s. In practice, however,

[475] Alexander Zahlten provides a comprehensive definition in his doctoral dissertation, which includes the economic, formal, and thematic elements of the genre, as follows: Pink Film is a low-budget alternative to the major studio system which reintroduced independent production and distribution strategies. Each film is shot in a timeframe of merely 3-5 days and with a budget of about 3 million Yen, is around 60 minutes in length, shot on 35mm film on location and without synched sound, and is exclusively shown in specialized Pink Film theaters. Directors are

the films are not immensely different in either form or content from directors such as Imamura or Oshima, both of whom were known for sexual and violent works which served as political allegories. Although they are certainly a distinct genre with its own generic forms and tropes, Pinks are part and parcel of the same stylistic current characterizing much of the Japanese political avant-garde. Pink, documentary, and fiction films blurred into one another, becoming part of the same intellectual dialogue. Indeed, in 1962 Matsumoto Toshio wrote an article in *Documentary Film* titled with the same common parlance used by Wakamatsu: *Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru*. From within such a phrase arose a discussion of several important buzzwords of the period: alienation (*sogai*), the subject (*shutai*), and the negation of everydayness (*Nichijosei no hitei*).[476] Pinks were ingrained in this dialogue of politics and aesthetics early on.

Far from being on the fringes of popular cinema—and indeed Pink Film was extraordinarily prolific and profitable, far more so than mainstream film—Adachi and Wakamatsu were mainstays of the art film world, contributing exceptionally to its cultural zeitgeist. For example, they, along with Oshima Nagisa, Matsumoto Toshio, and Matsuda Masao, helped bring back *Eiga Hihyo* (Film Review), once an important forum for film theory in the era surrounding the previous ANPO protests in 1960. The writers of the new *Eiga Hihyo* attempted to theorize the contours of a "movement cinema" (*undo no eiga*), often looking to other political aesthetic movements such as the Dziga Vertov Group for inspiration. The goal was to reinvent film criticism as activism. Furuhata notes that the editors of *Eiga Hihyo*

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granted a great degree of autonomy, and, as long as a certain number of sex scenes are included at regular intervals (generally about 5-7 per film), the director is free to experiment with form and narrative structure. Genitalia and pubic hair are hidden by either shooting around them or by use of post-production masking techniques. Violence, especially against women, is a mainstay of the genre, and almost every film includes at least one rape sequence. The films often play out themes of nationhood and postwar trauma by making use of the mediated female body. See Zahlten, "The Role of Genre in Film From Japan," 74, 77-78.

[476] Matsumoto Toshio, "Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru," *Kiroku Eiga* (Vol. 5, Oct. 1962) 14.

envisioned the activist filmmaker as both journalist and revolutionary: "We had no model to rely on," notes Matsuda, "but we were struggling to position ourselves as *journalists* living in the transformative age, and the activities of the Dziga Vertov Group were the only indirect help we found in this process."[477]

The editors of *Eiga Hihyo II* also resurrected *shutaiseiron*—the analysis of the subject of filmmaking. Writers, both critics and practicing filmmakers, discussed philosophical and political terms in vogue at the time: "image," "condition," "subject consciousness," etc. As Nornes notes, in this group, the image was analyzed as a record stamped by the assertive hand of the filmmaker within the volatile "conditions" of the world. This "world" hid enemies and was structured by powerful, long-lived institutions. The new *Eiga Hihyo* group viewed this relationship between subject, image, and object as key to their politicized aesthetics.[478]

These politicized aesthetics, however, are not perfectly mapped onto Kino-Eye aesthetics; for filmmakers such as Vertov, film was political in its ability to revolutionize human consciousness. The complex semiotics of the second *Eiga Hihyo*, however, soon approached something akin to aestheticizing the political rather than the reverse. Film became seen more as a weapon ("Kino-Bayonet") than a revolutionary medium; perception was no longer enough. For this reason, Adachi's—and Wakatsu's—films are far more violent than the other filmmakers discussed in this chapter. Notably, this increasing tendency toward violence reflected the increasing radicalization of the New Left in Japan. As articles became increasingly obscure, the call for a political movement through cinema became a call to war against the state—hardly the playful aesthetics of The Kino-Eye.[479]

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[477] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 175.

[478] Nornes, *Forest of Pressure,* 95.

[479] While reading the archives of the *Eiga Hihyo II* journal at the National Diet Library, I found that the most politically radical issues of the journal, especially in the last years of its tenure (1973-1974), were almost

Unsurprisingly, Adachi participated much more fervently in these intellectual discussions than Wakamatsu, whose anarchic and anti-authoritarian tendencies put him somewhat at odds with the hardline Marxists of the period. Although Adachi and Wakamatsu's collaborations are some of the most notorious of the genre, and are emblematic of the avant-gardist methods of the 1960s, their sensibilities are not identical, and, I would argue, diametrically opposed. However, it is important to note that Wakamatsu is not as perfect an inheritor of Kino-Eye techniques as Matsumoto Toshio or Hani Susumu. Rather, his films denote a more ambivalent sensibility in play in the Japanese political avant-garde, and are imbued with an estranging but still often playful characteristic lacking in the often brutal, and less affective, films of Adachi Masao.

Although Adachi's filmmaking style, which leans heavily Brechtian and was consciously influenced by Godard, will not be discussed here, his style stems from a misapprehension of Dziga Vertov mirrored by Godard's Dziga Vertov Group films. In a series of interviews with Hirasawa Go published as the text *Film/Revolution* (*Eiga/ Kakumei*), Adachi describes his many influences in his formative years as a young student—one of which was c*inéma-vérité,* in its very early stages during the early 1960s.[480] Adachi's filmmaking, then, is less aligned with Vertov's Kino-Pravda than Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch in 1960, as discussed in the previous chapter: a nonfiction filmmaking more in line with ontological realism. Unlike the playful estrangement of Vertov films, Adachi's own films—both fiction (*Schoolgirl Guerillas*, *Gushing Prayer*, etc) and non-fiction (*A.K.A. Serial Killer, Red Army-PFLC,* etc)—adapt a cold, often Brechtian,

exclusively written by men, and that the advertisements of these years heavily favored extremely graphic Adachi and Wakamatsu pink films. The odd feeling of reading articles on the aestheticization of violence and radical Marxist-Leninism interspersed with drawings and photographic replications of raped women is not something which can easily be described by words. I plan to investigate this problem of gendered violence in future work.

[480] Adachi Masao, with Hirasawa Go, *Eiga/Kakumei* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2003), 48.

surrealistic politic. Constantly desiring to use film as weapon, Adachi was a proponent of the Kino-Bayonet instead of the Kino-Eye.

Given the collaboration between Wakamatsu and Adachi, it is often difficult to decipher where one auteur starts and the other begins. However, Wakamatsu's work from the mid-1960s, even before his collaborations with Adachi, show a clear continuity through his later-1960s work. I claim, alongside Furuhata, that these films are also defined by their mirroring not only of actual news stories but a "doubling" in which Wakamatsu reexamines and reformulates other works of the political avant-garde. The result is a constant examination of virtuality and actuality which is frequently self-conscious and very often playful.

For example, one of Wakamatsu's first films, *Resume of Love Affairs* (*Joji no rirekisho,* 1964), is actually a reformulation of Imamura Shohei's *Insect Woman,* released a year prior. The plot of the two films is almost identical: a woman from the countryside is repeatedly raped, and, when she decides to liberate herself by moving to Tokyo and forging a new life, she finds that her fate cannot escape her, and is tricked into becoming a prostitute, continuing the cycle of sexual violence which had plagued her since childhood. In both films, this woman—an allegory for Japan—is contrasted with the new (male) movement against ANPO and desirous of leftist political revolution. She is also somewhat infantilized, using the term "papa" for her male patron. Lastly, both she and Tome in *Insect Woman* are interrogated the police. In addition, not only the plot of the film but the form is a variation on Imamura's original: long shots of the protagonist walking through the countryside in snow, for example, and the use of actual newsreels to illustrate the political moment in which the film is based. However, although Imamura's film is also notoriously sexual, Wakamatsu translates many aspects of the film through the lens of pink

film—out of which emerges a more self-consciously sexual, more violent, and more ironic iteration of Imamura's original—and, interestingly, one with a happier ending.

Like *Resume of Love Affairs*, Wakamatsu's other films seem to present works of the political avant-garde through a Pink funhouse mirror. For example, Wakamatsu's *Affairs Within Walls* shares a similar conceptual construct to Hani's *She and He*: a lonely, socially-minded housewife, a diegetic world entirely confined to a single *danchi*, an affair (or a hint of one, in Hani's case), a political past now turned to complicity with the high economic growth period and its "three sacred treasures" (television, refrigerator, washing machine). Indeed, in both films, these appliances literally take center stage: both Hani and Wakamatsu compose their frames to place one of these appliances in the center, especially the television. However, while the formal and plot-based elements of the two films are nearly identical, Wakamatsu removes the beautiful, highly affect-driven performance by Hidari Sachiko (also the protagonist of Imamura's *Insect Woman*) and substitutes a melancholy, cold performance in Fujino Hiroko, with whom identification is impossible. The elements which were empathic now become ironic. Although one would expect a sexploitation film, so close to soft-core pornography, to highlight haptic visuality, Wakamatsu's films overturn this sense of touch with an emphasis on the *optic.*[481]

In such a way, Wakamatsu's films often become a variation on a theme, whether another film, such as Hani's and Imamura's, or an event in the news—such as, for instance, the murder of Sharon Tate and three others by the Manson Family. In the 1969 Pink *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* (*Yuke Yuke Ni Do Me no Shoujo*), Poppo, a working-class girl, is gang-raped by a group of rowdy Tokyo youths, while the impotent Tsukio watches—neither able to save her from her

[481] For a more in-depth analysis on the contrast between affect-driven haptic visuality (especially as explicate by Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks) and the optic-centricism of Wakamatsu's *Affairs Within Walls*, see Julia Alekseyeva, "Nuclear Skin: Hiroshima and the Critique of Embodiment in *Affairs Within Walls"* in *The Atomic Bomb in Japanese Cinema*, ed. Matthew Edwards (North Carolina: McFarland, 2015).

unceasing rapes, nor to consummate their relationship. Later in the film we learn via flashback that he was sexually abused by his parents, and killed them and another couple as they were engaging in an orgy—hardly an ode to free love in the 1960s. Like many Pink Films, the end explodes into violence: Tsukio kills the youths who raped Poppo, and the couple jump from the rooftop to their deaths. At the film's conclusion, Wakamatsu includes several pages from a samurai manga, intercut with photographs of Roman Polanski and Sharon Tate, eight and a half months pregnant.[482] This bizarre inclusion of comic and mass media at the end of a Pink Film forces the viewer to rethink and reformulate every previous scene, after which disparate events begin to make much more sense—in particular, the scene where Tsukio murders his parents and another couple mid-orgy. After seeing the magazine cutouts of Sharon Tate, the viewer realizes that Tsukio's crime is a near-exact recreation of the murder of Tate herself.

Figure 36: Wakamatsu Koji, *Go Go Second Time Virgin*, (1969)

Not only is Tsukio's crime a restaging of a major event in cultural history, but it transformed Tate's murder into a meditative, almost ritualistic work of art which *reflects* upon

[482] See Figure 36.

the events presented. In *Second Time Virgin*, the murder is presented more as a work of art than a crime of passion; likewise, the fact that the initial presentation of the murder is in color—one of only two instances in the film—signals it as the most important moment in the narrative. We first see this artwork after Tsukio takes Poppo into a room (still in black and white), warning her that what she would see might be gruesome. She walks into the room and gasps, staring straight into the camera lens. At this exact moment, the film switches to color, and we see an eerily artistically composed scene with four naked corpses lying face down on the floor.[483] They have obviously been stabbed repeatedly, but in an almost lovingly retouched way: the red of their blood is far too bright to be believable, and is drizzled across their bodies in the manner of a Pollock painting; several bright white pairs of underwear are draped across the floor, or around someone's head. Indeed, later in the film we see a flashback of the murder itself, and our fears are confirmed: Tsukio re-arranged the bodies (and underwear, placed just so) to approximate a certain artistic composition, which included winding a thin blue piece of rope around each corpse—seemingly for no reason but to add a touch of blue to a scene dominated by red and white. Unsurprisingly, during the Tate

Figure 37: Wakamatsu Koji, *Go Go Second Time Virgin*, (1969)

[483] See Figure 37.

murders, too, a rope was wound between several corpses. Likewise, Tsukio's uttering of the word *buta* (pig) incessantly in front of the corpses echoes the fact that the word "pig" was scrawled on a door during the Tate murders in Sharon's blood.

This careful restaging of the murder of a famous American actress therefore becomes a reflection upon cinema and mass culture. Furuhata describes Wakamatsu's constant referral to news media and actuality as "artifactual":

> Despite being fictional, the diegetic Worlds of Wakamatsu's films are clearly contiguous with the historically "real" world outside the screen. At the same time, the purported realness of the historical world referenced by Wakamatsu's films is itself heavily mediated by journalism and the news media. The referential status of Wakamatsu's films should thus be called *artifactual.*[484]

Indeed, an element of artifactuality penetrates all of Wakamatsu's films to varying extents; even *Affairs Within Walls* ends with a zoom into a newspaper article about a murder in a *danchi* complex. Similarly, *Violated Angels* (*Okasareta Hakui*) of 1967 is a creative restaging of the Richard Speck mass murder spree in 1966 Chicago: a young man enters a dormitory for student nurses, raping and murdering all but one who escapes. Perhaps meant as a companion piece to *Second Time Virgin*,[485] *Violated Angels* also includes several scenes of murders which are staged by the characters and presented as art objects: in one shocking sequence, the murderer of *Violated Angels* slowly cuts away at the flesh of a nurse tied to a pole until the blood runs equally over her naked body. When her body is finally revealed, the film turns to color—a trick Wakamatsu always saves for the most emotionally arresting scenes of his films—and we see a

[484] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality,* 89-90.

[485] Another hint that the films are meant as companion pieces is in the inclusion of almost repeated footage: at the conclusion of *Violated Angels*, one of the nurses runs gleefully along a beach, while the murder-protagonists chases her in awe. The film has a deep blue filter, and the result has an oneiric quality. Two years later, in the beginning of *Go, Go Second Time Virgin*, Poppo runs along the same beach, again shot with the same blue filter--but here the tone is decidedly more nightmarish, as she is chased by young men who gang-rape her on the beach while she cries for help. Although the tons of both moments are in marked contrast to one another, the fact that they exist at the end of the earlier and beginning of the later movie imply a bridge between the two.

blood-red woman decorated with a wreath on her head. And of course, one cannot forget the film's hauntingly *aesthetic* conclusion: the bodies of the victims are splayed out on the floor like rays of a sun, with the last remaining girl in the center, holding the murderer's head in her lap, who is curled in fetal position. Like in *Second Time Virgin,* blood is splattered *just so*; indeed, the placement of the blood and bodies on the floor, where a pure white sheet had been spread, mimics an imperial flag: a metaphor for state violence. In Wakamatsu, artifactuality is aestheticized: actuality is warped into its reflective, avant-gardist iteration.

Wakamatsu's films are not necessarily playful in tone but always include a Vertov-like variation in technique, using actuality footage alongside staged sequences, both black and white and color film, footage of advertisements, surrealistic dream sequences, and an experimental use of music. For example, *Second Time Virgin* is a fascinating jumble of seemingly incongruous styles. Like many Pink Films, the film is a mix of black-and-white and color due to severe budget constraints. Highly grotesque scenes of sexual and physical violence are accompanied by a wistful and nostalgic soundtrack, which uses Western jazz and simple plaintive melodies (for instance, a gentle flute solo is played immediately after Tsukio murders the youths at the end).[486] The cinematography varies from extreme close up, to long shot, to long handheld POV shots. In one scene, Wakamatsu seemingly films while running down a stairwell for several minutes, while playful scat jazz is heard in the background. The viewer sees nothing but a vertigo-inducing flight down many stairs, thus entering us entirely into the subjectivity of one (or both) protagonists. The result is a highly varied mix of styles and techniques which combine a news-oriented sense of "actuality" with a hugely experimental and anti-authoritarian aestheticism.

[486] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 104.

This mix of styles is equally apparent in *Ecstasy of the Angels* of 1972, often claimed to be Wakamatsu's last great film before he fell into a career slump. Released by ATG, it contains many of the exuberantly experimental aspects typical of the production company: a jazz-heavy score, mix of black and white/color footage, high variety in camera angles and frequent use of handheld cameras, a carnivalesque sensibility, and the highly political themes typical of the avant-garde from this period. In the film, a radical Marxist revolutionary party, composed of groups with code names based on seasons, months of the year, and days in the week,[487] plans to steal ammunition from a US army base and launch armed assault; plans go awry when October, one of the group's leaders, is blinded in the attack on the army base, and taken out of commission in the fight. When it is revealed that he was set up for becoming too powerful among the members, a rift is created between the revolutionary groups, which leads to a series of rogue terrorist attacks in Tokyo.

