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## Material and Device. Notes on Cinematic Techniques in Iurii Tynianov's Narrative

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Although in his 1928 article „The Fundamentals of Cinema” Iurii Tynianov (1894–1943) states that poetry is closer to cinema than prose, for „film makes a *jump* from shot to shot, just as verse makes a jump from line to line”<sup>1</sup>, his novels and novellas appear to be widely influenced by newly-born cinematic techniques.

In Russia the 1920s indeed saw a close interaction between cinema and literature, with theories and practices of avant-garde cinema developing along with those of literature and literary criticism. Authors like Mikhail Zoshchenko and Veniamin Kaverin, the leading Formalist critical school of Opoiaz (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) and directors like Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein operated within a common milieu, often in the same city, sharing ideas and work experience. As a result, the analysis of film techniques and of cinema's potential as a new medium intertwined with the theorization on the meaning and the structure of literary texts developed by Formalists, with the artistic output of the two domains (avant-garde films and literature) drawing on each other as to plot construction, stylistic choices, character building and narrative techniques.

Formalist critics highlighted the structure that underlies a piece of literature, explaining „how” it is made (see Eikhenbaum's „How Gogol's *Overcoat* is Made” or Shklovsky's essay on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*<sup>2</sup>), laying bare the device, explaining the author's technique,

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<sup>1</sup> See Tynianov, „The Fundamentals of Cinema”, 45. Other relevant studies of Tynianov's on cinema appear in Tynianov, *Poetika, istoriia literatury, kino*.

<sup>2</sup> These two essays, dated 1919 and 1921, have both been translated into English. See, respectively, Eikhenbaum, „How Gogol's 'Overcoat' is Made” and Viktor Shklovsky, „The Parody Novel: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.”

„dissecting” the text, stressing composition elements rather than the subject of the work of art. Similarly, cinema, through the activity of directors like Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg and the FEKS group (Factory of the Eccentric Actor, founded in 1921), Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, underwent previously unknown systematization and technical analysis, to the extent that the pre-revolutionary word „kinematograf”, old-fashioned and linked to a bourgeois habit of cinema going, was significantly replaced by „kinematografiia”, featuring the suffix „-ia”, which emphasizes the craftsmanship in the art of filmmaking. Moreover, Eisenstein’s „montage of attractions” theory (exposed in the homonymous 1923 essay) postulated the importance of striking the audience, thus promoting the focus to be shifted from authorship to reception, in the same way as „estrangement” (*ostranenie*) was considered by early Formalism one of the main purposes of literature, which should make the reader see things by means of an estranged presentation, not just recognize them<sup>3</sup>. Dziga Vertov’s concept of Kino-eye (1924), too, found its literary reflection in the prose of *faktografiia* („Literature of Fact”). In Vertov’s view, the movie camera should act as a bare eye through which viewers are allowed to see reality „as it is,” caught unawares, without any authorial or subjective filter in between. Unlike pre-revolutionary cinema, based on psychological melodrama and character introspection, which had the purpose of reinforcing established values, Vertov’s documentary films aimed at showing to the masses a selection of cine-facts, in order to awaken the viewer’s social and political awareness. His *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929), for instance, has no actors, no plot and no intertitles. Likewise, the Literature of Fact movement advocated the use of mere facts in the composition of literary works. No room was allowed for fiction or philosophical digressions: just facts and documents were chosen to create pieces of literature, „first hand” texts, like proceedings from meetings or excerpts from scientific encyclopedias, constituting privileged materials for the sake of mimetic effectiveness in representing reality. Examples of this trend, along with the movement manifesto, are provided in the 1929 essay

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<sup>3</sup> As Hansen-Löve points out, the different categories of montage developed by Eisenstein throughout the 1920s, from montage of attraction to intellectual montage, mirror those same methodological steps that Formalism underwent in the development of its theoretical apparatus. See Hansen-Löve, *Russkii formalizm*, 346.

collection *Literature of the Fact: The First Anthology of Documents by the Workers of LEF*, edited by Nikolai Chuzhak<sup>4</sup>.

