Film Aesthetic in the Ukrainian Novel of the 1920s: The Novel as Experiment

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The primary goal of Ukrainian modernist and avant-garde writers was the construction of a new Ukrainian novel. In search of revolutionary models of representation and storytelling, these writers turned to cinema for themes, compositional principles, and narrative devices. This study focuses on the aesthetics of cinema as a vehicle for modernizing narrative modes, structure, and characterization in Ukrainian experimental novels of the 1920s. The adoption of the dispassionate camera-eye narration reconfigured the traditional role of the novelistic narrator and contributed to vivid, lively narration. The literary emulation of film techniques such as montage revolutionized narrative structure and composition through rejection of linear storytelling and adoption of a fragmented, discontinuous style of narration. Cinematic aesthetics also affected character development, contributing to external, predominantly visual, characterization.

Chapter 1 examines the fascination with cinema among Ukrainian writers during the 1920s artistic revolution, focusing on film aesthetics and early application of cinematic devices in Ukrainian prose and poetry. Following chapters analyze the two most representative novels to absorb aesthetics of cinema. Chapter 2 analyzes the memoir-novel Maister korablia (Master of the ship; 1928) by Iurii Ianovs’kyi. The novel chronicles the history of film production in a 1920s Ukrainian film studio, the specifics of which are reflected in the novel’s collage
composition, creating an effect of collective production. The incorporation of camera-eye narration produces a sense of immediacy and narrative authenticity, while montage construction shapes the sequence of the narrator’s fragmented memories. Chapter 3 explores the dramatically different effect of the application of cinematic devices in Leonid Skrypnyk’s *Intelihent* (The intellectual; 1927–28), presenting the “screened novel” as a new, utilitarian literary form. At once an exaggerated Bildungsroman and a study of the life of a specimen of the bourgeois intelligentsia, this novel incorporates fiction, cinema and non-fiction. The employment of camera-eye narration emphasizes the mechanical, puppet-like qualities of the bourgeois characters, while the montage construction and juxtaposition of cinematic narration with the narrator’s commentary directed to the audience generate irony and satire. Conclusions assess the legacy of these innovative yet understudied intermedial experiments both in Ukraine and in the broader European context.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Professor Taras Koznarsky for his guidance and continuous exchange of ideas throughout the course of researching and writing this dissertation. This project would not have been possible without his support. I am also grateful to my committee: to Professor Maxim Tarnawsky for introducing me to less-studied Ukrainian experimental novels and to Professor Veronika Ambros for stimulating discussions on literature and for her insightful comments on the drafts of this dissertation. I would like to express my gratitude to Marta Baziuk, Dr. Halyna Hryn, and Gregory Matlak for editorial help and to Dr. Ksenya Kiebuzinski and Nadia Zavorotna for bibliographic help. I am grateful to the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies and to the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies for their financial assistance. Their fellowships, along with those of numerous other donors at the University of Toronto, generously supported my graduate studies. I also thank my friends in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Toronto and Boston for their constant encouragement. Lastly, I thank my family, including my late father, my mother, Sofia, Peter, and Julia for their patience and support.
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Preface

In Ukrainian history, the late 1920s epitomized an era of modernization and national awakening, as well as of intellectual, cultural and artistic renaissance. Artists at the time recognized the significance of the period for Ukrainian culture, frequently referring to it as the “Great Renaissance” or “Cultural Revolution.”¹ The leading Ukrainian monthly journal Chervonyi shliakh (Red pathway; 1923–36) captured the crucial position of the newly-formed Ukrainian state both in the postcolonial space of the former Russian Empire and internationally: “Ukraine was transformed from a godforsaken province of Tsarist Russia into a worker-peasant state, into a component second in size and in influence within the contemporary Soviet Union, and into a significant factor in international affairs.”²

In the decade following the revolution, the newly established Soviet Ukrainian republic underwent rapid urbanization and industrialization and experienced the transformation of all spheres of society. Yet due to centuries of colonial existence, Ukrainian literature and culture appeared provincial, outdated and in urgent need of modernization. And along with sweeping socio-political changes and the shift to heightened national awareness, the Cultural Revolution also fostered a much-needed revival in Ukrainian literature, language, visual arts and theatre.

Specifically, the modernization of Ukrainian literature involved a radical break with past literary conventions, which were seen as signs of Ukraine’s colonial past, and the introduction of...