Although the film is one of the most applauded in Wakamatsu's repertoire, Kimata Kimihiko notes that after the release of the film, times had changed: the film foreshadows the breakdown of the "season of politics," especially after the Asama Sanso Incident. Immediately preceding the release of the film, the militant leftist group United Red Army lynched many of its own members while training in the woods of Nagano. Soon after the lynchings, on 19 February 1972, five remaining members took a lodgekeeper's wife hostage and barricaded themselves inside the lodge. A shoot-out with the police ensued, and the televised event, which began on February 19 and ended on February 28, received unprecedented television broadcast ratings.[488]

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[487] Hirasawa Go notes that the armed group appearing in the film, especially the structure of organization based on year, season, month, and weekday, was not based on any Marxist Revolutionary Party, but on the secret *Société des Saisons* of the French 19th century revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui. See Hirasawa Go, notes on *Ecstasy of the Angels*. Japan Society website, accessed 12/10/2015. http://www.japansociety.org/event/ecstasy-of-the-angels.

[488] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality,* 185-186.

The New Left, which peaked in 1968, had become increasingly radicalized, and turned violent; the captured Red Army unit even confessed to lynching many of its own members. Although the film merely foreshadows this, it was seen as instigating the incident and became an enormous scandal. Having lost their goal, apathy (*shirake*) then spread among the youth.[489] Although the film was certainly a foreshadowing of Japanese politics, it is also a clear variation on Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967)—a film Wakamatsu and Adachi had undoubtedly seen, since *Eiga Hihyo* often published articles on Jean-Luc Godard in this period. Like *La Chinoise*, *Ecstasy of the Angels* also describes a group of radicalized youths set on working for revolution—but instead of sublimating their urges through morning calisthenics and readings of Mao Zedong, the youths of *Ecstasy of the Angels* form bonds through sex with group members. Thus both *La Chinoise* and *Ecstasy of the Angels* contain a botched attempt at revolution, albeit filtered through the peculiarities of each film's historical moment.

Although Andrew Grossman claims that unlike Godard, Wakamatsu's version of the trope lacks wit and humor—that we must "give Wakamatsu the benefit of the doubt if we're to see *Ecstasy* as satire"[490]—I argue that *Ecstasy* revels in the ambiguous space between gravity and wit. Although the screenplay was written by Adachi, the heyday of the New Left was already noticeably behind him. He states, in an interview with the filmmaker Eric Baudelaire:

> When we made *Ecstasy of the Angels* I knew we wouldn't win with a few sporadic bombings. Fighting alone with a few bombs or guns was pointless. And I was seeking a way to bring real change to the world. So I wrote the screenplay for *Ecstasy of the Angels* as a portrait of a lost, self-destroying youth.[491]

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[489] Kimata Kimihiko, "Thoughts on the Extremely Private Pink Film of the 1970s," *The Pink Book: The Japanese Eroduction and Its Contents*, Ed. Mark Nornes, (Kinema Club 2nd Ed. PDF, 2014), 52-53.

[490] Grossman, "All Jargon and No Authenticity," 242.

[491] Eric Baudelaire, *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images* (film), 2011

The film was thus created as a swan song for radical leftism in Japan. The "way to bring real change to the world" was returned to self-analysis (a more radical leftist might deem it *jikko hihan* or self-criticism), and a disruption within *nichijosei* (everyday-ness). Its relation to violence is less glorifying than melancholy: when the leader named October narrates, "October's soldiers are going into battle. All are prepared to die," the audience cannot help but take his words with a grain of salt. After the nightclub singer, named Friday, drives straight to the National Diet armed with a hand grenade, the scene cuts to an image of Mt. Fuji in full color, with what appears to be a very small bomb exploding on an abandoned road[492]: as Adachi explains, "fighting alone with a few bombs... was pointless." The act is revealed to be a symbolic gesture, a futile homemade bomb creating a bare hint of roadside debris.

Figure 38: Wakamatsu Koji, *Ecstasy of the Angels* (1972)

The film is inundated with self-reflexivity. For instance, when the revolutionary Monday performs his daytime job of taking vaguely pornographic photographs of two women dressed as schoolgirls, he decides to join their lovemaking in a threesome. They ask him whether he would still be able to take photographs. He says, "Yes of course—it's avant-garde!" Likewise, the film employs a constant discussion of whether something is "real" (*honki*) or dramatized theatrics. The film, aware of

[492] See Figure 38.

itself *qua* film—especially one participating in the carnivalesque media mix exuberance of ATG—is meta-cinematic. Like many films of the "Kino-Eye" trajectory, it gleefully refers to its own participation in an aesthetic-political movement.

Furuhata claims that by foregrounding the connection between the cinematic image and an on-going media event, Wakamatsu's work brings together two economies of the image: journalistic and cinematic, for which precise timing is key.[493] More so than this, however: Wakamatsu also highlights the fundamental *aesthetic* aspect of his work. When Wakamatsu reworks a film by Hani Susumu or Imamura Shohei, or dramatizes a prominent media event, he knowingly recreates it as a consciously symbolic form. Thus a murder is oddly lovingly rendered into the shape of the imperial flag, or a bomb explodes before a sacred mountain.

However, one must remember that all of Wakamatsu's films and their fascinating technical aspects—their varied mix of technique and media, their use of estrangement, their "artifactuality" in their use of actuality footage and events—nonetheless play out their political allegory through the use of the brutally violated female body, with few exceptions. As Grossman rightfully notes, rape is a trademark of Pink Film, meant to critique an emasculated postwar patriarchy futilely grasping at power; however, the use of sadomasochistic kink and "fascistic" depictions of female bondage as an allegory for every political theme is extraordinarily problematic.[494] Pink Film is oriented to an exclusively male audience, and as noted previously, its rise in both popularity and critical assessment coincided with the rise of radical leftist militarization in *Eiga Hihyo*; the radical intellectual discourses of the time seem to have aligned all too commonly with the subjugation of women, who have once again found their bodies

[493] Yuriko Furuhata, "The Actuality of Wakamatsu: Repetition, Citation, Media Event," *The Pink Book: The Japanese Eroduction and Its Contents*, Ed. Mark Nornes, (Kinema Club 2nd Ed. PDF, 2014), 151.

[494] Grossman, "All Jargon and No Authenticity," 239-240.

transformed into canvases onto which men could project their sense of political and sexual impotence. Although there is much that is fascinating in the characteristics of Pink Film, many of which align with Kino-Eye aesthetics, its ambiguous sexual politic cannot be ignored, and a more wide-ranging study of its gender politics remains to be written.

Radical Aesthetics: Terayama Shuji's Laboratory of Play

Although the release of Wakamatsu's *Ecstasy of the Angels* effectively ended the "season of politics" in Japan, another larger-than-life figure continued to delve into the political avant-garde, albeit with a more anarchic perspective. This was Terayama Shuji, the internationally renowned poet, playwright, director, filmmaker, photographer, novelist, lyricist, cultural critic, theatrical theorist, advocate for the rights of youth, and spokesman for lonely teenage girls—as well as gambler, peeping Tom, and iconoclast.[495] Terayama, the ultimate jack-of-all-trades, was notorious for not following the dogma of any one particular theorist; as such, his work overflows with apparent contradictions, while his artistic output constantly metamorphosed into something else. Although participating in the same cultural milieu as Adachi Masao, Terayama's playful experiments and radical aesthetics cannot be further from the Marxist-Leninism of many of the writers of *Eiga Hihyo.* As Victor Shklovsky reminds us in his "Letter to Lev Yakubinsky": "I am not about to become a hard-and-fast Marxist, and I advise you to follow my example."[496] So too is Terayama's work a self-conscious, constantly self-evaluating revolution of forms, distrustful of any alleged claims to objective truth.

[495] Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts: The Avant-Garde Theatre of Terayama Shuji and Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 1.

[496] Victor Shklovsky, quoted in Richard Sheldon, Introduction to Shklovsky, *Third Factory*, xxxv.

As Terayama defiantly claims, "I am my own documentary" (*Watashi ha jishin no kiroku de aru*)[497]. Respectful but nevertheless suspicious of observational documentary formats, Terayama much preferred a "realism" seeped in both fiction and nonfiction. Like the other directors analyzed in this chapter, Terayama was unconvinced by the allegedly unstylized, less expressionistic, and less narrative-driven documentary modes. As he claims, "There is a way of thinking that states that fiction is corrupt, and nonfiction is ever-present. But is fiction truly corrupt?... One must pay heed that in this relative comparison, in the dynamic between reality and fantasy, "documentary" (*kiroku*) doesn't quite align with either."[498] Like Vertov, Terayama was less interested in a hard-line "document" and more in a playful reimagining which upsets our perceptual habits. Indeed, for Terayama, Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* was far less "documentary" of a film than *Hiroshima mon amour,* which played out perpetual human conflicts within the film's fictional drama: life and death, love and hate, thought and feeling.[499]

It is therefore unsurprising that Terayama did not film strict documentaries, nor incorporate a great deal of actuality footage into his films. However, he was an extremely important figure in the zeitgeist of the period, and his wildly anarchic films become a document in themselves (indeed, much of his work is explicitly autobiographical). Terayama's highly playful, nontraditional aesthetics, coupled with a more anarchic political streak suspicious of party politics, forms a necessary pairing with the other filmmakers of the Kino-Eye trajectory within the Japanese political avant-garde. Although Terayama was as much, if not more of, a playwright and poet than a filmmaker, he became interested in film during the heyday of the the

[497] Terayama Shuji, *Eiga gishi wo ite (A Projectionist in Shot: Collected Writings on Cinema of Terayama Shuji)* (Tokyo: Shinshohan, 1973) 229.

[498] Ibid., 227.

[499] Ibid., 229.

1960s, and his films—especially *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*—became iconic representations of Tokyo youth culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Likewise, the themes of his films are highly relevant for their political and documentarian inclinations, even within a fictional framework. His work, whether theatrical, cinematic, or poetic, is imbued with history, constantly referring to historical events and using audio recordings, such as the recording of Emperor Hirohito's surrender in his film *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* (*Tomato Kechappu Koutei,* 1971, short and long versions). In this strange and playful investigation into Japanese postwar history, prepubescent boys don costumes of various dictators from history (especially Napoleon) and revolt against their adult oppressors. Notably, when Terayama was asked his favorite play, he claims to have immediately answered, "History."[500]

Similarly, in *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*, History with a capital H is literally *played* by the children-dictators, who give chase to adults while wearing the robes of the KKK, play dolls in front of a giant portrait of the Meiji emperor, and, in the famous opening, cross out portraits of iconic figures who have framed History: figures of politics (Mao Zedong), economics (Karl Marx,[501] Adam Smith), and arts (Mae West, Arthur Rimbaud). The result is a

Figure 39: Terayama Shuji, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* (1971)

[500] Terayama Shuji, translated by Sorgenfrei, in *Unspeakable Acts*, 263.

[501] See Figure 39.

reinvestigation of these selfsame icons, and a self-conscious play on the Nietzschean re-evaluation of values to which some factions of the New Left aspired. Like other figures discussed here, Terayama was obsessed with dissolving the line between fiction and reality, laying bare certain fundamental truths in a manner akin to formalist defamiliarization. He was therefore was an essential part of the political avant-garde and its quest to reevaluate Japanese society through radical aesthetic practices.

In 1967 Terayama, already an esteemed poet and dramaturgist, established *Tenjo Sajiki* (Ceiling Gallery), an underground theatre troupe that included Kujo Eiko, his wife at the time, as producer, graphic designer Yokoo Tadanori as artistic director, and Higashi Yutaka as stage director.[502] The troupe's name comes from the Japanese translation of the Marcel Carné film *Les Enfants du Paradis*, as well as the cheapest "Ceiling Gallery" seats of a theatre, but as Steven Ridgely notes, the subtitle of the troupe's name may be even more significant: *engeki jikkenshitsu,* or theater laboratory, often "A Laboratory of Play" in their own materials. The name can be traced to a sign Terayama posted on the door of his apartment in the early 1960s proclaiming the space his "laboratory."[503] This "Laboratory of Play" recalls the Kino-Eye, and especially Vertov, in two important ways. First, the artist becomes the "engineer" within Vertov's early experiment "Laboratory of Hearing" and what I have called his "Laboratory of Sight" in the first years after *Kino-Pravda*, described in Chapter 2—not to mention Vertov's general praise of science and suspicion of art. Second, play is a central technique of the Kino-Eye, crucial for the understanding of his filmmaking. As Terayama notes, "'Play' offers an

[502] Allison Holland, review of "Japanese Counterculture: The Antiestablishment Art of Terayama Shuji," *Japanese Studies* (32:3, 2012), 483.

[503] Steven C. Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture: The Antiestablishment Art of Terayama Shuji* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) xxi.

opportunity to escape self-isolation, a chance for 'self-encounter.'"[504] Although Vertov worked exclusively with actuality footage and is known as a director of newsreels, their wide-ranging experimental frameworks are oddly similar, and make for a fruitful comparison. For example, Terayama's concept of play is inherently tied to nonfictional worlds, and history:

> ...My thinking goes like this: "Play" (Spiel) organizes chance through imagination or intense concentration. Because "play" (Spiel) is fictional, it is easy to set it outside of everyday reality. Why can't it include everyday reality? "Play" tends to fall into the realm of the private dreamworld, but our drama rejects private dreamworlds. We ardently try to construct dramas that portray universal truths.[505]

Play, for Terayama, includes "everyday reality," in which the "private dreamworlds" are necessarily rejected in favor of the portrayal of "universal truths." Naturally, one of these universal truths is the blend of fictional and nonfictional worlds, of reality and fantasy. Although here Terayama describes his *Tenjo Sajiki* theatre troupe, this same sense of play exists in his films. Indeed, many of his theatrical and radio scripts were reworked into films; for example, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* was originally a provocative radio play entitled *Otona-gari* (*Adult-Hunting*, 1960).[506] "Play" in its many iterations suffused Terayama's entire artistic output—even within Terayama himself, constantly in a state of reinvention and transformation: a permanent revolution of self-hood and personality.

As Carol Sorgenfrei notes, his goal was to transform the "dross of mere existence into golden art, leaden reality into glittering fiction."[507] This "dross" reminds one of the Soviet war on *byt*, the burden of routine everydayness. As we have already seen, the late 1960s, peaking with the 1970 wave of ANPO protests, sought to revolutionize everyday life, or *nichijosei*. Terayama's

[504] Terayama, *Unspeakable Acts,* 268.

[505] Ibid., 268-269.

[506] Holland, "Japanese Counterculture," 483.

[507] Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts*, 1.

politics yearned to liberate humanity from this burden of everyday life, as well as from ties to home and country (*furusato*); as epitomized in the film *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets (Sho wo suteyo, machi e deyo,* 1971), Terayama enjoined Japanese youths to break from obligation to one's home and participate in social existence. Like Vertov, he implored his audience to "Come out, please, into life."[508] In a truly countercultural light, Terayama desired, in his words, to "summon the millions of limping outcasts, blacksmiths, and magicians—to create new chances for encounters." These outcasts recall those ostracized members of society also beloved by Imamura Shohei: prostitutes, brothel madams, ex-communicated priests, and prodigal sons, which some of Imamura's compatriots sardonically termed, in an archaic fashion, *Chimimouryou* (魑魅魍魎)—the "evil spirits of rivers and mountains."[509] Such "evil spirits," nonetheless persisting in contemporary Japanese society, became integral to Terayama's revolutionary movement: in his words, a *hantaisei undo*, or antiestablishment movement.

However, Terayama's experimental theatre, as well as his films, were based on radical *aestheticization.* Everyday life became play, in both senses of the term: both playful, and a theatrical production. For Terayama, the function of play seems to have been inherently political: to "reverse history."[510] Terayama, however, differentiates this from political science, whose purpose was to distinguish fantasy from reality.[511] His plays—and by extension, his film output—question the validity of distinctions: false versus real, imaginary versus lived

[508] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya*, 42. Translation: Vertov, "The Council of Three," 20.

[509] As Imamura writes in his autobiographic account of the beginning of Imamura Productions: "miscellaneous people gradually began to seep in, such as a hostess we met at bars and interviews, an excommunicated priest, a prodigal son who crushed the family Japanese inn business, etc. Urayama, half amazed, said that I liked "the evil spirits of rivers and mountains..." see Imamura, *Eiga wa kyouki no tabi de aru,* (「映画は狂気の旅である」Film is a Journey in Madness), (Tokyo: Tokyo Library Center, 2010), 97.