On the Soviet literary scene of the 1920s, the role of Iurii Tynianov was prominent: his historical novels undoubtedly rank among the best and most innovative Russian historical fiction of those years. His passion for documents results in incredibly detailed historical backgrounds to described actions, while his deep philological concern and his sophisticated exercises in style provide the reader with samples of 18th- and 19th-century Russian language. Not surprisingly, his *Kiukh-lia* (1925), a novel about the Decembrist poet Vilhelm Kiukhel'beker, is still studied today in Russian schools. Nevertheless, Tynianov was above all a critic, a professor, a theoretician, and a leading member of the Petrograd/Leningrad Opoiiaz circle, together with Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Eikhenbaum. The collection *Poetika kino* (1927)<sup>5</sup>, which contains, among other essays, Shklovsky's «Poetry and Prose in the Cinema», Tynianov's abovementioned „The Fundamentals of Cinema” and Eikhenbaum's „Problems of Cine-Stylistics”, testifies of the lively interest by the Opoiiaz school towards the newly-born art. The syntax of cinema was codified and transferred into literary patterns, which brought about a renovation of old canons in story-telling for the whole decade and beyond. „The visible world is communicated in cinema not as such, — Tynianov writes — but in its semantic relativity, otherwise cinema would simply be a living (and not-living) form of photography. The person-as-seen and the thing-as-seen are only an element of film-art when they are presented as meaning-bearing signs”<sup>6</sup>. Iurii Tynianov and Sergei Eisenstein never worked together, but they showed mutual respect and admiration. As late as 1943, in a letter to Tynianov the famous director admits having drawn inspiration from the writer's novel *Pushkin* (1936–37, unfinished) for a film on the Russian national poet<sup>7</sup> (actually, he would soon leave that plan behind and focus on the *Ivan the Terrible* trilogy, whose part one was released in 1944). One major convergence can be highlighted in Tynianov's and Eisenstein's theories of montage: ac-

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<sup>4</sup> Chuzhak (ed.), *Literatura fakta*.

<sup>5</sup> For an English version, see Taylor (ed. ), *The Poetics of Cinema. Russian Poetics in Translation* 9.

<sup>6</sup> See Tynianov, „The Fundamentals of Cinema”, 37.

<sup>7</sup> The letter is included in the essay collection *Iurii Tynianov: pisatel' i uchenyi. Vospominaniia, razmyshleniia, vstrechi*, 176–181.

cording to Tynianov, „montage is not the connecting of shots, it is the differential *exchange* of shots”<sup>8</sup>; likewise, Eisenstein’s positions insist on this „difference” and on further meaning arising from two juxtaposed shots, which is unique and new and is by no means identical to a mere addition or blending of the two generating elements<sup>9</sup>. In this respect, Eisenstein points out that the montage technique, which finds its most natural application in cinema, is also employed in literature, as a basic form of aesthetic expression. Among other past and contemporary authors who, in his view, made use of a literary version of montage, he names Pushkin, Joyce, Mallarmé, Maiakovsky and Zola.

Not only did Iurii Tynianov show a lively and genuine interest in cinema in his critical and theoretical essays but he also got directly involved in the Soviet film industry of the 1920s as a screenwriter for a number of productions, such as: *The Overcoat*, adapted from Gogol’s short story (1926, directed by Kozintsev and Trauberg); *SVD* (1927, written together with Iurii Oksman and directed by Kozintsev and Trauberg), about a Decembrist insurrection in southern Russia; *Lieutenant Kijé*, adapted from his own 1927 literary work (1934, directed by Aleksandr Faintsimmer, with a film score composed by Sergei Prokofiev); from his own novel, *Vazir-Mukhtar*, which was never showed in theatres owing to the outbreak of World War II. In 1930 Tynianov started writing a screenplay for Lenfilm (director: V. M. Petrov) in parallel with a short story on the same topic, entitled „The Monkey and the Bell”, but both works were left unfinished.<sup>10</sup>

Tynianov’s screenwriting, as well as his theoretical studies on cinema, are expectedly mirrored in his narrative fiction. The Formalist scholar looked for stylistic traits which were common to the cultural domains of both literature and cinema. In particular, he was fas-

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<sup>8</sup> See Tynianov, “The Fundamentals of Cinema”, 45.

<sup>9</sup> In his theory of montage (1929), Eisenstein compares the shots of a montage scene to the parts which form an ideogram: in both cases the result is far more complex than the mere sum of the components. The most relevant essays of Eisenstein’s on montage are included in his *Izbrannnye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*. For an English version, see the four-volume collection of Eisenstein’s essays *Selected Works*. Volume I contains the essays on montage composed in the 1920s.