² “Україна із глухої провінції царської Росії стала робітничо-селянською державою, другою по розмірах і впливу складовою частиною сучасного Радянського Союзу і значним фактором міжнародного життя.” “Vid redaktsii,” Chervonyi shliakh, no.1 (1923): V. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. In all Ukrainian citations I preserve the original 1920s orthography and style.
innovative themes and techniques that would revolutionize the novel. Redrawing the boundaries of art, Ukrainian avant-gardists constructed experimental artistic forms that defied genre definitions. Through these forms, Ukrainian experimental writers attempted to raise their works to a higher artistic level and to construct a new body of Ukrainian literature.

Innovation and artistic experimentation was at the core of this construction project. The artists of the avant-garde literary organization “Nova Generatsiia” were the most ardent promoters of radically modernizing Ukrainian literature and art. In fact, Oleh Ilnytskyj argues that Futurists’ “diverse and seemingly contradictory literary legacy […] derives its coherence and unity from one dominant premise: experimentation, that is, an unstinting commitment to novelty.” For the “Nova Generatsiia” writers, novelty in art was synonymous with their ideological goal of subverting old, bourgeois art and constructing new “rational” and utilitarian art forms. To reconfigure established artistic traditions, the Futurists promoted the synthesis of genres and art forms, such as blending fictional and factual genres or fusing literature with cinema, radio and technology. The synthesis of arts was regarded as an appropriate driving force for aesthetic innovation because “it was simultaneously ‘destructive’ and ‘constructive,’ that is, it undermined old genres and arts while creating new ones.” Another group of writers at the vanguard of the artistic revolution, VAPLITE, also vocally pled for artistic and formal

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3 “Nova Generatsiia” (The new generation, 1927–31), a literary organization of the Ukrainian Futurists; the group published a monthly journal of the same name between October 1927 and December 1930.

4 Oleh S. Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930: A Historical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 205. (Note that I use bracketed ellipses here and throughout for my elision of citations, in distinction from suspension points appearing in the original text.) Ilnytskyj also aptly notes that Ukrainian Futurism served “as a synonym for all of the avant-garde, a fact also reflected in their pan-avant-gardistic philosophy, which eschewed taking a narrow or restricted perspective on art.” Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 335.

5 Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 214.

6 *Vil’na Akademiia Proletars’koi Literatury* (Free Academy of Proletarian Literature; 1925–28), a Kharkiv-based organization of writers; after it was disbanded for the accusations of nationalism and elitism, the literary journal *Literaturnyi iarmarok* (Literary Fair, 1928–30) became the forum for their artistic ideas and a place of publication of their experimental literary works.
experimentation, for originality, for the rejection of literary clichés and for the modernization of prose, all of which were connected to the overarching goal of enhancing the aesthetic quality of Ukrainian literary works.

One direct result of this period of artistic efflorescence and national awakening was the establishment in the 1920s of the Ukrainian film industry. The films of Oleksandr Dovzhenko raised the level of significance of Ukrainian cinema in the Soviet Union and also placed it on the international map. The positive reception of foreign audiences to Dovzhenko’s silent films *Zvenyhora* (1928) and *Zemlia* (*The Earth*; 1930) was recognized as a marker of the nation’s achievements in cinematic art. These films made a lasting impression in their experimental approach to and reshaping of cinematic narrative, in their poetic style, and in their visually stunning images of Ukrainian landscapes.

Ukrainian experimental writers of the 1920s exhibited an avid interest in the film medium. They discovered the great artistic potential of cinema from their direct involvement in the filmmaking industry. Leading Ukrainian authors were employed at the Odesa Film Studios at VUFKU in the 1920s as screenwriters, film editors and authors of intertitles. Because of this experience and their overall fascination with the cinematic medium, cinema appeared as a theme in 1920s Ukrainian novels. By the late 1920s film aesthetics had produced a profound effect not only at the thematic level, but also on the way Ukrainian experimental writers told their stories, structured their experimental works, and described their characters and settings.

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7 For instance, *Zvenyhora* was very well received by French cinematographers and the audience at its numerous screenings in Paris in March 1928. See “Khronika: Velycheznyi uspikh ‘Zvenyhory’ v Paryzhi,” *Chervonyi shliakh*, no. 5–6 (1928): 241. *Zemlia* continued to captivate both film critics and audiences. The film was included in the list of twelve best films of all time at the Brussels Film Festival in 1958, part of the Brussels World’s Fair or Expo 58.