[510] Terayama, *Unspeakable Acts*, 264.

[511] Ibid., 265-266.

experience. As Terayama writes, “I want to ask what these distinctions imply, and I want to restore people's *identification* with the coexistence of opposites (making them one and the same).”[512] Terayama thus advocated for an intense questioning of such difference, and a breaking down of their boundaries to reveal hidden truths. In his film and theatre, the result was often shocking and scandalous; take, for example, his short film *Laura* (*Raura*, 1974): three prostitutes heckle the audience, from whom a single man is selected. He is beckoned forward and led into the screen, which is revealed to be composed of bandages. These bandages then part, allowing the audience member to *enter the screen*. He enters, and while doing so, the film changes to reveal the man in the diegesis of the film itself; the prostitutes brutally humiliate the man, stripping him of his clothes and continuing to jeer at him. Then, afraid and clutching his clothes, he is pushed out of the diegetic world of the film and *back into our world*. The result is a playfully shocking, and quite brutal, investigation of fiction and reality, with the worlds folding into each other in a violent fashion, the boundaries forcibly broken and constantly tested.

To a lesser extent, the film *Butterfly* (*Choufuku-ki,* also 1974) also questions the validity of the barriers between fantasy and reality. An extremely surreal piece—and indeed, Salvador Dalí is listed in the credits—the short film includes tropes from art, such as the trope of the butterfly, often used in the works of Dalí. During the film's projection, people appear to walk in front of the projector, casting large shadows on the screen. The viewer thus participates simultaneously in our world and in the diegesis of the film. Terayama engages in an investigation into the very difference between the real and the imagined, the fictional and the non-fictional, in a manner which is purposefully shocking to the viewer.

In addition, Terayama's discussion of his own methods often sounds uniquely similar to a

[512]Ibid., 266.

Soviet avant-gardist manifesto. Terayama writes:

> ...Theatre without actors and theatre where everyone is an actor, theatre without theatre buildings and theatre where everything is a theatre building, theatre without audience members and theatre where everyone is transformed into an audience member, theatre in city streets, theatre invading private homes, postal theatre, theatre in secret chambers without exits, telephone theatre: These are the trails left by ten years of varied experiments performed by Tenjo Sajiki Theatre Laboratory.[513]

Terayama desired a radical aestheticization in which theatre permeated virtually every aspect of contemporary Japanese society: city streets, private homes, the post office, telephones, and every "secret chamber". Everything in Terayama's world could be imbricated within a fictional space, which reveals itself to be not dissimilar from the world of nonfiction in the first place. Although Terayama appears to be advocating a radical fictionalizing of space which seems antithetical to the concern for Vertov's "stern realities," their methods are not entirely dissimilar. Remember, for instance, that Vertov's goal for the Kinoks was not a representation of an abstract "reality" but a "sensory exploration of the world through film." Similarly to Terayama, in Vertov's theories, the camera forcibly invades the space of contemporary Soviet society, creating a fresh perspective in Vertov's filmgoers. Compare the rhetoric of Vertov in "The Council of Three":

> ...I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement...[514]

Vertov's Kino-Eye plunges itself into every aspect of daily life, reveling in its "chaos of movement." Although the Kino-Eye is a means for *movement*, like Terayama advocating for the penetration of theatre into everyday life, it results in a new sensorial experience. In its ability to

[513] Terayama, *Unspeakable Acts,* 264.

[514] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 40-41. Translation: Vertov, "Council of Three," 17.

penetrate every aspect of a usually humdrum daily life, Vertov's Kino-Eye infuses it with the crafted, created elements of his camera. One re-experiences the world through its infinitely mobile, falling, ascending, plunging lens. Theatre in Terayama's world similarly dissolves these boundaries between a "created" artistic work and the contemporary landscape; for Terayama, bystanders and average citizens become actors, with the whole world a stage.

The boundary between fiction and nonfiction is especially investigated in his chaotic and carnivalesque full-length film *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*—one of the last works of the Japanese political avant-garde during this period. *Throw Away Your Books* was one of the "ten million yen" ATG co-productions (around US $28,000 in 1971), each of which received half of that already rock-bottom budget and were expected to pull together the other five million independently.[515] Although several critics describe it as a rock musical due to the importance of the film's soundtrack by J.A. Seazer, Terayama's frequent collaborator, and the tendency of characters to burst into song (this is especially common in the film's "dreamlike" sequences), I believe the film's use of music is one of its many media techniques, mixing within the diegesis of a single hybrid film-text. The film is as much an early 1970s psychedelic rock musical as political treatise, as much a surrealist, experimental fantasy as a standard *bildungsroman*. In the film, the teenager Kitagawa Eimei lives at home with an unemployed war criminal father, thief grandmother, and a younger sister, Setsuko, who has a sexual attachment to her pet rabbit; the protagonist attempts to join a team of soccer players, but fails: the team's charismatic leader Omi brings Eimei to a prostitute (thus fulfilling the initiation rite), but he runs away. His grandmother asks a Korean neighbor to kill Setsuko's rabbit, and in Setsuko's mourning, she wanders into the soccer team's changing room, where she is brutally gang-

[515] Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture,* 111.

raped.[516] Eventually Setsuko falls in love with Omi and moves in with him and his girlfriend, the grandmother runs way after her son attempts to place her into a Western-style nursing home, and the father is unemployed after the ramen cart Eimei purchased for him ends up being stolen.

Although the film does not depart from its plot, it is suffused with surrealist dream images shot through filters, including the fantasy of a Letatlin-like flying machine[517] built by the protagonist, which also appears in the Terayama short film *Cinema Guide for Young People* (*Seishounen no Tame no Eiga Nyuumon,* 1974); a green filter is used to represent his family, and

Figure 42: Terayama Shuji, *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets,* 1971

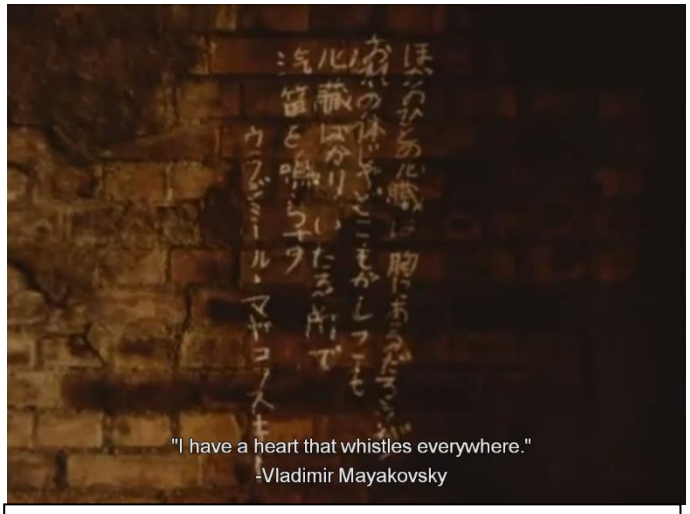

Figure 43: Terayama Shuji, *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets,* 1971

[516] Steven Ridgely notes that this moment in *Throw Away Your Books* is the first and last moment in any Terayama production in which a woman is raped—in contrast to many of the directors discussed in this chapter, for whom the violation of a woman by a man becomes a common trope, if not a cliché. Terayama's films, by contrast, usually involve the humiliation of young men by older, more experienced women. Indeed, a highly controversial scene in *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* shows a prepubescent child undressed and fondled by a group of much-older made-up women. The ethical implications of this aside, it is evident that Terayama's use of sexual abuse is far subtler than the standard Japanese film trope of rape used as an allegory for the abuses of the Japanese government onto its own people, or its complicity in the American use of Japan for its war bases.

[517] Here there is a fruitful comparison with Soviet avant-garde artist and architect Vladimir Tatlin's project "Letatlin," an ultimately unrealized flying machine created between 1929-1931. Tatlin's project also occurred at the cusp of two important aesthetic and political movements, existing directly between the end of the experiments of the Soviet avant-garde and the plunge head-first into Stalinist socialist realism. Likewise, as we will see, Japanese political avant-garde film moved from a highly politically engaged sensibility surrounding ANPO to an increasingly personal essay-type films. For both Tatlin and Terayama, there is a sense in the inherent impossibility of both projects: an Icarus-like plunge into the unknown. See Figures 40 and 41 for a side-by-side comparison of both flying machines.

a magenta filter is typically used for his fantasy of escaping it.[518] The emphasis on such oneiric images recalls Matsumoto's call for a merging of visible and invisible (*me wo mienai*) worlds in *Eizou no Hakken.* Matsumoto praised especially those moments in standard fictional films which allow the unconscious to peek through in a surrealist fashion, such as the dream sequence in the otherwise neo-realist Luis Buñuel film *Los Olividados (The Young and the Damned*, 1950), in which the protagonist has a highly expressionistic nightmare about his mother. Such films demonstrate a merging of realism and surrealism within the same diegetic framework.

Aside from the oneiric sequences using filters in *Throw Away Your Books*, a similarly dreamlike scene occurs when Eimei is brought to have sex with a prostitute: Eimei lies motionless, evidently uncomfortable while she caresses his body on a bedspread decorated with traditional calligraphic Japanese script. The camera moves in a circular manner, superimposing variations on the same pose made by the two figures, while a sutra-like chant is recited in the background, combined with J.A. Seazer's psychedelic rock. The result is highly dreamlike and mystical; the camera follows Eichi's frame of mind, and even fades in and out of black, as if the camera-eye were closing and opening along with the human, akin to the eye/camera/shutters juxtaposition in *Man with a Movie Camera.* Suddenly, during this mystic rite in which Eichi

Figure 40: Vladimir Tatlin, *Letatlin*, 1929-1931

Figure 41: Terayama Shuji, *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets,* 1971

[518] Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture,* 129.

squirms uncomfortably, the music stops. Eichi states, “I'm leaving,” and sharply pulls back curtains to reveal a pastoral scene: a blend of realistic and avant-garde styles.

Besides the film's hybrid realism and surrealism, however, *Throw Away Your Books* is remarkable in its mixture of text and image: it is what Terayama himself termed a “reading film,” due to the graffiti that floods almost every shot. There are quotes from Gheorgiu, Mayakovsky, Malraux, and Fromm covering brick, cement, grass, and wall—every possible surface.[519] Although the title enjoins the audience to “throw away your books,” its meaning was far more symbolic than literal: to break with solitary study and join in solidarity with others in the “street.” As Terayama notes, “One might say that I, who have thrown out the study of printed material and went out into the city, extended the definition of books.”[520] The film is instead a call to arms to bring books out into the streets themselves; in a tone mirroring, and certainly influenced by, Guy Debord and the Situationists in Paris, the graffiti in *Throw Away Your Books* radically alters a homogenous landscape bowed to the submission of capitalism. As one graffiti in the film enjoins: “The city is a open book. Write on its infinite margins.”

Indeed, the use of graffiti in the film echoes film footage of the *Mai ‘68* protests in Paris, co-currently in heavy rotation in Japan due to the influx of Dziga Vertov Group films. Although the film appears at first glance a personal fictional story, the real world intervenes, scribbled across the walls of so many shots. The film would not be usually be considered non-fiction, but it includes several pivotal scenes using actuality footage: a series of personal ads for homosexuals, made into video; a comedic taped interview of a prostitute (“Which is your favorite book?” “The Bible.” “How about Marx's *Das Kapital*?” “Haven't heard of it.”); footage of Japanese hippies

[519] See Figures 42 and 43.

[520] Terayama, *Eiga gishi wo ite,* 218.

(often discriminatively called *Fuuten,* or vagabonds) inhaling paint thinner or smoking marijuana. The real world makes itself present, even while Eimei dreams of flying machines in a magenta filter. However, the purpose of such a juxtaposition was far more political than it might first seem. As Ridgely notes,

> This is not a process simply of drawing elements of reality into a fictional realm but of seeking a clearer view of reality from the standpoint of fiction—of exiting the real in order to get a clean look at it from a viable vantage point. This recognition of fiction's codeterminative relationship with truth, and therefore of theater's codeterminative relationship with everyday life, constituted Terayama's theory of performance, that is, his dramaturgy.[521]

Thus the purpose of such a blend of fiction and nonfiction was to get a "clean look" at the world, and at life itself. Fiction and truth have a codeterminative relationship: one cannot exist without the other, and is necessarily bound to it. Theater is bound with "everyday life," and Terayama's dramaturgy, both films and theatrical pieces, serves to destabilize their distinction. Terayama offers a radical deinstitutionalization of forms, de-mystifying the film's diegetic worlds.

Terayama viewed his films as diametrically opposed to the violence of Godard's films, which we have associated with the "Kino-Bayonet" over Vertov's "Kino-Eye"; as he notes: "For Jean-Luc Godard, the structure of words is preoccupied by politics... but for me... words undergo a depoliticization; in other words they are *experienced* and confronted."[522] Like the other filmmakers in this chapter, Terayama was intensely suspicious of an art overdetermined by political policy. When Terayama writes that the graffiti scribbled across every surface in *Throw Away Your Books* is "depoliticized," this does not mean they are rendered apolitical. In an essentially formalist experiment, Terayama allows the viewer to *re-experience* phrases which

[521] Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture,* 108.

[522] Emphasis in original. Terayama, *Eiga gishi wo ite,* 218.

have become overly familiar. The film's politics proceed from a radical anarchic de-politicization—but one which results in a fresher and more vibrant political meaning.

The film's formalist bent is also not limited to its use of language; indeed, it is perhaps most notable for its quasi-Brechtian loss of the fourth wall: Eichi addresses the audience directly in both the beginning and end of the film. The film's ending refers explicitly to the merging of fictional words with reality—recalling Imamura Shohei's dropping of walls in the conclusion of *A Man Vanishes* (1967). Here, Eichi speaks to the audience directly:

> The film ends here. Now it's my turn to speak. When you think about it, a film can only live in the dark. When the lights go up like that, the world of the film is blotted out. In the film, I dreamed of an airplane. In real life, I also dreamed of a human airplane. And, bit by bit, while that went on, the line between film and reality has disappeared... This fantasy takes hold of me bit by bit.

Thus, not only is the line between fiction and reality eroded by the events in the film's plot, but the statements made by Eichi himself reveal this merging of diegetic worlds. The film exposes itself before us: Eichi reveals himself to be an actor, and the film lays bare its cinematic device. During a moment when Eichi speaks, the film's projector even appears to malfunction, and while Eichi continues his monologue, the film cuts to a shot of the frame itself: a device also used in *Man with a Movie Camera*. The concluding scene, in lieu of ending credits, is a slow pan showing the faces of the actors and crew in close-up: a horizontality with revolutionary purpose in its lack of hierarchical structure. The viewers of *Throw Away Your Books* directly confront the actors involved in its production.

Terayama's filmmaking takes Shklovsky's formalism to its furthermost limits, imbuing a similar theory with a chaotic and anarchic playfulness. Dreamworlds float into the space of reality, and fiction and non-fiction collapse into one another. Much could also be said for the gender politics in Terayama's film, and his use of transgender actors, all of whom seem to

allegorize a playfulness and artificiality, perpetually critical of any allegedly "real" self. The result, echoing the Happenings and other performance art of the period, is a radical manifesto to the power of aesthetic forms to revolutionize the way we perceive of our own flawed realities.

Conclusion: From a Media of Revolution to the Revolution of Media

In Terayama's film, Eimei states near the film's conclusion: "this film will be over soon." Indeed, 1971 was already nearing the end of the Japanese political avant-garde; more than a decade of extremely prolific filmmaking would soon be over—or at least, would metamorphose into something else. In 1973, Matsuda Masao, one of the key writers of *Eiga Hihyo,* declared that the *kakumei no media*—revolutionary media, the media *of* revolution—gave way to *media no kakumei*, the revolution *of* media. For Matsuda, the time for hard-line Marxist-Leninism was gone, replaced by a less didactic approach: one inspired by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, for example.[523] Matsuda, formerly an avid proponent of radically leftist filmmaking epitomized by filmmakers such as Adachi, effectively declared the approach of *Eiga Hihyo* to be a failure.

The post-1973 world saw a massive shift in documentary media practices. Even in France, the Dziga Vertov Group, so inspirational for *Eiga Hihyo*, had disbanded in 1972. As Mark Nornes notes, "The passion and social commitment of the 1960s cinema seemed to give way to a new kind of documentary centered on the self... Something happened, the question was what."[524] Nornes posits that there are many ways to answer of the "what happened" question, ranging from the problem of gender (certainly an enormously important handicap in May '68, as

[523] Matsuda Masao, "Media kakumei no tame no akushisu" (An Axis for a Media Revolution), *Fukanosei no Media (Impossible Media*), Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1973.