<sup>10</sup> See Nikolai Stepanov, Untitled essay, in *Iurii Tynianov: pisatel’ i uchenyj. Vospominaniia, razmyshleniia, vstrechi*, 126—142: 135.

cinated by the semiotic potentials of the relationship between images and intertitles in silent movies, and as a consequence he made massive use of „visual“ devices in his writing to pursue an equivalent effect. Part of the „plot“ and of the meaning is to be found in the denseness of single episodes, in small details, movements and gestures on which he draws the reader’s attention. Like in filmmaking, the „setting“, the visual balance in the „scene“, the „shot angle“, the spatial relationship between characters and things, or characters and other characters, are of utmost importance in Tynianov’s writing. As Stepanov states<sup>11</sup>, Tynianov used to draw scenes before composing chapters of his novels, and this results in written recreation of genuinely visual images on the page. At times visual becomes almost „visionary,“ producing estranged, surreal portrayals of events and characters, as it happens with the description of architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli in *The Wax Effigy* (1930), a novel about the last days in the life of Peter the Great. The Italian artist is seen as if in an oneiric vision:

... after he [Rastrelli] had shifted his weight from one foot to the other, he suddenly leaned his little right hand forward — rubies and carbuncles were shining on it — and began to talk so rapidly that [...] His way of speaking resembled bubbles that quickly come up through water around a man swimming and explode once on the surface. Bubbles appeared on the surface and exploded — and in the end the swimming man went down: Count Rastrelli drowned (379).<sup>12</sup>

In another passage, which depicts the maestro working on the wax effigy for the dead Emperor, Tynianov describes his drawings as follows:

And on sheets of paper he wrote down [...] numbers [...] which were measurements. Nearby, he drew the contour of a finger, and around that finger other figures flocked, like fishes around their feed; then came a mass and a wave, which was a muscle, then a jet of water, which was a stretched leg, then a lake with a whirlpool, which was a belly (418—419).

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<sup>11</sup> See Nikolai Stepanov, *Untitled essay*, in *Iurii Tynianov: pisatel' i uchenyj. Vospominaniia, razmyshleniia, vstrechi*, 126—142: 136—137.

<sup>12</sup> All quotes from Tynianov’s literary works, with the exception of *Young Vitushishnikov*, are taken from Tynianov, *Voskovaia persona. Izbrannoe*. Translations are mine. English versions of his main novels and novellas are listed in the bibliography.

Such suggestive visual similes, typical of German silent expressionist films, like Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), can be also found in Soviet productions, such as Eisenstein's *October* (1927).

In most of Tynianov's novels the plot line develops through a combination of short episodes, each autonomous and complete in itself, with characters acting as links between such different and isolated dimensions and guaranteeing an overall narrative unity. This device is used, for instance, in *Young Vitushishnikov* (1933), a novella that takes place during the reign of Nicholas I and is developed from an anecdote of that time, as well as in *The Wax Effigy* (featuring even one-page chapters/episodes, like chapter 3) and in *Kiukhlia*. In these literary works the action does not unfold by simply following an external plot line, but rather through a sequence of episodes, scenes, or even different nuances of or different perspectives on a single event.

The juxtaposition of episodes with no explicit continuity linking each of them to the following one manifestly recalls the montage technique used in 1920s Soviet avant-garde films (such as Vsevolod Pudovkin's and Eisenstein's works), from which Tynianov certainly draws inspiration to build his narrative. A prime influence of cinema on Tynianov's narrative was in fact the use of the „synthetic“ style typical of contemporary avant-garde productions and his *Kiukhlia* provides first class examples of this. The whole novel features the juxtaposition of „scenes“ of different length and intonation, a technique which could be particularly noted in chapter IX, *Peter's Square*, dedicated to the Decembrist revolt in Petersburg: the reader experiences different perspectives on the same event, the Decembrist insurrection. Each piece of the narration, each unity of this „literary montage“, offers a different point of view on the historical event which takes place on the wide Peter's square: the cavalry headquarters, the Moscow and Finnish regiments, the Imperial Guard, the insurrectionists who meet at Ryleev's place, the Tzar at the Winter Palace waiting for the reports of count Miloradovich's attempts to parley with the rebels, people gathering in streets and squares and so forth. Once readers have grasped all the different perspectives, they are able to infer the features and the proportions of that major event, which is never linearly depicted as a whole, except for the brief „geographical“ synopsis at the beginning of the chapter. This focuses on the role of streets

and squares, compared to blood vessels in the human body, and requires being inferred from hints and disjointed pieces of narration. Rumour has it that the revolt is bloody and fierce, uproar and noises are heard from the streets and squares where the fight is taking place, this and that official are reported dead, but in spite of this we can hardly „see“ something directly: „Where are you going, for heaven’s sake? There’s a revolt going on in the square, all hell’s breaking loose“ (245); „The roar seems distant, although the house is close to the square. The old mansion [Trubetskoy’s] lives its life and has no intention of lending an ear to the shouting in the street or to the shots in the square. Its walls are thick“ (247); „Your Majesty, general Miloradovich has been killed. General Voinov has been beaten by the crowd with wooden sticks“, „Again shots are heard from the square“ (255).