8 *Vseukrainske fotokinoupravlinnia* (All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema Administration). Created in 1922, VUFKU oversaw cinema production and the distribution of foreign films in Ukraine until its dissolution in 1930. Its successor, Ukrainafil’m lost all of VUFKU’s autonomy and was made fully subordinate to Soyuzkino. For more on VUFKU, see Bohdan Y. Nebesio, “Competition from Ukraine: VUFKU and the Soviet Film Industry in the 1920s,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 29, no. 2 (June 2009): 159–80.
Ideologically, film occupied a crucial niche in Soviet Ukrainian culture in the 1920s. This new technology was hailed as an artistic form epitomizing modernity and the avant-gardists’ quest for dynamism, technology, and collective artistic construction. Most importantly, cinema was also highly praised for its “propaganda and agitational strength.” Film aesthetics inspired experiments in the Ukrainian novel more than any other artistic medium. Specifically, cinema, like photography, provided devices for truthfully representing reality, a crucial ideological requirement of the new Soviet art. At the same time, experimentation with montage and the artistic editing of films afforded greater freedom in organizing and manipulating filmed material, thus enhancing the work’s propagandistic value.

Even though cinematic elements are most characteristic in the prose of Ukrainian “leftist” writers (i.e., Futurists), this study focuses on the impact of film aesthetics on Ukrainian experimental prose, regardless of author’s ideological preferences or affiliation with particular writers’ organizations. The dissertation traces how, by emulating the aesthetics of film, the experimental novel of the 1920s subverted traditional themes and narratives in Ukrainian literature and constructed a new type of literature, the reading of which evoked the experience of watching early silent films. These fruitful accomplishments in experimental prose have not been studied in their complexity and therefore require more comprehensive analysis, which my study attempts.

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My study centers on the incorporation of cinematic elements in prose as a productive means of modernizing the Ukrainian novel and of constructing a new Ukrainian literature. By emulating cinema aesthetics, experimental novels redefined the boundaries of the novel genre and tested the limits of artistic formal experimentation. In particular, the writers explicitly modeled their fiction on film production. They emulated cinematic narrative modes and techniques in their prose in order to reshape traditional representation, narrative perspective, narrative construction, and exposition of characters.

The Ukrainian experimental novel was widely theorized by Ukrainian futurist and modernist writers in the 1920s, and the theoretical framework of my discussion closely reflects these polemical, critical and theoretical studies. The studies and manifestoes on the “leftist” novel and “leftist” art in general are particularly useful for my analysis. For instance, valuable resources are found in theoretical discussions of the importance of “factual” literature and of non-acted film. Film narration had a crucial place in these discussions as it offered writers tools to directly render reality in prose.

1920s formalist theory had an equally important effect on the aesthetics of the experimental novel, as the concepts of “defamiliarization” and “laying bare” literary devices stimulated writers to introduce cinematic elements in fiction. This study primarily examines the revolutionizing impact of cinema aesthetics on formal artistic experimentation in the novel. Awareness of literary form played a crucial role in both critical discourse and prose of the 1920s, foregrounding the mechanics of writing and of narrative construction in the experimental novel. In a way, literary experiments with cinematic devices mirrored complex engineering constructions, where heterogeneous materials or elements of disparate genres, styles and art
forms were juxtaposed to produce hybrid artistic collages. In these constructions, both form and artistic materials served as vehicles through which authors accomplished their manifest goals.

Chapter 1 situates the discussion of these experiments within the wider context of aesthetic and formal experimentation in Ukrainian art in the 1920s, which was itself reflective of the concurrent social, political and economic changes. I examine the aesthetics of cinema in experimental prose, applying to literary works the tools of narrative analysis of film, in order to elucidate their innovative qualities inspired by and absorbed from cinema. In particular, the emulation of film aesthetics in the experimental novel introduced a cinematic perspective in three primary ways: through camera-eye narration, through montage narrative organization, and through cinematic external characterization.

A common theme appearing in both theoretical discussions and experimental novels of the 1920s was that the novelistic conventions of the traditional novel were worn out and diminished in their expressive power. In contrast, the experimental works immediately grasped readers’ attention with the cinematic qualities of their prose, which produced a more dynamic narration. Incorporating cinematic devices thus accomplished the experimental writers’ goals of higher expressivity in their writing and of finding new modes of artistic representation.