[524] Nornes, *Forest of Pressure,* 128-129.

we have seen in the previous chapter), to the continuing presence of Old Leftist tendencies within the New Left, as well as the increasing violence and polarization of leftist movements. Indeed, as we have mentioned previously, events such as the Asama Sanso Incident of 1972 caused the public to shy further and further away from politics altogether, not to mention the left.

Foreshadowed by the plot of Wakamatsu's *Ecstasy of the Angels*, and again treated in Wakamatsu's epic docu-drama *United Red Army* (*Jitsuroku Rengousekigun Asama-Sanso e no Doutei*, 2007), the Asama Sanso Incident was the most televised moment in Japanese history, with an unprecedented ten-hour marathon of live broadcasting during the final showdown between the United Red Army student activists and police. An astonishing 98.2 percent of viewers in the Tokyo metropolitan area watched live coverage of the event.[525] Leaving aside the question of why the event occurred in the first place, the incident, as well as a streak of serious and well-documented hijackings of Japan Airlines flights in 1970 and 1973 by the Japanese Red Army in association with the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLO), effectively ended a period of popular leftism in Japan that arose in the postwar period in the wake of the 1960 ANPO.

Indeed, sociologist Kitada Akihiro argues that this event, known as the Asama Sanso incident, epitomized the end stage of leftist reflexivity. The members of the United Red Army utilized an extreme form of self-criticism that resulted in a communism oriented around self-negation. Asamo Sanso became the turning point of a deeply sincere reflexivity, but which continued to permeate Japanese culture later on in a "zombie"-like fashion.[526] The turn away from politics that followed this incident resulted in a type of media consumption more focused on irony. Elsewhere, Kitada describes "irony" in Japan as an attitude that separated

[525] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality,* 185-186.

[526] See Kitada Akihiro, *Warau Nihon no Nashonarizumu (Laughing Japan's 'Nationalism')* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2005), Chapter 1.

communicated content and its genre. The post-1970s turn to irony, then, mobilized as a reaction to an increasingly sensationalist media; Japanese citizens became distrustful of journalistic outlets and deeply critical of ideological sincerity.[527] This was all spurred by the Asama Sanso incident would remain, until the Aum Shinrikyo cult's gas attacks on the Tokyo subway in 1995, the most disastrous result of political sincerity in recent memory.

It also ended the period of the political avant-garde. No avant-garde documentaries, of either the Kino-Eye or Kino-Bayonet variety, returned to Japanese screens. The turn, as many critics from Nornes to Furuhata to Franz Prichard indicated, was toward individual experience and away from collectivity. This turn occurred not only within film history but literature, photography, and visual art as well. The filmmakers described in this chapter each experienced their own definitive ending point around 1973: Hani stopped making feature films and settled into the world of shorter animal documentaries created for television (this is, indeed, what he is known for in Japan to this day). Matsumoto created only a few feature films after the incident, continued creating increasingly niche experimental short films, and settled into academia. Wakamatsu continued creating Pinks and other films, but his films, according to many critics such as Kimata Kimihiko, had simply lost their edge.[528] Terayama was perhaps the most successful of these filmmakers, and continued his theatre and film productions—although none of his later films would pack the political punch of *Throw Away Your Books*; Terayama moved, instead, towards a surrealism and experimentation less focused on plot and actuality footage. Nonetheless, the period was over, and every avant-garde documentarist picked either one side, or the other—never to blend the two again. As Kimata notes, "The masses came to be disillusioned

[527] Kitada Akihiro, "Japan's Cynical Nationalism," in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, edited by Ito Mizuko, Okabe Daisuke, and Tsuji Izumi, 68-84 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 75.

[528] Kimata, "Thoughts on the Extremely Private Pink Film in the 1970s," 52.

by the fantasy of revolution. Having lost their goal, the term 'apathy' *(shirake*) spread among the youth.... [T]he protest folk songs sung by young people turned into '4.5 mat folk songs' about leading a humble life-style with one's lover..."[529]

Something had clearly changed in the national and international consciousness. Although certainly there are economic and political aspects that are at fault with the demise of the New Left, I argue that the "something" that changed Japan had everything to do with aesthetic form. As epitomized by Adachi and Matsuda in the heyday of the second *Eiga Hihyo*, violence was aestheticized in a nearly fascistic manner; misogyny was widespread. The Kino-Bayonet, as manifested by the increasingly violent actions of the United Red Army, and the increasing prominence of the "camera-weapon" arguments of *Eiga Hihyo II*, defeated the Kino-Eye. This finally resulted in a backlash against politics altogether by everyday citizenry. Although surely Godard and Gorin are not single-handedly responsible for the death of leftism in Japan—this argument would ascribe too much importance to a movement only relevant for a small handful of *Eiga Hihyo* critics and filmmakers—the dominance of more militant techniques point to a greater problem at large regarding aesthetic form: a rejection of looser political models, questions of ethics and violence, a loss of playfulness, and an alienating aesthetic form.

As we have seen, the implications of such a turn—away from the playfulness of the avant-garde documentary and toward the strict militarism and Brechtian formal techniques—have been disastrous. However, the question remains: why did the Kino-Bayonet replace the Kino-Eye? One must ultimately concede that the revolutionary films of the Japanese political avant-garde did not in themselves create, or sustain, a political revolution. The true reason for the increasing militarization within the "season of politics" remains unknown. Nonetheless, within

[529] Ibid.

this turbulent historical period, the avant-garde documentary in Japan demonstrates a turn away from strict militarism and toward playful iconoclasm, away from violence and toward reflexivity.

Michael Renov defines a documentary as "the more or less artful reshaping of the historical world."[530] In many works of the Japanese avant-garde documentary, the inherent arfulness of films is laid bare; the result was a playfully estranging aesthetic form, rife with experiment and often bathed in allegory. For Renov, "all discursive forms—documentary included—are, if not fictional, at least fictive."[531] The many films of this tradition, by blending fictional and non-fictional forms, expose the inherently fictive quality of cinema, a form which, in Renov's words, "struggled to find its place within the supposed conflict between truth and beauty."[532] In its use of Vertovian techniques, the Japanese Political Avant-Garde questioned this line between truth and beauty, blending the two; the result was a series of undidactic works of leftist inspiration, capable of striking deeply affecting notes, defined by and desirous of revolutionary transformation.

[530] Michael Renov, "Introduction," *Theorizing Documentary,* (London: Routledge, 1993), 11.

[531] Ibid., 7.

[532] Ibid., 15.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Affective Revolutions of Animation from the 1920s to the 1960s

Towards an Animated Documentary

As noted throughout this dissertation, the avant-garde documentary reemerges in times of revolutionary fervor and crisis. In eras such as the 1920s and 1960s, conventional political aesthetics—for instance, a model in which political beliefs are transmitted from government to citizen—were deemed inadequate. The avant-garde documentary resurfaced to attempt to reawaken perception and change human consciousness. For many figures, the genre held deep historical significance: Georges Sadoul, Edgar Morin, Matsumoto Toshio, Nakahara Yusuke, and Siegfried Kracauer viewed cinematic history as a dialectic between the "found" image of the Lumière Brothers and the "created" image of Georges Méliès. As Morin, one of the founders of *cinéma-vérité*, described, "To absolute realism (Lumière) responds absolute unrealism (Méliès)… from here cinema developed, a fusion of Lumière's cinematograph and Méliès' fairytale."[533] For these thinkers, all genres fit into this thesis-antithesis model: Lumière's films encompassed action films, comedy, neo-realism, and non-fiction footage, while the experimental productions of Méliès included fantasy, science-fiction, experimental films, surrealism, and animation. Matsumoto envisioned the inevitable synthesis between these two opposing poles as the avant-garde documentary: an organization of actuality footage that refuses to hide its more creative and discursive elements.

Much of this dissertation has delved into an analysis of this blending of creative and realistic modes; although not every film analyzed here contains as many avant-garde as

[533] Morin, *Le cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire*, 58.

documentary elements, each filmmaker is engaged with a study of both avant-garde formal methods and journalistic actuality. Jean-Luc Godard's Dziga Vertov Group productions, for instance, include both fictional films (*Le Vent d'Est, Tout va bien*) and non-fictional films (*British Sounds, Un film comme les autres*), but each investigates a certain merging of these oppositional forms. Likewise, Hani Susumu's films in the 1960s and 1970s include both fictional (*Mitasareta Seikatsu, Nanami: Inferno of First Love*) and non-fictional productions (*Children Hand in Hand*) but almost all are an uncanny blend of narrative and documentary film. Evidently, the avant-garde documentary in the 1960s used the format to unearth the "found" and "created" elements in cinema. As Michael Renov argues, "… it is not that the documentary *con*sists of the structures of filmic fiction (and is, thus, parasitic of its cinematic "other") as it is that "fictive" elements *in*sist in documentary as in all forms."[534] Without going to the same extreme as Christian Metz announcing every film a fiction because it involves a process of representation,[535] the filmmakers of the avant-garde documentary *insist* on the constructed, creative elements of all discursive works—documentary included.

The avant-garde documentary is, then, largely self-critical, and serves to investigate the nature of media. Given its critical lens, it is no accident that this turn away from observational ("objective") documentary formats coincides with periods of political and social crisis. The critics theorizing the avant-garde/documentary dialectic—Sadoul, Morin, Matsumoto, Nakahara, Kracauer, et al.—wrote during the 1960s, an era of great political turmoil. As first posited in the Introduction, the avant-garde documentary rears its head in the very moments when standard journalistic or documentary formats are no longer reliable. In this period, the "truth" is no longer

[534] Renov, *Theorizing Documentary*, 10. Emphasis Renov.

[535] Christian Metz, "Le signifiant imaginaire," in *Communications* (23: Psychanalyse et cinéma, 1975), 31.

necessarily a representation of stern reality. As Trinh T. Minh-ha states, criticizing the idea of *cinéma-vérité*: "Which truth? Whose truth? How true?"[536] For Minh-ha, documentary is not "the real" but "the repeated artificial resurrection of the real".[537] The theorist-filmmakers of the 1960s shared Minh-ha's skepticism, arguing for a more critical and nuanced perspective in which fiction and non-fiction, no longer opposites, were in constant conversation.

As we have seen in the films of Dziga Vertov, this creative synthesis of forms existed since the early years of documentary productions. Bill Nichols notes that the established story of the beginning of the documentary genre continues to perpetuate a division between the avant-garde and documentary—a false division that obscures their actual proximity, especially during the 1920s.[538] It was, in fact, John Grierson who downplayed the role of the avant-garde in the formation of modern documentary structure. As Nichols writes, Grierson "adapted film's radical potential to far less disturbing ends."[539] Grierson desired documentary to be a fundamentally "un-aesthetic movement," and yet its very beginnings—especially in the Soviet 1920s—were rooted in the belief that film had the capacity to fundamentally change and improve human consciousness, that aesthetic form could change the way we experience the world, and that art could make the quotidian livelier and worth living. In other words, the Kino-Eye was an *aesthetic* movement all along.

Bill Nichols, who divided documentaries into expository, poetic, performative, observational, participatory, and reflexive modes, notes that reflexive documentaries like *Man with a Movie Camera* constantly reveal the fabricated nature of the image, and question the idea

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[536] Trinh T. Minh-ha, "The Totalizing Question for Meaning," in *Theorizing Documentary,* Ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 93.

[537] Ibid., 96.

[538] Nichols, "Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde," 581-582.

[539] Ibid., 582.

of documentary as a pure capture of reality.[540] What, then, of animation—an utterly "created" form, rejecting the notion of pre-existing actuality? Can any work partially, or entirely, crafted by the human hand (rather than "found" in the world outside of an editing room) purport to call itself documentary? As I will argue in this concluding chapter, this is actually possible; in fact, the animated documentary can be considered the apex of the avant-garde documentary. As I will demonstrate, the animated documentary has its own rich history, weaving alongside and nestled within the Kino-Eye tradition, persisting from the early 20th century until the present day.

In recent years, animated documentaries have emerged as potential re-imaginings of a non-fiction filmmaking space. These films highlight a basic truth of documentary film, according to Michael Chanan: the documentary is always built on structuring absences, which are normally suppressed in the process of editing.[541] Recent animated documentaries direct their attention on this idea of a lack inherent in allegedly non-fictional productions; their purpose becomes instead, to draw attention to the absence instead. Ari Folman's 2008 *Waltz with Bashir* and Michel Gondry's 2013 *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* are two such animated documentaries which explicitly use the form of animation to offer the viewer a more enlightened perspective on its profoundly non-fictional themes, animating these very absences described by Chanan. Folman's animated film, portraying his own experiences in the 1982 Lebanon War, questions the foundation of his own traumatic war memories. Through a "created" form, Folman investigates the created-ness of memory. By animating things unable to be represented by actuality footage, such as memories in the process of being pieced together, *Waltz with Bashir* expands the ability of documentary to represent truth—even as it departs further from realism.

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[540] Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 17.

[541] Michael Chanan, "Filming 'The Invisible,'" in *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008), 124.

Similarly, Michel Gondry's film investigates questions of life, politics, and memory—but in a somewhat more playful manner. His film—a series of animated interviews with philosopher-linguist Noam Chomsky—animate the complicated theories circulating in Chomsky's texts, creating a film both educational and deeply affecting. Interestingly, Gondry claims to have used the animated documentary format to lay bare the constructed-ness of the film itself: to explicitly state it as a work of propaganda.[542] For Gondry, a "talking head"-style interview with Chomsky would have removed the very real presence of the documentarist as an interlocutor. His use of animation—created with his own hands, on an old-fashioned animation stand, with transparencies—challenges the ability of nonfiction cinema to directly represent reality.

Nor is the animated documentary merely a contemporary eccentricity: animated documentary films have a long history, stretching as far back as cartoonist and animator Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918).[543] I would posit, alongside DelGuardia and non-fiction theorists such as Renov and Nichols, that animation is not an anathema to the study of documentary films—and indeed, they have been an integral part of documentary films since their early inception, especially within the tradition of the avant-garde documentary. Therefore, the gap between avant-garde and documentary is profoundly ambiguous. As we will see, many of the pioneers of the "Kino-Eye" trajectory—Vertov included—used animated techniques with relative frequency. Theorists have noted that Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* presents variations on the theme of animation, from beginning to end.[544] Indeed, animation was integral to

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[542] Gondry used the word "propaganda" explicitly, pushing back in a Q&A against the notion that the film is not a propagandistic work. Conversely, Gondry uses the term in a far more positive light. Michel Gondry, Q & A after film premiere, *DOC NYC,* Nov 21, 2013.

[543] Sybil DelGuardia, "If Truth Be Told, Can 'Toons Tell It? Documentary and Animation," in *Film History* (9: 2, Non-Fiction Film, 1997), 190.

[544] Zourabichvili, "The Eye of Montage," 148. The use of the musical metaphor is very important here; as we will see, Vertov's idea of the "interval" is itself drawn from music.

Vertov's theoretical works as well as his filmmaking. In this chapter, I will link the practice of animation to Vertov's idea of the interval, and will then discuss the animated elements within the filmmaking of Hani Susumu and Chris Marker—two directors of the Kino-Eye who imbue avant-garde documentaries with a particularly animated potential.

Intervals, Gaps, Ruptures: Potentials of the Moving Image

Vertov's "intervals" are constructive gaps which highlight the difference between what is real and what is represented, between reality and its image. For Sam Rodhie, this interval is the source of all movement and energy in Vertov's films.[545] The interval, as exemplified by animated films, is central to the affective delights of the Kino-Eye. Yet is not unrelated to another important interval: that between fiction and nonfiction. Documentarist Trinh T. Minh-ha posits that theorists and filmmakers should turn their attention to this fruitful ambiguity between narrative and documentary, rather than proposing even more concretization or separation between the terms. As she writes:

> Truth, even when "caught on the run," does not yield itself either in names or in (filmic) frames; and meaning should be prevented from coming to closure at what is said and what is shown. Truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than *a* meaning. And what persists between the meaning of something and its truth is the interval, a break without which meaning would be fixed and truth congealed. This is perhaps why it is so difficult to talk about, the interval. About the cinema. About. The words will not ring true. Not true, for what is one to do with films which set out to determine truth from falsity while the visibility of this truth lies precisely in the fact that it is false? How is one to cope with a "film theory' that can never theorize "about" film, but only *with* concepts that film raises in relation to concepts of other practices?[546]

[545] Rodhie, *Montage,* 83.