The scene after the revolt is the one that best reflects the influence of the montage technique on the novel: the page depicting it is built through one-word sentences and short lines which occur regularly, dictating a rhythm to the sequence of shots which pass before the reader’s eyes like flashes from different situations, like units of a montage scene in an avant-garde movie, such as the stairs sequence in Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1924), where the time length of each single frame never exceeds three seconds. The alternation of two colors, namely the sparkling white of ice and weapons and the darkness of the night, of dead bodies in piles with glimpses of red from the fires, reinforces this cadence throughout the scene and, on a stylistic level, the passage as a whole resembles a script:

Half an hour later night falls. It’s the dense, dark, icy winter night of December 14th. A night-evening.

In the square there are fires, smoke, sentinel calls, cannons with muzzles pointing in all directions, barrier chains, patrols, ranks of Cossacks’ lances, the dim sparkling of the horseguards’ bare sabres, the red of crackling wood in fires where soldiers and guns are piled in pyramids burning.

Night.

Perforated walls, broken windows all along Galernaia street, whispers and silent movements on the first floor of neighbouring houses, gun butts hitting bodies, the low and desperate lament of arrested people.

Night.

Fan-shaped splashes of blood on the Senate walls, corpses. Piled, isolated, black and bloody. Carts full of sacks dripping with blood. Along the Neva river, from Saint Isaac's bridge to the Academy of Arts, there is a quiet bustling: corpses are shoved through the narrow holes in the ice (268–269).

In order to insist again on the visual peculiarity of Tynianov's literature, it is worth noticing that some passages in his works strongly remind of cinematic panoramic scenes, of long and aerial shots. The beginning of chapter IX in *Kiukhlia*, for instance, shows the city of Petersburg from above and the reader is able to see the places where each event happens and the directions taken by different characters. Streams of people flowing from roads into squares are seen as the blood circulation in the body of the city:

The revolt of December 14<sup>th</sup> involved squares.

Through the streets people were flowing into Admiralty and Saint Isaac's squares, and through those same streets walked the regiments, first the rebel ones, then those of the government.

From Razvodnaia square (later renamed Palace square), Nicholas arrived in Admiralty square and reached the lions of Lobanovsky Palace.

Razvodnaia and Saint Isaac squares, where the governmental regiments were, silently choked Admiralty square, where the people were in turmoil, and Peter's square, where the revolutionaries were. They closed Peter's square from three sides and threw revolutionaries in the river, while some of them were shoved to the narrow Galemaia street.

The day of December 14<sup>th</sup> unfolded with a kind of blood circulation in the city: along arterial roads the people and the rebel regiments flew into squares as if through blood vessels, but then these arteries became clogged and, with just one push, the regiments overflowed their vessel banks. For the city, that was a heart attack, with real blood spouting (234).

When Kiukhel'beker, the main character, rushes from the cavalry headquarters to the Winter Palace to different regiments to the main square, fulfilling thus his „technical role“ of liaising all the facets of the action, the narrator compares him to a ball bouncing from side to side in the turbulent city (243) and the reader gets the impression of watching him from above.



The „metropolis“ was a privileged subject for avant-garde directors and shots taken from above appear in a number of movies, including Paul Strand's *Manhatta* (1921), René Clair's *Paris qui dort* (1923), Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and, of course, Vertov's abovementioned *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), which portrays the modern city by assembling shots of Moscow, Kiev and Odessa. By the time *Kiukhlia* was written, aerial shots had already appeared in Soviet productions, such as Vertov's *Kino-Eye. Life Off-Guard* (1924), which shows a long shot of a street in Moscow taken from above in the late afternoon.