The narrative space of experimental novels was directly inspired by cinematic storytelling. The visual canvas of the novel that emulates film aesthetics is especially striking in

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12 For my detailed discussion of elements of film aesthetics in literature, see section 2 of chapter 1.
this regard, as authors relinquished telling for showing and as they rendered photographic
descriptions of reality in camera-eye sequences. Visualizing scenes through a camera lens
incorporated concrete imagery into the narration. Including ekphrases of film also allowed the
novelists to provide explicit commentary on literature’s own devices and to explore self-
consciously writer’s craft. Hence the experimental novels not only introduced new literary
themes, characters and spaces in Ukrainian literature, but also offered a fresh, self-reflexive look
at the Ukrainian cultural and literary traditions.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the most representative and innovative examples of emulating
cinema aesthetics in literature, two core works of the Cultural Revolution of the 1920s, namely,
the novels Maister Korablia (The master of the ship; 1928)\textsuperscript{13} by Iurii Ianovs’kyi and Intelihent
(The intellectual; 1927–28)\textsuperscript{14} by Leonid Skrypnyk. These novels were chosen for their integral
and overt use of cinematic techniques, yet each explores different aspects of literary-cinematic
intermediality.

Chapter 2 focuses on Maister korablia, which presents the memoir of an aging film editor
documenting the early history of film production in 1920s Ukraine. Cinematic devices enable
Ianovs’kyi to achieve documentary-like narration. In my analysis, I focus on poetic camera-eye
narration, the fragmentary organization of the narrator’s memories through literary montage, and
the novel’s heterogeneous collage composition, with a striking use of ekphrases of various
media.\textsuperscript{15} Chapter 3 studies the screened novel Intelihent, which is structured as a film ekphrasis

\textsuperscript{13} First published in 1928 by Knyhosipilka in Kharkiv.

\textsuperscript{14} The novel was first serialized in Nova generatsiia, nos. 1–3 (1927), nos. 1–8 (1928), under the pseudonym Levon
Liain and published as a monograph in 1929. See Leonid Skrypnyk, Intelihent: Ekranizovanyi roman na shist’
chastyn z prolohom ta epilohom (Kharkiv: Proletaryi, 1929).

\textsuperscript{15} In my analysis, “literary montage” refers to an organization device transposed from 1920s films into literature. In
general, in 1920s Ukrainian film theory the term “montage” is synonymous with the general term “editing.” In other
words, it indicates editing in both experimental films and films of the classical continuity style. So, for instance, in
his seminal work on film art, Skrypnyk defines “montage” as the overall organization of filmed material
set alongside an unfolding film commentary. Unlike *Maister korablia*, the latter novel employs ekphrasis to create a satire of the bourgeoisie and to produce a new utilitarian or “rational” art form. The laconic camera-eye narration documents the life of its philistine protagonist, Intelihent, while literary montage is used to select the most representative episodes from this life. The device of external characterization allows the writer to endow his protagonist with the most typical features of bourgeois intelligentsia thus constructing a satirical portrait of a class as a whole. Moreover, in the overt commentary the narrator attacks conventional art forms, literary clichés and the bourgeois sensibilities of both the protagonist and the novel’s audience.

The ultimate goal of Ukrainian experimental writers was to place the new Ukrainian literature within the ranks of European literature; my thesis demonstrates that these aspirations were primarily reached through the incorporation of film devices in the novel. Ukrainian writers modernized literary devices and narrative modes, constructing masterful prose that stimulated future literary experiments in Ukraine, and that prefigured similar experiments in European and North American literature. These significant achievements in Ukrainian experimental prose have not yet been thoroughly studied and need to receive their proper place in literary scholarship. My examination is a significant contribution not only to the study of artistic experimentation in Ukrainian context, but also to the study of the modernism and avant-garde movements in general.

Chapter 1 Experiments with Cinematic Narration in Ukrainian Literature

In the second half of the 1920s, Ukrainian culture experienced a period of unprecedented renaissance. After the struggle for Ukrainian national liberation and the downfall of the Ukrainian National Republic (1917–20), the Soviet regime was established in the Ukrainian territory. In December 1922, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic officially joined the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). As a founding member of the USSR, during the 1920s the Ukrainian Soviet Republic enjoyed relative political and cultural freedom within the Soviet Union, during which time a new generation of Ukrainians enthusiastically threw themselves into the making of Socialist Ukraine.