[546] Minh-ha, "The Totalizing Quest for Meaning," 92.

Here, Minh-ha posits the idea of an interval between "meaning" and "truth". Films that "set out to determine truth from falsity"—such as, for instance, direct cinema, or *cinéma-vérité*—are missing the point. There is, at any rate, meaning in "falsity," e.g. fiction films. Moreover, Minh-ha argues that truth is *precisely* located in the fact that it is false/fictional. As Minh-ha writes, referring to Morin's interpretation of Vertov as a "filmmaker-thief": "truth, even when 'caught on the run, does not yield itself… in names or in (filmic) frames." Certain fictive forms allow a more profound unveiling of truth. Minh-ha uses the definition of "meaning" as *a* meaning—one of many—found within "captured" footage, and distinguishes it from truth. As she argues, this fruitful interval between truth and meaning—between nonfiction and fiction—should be explored further.

Other theorists have used the metaphor of the "interval" to describe a condition which maintains revolutionary potential by circumventing preordained categories. Barbara Johnson famously related this "gap" between subject and object to the rhetorical device of the apostrophe. For her, this call addressed to a normally-absent form is synonymous with *animation*, becoming "a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness."[547] Although Johnson speaks specifically of animation as the act of bestowing life, rather than the medium of animation necessarily, one might relate her rhetorical device with the latter as well. To animate is to breathe life into objects, to create movement from still form. In Minh-ha's words, it might render truth visible, even while being something created, a work of fiction (indeed, the subject of the apostrophe is not actually present). Just as Minh-ha argues that the visibility of truth lies most fully in its

[547] Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," in *Diacritics* (16:1, Spring 1986), 30.

fundamental created-ness, animation—a breathing life into objects and drawings, full of its own gaps and apostrophes—can be an ideal outlet to investigate the nature of truth in cinema.

It is no coincidence, then, that Vertov—who has written at length about the importance of the "interval" for the Kino-Eye—was also passionately interested in animation. It is therefore natural to return to the prophetic Soviet filmmaker, whose theories would have immense appeal for later animators, experimental filmmakers, and documentarists alike. But first, some contextualization is important: during this early Soviet period, "interval" was a theoretically loaded term, in heavy rotation in critical theories circulating contemporaneously with Vertov's "Kino-Eye" manifestos. Eisenstein discusses it often,[548] especially in the context of an integration of filmic and music theory.[549] Vertov solidified his "theory of intervals" after the launch of *Kino-Pravda* and before the launch of *Kino-Eye*. It appears first in 1922, in the manifesto "We":

> *Kinochestvo is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and internal rhythm of each object.*
> *Intervals* (the transitions from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution.
> The organization of movement is the organization of its elements, or its intervals, into phrases.[550]

In the original Russian, intervals—*intervali*—is highlighted, pointing to the centrality of intervals in his discourse. Vertov thus borrows the musical definition of interval in his manifesto, where other musical metaphors proliferate. Here he speaks not only of a musical "interval" but

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[548] As Petric notes, however, it is possible that Eisenstein was highly influenced by Vertov when crafting his own theories on film, given that Eisenstein was only beginning to explore the potential of cinema when Vertov was filming his feature-length documentaries. See Petric, *Constructivism in Film*, 48-61.

[549] Cook, "Our Eyes, Spinning like Propellers": Wheel of Life, Curve of Velocities, and Dziga Vertov's "Theory of the Interval."' *October* (121, New Vertov Studies, Summer 2007), 86.

[550] Vertov, *Is Naslediya,* 16. Translation: Vertov, "We," 8-9.

rhythm, harmony, movement, phrase, and transition—all key musical terms. As music might be defined as the organization of sound, Vertov viewed his cinema as an organization of disparate cinematic "phrases" separated by intervals, or "transitions from one movement to another". Notably, Vertov reveals that the most essential element of film is not actuality footage, nor even cinematography, but the editing process; Vertov's *kinochestvo* (kinoculism) is defined by the intervals between shots, in their playful and estranging "tricks", and those moments of editing able to transition from one rhythmical, musical movement to the next. In Vertov's montage, as Rodhie notes, one shot does not "answer" another, but instead functions to highlight the gap or interval between them. In fact, these relations formed through intervals are the focal points of his films.[551] Kinoculism is the organization of distinct, seemingly unrelated, cinematic elements—in other words, it is the fundamentally aesthetic interpretation of footage. To put it in Minh-ha's terms, it is a meaningful gap revealing truth.

For Gilles Deleuze, this meaningful gap is one of the most prominent elements of Vertov's filmmaking. "The originality of the Vertovian theory of the interval," he writes, "is that it no longer marks a gap which is carved out, a distancing between two consecutive images but, on the contrary, a correlation of two images which are distant (and incommensurable from the viewpoint of our human perception)."[552] Deleuze thus links the Vertovian interval both to cinematic discourse and to philosophical discussions regarding perception, especially as analyzed by phenomenologist Henri Bergson.[553] For Deleuze, Vertov's intervals accomplish

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[551] Rodhie, *Montage,* 82-83.

[552] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 82.

[553] Delgado, "Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera,*" 6. The extent to which Vertov aligns with Bergsonian principles will not be discussed here except to note the correspondence between Vertov's cinema and phenomenological discourse. However, it is important to note, as Zourabichvili notes, that Vertov's Bergsonian qualities definitively separate him from Eisenstein: "if Vertov is a revolutionary, it is as a Bergsonian, not as someone who 'splits skulls,' according to Eisenstein's formula."

something akin to Shklovsky's estrangement by re-evaluating normally rigid conceptual frameworks.[554] As Deleuze states, the interval is "the point which changes, which makes perception change."[555] Just as Shklovskian estrangement is meant to reawaken human perception, Deleuze interprets Vertov's interval, created through montage, as the point when perception changes.[556] This interpretation aligns with what we have described as the Kino-Eye, and it is no surprise that, as Deleuze states, "the interval of movement is perception, the glance, the eye."[557]

Vertov's intervals create a space for productive aesthetic estrangement. Cook writes that in Vertov's work, the transition from one shot of an object in motion to another shot of a different object in motion must always appear as a rupture—an abstract motion.[558] His films revel in the rupture between two separate shots of objects in motion, and delight in the gap between two narrative worlds. Take, for instance, a shot in *Man with a Movie Camera* which describes the public transit of a bustling town: separate shots of moving trains, trolleys, and buses careen toward one another until finally, they are superimposed within the same frame. This is a formal as well as a narrative rupture in which the crafting hand of the filmmaker makes itself known. Attention is drawn to intervals, and in the abstract motion created between two shots.

Although at first the "theory of intervals" appears to favor a "pure cinema" of abstraction in place of documentary filmmaking, Vertov does not see these tendencies as incompatible. Indeed, their synthesis is the main work of the *kinocs*. As Manovich argues, the "database" of

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[554] Ibid., 9.

[555] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 83.

[556] Zourabichvili, "The Eye of Montage," 147-148.

[557] Deleuze, *Cinema 1,* 39-40.

[558] Cook, '"Our Eyes, Spinning like Propellers"', 90.

Vertov's actuality footage, a normally static and "objective" form, becomes dynamic and subjective through his use of intervals.[559] As Vertov describes in the pages of *Pravda*:

> Not the Pathé or Gaumont film newsreel (a newspaper chronicle) and not even *Kino-Pravda* (a political newsreel), but a real *kinocs* newsreel—a headlong survey of visual events reduced at intervals to an accumulator whole by the great mastery of montage...[560]

For Vertov, a real *kinocs* newsreel—one which exemplifies all aspects of the Kino-Eye theory—includes a "headlong survey of visual events reduced at intervals"; these intervals are then accumulated by "the great mastery of montage". In other words, a *kinocs* newsreel takes actuality footage ("visual events") and reduces these to intervals, which are then accumulated, edited, and montaged. The accumulation of these intervals is realized through animation techniques—specifically *kadro-syomka*, or "frame shooting," in which an animation is produced by "accumulating" a series of still shoots that are then edited. Moreover, as we will see, both intervals and animation rely on the gap between frames. Vertov's version of animation does not exclusively rely on drawn forms; all captured footage, especially actuality footage, must be rooted in the same "theory of intervals"—thus making all of Vertov's filmmaking, to use Tom Lamarre's terminology, quintessentially *animetic*.

In *The Anime Machine,* Lamarre uses "animetism" to describe the formal qualities of animated films which are not included in the "full" animation used by Disney, which aims for realism. For Lamarre, animatism is "not... movement *into depth* but movement *on or between surfaces.*"[561] Lamarre draws his analysis from the art of compositing, using the multiplanar

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[559] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 212.

[560] Vertov, "Novoe techenie v kinematografii", 7. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, 84.

[561] Tom Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 7, emphasis Lamarre's.

animation stand to achieve varying degrees of adherence to realism. Yet for Lamarre, realism might not be the point, since animation is an art of compositing invisible interstices between layers of the image.[562] As Norman McLaren writes:

> Animation is not the art of drawings that move but the art of movements that are drawn; what happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame; animation is therefore the art of manipulating the invisible interstices that lie between frames.[563]

Animation is prized not for its ability to merely copy live-action footage: it is the art of the in-between, the gaps and interstices "that lie between frames"—much like Vertov's intervals. Animation, more so than the art of making drawings move, emphasizes the manipulation of the frames *between* movements. For Lamarre, animation and its techniques predate cinema; as he argues, animation—in the sense of making images move—has been film's primary concern since its inception.[564] Interestingly, even Lamarre terms the movement between planes of an image an animetic interval. For Lamarre, opening a gap between layers of the image has a distinctive feel; where such a gap in cinema might, in today's filmmaking, be perceived as low-budget or unskilled, in animation, we are "more likely to accept it as art rather than artifact. Animation thus allows for the exploration of a different potential of the moving image."[565]

The key to animetism, then, is its ability to create a different set of possibilities and conventions, especially in human perception. For this reason, filmmaking which aspires to animetism does not aim for pure realism, and instead tends to treat "full animation" or extremely naturalistic, seemingly unedited filmmaking with some amount of suspicion. It is in the "gap between layers of the image" where revolutionary artfulness resides, whether in Vertov's

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[562] Lamarre, *Anime Machine*, xxiv-xxv.

[563] Norman McLaren, quoted in Ibid., xxiv.

[564] Lamarre, *Anime Machine,* xxi.

[565] Ibid., 9.

documentary films or an animation by Miyazaki Hayao. Animetism, as employed by Dziga Vertov as well as others, explores different conventions of the aesthetic form.

However, film was soon drawn into a movement which emphasized naturalistic, three-dimensional movements into depth.[566] Yet the early avant-garde documentaries—and, as we will see, avant-garde documentaries from the 1960s as well—showed a readiness to adhere to animetic properties. And Vertov's own films often employ animation, whether stop-motion, animated diagrams, or drawn animations. Animation—or rather, "drawings in motion"—*Risunki v dvizhenie*—were highlighted in his 1922 manifesto, equated with "the theory of relativity on screen"[567]. In fact, Vertov created fully drawn animated advertisements, such as the short *reklama* (advertisement) *Soviet Toys.* Released in 1924—the same year as his film-manifesto *Kino-Eye—Soviet Toys* is a fascinating microcosm of Vertov's mature theory, and necessitates a careful analysis. As we will see, the avant-garde documentary (*Kino-Eye*) and the playful animated advertisement (*Soviet Toys*) must then be considered in tandem, as two sides of the same cinematographic coin.

***Soviet Toys*: An Alternative Manifesto of Animated Form**

Dziga Vertov's use of "tricks" such as animation exemplified a political—and even ethical—ideology by emphasizing human perception in the service of communism. As discussed in Chapter 2, tricks were the primary answer to Vertov's inquiry, "What must and can be done now in Russia?" Although the cinematic "trick" (*triuk*) encompassed a wide variety of cinematic feats from slow motion to freeze frame and reel reversal, Vertov singles out animation, or his

[566] Ibid., 7.

[567] Vertov, *Iz Naslediya,* 17. Translation: Vertov, "We," 9.

"comic studies," as one of his primary "repertoires": "Trick comic (*komicheskie*) studies both today and tomorrow (through the method of the hyperbolic trick [*giperbolicheskovo triukha*])."[568] These "trick comics" are short animated advertisements: *reklama-triuk*.[569] As Mihailova and MacKay write, although the use of advertisements might seem out of place in an allegedly post-capitalist country, they were used to "help rebuild the shattered post-Russian Civil War economy, participate in a new society, and create models for *reklama* [an advertisement]... proper to Communism."[570] Vertov, however, adapts the *reklama* format to "prepare the viewer for the reception of new things"; animated advertisements, although short, allowed the viewer to experience technologies of the new Soviet era.

The short animated advertisement *Soviet Toys* was included in the same reel as *Kino-Pravda* 18, along with another animation entitled *Humoresques.*[571] Although *Soviet Toys* is a mere 10 minutes long, the film epitomizes themes that are often ignored by those who claim his influence. At first, Vertov's 1924 animation appears to exemplify many themes circulating throughout contemporaneous Soviet agitational propaganda: an extremely fat bourgeois man, representing the New Economic Policy (NEP), consumes food, money, women, and the church, while the twin forces of the urban working-class and rural peasant proletariat combine to break through his bourgeois belly and release capital back to the people of the new Soviet state. Although the film is entitled *Soviet Toys*, and although the simplistic animation style does lend a

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[568] Ibid., 22. Translation: Tsivian, *Lines of Resistance,* 81.

[569] Vertov wrote treatments for many styles of advertisements in 1923, including "comic" (*komicheskaia*), newsreel (*khronika*), and even detective (*detektiv*), both satirical and not, which is rather surprising given his known hatred of fictional, Hollywood-esque detective stories. However, it is important that the "trick advertisement" (*reklama triuk*) always appears to be animated, indicating yet again the importance of animation for Vertov's "trick" studies. See Ibid., 26-29.

[570] Mihaela Mihaelova and John MacKay, "Frame Shot: Vertov's Ideologies of Animation," *Animating Film Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) 150.

[571] Esther Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory, and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2004) 224.

certain toy-like or paper cut-out effect, the plot of the film is rather grotesque; a conflation of literal and metaphorical bodies lends a disturbing violence to the image. The bourgeois man, an embodiment of vileness, leers at a lewd dancer-prostitute and swallows her whole. His excess of capital causes him to vomit into a barrel,[572] only to drink his detritus back up again. When the urban and rural working class finally team up to defeat him, they become a Janus-faced spinning top, itself a disquieting image. In the end, when young members of the Red Army come to aid the workers, they create an ersatz Christmas tree—but instead of garlands and ornaments, the tree is decorated with remnants of bourgeois society. The church leaders and fat man find their heads in nooses, while the prostitute is held onto the tree by the hem of her skirt, revealing her underwear.[573] Evidently, this early cartoon, with its grotesque even violent, imagery, is not necessarily meant for children.

Figure 44: Dziga Vertov, *Soviet Toys* (1924)

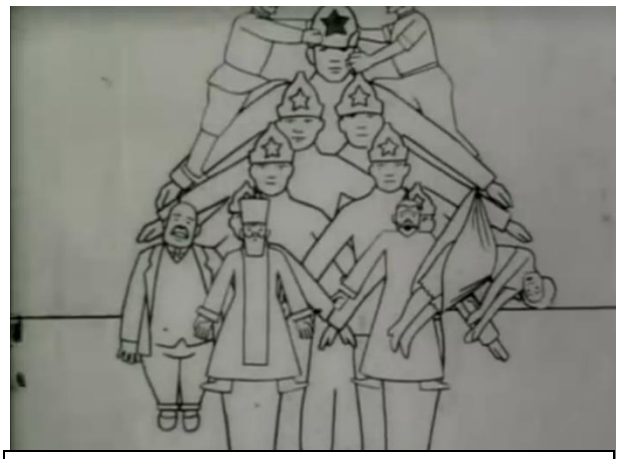

Figure 45: Dziga Vertov, *Soviet Toys* (1924)

Although the scope of 20th century Soviet animation is outside the purview of this dissertation project, there is evidence that earlier Soviet animations were oriented toward more mature and more brazenly political themes, while later, post-Stalinist animation exemplified the

[572] See Figure 44.