At times the narration's rhythm and focalization imitate those of a camera that shifts from wide shots to close ups and back. In *Kiukhlia* „external sets“ and crowd scenes are very frequent. Often the narrative perspective narrows down from the anonymous crowd to a single, recognizable character in order to portray actions and dialogues or to perform description from a close distance. After this step is completed, the shot opens up again and the character eventually disappears from the reader's view, swallowed by the multitude of people in that same crowd:

Vilhelm has never seen so many people. People are everywhere, rows of dark men are standing even between the columns of the Senate, even on the roofs of nearby houses. Around the monument and beyond the Admiralty everything is black.

A couple of craftsmen have captured an official in the crowd and they are holding him tight.

[...] Vilhelm intervenes and implores them:

— Let him go (248–249).

Vilhelm takes Levushka's arm, he cheerfully palms him off his sabre and takes him to the monument [...]. He brings him near to Pushchin.

— We have a young soldier.

Then he runs away through the square.

Levushka stays there for a while and he carefully puts the sabre down. Then he mixes up with the crowd and disappears (250).

Something similar happens in the final chapter of *The Wax Effigy*: some weeks after Peter the Great's death the Court is not wearing mourning anymore and the Empress bursts out into laughter for an

April fools' joke. From a distance all the young ladies surrounding her look happy and cheerful, but, again, the narrator specifies that this is just an illusion and that we have to look closer in order to discover that one of those girls is not laughing at all, but she's instead complaining about something:

Around her, all the young ladies were lying one beside the other, proving how sticky and contagious that laughing was. They were all partially dressed, some of them were almost naked and their breasts were uncovered, because they were too lazy to get dressed in the morning and still had a whole day to do it. Many of them even waved their legs slowly around and one of them couldn't stop raising her eyebrows because of her laughing, as though some part of her body was hurting. Actually it was not exactly like that, and this *Fräulein* was not laughing as much as it seemed, because in the beginning she got really scared too. In fact she was not laughing at all, she was only saying:

— Oh, I have had enough! (473)

Focalization, namely the „narrative camera“, is thus to be considered as essentially dynamic in Tynianov's works. *Young Vitushishnikov* (1933), for example, is characterized by the use of a swinging double focus and wide shots, which catalyze the reader's attention alternately on the main scene and on the background action, or on both of them. At times the background pops up to the front rather surprisingly, thus gaining importance over the main scene, until it quickly slips back again, as though blinking to the reader. This technique allows the author to stress the disproportion between real episodes and their ironic exaggeration. In chapter XVII Nicholas I walks into a tavern where soldiers are furtively having a drink while being on duty, but he focuses his attention on the wallpaper and he doesn't notice the two men quickly slipping out of the back door. The narrator tells the story from the Emperor's point of view, so he summarises the main action (soldiers hiding from the Tzar) while he describes the wallpaper in detail:

[the soldiers] tore away from their seats and rushed, with heads lowered, to the back room, which was the private domain of the tavern-keeper.

[...] And to the end of their lives they preserved the memory of how cleverly they got away from the police inspector [they

didn't recognize the Tzar, so they thought the man was just an inspector].

As for the Emperor, what confused him were the unfamiliar conditions of the terrain. The interior of the drinking establishment was covered with dark marbled wallpaper, which, moreover, was spotted by an abundant outcropping of mold. The wallpaper had cracked with age in various places and directions. Therefore the small door [...] escaped the Emperor's attention.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, in chapter XXVIII, Jeannette, a model who appears in a poster advertising mineral water, nearly steps out of her frame: the narrator describes her as if it were an actual character that comes to the foreground in the portrayed action: „the Minister was no longer on duty and he spent his days in the Meshchanskaia street at the famous Jeannette's (517)”. Depth of field is one of the oldest techniques in filmmaking, since it was used already by the Lumière brothers in their short documentary film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895), but in the 1920s it was almost abandoned in favour of other stylistic devices, so Tynianov probably did not borrow it from contemporary directors.

Of course, secondary action that suddenly comes to the foreground without an apparent motivation may also consist of sounds. In *The Wax Effigy* a man is sitting in a tavern and the author reports fragments of a conversation in the background, and readers can almost „hear” noises from the „set” as though they were watching a (sound) movie or a theatre *pièce*. People who talk are of no importance for the story.

... they were talking quietly about some ribbons and braid and [...] wax. They talked more about other things and the soldier could hear „judge”, „burgomaster” and nothing else. He could only catch this, as they were speaking very quietly (428).