[573] See Figure 45.

fantastical, childlike animations with which we are more familiar.[574] During the Stalinist era, socialist realism began to infiltrate animation studios, and sanctioned the adaptation of classical texts and popular traditions, especially for children's edification. The rounder, more Disney-fied forms of American productions began to appear around this time as well.[575] However, although most animation produced in the 1920s was not necessarily technically innovative, the period was still ripe for adult-oriented, heavily political animated films using avant-gardist formal techniques. Indeed, animation scholar Sergei Asenin notes that that the Soviet Union linked animation "from its first steps" with political affairs, current events, journalism, satire, and newspaper caricature, noting the animated sequences in Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* as an important early progenitor. Asenin also notes that *reklama* composed a substantial proportion of these early animated works, making Vertov's film exemplary of a larger trend in political animation.[576]

Vertov's film, however, is also more sophisticated than most agit-prop attacking the stereotypical NEP bourgeois. *Soviet Toys* is an advertisement (*reklama*), but the item it markets is no rehashed political argument. Indeed, as Mihailova and MacKay argue, Vertov sells us animation itself. In the middle of the animation, a figure with lenses for eyes and a spinning top in his mouth emerges enclosed in an iris, while the phrase "Film Advertisement - Goskino" appears on the screen.[577] The top used as a mouth is a reference to Dziga Vertov's name (*Vertovat'* means "spin"), and the eye-lenses refer to Vertov's "Kino-Eye" theory, as well as the

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[574] Although there has been a dearth of texts focusing on Stalinist or pre-Stalinist Russian or Soviet animation, the seminal texts by David MacFadyen (*Yellow Crocodiles and Blue Oranges*) and Laura Pontieri (*Soviet Animation and the Thaw of the 1960s)* point to an increasing optimism and turn away from strict agitational propaganda after the death of Stalin.

[575] Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands,* 226.

[576] Mihailova and MacKay, "Frame Shot," 149.

[577] See Figure 46.

Figure 46: Dziga Vertov, *Soviet Toys* (1924)

Figure 47: Dziga Vertov, *Soviet Toys* (1924)

Kino-Eye film released that same year. This brief cameo is crafted as a clever signature. Vertov goes beyond this self-referentiality, however, in the film's conclusion. Near the end, the ersatz Christmas tree decorated with hanged bourgeois caricatures swirls into an actual Christmas tree, now decorated with spinning stars. A magnanimous hammer and sickle appear in the center of the frame like a prototypical Soviet *End.* Although the viewer expects this to be the film's actual conclusion, the screen wipes right, revealing two male film executives, one sitting behind a desk. Behind the seated man reads: "Goskino Film Advertisement". The man in the foreground stares right, and is so shocked (ostensibly at the film we have just seen) that his hat falls off—a typical comic gag. This same man, donning a sardonic expression, turns to the viewer, thus breaking the fourth wall, and winks knowingly. He holds a piece of paper, on which is written: Goskino Film Chronicles, Film Advertising, with a Moscow address and telephone number.[578] The film's last frame is this advertisement for an animation studio.

The conclusion of this film is nothing if not "trick-like": the viewer has been tricked into watching not strict Soviet agit-prop, but an advertisement for a burgeoning art medium—a meta-cinematic gag. Although it was not uncommon for early animation to contain a great amount of

[578] See Figure 47.

self-referentiality—one remembers, for example, the 1910s animations of Émile Cohl, Max Fleischer, or Otto Mesner, who incorporated a human hand drawing the scenes, a cartoon that longs for "real" human existence, and drawn figures that battle with their creator[579]—Vertov's trick is unique in its play on the stereotypical agitational propaganda piece. As Mihailova and MacKay note, the film instead argues that the techniques of animation, fortified by the long agit-prop experience during the Russian Civil War, can be effectively mobilized for purposes *other* than political agitation, and can thus attract new audiences.[580] The film's propaganda, then, is actually one of form over content—and, as always, the form is worthy of analysis, and reveals a great deal about the filmmaker's intent.

Soviet Toys was created using paper cutouts—loosely based on Viktor Deni's drawings published in *Pravda*[581]—and a rudimentary animation stand, creating an effect that emphasizes two-dimensionality (creating the mannequin or "toy"-like figures) while allowing for a great deal of lateral movement and a fair amount of movement through depth. The animation was created by building up the film piece by piece, in what was entitled "frame shooting" (*kadro-syomka*) in the parlance of the 1920s. Significantly, the techniques used by Vertov's *kadro-syomka* animation apply to his documentary films as well. As noted earlier, Vertov's theory of intervals emphasized the gap between frames; for Deleuze, this gap was key to Vertov's ability to revitalize human perception. In most of Vertov's works, the raw material of the frames is composed of actuality footage, while the interval worked to expose and interrogate their connection. In other words, Vertov animated the correspondence of these two frames, which

[579] Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands,* 1-13.

[580] Mihaela and MacKay, "Frame Shot," 153. Emphasis in original.

[581] Laura Pontieri, *Soviet Animation and the Thaw of the 1960s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 8.

often derive from completely different spaces (Odessa, Kiev, Moscow) and times (morning, afternoon, evening, etc).

Similarly, as noted in Chapter 2, his average shot length is quite short, and even his less trick-based films, such as *The Eleventh Year* (1928)*, Stride, Soviet!* (1926)*,* and *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926), all contain at least one scene heavily incorporating stop motion animation—all within films now considered documentaries. Vertov's films, even if they were not entirely animated films (*Soviet Toys*) or heavily based on animated or stop-motion "tricks" (*Man with a Movie Camera* and, to a lesser extent, *Kino-Eye*), are therefore animated—or rather, rely heavily on animetic qualities within the editing of each frame. Vertov, both agitational-propagandist and avant-garde documentarist, both filmmaker and animator, saw that the principles of the avant-garde and animation were linked from the start.

Although this link between animation and documentary was largely forgotten as stricter documentary modes began to dominate, several filmmakers of the Kino-Eye did experiment with animation in their oeuvres. I will now briefly analyze several works by Hani Susumu and Chris Marker, two of the most playful directors of the Kino-Eye. Unsurprisingly, the work of both is notoriously difficult to pin down to any political doctrine, preferring to navigate the threshold between aesthetics and politics without favoring either one. And, notably, both Marker and Hani are best known for their documentary works, while still choosing to fold animation within their feature-length films. Although Hani's use of animation is less extensive, his most frequent occurrence exists in a film continuously ignored by retrospectives of his work. For this reason, an analysis of his use of animation becomes even more necessary.

Hani Susumu's Singing Hippopotamus

Although the Japanese political avant-garde in the 1960s incorporated a great many different styles and techniques, the fields of animation and political avant-garde cinema remained relatively differentiated. This divide was exacerbated by television and the necessity to create a great amount of programming in very little time; although this need created a type of "limited animation" in which frames and backgrounds were often re-used in order to economize frames, this type of animation did not necessarily mean to estrange. Much of the dialogue around animation at this period was focused on its economic value; for instance, in 1964, Hara Touru, who would later become a producer for Studio Ghibli, wrote several articles on animation for *Eiga Hyouron* (Film Criticism), calling animation a "fat pig" ready for consumption.[582]

But even if popular animation did not readily unite with art cinema, there was great discussion of animation in elite film circles. In 1960, the journal *Eiga Hyouron (Film Criticism)* ran 12 pages—an extraordinary page-length for the journal—on a single Soviet animation, *Snezhnaya Koroleva* (*The Snow Queen*) by Lev Atamanov, created in 1957.[583] Likewise, in the mid-1960s, the Sougetsu Art Center launched several film festivals oriented around animation, especially short films from abroad. Certain animation—especially foreign animation, with the notable exception of Disney—approximated art cinema for Japanese critics, and many of the animated films screened were quite experimental. Nonetheless, the sense of a divide between high art (political avant-garde cinema) and low art (television animation) remained rather strict: although the time appeared ripe for a blending of animation and documentary, few directors of the avant-garde documentary genre made the leap into animated film. This was partially due to

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[582] Hara Touru, "Animeishon wa Futotta Buta" (Animation is a Fat Pig), *Eiga Hyouron* (Film Criticism) (Vol 21, No 9, September 1964).

[583] Mori Takuya, "Sovuetto Manga Eiga no Keifu: Shuusaku *Yuki no Joou* wo Chuushin ni" (The Genealogy of Soviet Cartoon Films: Centering on the Excellent Work *The Snow Queen*), *Eiga Hyouron* (Film Criticism) (Vol 17, No 5, May 1960).

the stigma of television programming, which leftist cultural critics such as Shimizu Ikutaro viewed as the culmination of capitalist mass communication.[584]

There is, however, at least one notable exception to this rule: *Love's Great Adventure* (*Koi no Dai Bouken*) by Hani Susumu, filmed in 1970 and including animated sequences by illustrator Wada Makoto. As discussed in Chapter 4, Hani Susumu began his career making PR films; his short documentaries such as *Children in the Classroom* (1955) and *Children Who Draw* (1956) changed the face of Japanese documentary. Hani brought a sophisticated aesthetic perspective to a genre not held in high esteem at the time; his films were affective, captivating, and utterly unique. In the 1960s, he turned increasingly to fiction film, and, in keeping with the *zeitgeist*, blended documentary cinema with avant-garde fiction techniques in each of his films. However, in 1970, Hani filmed *Love's Great Adventure*—a musical comedy meant for children.

For almost every critic writing on Hani, the inclusion of this work seems at odds within his widely praised filmography; indeed, most lists do not even include this film into his repertoire. It is never screened at his retrospectives, and was entirely ignored by film critics at the time of its release. Its only mention in critical literature is by Donald Richie, who claims it "strays completely"[585] from the central themes in Hani's films, and is thus a failure. Indeed, the genre of a musical comedy at first appears to contradict the respected styles of widely-lauded art productions, especially in conjunction with ATG (the Art Theatre Guild, the experimental

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[584] Aaron Gerow, "From Film to Television: Early Theories of Television in Japan," in *Media Theory in Japan*, ed. Marc Steinberg aand Alexander Zahlten (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 38-40.

[585] Richie notes that the main theme in Hani's films is the self-actualization, of self-discovery, of women. Although this is certainly one central theme in his films, his oeuvre is far too complex to be reduced to a single one-- and indeed, it does not apply to approximately half of his films. I would also claim that *Love's Great Adventure* in fact does belong to the category described by Richie: as we will see, the female protagonist does end the film ona note of self-discovery. I would assume, then, that Richie might be misremembering, or simply disregarded the film as uninteresting due to its musical comedy genre. See Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 159.

company most characteristic of the Japanese 1960s political avant-garde), for which he had been known, such as *Nanami: Inferno of First Love* (1968). Upon further reflection, however, the animated musical reflects the playful Kino-Eye trajectory—especially given Hani's peculiarly documentarian outlook. Not only does the film fit surprisingly well within his broad and highly varied work, it is also one of his most explicitly political films. It also self-reflexively analyzes the still-developing medium of animation.

The film follows Konno Yoko ("Pinky" from the pop group Pinky and Killers), who travels to Tokyo from a rural town with a train full of bright-eyed young women. These women have come to work at the Mae-Take ramen factory, led by a malicious CEO (referred to only as *shachou-san*, or boss) with a mustache that combines the facial hair of Emperors Meiji and Hirohito with that of Stalin. The factory's entirely female staff also live in the factory, and are manipulated by a recording device embedded in their pillows, hypnotizing women into desiring nothing but the production of ramen. The heroine, however, is immune to this hypnosis, and falls in love with a veterinarian who rescues her wallet from a pick-pocketer. She is fired from her job at the factory for accidentally interrupting the nightly hypnosis, and asks for a job from the vet, who tells her she could be a *kaba-garu*. Assuming this means a "Cover Girl," Yoko arrives at a television studio, but the job, as it turns out, is for a *Kaba*-girl, or "Hippo Girl"—the voice actress for an animated hippopotamus. Ensuing from this wordplay gag is an animated sequence,[586] and a meta-cinematic glance into the workings of educational TV programming—a genre with which Hani, producer of several TV documentaries, was undoubtedly quite familiar.

[586] See Figure 48.

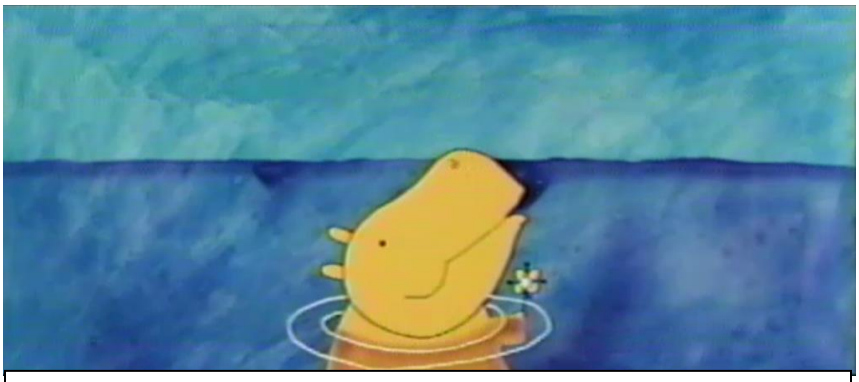

Figure 48: Hani Susumu, *Love's Great Adventure* (1970)

Having found her dream job, the heroine realizes her veterinarian love interest is engaged to another woman, Kaori, who has suddenly become engaged to the Mae-Take CEO. Yoko deduces that Kaori is also the victim of his hypnotic tapes, and attempts to break up their impending marriage with the help of a crowd of children whom she had befriended—as well as an actual (animatronic) hippopotamus, driven mad by insomnia caused by radio waves emitted by the hypnotic recordings. The CEO happens to have a phobia of hippos—one had killed one of his relatives—and is terrified to find yet another hippopotamus charging at him during his own wedding. Kaori and the veterinarian resume their relationship, and Yoko boards the next train back to her hometown—a bittersweet ending.

Although the plot structure is relatively standard for comedies, the thematic elements are far more sophisticated than the average musical. For example, the film explicitly criticizes the high economic growth period, and the rush of factory productions during this time; likewise, Hani lampoons the instant ramen phenomenon started by Momofuku Ando, and the increasingly manipulative nature of the advertising industry. The antidote to these evils recalls the heroes of Hani's other films: animals and children, serving as an ethical barometer for the film's many comedic gags. Strikingly, the story does prioritize romantic love so much as platonic friendship and camaraderie; the film ends in a wedding, like all classical comedies, but the marriage is not the protagonist's. In fact, if Yoko might be interpreted as married by the end of the film, it is not to her veterinarian beloved, but an animated hippo.

In the conclusion of the film, Yoko rides a train out of Tokyo, but sees the hippo she had played as a voice actress running alongside the train.[587] The hippo continues to follow the train until it stops, and Yoko exits, dancing with the creature she "animated" with her voice.[588] Like Vertov's *Soviet Toys*, *Love's Great Adventure* concludes as an ode to the possibilities of animation itself. Indeed, as Yoko finds her calling as a voice actress, she literally breathes life into an inanimate character. Although the larger plot is more a critique of capitalism than an investigation into drawn cinematic form, Hani nonetheless places animation in the fore, and mixes live action and tricks in as playful a manner as the animated animals the film depicts.

Although the film, as a musical comedy, is not particularly nonfictional, it uses an abundance of tricks characteristic of the Kino-Eye: an animated diagram (much like in *Kino-Eye*) depicting the tape mechanism within pillows; an extensive use of fast forward, split screens, and sped-up dialogue; animatronic animals and drawn animation. There is even a brief use of actuality footage: Hani, who will spend the latter three decades of his career creating animal documentaries, also included documentary footage of animal life within Tokyo zoos. The result is a fast-paced film full of tricks, bursting with exuberance. It was perhaps this enthusiasm and idealism, and the film's sheer vaudeville strangeness within Hani's otherwise weighty oeuvre, which prevented it from resonating with contemporaneous viewers.

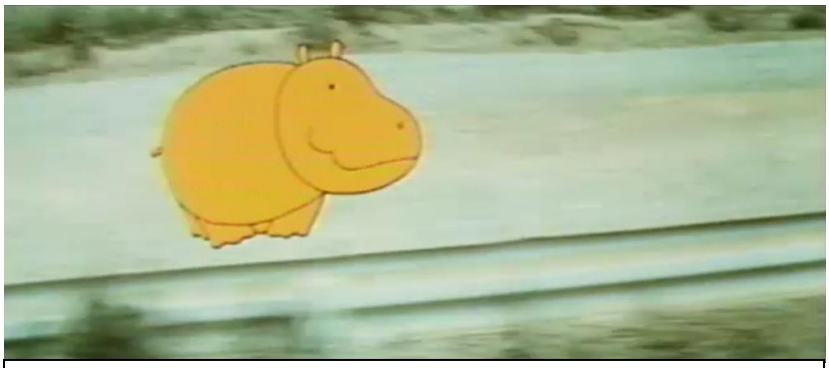

Figure 49: Hani Susumu, *Love's Great Adventure* (1970)

[587] See Figure 49.

[588] See Figure 50.