The sense of hearing is not secondary at all in Tynianov's works where sounds are commonly used as narrative links between two or more otherwise separate episodes. Two examples from *The Wax Effigy* are particularly suited to underline a typically cinematic „sound editing”. The first appears in section IV of chapter I, where Tynianov describes a hunting scene: a man notices two wolves running on the

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<sup>13</sup> Tynianov, *Lieutenant Kijé / Young Vitushishnikov: Two Novellas*, 89.

iced Neva river, so he steps out of his hut, which is not far from the Emperor's Palace, with his hunting dogs and he shoots, but the wolves manage to run into a forest. „That shot woke him up“, reads the last sentence of the section. „Him“ is Peter the Great, and the next scene, which opens section V, is set inside his room, where he recalls a dream (382). The second example of „sound editing“ is visible in chapter VI: as three salvos are heard, everybody thinks there is a fire going on, although it is only a joke organised by the Empress for April 1<sup>st</sup>. Tynianov shows how different characters (girls in courtyards, noblemen and their servants, the duke of Izhora) located in different spots of the city react to those same salvos, which act as unifying elements between single scenes (468).

Moreover, sounds sometimes even precede visual description: first a sound is heard, then Tynianov describes what is happening, as in *Kiukhlia*, chapter IX:

A noise is heard from a distance and Vilhelm can't recognise it at first. It resembles the sound of a tide, when the wave moves back out and takes away the shingle on the shore, or the intense tapping of thousands of little hammers. Then he guesses: the cavalry is passing (242).

In other passages auditory sensations represent all that readers can rely on, especially when the narration is conducted from the subjective perspective of a character (like in the scene where Vilhelm recognizes voices and situations while walking through a thick fog). Therefore, readers can follow the story through their sense of hearing when they cannot see it unfolding before their eyes. This situation can be easily compared to that of sounds off on a completely white or black screen, a filmmaking technique whose synaesthetic effects began to be fully explored with the advent of the sound era.

Tynianov's passages featuring a fixed perspective, which corresponds somehow to a fixed frame in filmmaking, represent an original technique in the Russian prose of those years. In such a focalization „voices off“ are prominent as well. For instance, in *Kiukhlia*, chapter IX, the action is presented through Nicholas' perspective: while riding a horse he stands up a bit from his sitting position, so that he can catch a better view, but there are still Palace walls that limit his visual range. This focalization can be compared to a steady shot in cinema:

on our imaginary screen we are able to follow grenadiers running from side to side, but their action begins well before and ends well after what we *see*, as we learn both from the employed literary technique, which resembles the cinematic „sounds off“ („he hears an incredible noise coming from Razvodnaia square“, 256) and from the officer’s face („The crowd of grenadiers reappears at the gate. [...] Nicholas [...] sees the little officer’s excited red face clearly, but he doesn’t understand anything. Where are they going? Why have they left the Palace?“, 256).

In a number of passages from different novels, moreover, the narrative focus can be compared to that of a tracking shot presenting one character after another in a spatial sequence. As Stepanov underlines<sup>14</sup>, this happens in the lunch scene at Grech’s in the novel *Death and Diplomacy in Persia* (1928), a book about Griboedov’s last year of life before dying during a revolt in Persia, where he served as a diplomat. Likewise, in *Kiukhliia* the author offers a sort of „introspective tracking shot“ of the main characters, the Decembrists, at Ryleev’s before the revolt bursts out, indulging on the intimate thoughts and fears of each of them (238).

In conclusion, most cinematic techniques employed in Tynianov’s creative prose were quite common in his times, and the influence of filmmaking on literature was direct and remarkable. Some of them, though, such as the use and semantic exploitation of long shots had not been completely explored yet by contemporary directors and they would be developed further on in decades; some others, like out-of-field noises and sound continuity, were generally not used in silent films of the 1920s (while sound cinema — especially talking pictures — was still at an early stage). Therefore, not all of the above-mentioned stylistic devices have their origin in contemporary Soviet cinematic style and trends. However, Tynianov’s literary texts, as this analysis has emphasized, show evidence of the fact that cinema and literature share both a common syntax and similar stylistic paradigms, thus bridging the gap between two otherwise „parallel cultural series“, as Formalists put it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Nikolai Stepanov, An Untitled Essay, in *Iurii Tynianov: pisatel’ i uchenyj. Vospominaniia, razmyshleniia, vstrechi*, 126–142: 132.

<sup>15</sup> See in particular Tynianov’s theory of evolutionary parallel series and models in his 1927 essay “On Literary Evolution”.

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