Figure 50: Hani Susumu, *Love's Great Adventure* (1970)

Hani, as described in the previous chapter, is known mostly for his revolutionary documentary productions, "seismographic film events" which "set the world off balance."[589] However, as Furuhata notes, Hani's films invest greatly in the poetic and affective powers of the image, which other scholars criticized for *photogénie*.[590] In fact, these scholars are correct: Hani was resolutely interested in this quality first described by Jean Epstein: more than a beauty of certain (photogenic) faces, or even film effects, *photogénie*[591] is a transcendent feeling that film lends to phenomena. In the words of Michael Chanan, *photogénie* is "a shimmering that gives us the impression of seeing things as we've never seen them before, as if endowed with a special intensity and inner life, or… a personality of their own."[592] In films such as *Love's Great Adventure*, Hani was more interested in an affective *photogénie,* in a "shimmering" bestowed by his use of animation, than stern actuality footage.

Although its reliance on *photogénie* and narrative filmmaking explains the dearth of discussion of this film within the Japanese political avant-garde, it is nonetheless extremely useful in an analysis of the filmmakers practicing during this period. This film was created directly between the release of Hani's erotic-surrealist fantasy *Nanami* and the wistful and

[589] Mark Nornes, *Forest of Pressure*, 14-15. Previously quoted on p. 190.

[590] Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 44.

[591] Although this dissertation does not delve into the overlap between *photogénie* and the Kino-Eye, it deserves further consideration. Malcolm Turvey delved into the overlap between Vertov and Epstein, as well as Bela Balacz and Siegfried Kracauer, describing a "revelationist" tradition of film theory. See Turvey, *Doubting Vision*, 2008.

[592] Chanan, "Filming 'The Invisible,'" 131.

reflective *Morning Schedule* (1972), both produced and distributed by the ATG. *Love's Great Adventure*, although meant for an entirely different audience, exhibits the same investment in cinematic form, childlike playfulness, and leftist politics characteristic of Hani's films—all traits which define not only the Japanese political avant-garde, but the Kino-Eye as well.

Chris Marker's Animated Owls

From his first productions, Marker forcefully announced his concern to de-mythologize 'objective' documentary filmmaking through the editing and construction of his films.[593] His film trajectory thus takes a different path from Hani, who began his career with PR documentaries. Marker, rather, began fully invested in the avant-garde documentary tradition of the Kino-Eye—even if he did not call it as such. Indeed, his work finds a striking comparison to the styles and theories of the Soviet avant-garde. In the late 1950s, Marker was contributor and publisher of *Petite Planète*: idiosyncratic travel guides notable for their experimental typography and layout. He consciously looked back to similar publications produced by the Soviets,[594] such as *Lef*, to which Vladimir Mayakovsky, Dziga Vertov, Victor Shklovsky, and Osip Brik contributed. The *Petite Planète* books reflect many aspects of Marker's filmmaking, and Marker himself called them "ersatz cinema".[595]

As Kear notes, Marker's distinctive combination of impressionistic, created style and documentary actuality owes much to the influence of early Soviet artistic and cultural pioneers,

[593] Jonathan Kear, "The Clothing of Clio: Chris Marker's Poetics and the Politics of Representing History," in *Film Studies* (6: Arts Premium Collection, Summer 2005), 50.

[594] Ibid., 51.

[595] Isabel Stevens, "Isabel Stevens on Marker's *Petite Planète,*" in *Aperture* (217: "Lit," Winter 2014), Online Issue. Accessed Feb 27, 2017. http://aperture.org/blog/isabel-stevens-chris-markers-petite-planete/

whose legacy he explicitly sought to extend within his own filmmaking. This is especially seen in his admiration for Alexander Medvedkin, who encouraged, through films such as *Happiness* (*Schiast'e*, 1935), an approach to cinema which was topical and discursive, and radical both formally and politically—a form of cinema that reflected on its own mode of production.[596] In addition, Marker's film collective the Medvedkin Group produced 'film magazines,' or newsreels which extended the 'brief montage pamphlets', or *Ciné-tracts*, which combined text and image, commenting on and propelling forward the *Mai '68* uprisings in Paris. And, much like Dziga Vertov and Alexander Medvedkin's own histories, the reception of Marker's films by the more orthodox Communist party members was quite critical. Marker's more poetic interpretation of socialist newsreels were viewed as overly romantic, and not adequately socialist realist.[597] Indeed, Marker's reception here typifies the central rift between every historical and geographical location discussed in this dissertation: a perpetual struggle between the Old and New Left.

It is not surprising, then, that Chris Marker, paradigmatic French avant-garde documentarist of the Kino-Eye, utilized animation in a great number of his works. His film *Sunday in Peking* (1956), which charted China's new social order, was the first film in which Marker wrote the scenario, directed, acted as cinematographer, and narrated the commentary himself[598]—and also includes a brief animated sequence, created by moving translucent paper-cut outs over a light box.[599] Here animation is used to discuss Chinese history, but from a playful and folkloric perspective. The voiceover describes "monsters, tigers, dragons who take food

[596] Kear, "The Clothing of Clio," 51.
[597] Ibid.
[598] Ibid., 49-50.
[599] See Figure 51.

from a girl's hand and respond to her caresses." Folklore and history intertwine, forming a colorful, multivalent perspective to what might otherwise be misconstrued as a propaganda film. As Jonathan Kear notes, "the innumerable *mots d'auteur*, playful intermixing of genres, guileful word play and self-conscious 'impressionism' point the way toward the idiosyncracies that would typify Marker's style."[600]

Figure 51: Chris Marker, *Sunday in Peking* (1956)

Indeed, one can argue that all of Marker's films, with their incredible range of editing techniques and their mixing of genres, are fundamentally imbued with animation. Like Vertov, Marker also puts focus on "intervals", a gap between two frames (or, more likely in Marker's case, reels) of actuality footage. Marker's "intervals" are more drawn out, occurring as asides that could range between one second and several minutes; but, like Vertov's, they are also constructive gaps which clarify, and often interrogate, the difference between what is real and what is represented. These intervals might manifest as paper cut-outs, stop-motion, video-game footage, or overprocessed abstraction. This is especially true in his later films, such as *Level Five* (1995), which uses a great amount of digital footage from video games. In addition, films such as

[600] Ibid., 50.

Three Cheers for the Whale (1972) use a great amount of still imagery, juxtaposed with a small percentage of live action. Most of the highly variable camerawork occurs while focusing on a still image. And, most notably, Marker created a short science-fiction animated film with filmmaker-animator Walerian Borowczyk entitled *Les Astronautes* (1959), which features the animation of drawings and photographs. The film entails an astronaut and his pet owl journeying to space, playfully wreaking havoc on civilizations and engaging in a video game-like battle with a neighboring ship. Marker's characteristic owl, one of his most beloved animals, features heavily,[601] but his exact involvement in the fascinating film is relatively unknown.

But perhaps no Marker film captures the Kino-Eye aesthetic, especially its potentially animated qualities, as much as Chris Marker's 1957 documentary film-essay *Letter from Siberia.* It is perhaps the only *Nouvelle Vague*-affiliated film inheriting every characteristic of the Kino-Eye that one also sees in Vertov—play, estrangement, actuality footage, and cinematographic tricks—while also relying heavily on animated sequences. Chris Marker's film incorporates several animations, both drawn and one stop-motion, throughout its essayistic account of Siberian life in the late 1950s. He also includes pixilated animation, or the stop-motion-like transformation of human beings into puppets, used by animators of the uncanny such as Jan Švankmajer. Marker's intermixing of black and white with sepia, color footage alongside rapid editing of

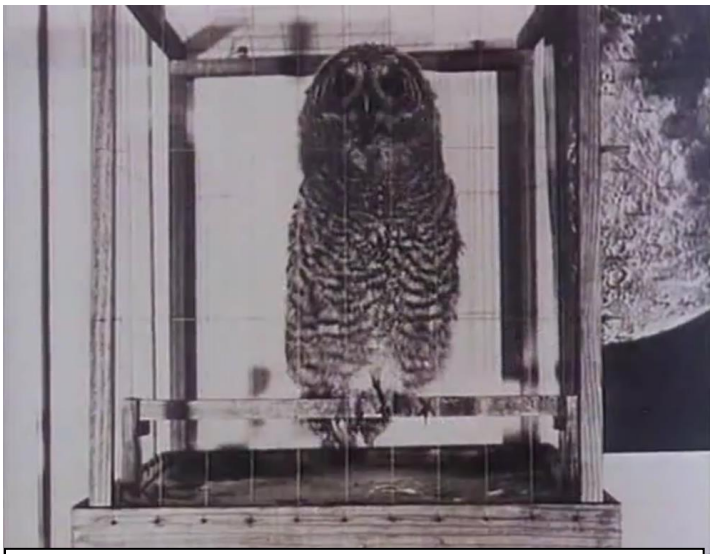

Figure 52: Chris Marker and Walerian Borowczyk, *Les Astronautes* (1959)

[601] See Figure 52.

travelogue and newsreel photographs, still photographs, and animation marked an intensification of his experiments with montage, and a subversion of normative conventions of documentary.[602] As I will show, although the film appears at first a documentary account, it subverts the all too common claim to documentary objectivity by emphasizing a playful and poetic voiceover, and a creative and highly personal interpretation of events.

Even before analyzing the film's formal structure, however, the film's content and narrative can already be compared with one of Vertov's major films: *A Sixth Part of the World* (*Shestaya Chast' Mira*) of 1926. In this film, Vertov sends his camera to far-off lands stretching across the breadth of the newly-formed Soviet Union. The camera crosses topographies as wide-ranging as the Siberian arctic, the Kazakh desert, and the Mongolian steppes; its ethnographic take on the people and wildlife of each region are not characterized by a *Nanook of the North*-type narrative drive, nor an objective statistical portrayal of each disparate region. Rather, Vertov uses the rare footage from these far-flung regions in order to edit them into a rushing, highly affective art film; beaming faces of Yakut, Uzbek, Kazakh, and Samoyed peoples are juxtaposed and placed into conversation with one another. The drive is one of utopian inclusivity, a fact exemplified by the repeating, roaring intertitles, "YOU!" (*Ti!),* followed by a representation of the activities of each ethnicity. It is, in fact, the opposite of documentarian distancing.

Although Marker might have seen *A Man with a Movie Camera*, especially in the early 1960s when it was frequently screened at international avant-garde film festivals, it is unlikely that he saw this particular film before filming his own ode to Siberia. Yet in *Letters from Siberia*, he appears, paradoxically, to refer to the film directly. This appears near the tail end of the film's most famous scene: a replay of a single sequence of three individual shots filmed in Siberia, but

[602] Kear, "The Clothing of Clio," 50.

with three completely different voiceover ideologies: Socialist Realist, anti-Communist, and "objective" educational programming. The shots themselves appear relatively neutral when viewed without commentary: a bus and expensive car cross paths at an intersection, a group of laborers painstakingly level a muddy earth, and a Yakut man with an eye abnormality stares briefly into the camera lens while walking. Nonetheless, we receive three separate and entirely contradictory interpretations of an allegedly objective "reality". Chris Marker ironically pokes fun at ideologies which create such disparate narratives from a single cinematic event; in so doing, Marker goes beyond irony into the realm of ethics and politics, laying bare the artful device of documentary filmmaking. As his friend and colleague André Bazin noted in 1958, upon the film's release:

> And this time we are way beyond cleverness and irony, because what Marker has just demonstrated is that objectivity is even more false than the two opposed partisan points of view: that, at least in relation to certain realities, impartiality is an illusion. The operation we have observed is thus precisely dialectic, consisting of placing the same image in three different intellectual contexts and following the results.[603]

Significantly, Marker argues against objectivity in favor of personal, subjective filmmaking processes. "Impartiality," ultimately, "is an illusion." Thus Marker's films echo claims such as Trinh T. Minh-ha's, which question the very notion of a filmable, representable "truth". Bazin argues that the illusion to objectivity is in fact "even more false than the two opposed partisan points of view." As Marker's narrator states during the aforementioned sequence:

> But objectivity isn't the answer either... What counts is the drive and the variety. A walk through the streets of Yakutsk isn't going to make you understand Siberia. What you need might be an imaginary newsreel shot all over Siberia...

The "imaginary newsreel shot all over Siberia" is, in fact, not imaginary at all. The ideal

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[603] André Bazin, Trans. David Kehr, *Cahiers du Cinéma, published in Film Comment, 2003. Accessed 15 April 2016: http://chrismarker.org/2015/10/andre-bazin-on-chris-marker-1958.*

documentary Marker envisions is the same fundamentally aesthetic, playfully edited newsreel that Vertov created in the 1920s—*A Sixth Part of the World*. It might also refer to the Agit-Train (*Agit-Poezd*) projects in which both Medvedkin and Vertov participated, creating and showing films throughout the newly-formed USSR. Both creative projects are founded on an idealistic Utopianism and sense of plurality; as Marker puts it, "What counts is the drive and the variety." Like Vertov and other filmmakers of the Kino-Eye, Marker's films are playfully subjective accounts of stern reality.

Figure 53: Chris Marker, *Letter from Siberia* (1957)

Figure 54: Chris Marker, *Letter from Siberia* (1957)

The uncanny reference to Agit-Trains and *A Sixth Part of the World,* however, are not the only Kino-Eye characteristics in Marker's film. *Letter from Siberia,* as noted previously, contains several brief animated sequences. The first of these is a playful tribute to the Woolly Mammoth. Marker's film depicts an animation of a group of Mammoths walking in unison,[604] as well as a brief biological and cultural history of the species and its name in various languages. In one whimsical sequence, a Woolly Mammoth poses on a pedestal while a Neolithic human hand

[604] See Figure 53.

draws its figure on the walls of a cave.[605] The scene is playful, perfectly encapsulating Marker's distinctly animated perspective.

Other similar moments abound, such as an imagined—and then realized—advertisement for Siberian reindeer. As the voiceover states:

> If I had the money, I'd shoot a spot commercial in their honor. And I'd run it between two showings, or better still, between two reels. The picture would break off suddenly, and you'd see something like this:

The film then shows a title frame—"United Productions Siberia Presents"—mirroring Vertov's Goskino advertisement *Soviet Toys*. The frame then shows us a toy owl—Marker's familiar—moving its head and flapping its wings in slow motion. It inexplicably wears an "I Hate Elvis" pin while standing before a framed picture of a reindeer.[606] It then narrates an animated advertisement for the animal, while the reindeer is represented through a simplistic drawn animation.[607] Marker again reflects Vertovian characteristics in this short animated sequence: *Soviet Toys* was a "spot commercial" much like Marker's clever *reklama* ode to reindeer.

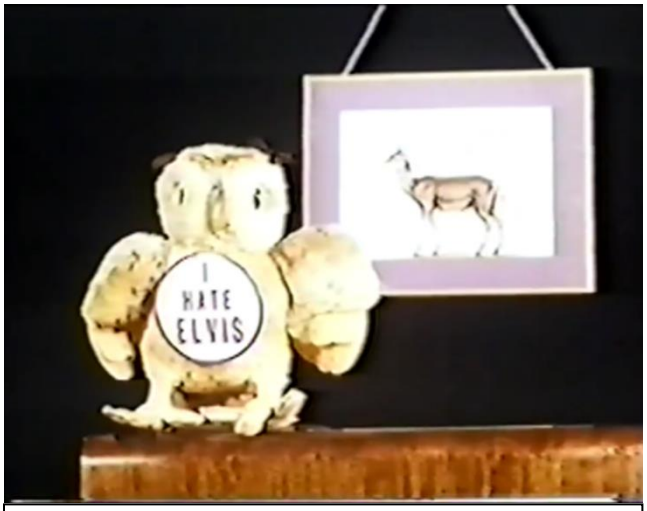

Figure 55: Chris Marker, *Letter from Siberia* (1957)

Figure 56: Chris Marker, *Letter from Siberia* (1957)

[605] See Figure 54.

[606] See Figure 55.

[607] See Figure 56.

Likewise, Marker's desire to show the animation "between two reels," when the picture "breaks off suddenly," again approximates Vertov's "theory of intervals," and the importance of the rupture and gap within the Kino-Eye.

The use of "tricks" in the film, however, is not limited to drawn or stop-motion animation. For instance, the film incorporates comedic folk songs: odes to Siberian animals such as eagles, reindeer, and foxes. In one description, a woman sings in an ironically operatic style: "Eagle, oh eagle/ when you walk,/ we see your socks." The songs are accompanied by images of these animals, to an effect of childlike wonder. Likewise, the film's most oft-seen protagonist is a tame bear named Uschatik ("Little Ears"), also named in the credits. Marker's viewer, simultaneously awed and overjoyed, gathers around the movie camera like the children depicted in *Letter from Siberia*, crowding the filmmaker. Such scenes recur in *Sunday in Peking,* and are characteristic of Marker's fascination with tricks of the eye. Like Vertov's *Kino-Eye* and *Man with a Movie Camera*, and their extended sequences of children viewing a Chinese magician, children become manifestations of the Kino-Eye theory in their capacity for wonder. And, like a magician, the camera brings life to inanimate objects. As Marker's voiceover states, describing a typical Siberian landscape: "Overhead, the cranes stand aloof, alternatively curious and courteous with one another, like a herd of dinosaurs." Although all the viewer sees are construction cranes, Marker personifies these objects of construction to which the urban dweller is overly habituated. In other words, he *animates* them.

Lastly, the film, in characteristically self-reflexive fashion, lays bare the device of documentary filmmaking. In his voiceover, Marker describes not only the Siberian scenery portrayed by the camera, but the editing techniques he uses. For instance, Marker describes reveals the fundamental tension driving his documentary:

> Here's the shot you've *all* been waiting for, the shot no worthwhile film about a country in process of transformation could possibly leave out: the contrast between the old and the new... Take a good look, because I won't show them to you again.

And, just as Marker warned, the shot exists for a few mere seconds: a 40-ton truck passes a horse-drawn buggy on a Siberian road. The scene cuts. Marker estranges this familiar trope of old versus new and imbues it with fresh perspective. As his voiceover later states, "Don't get the idea that these Yakutsk are distant cousins of Nanook of the North!" Marker resists a falsely objective ethnography, preferring his own quintessentially personal glance. As Village Voice critic Carrie Rickey described at the film's revival in 1982:

> ...compassionately detached, playful and eclectic…. What still thrills about *Letter from Siberia* 25 years after it was made is Marker's sympathetic ethnography, so much against the grain of the partisan American documentaries of the '50s where the omniscient voice told you how to read each image.[608]

Marker's film, though also created in 1957, is opposed to what Rickey calls the "partisan American documentaries" and their claims to omniscience and objectivity. *Letter from Siberia* is instead "compassionately detached, playful, and eclectic"—and here I would emphasize "compassion," for Marker's film does "prick" emotional drives. Rickey also writes: "Marker... has no thesis about Siberia but amazement."[609] Although Marker's film does evoke a sense of wonderment, the thesis of *Letter from Siberia* lies in its call for subjectivity: the avant-garde within the documentary. Neither shying away from politics nor becoming subsumed underneath any one political dogma, Marker insists on a politics of subjectivity and reflection.

Indeed, Marker's strategy has been compared with Walter Benjamin's denial of Hegelian synthesis in favor of "nonsynthesis", what Benjamin called "dialectics at a standstill." Benjamin was interested in images as emblematic traces, removed from the historical continuum, which

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608 Carrie Rickey, "Letter from Siberia," *Village Voice* (Oct 5, 1982).

609 Ibid.

can be reactivated through their juxtaposition.[610] Like Benjamin, Marker's images are less dogmatic, and necessarily ambiguous—while still profoundly political. As Kia Lindroos writes, comparing the two figures:

> By viewing the film, we "return" to the politics of history, although the return also includes the new present of the viewing moment. In a manner inherited from Soviet directors like Vertov or Eisenstein, Marker's images demand active participation by the viewer in order to make the film work. Each sequence of images seems to contain a doorway into another independent story, which accidentally lapses together with other stories in the film. The multiple layers are tied together by the (Vertovian) cameraman, who wanders amidst crowds and records silent and deserted places or overcrowded metros and city life. In this case, the film also illuminates the Benjaminian view of the politics of the present in a way in which Benjamin seeks to "explode" the passive and contemplative approach to the aesthetic and the political. Every present imports its own temporal and spatial displacements and reverts back to the move toward a present-time-oriented politics.[611]

Lindroos refers specifically to Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983) but it is equally applicable to *Letter from Siberia* as well, and the bulk of his avant-garde documentaries. Marker's cameraman approximates Vertov's cameraman, in the sense that the author-filmmaker is made present; in contrast to a disappearance of the author in the favor of an assumed objectivity, both Vertov and Marker place their, and the camera's, singular subjectivity center-stage. This subjectivity, thrown into the hustle and bustle of metropolitan life, "explodes" a passive and contemplative approach to politics and aesthetics in the same manner as Benjamin. Echoing Benjamin's concept of history as read by Lindroos, Marker and Vertov expose the viewer to a present-oriented history which demands active participation from the viewer—an active participation aided by both filmmakers' use of tricks and animation techniques.

Nor, however, are Marker's films devoid of critical examinations of contemporary

[610] Chanan, "Filming the 'Invisible,'" 128.

[611] Kia Lindroos, "Aesthetic and Political Thought: Benjamin and Marker Revisited," *Alternatives* (28, 2003), 247.

political life. Films such as *Le Joli Mai* (1962) and *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (Grin Without a Cat, 1977) uproot dangerous and difficult themes in French society, from *Mai '68* to the Algerian War. As Kear notes, in Marker's films, "Conventions of estrangement, intransitivity, non-closure and the foregrounding of representational conventions… foster a critically reflective attitude."[612] His estranging techniques, which foreground their own conventions, have a distinctly political purpose—one that can only be actualized with Marker's characteristic form. Neither fictional nor entirely factual, Marker's films exist at the fruitful interval between these two categories.[613]

The Revolutionary Affects of Animation

As I have argued in Chapter 2, the idea that avant-garde techniques—animation included—could coexist with non-fictional filmmaking practices was not unheard of in the experiments of the Soviet 1920s. Indeed, Vertov was not the only Soviet thinker who saw a yet-unrealized potential in animated imagery. In 1923, Victor Shklovsky, who discussed not only *ostranenie* but also film culture (and even wrote several screenplays, including Abram Room's 1927 film *Bed and Sofa*), wrote the following:

> There is one more line that the development of cinema might follow and that is the animated trick film. I have seen several and I am convinced that it has as yet quite unrealised potential. The interesting thing about it is the awareness of the toy-like quality of the animated image moving on the screen. The feeling of illusion was a very important feature of the old theatre and they knew how to use it, suppressing it one moment and resurrecting it the next. Cinema is, of course, very conventional just as photography itself is conventional but we have trained ourselves to perceive the world through photography and we scarcely notice the conventionality of cinema. Hence one of the opportunities for artistic construction

[612] Kear, "The Clothing of Clio," 56.

[613] Ibid., 57.

> is disappearing: the play with illusion. Perhaps the animated film can be combined with the photographed film? But what will be will be.[614]

Shklovsky thus saw an "unrealised potential" of the animated film, which was often discussed as the "animated trick film" or simply the "trick film." Here he also indicates the inherently "toy-like" quality of the animated image—recalling the Vertov's *Soviet Toys*: they do look like dolls, but, more importantly, they are imbued with a childlike playfulness. Animation entails an illusionistic quality that can captivate and estrange, simultaneously. Interestingly, here Shklovsky praises an element of theatre that Vertov claims to eradicate: a feeling of theatricality, a "play with illusion". This reimagination of theatriality is reminiscent of many of Godard's works, such as *Le Vent d'Est* or *Le Gai Savoir.* Nonetheless, there is no contradiction here: when Shklovsky evokes the theatre, it is to vindicate its potential to surprise, to evoke feeling, and, certainly, to dehabituate. When Shklovsky claims that good theatre is capable of "suppressing it one moment and resurrecting it the next," he indicates that the jolt of dehabituation is only possible with the experience of art's formal qualities. The sensibilities of animation are thus simultaneously estranging and *affective*.

Eric S. Jenkins argues that animation is unique in its ability to create affective experiences through what he calls the *punctum* of animation, following Roland Barthes' concept in *Camera Lucida* (1980). Although Barthes uses the *punctum* to describe a characteristic of a photograph which "pricks" due to its detail or its reminder of death, Jenkins argues that there exists another *punctum* unique to animation which reminds the viewer of life. This, of course, is animation taken literally as the ability to breathe life to inanimate objects; as Jenkins puts it, the affective *punctum* is the "prick" from seeing a *never-has-been* character come alive—thus

[614] Leslie, *Hollywood Flatlands*, 18.

eliciting "the medium's spatiotemporal rupture of the prevailing parameters of the real."[615] Animation, in its inherent ability to animate the inanimate, disbands the conventional and taps into the "unrealized potential" postulated by Shklovsky.

Jenkins notes that movement in animation derives from the spaces between images and between frames[616]—a similar argument to Vertov's theory of intervals, and Norman McLaren's postulation of animation as the art of the interval. This sense of rupture creates a "prick" of coming-to-life, which in turn results in an experience of pre-conscious affect. Animation is uniquely able to evoke this experience. As Jenkin writes:

> The *punctum* sparks a dual animation, an affect and an affection, moving in both directions between image and observer. The image animates viewers by punctuating the spatiotemporal coordinates of their perceptual mode, and the viewer animates images by embarking on adventures into the past or future or into questions of ontology or metaphysics, to name just a few.[617]

Thus the *punctum* of animation works by animating both image and viewer through its ability to evoke deep feeling. The viewer then "embarks on adventures" through affective memory, activating her perceptual capacity, and "punctuating" her "spatiotemporal coordinates". This rupture reminds one of estrangement, and its ability to rehabilitate the senses; as Svetlana Boym writes, estrangement brings sensation back to life itself.[618]

Such is the overarching purpose of this investigation into the Kino-Eye: a trajectory of the avant-garde documentary which attempts to make the "stone stony" (in Shklovsky's words), and revolutionize human perceptive capacities. Although not every avant-garde documentary discussed in this dissertation includes techniques of animation, the films discussed in this chapter

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[615] Eric S. Jenkins, "Another *Punctum*: Animation, Affect, and Ideology," *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 2013), 576. Emphasis Jenkins's.

[616] Ibid., 578.

[617] Ibid., 580.

[618] Boym, "Estrangement as a Lifestyle," 515. Previously quoted in Chapter 2.

exemplify the most aesthetic, affective, and animated aspects of the Kino-Eye, and are exemplary of a playfully reflective non-fictional mode that questions its own form. At times, as Lucy Fischer notes of Vertov's *Enthusiasm*, films of the Kino-Eye—in their insistence of documentary evidence, in their radical disruption of the cinematic illusion—might appear to us less real, less documentary than even fiction films.[619]Animated documentaries exemplify this tendency: somehow appearing both more real than documentary, and less real than fiction, they articulate a theory of gaps, intervals, and ruptures that, as Minh-ha might state, finally allow the film to "ring true".[620]

Techniques of the Kino-Eye can spark affects, animate our minds, and—eventually—radicalize our political beliefs. As Annette Michelson said of *Man with a Movie Camera*, the Kino-Eye is the "thematic interplay of magic, illusion, labor, filmic techniques, and strategy,"[621] wrapped up in a sophisticated theory of media as singlehandedly able to transform human consciousness and perception. Aesthetic philosopher Nakai Makasaku believed the same, alongside Walter Benjamin. For Nakai, mass media technology such as film could affect human sensation and subjectivity through the manipulation of its projected materials.[622] In other words, the more "manipulated" the film became, the more it was able to radicalize the viewer through sensorial pathways. The playful, "manipulated," even animated Kino-Eye reflects a more optimistic, even Utopian view of cinema—what Malcolm Turvey named its "revelationist answer"[623] to the problem posed by modernity.

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[619] Lucy Fischer, "'Enthusiasm,'" 33.

[620] Minh-ha, "The Totalizing Quest for Meaning," 92. Previously quoted on 256.

[621] Michelson, "*The Man with the Movie Camera,*" 66.

[622] Nakai Masakazu, quoted in Moore, "Para-existential Forces of Invention," 143.

[623] Turvey, *Doubting Vision*, 3.

The Kino-Eye trajectory then emerges, and re-emerges, in cinematic history when political filmmakers return to this idea of cinema as "revelationist". Notably, it emerges when politics is in a period of crisis, and when media—including film—becomes a focal point of critical attention. Media becomes the object of criticism, and emerges with the capacity to change human behavior when cobblestones and Molotov cocktails could not. As critic Suga Hidemi describes of post-1968 Japan, "New Leftists were driven into a corner, realizing that there was nothing more that could be done with staves, thrown rocks, and fire bottles."[624] Although some filmmakers began escalating their violent tactics even further—a problematic "weaponism" common in post-1968 Godard and Adachi Masao, filmmakers of the 'Kino-Bayonet'—other critics such as Matsuda Masao called for a deep deconstruction of the systems and structures of media.[625] The films that emerged from the Kino-Eye viewed film less as a weapon, and more as a self-critical tool, able to jolt the audience to life, and to politics.

Notably, however, both the Kino-Eye and Kino-Bayonet fall under a certain rubric of political modernism, defined by D.N. Rodowick as "a radical political text… conditioned by the necessity of an avant-garde representational strategy."[626] Nonetheless, film theorists of the avant-garde documentary, especially in Europe after 1968, largely focused on its more Brechtian trajectory, consistently favoring films and directors which are not only difficult and alienating, but fundamentally unapproachable. A transnational analysis of avant-garde documentaries, however, reveals a far more playful, pleasurable, and estranging cinematic tradition that serves to question the principles underlying nonfiction filmmaking.

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[624] Suga Hidemi, quoted in Miryam Sas, "The Culture Industries and Media Theory in Japan," in *Media Theory in Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 152.

[625] Ibid., 153.

[626] Rodowick, *Crisis of Political Modernism*, 12.

However, there is considerable evidence that this trajectory is currently re-emerging in our own era of political crisis. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, groups such as Harvard University's Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL) are creating extremely unique avant-garde documentaries which serve to affect the viewer in a radically sensorial way. In 2012, director of SEL Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel's released *Leviathan*—an extremely sensorial, almost entirely dialogue-less ethnographic film shot on a fishing boat with GoPro cameras. Castaing-Taylor describes SEL and *Leviathan* as battling against a slew of conventional documentary tactics, from dramaturgical narratives to "talking heads" to linear/chronological structures.[627] Remarkably, Castaing-Taylor's description of his films appears to summarize the very heart of Kino-Eye filmmaking:

> …the SEL is concerned, not to analyze, but to actively produce aesthetic experience, and of kinds that reflect and draw on but do not necessarily clarify or leave one with the illusion of "understanding" everyday experience, and it also seeks to transcend what is often considered the particular province of the human, and delve into nature—in short, to reconjugate culture with nature, to pursue promiscuities between animalic and non-animalic selves and others, and to restore us both to the domain of perception, in all its plenitude, rather than the academic game of what Dewey called "recognition," or of naming, that he derided as a barely conscious endeavor; and to the fleshy realm, in Merleau-Ponty's phrase, of "wild being," in which the invisible, far from being the negation or contradiction of the visible, is in fact its "secret sharer," its *membrure*…[628]

Castaing-Taylor thus approaches a "revelationist" idea of cinema as which is notably similar to Nakai's idea of cinema as "a medium that enforces both reflection on and renewal of the very relationship of humanity and nature."[629] As if inspired by Nakai directly, SEL seeks to "reconjugate culture with nature," allowing their films to serve as domains for "reflection" and

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[627] Lucien Castaing-Taylor, in an interview with Scott MacDonald, in "Conversations on the Avant-Doc: Scott MacDonald Interviews," in *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* (54:2, Fall 2013), 295.

[628] Ibid.

[629] Kitada, "An Assault on 'Meaning'", 287.

"aesthetic experience". The purpose of these films is to restore both "animalic and non-animalic selves" to "the domain of perception" and to "the fleshy realm". And of course, it is no accident that Castaing-Taylor refers to phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose theories are so interwoven with the ethical, political aesthetics of both Shklovsky and Vertov.[630]

Given recent "avant-docs" such as the Sensory Ethnography Lab, as Scott MacDonald suggests, it is likely that avant-garde and documentary forms will become increasinly affiliated, rather than antagonistic.[631] Indeed, the contemporary landscape may be seeing a renaissance of avant-garde documentary forms, given our own society's political crisis, and deep suspicion of standard "objective" media practices. In an era of "alternative facts", itself in the grip of a failed revolutionary moment, such affecting and enlightening experiments can reveal an approach which engages more meaningfully, critically, and truthfully with actuality. A century after the Bolshevik Revolution, and a half-century after *Mai '68,* it might be high time to re-examine the rift between the Old and New Left, between violence and self-criticism, between Eisenstein and Vertov, between realism and the avant-garde, that continues—if even in the most infinitesimal ways—to seep into the most mundane facets of our late capitalist lives.

[630] See Chapter 2 for a more lengthy commentary on the role of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perception in the films of Dziga Vertov.

[631] Scott MacDonald, "Avant-Doc: Eight Intersections," *Film Quarterly* (64:2, Winter 2010), 57.

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