A favourable political climate, progressive socio-historical changes, and an extraordinary rise in national awareness among Ukrainian intellectuals and artistic elites all contributed to the significant modernization of Ukrainian culture and art. It became a top priority of a majority of literary groups and organizations to raise the quality of literary works, and the preferred means was radical experimentation. In this chapter I explore this artistic experimentation and, specifically, the modernization of the Ukrainian novel in the context of these revolutionary socio-political changes. In particular, I show how cinema was perceived as a prevailing, revolutionary art medium of the day, and how it became a driving force in modernizing the aesthetics of the Ukrainian novel.

This dissertation examines the two most daring examples of experiments incorporating cinema aesthetics into Ukrainian literature, namely, the seminal novels *Maister korablia* by Iurii Ianovs’kyi and *Intelihent* by Leonid Skrypnyk. Both writers were strong supporters of the Soviet regime and of communist ideology. Both resided in Kharkiv, then the capital of Soviet Ukraine and the first city to recognize the Soviet regime in Ukraine in 1917. In the 1920s, aside from
being the political centre of the Ukrainian SSR, Kharkiv also became the heart of the construction of a new Ukrainian culture, granting special resonance and significance to works of art produced in this city.1

“Give Us Culture-Building and Art!”: The Artistic Revolution in Context

In Soviet Ukraine, following years of colonial existence, the idea of constructing a new national art was understood to go hand in hand with the project of building a new state. Ideologically, then, the emerging Ukrainian culture of the 1920s was closely aligned with Soviet ideas of constructing a new art. In the first post-revolutionary years, theoretical discussions frequently contrasted the term “proletarian art” with the old or bourgeois art.2 Theories of avant-garde, in particular, claimed that the old art no longer held any use in the new state; just as the revolution had destroyed the old social order, so also its art had to be annihilated.3 New forms were needed to reflect the dynamic changes in society. As Valeriian Polishchuk pointed out: “Old art does not satisfy [us], which means that we need to produce new art, essentially, such that would offer spiritual nourishment to the widest masses, and which would be, so to say, ‘in

1 Along with Kyiv, Prague, Berlin and Budapest, Kharkiv emerged as a centre of avant-garde experimentation, reflecting the broader “internationalization” of the European avant-garde movement. Timothy Benson outlines the avant-garde’s shifting geographic centres in the 1910–1930s: “Now obscured by decades of neglect imposed in part by subsequent absolutist regimes, the Central European avant-garde of early decades of the century was integrally related to its now better-known, well-documented counterparts in Paris and Moscow. Artists and writers coalesced in metropolitan centers such as Berlin, Warsaw, Munich, Vienna, Prague, and Budapest, each a cultural capital in its own right with a long heritage of both ‘official’ and artistic innovation.” Timothy O. Benson, introduction to Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 12.


accordance with the contemporary moment.' And so proletarian art emerges, [...] replacing the old bourgeois art in content, [...] and the tasks of this art need to align with the mind-set of the working class.”

The period following the end of the Civil War and of establishing the USSR was viewed by the new cultural elite as a time of construction and rebirth of Ukrainian culture. In his article on proletarian art Polishchuk argues: “Besides war and the music of the cannons—give us culture-building and art! The widest circles of Ukrainian society demand it. The proletariat is setting the labour battlefront, constructing culture, side by side with the military front.” The editorial of the monthly periodical Chervonyi shliakh defined this period as “a second stage of the proletarian revolution, a period of creative, economic and cultural construction. [...] Despite the famine, the agricultural and cultural renaissance of Soviet Ukraine is undoubtable.” Within this revolutionary context, the need to create new art was taken as equally important to the task of building a new socio-political order and a new socialist economy.

The term “culture-building” or “cultural construction” (культурне будівництво) carried special significance here. It appeared metaphorically in political slogans and in phrases such as

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4 “Старе мистецтво не задовольняє, значить, дати треба нове мистецтво, власне, таке, щоб дало духовну їжу тому найширокшому загалу, будоб, як то кажуть, 'по сучасному менту.' І от з'являється пролетарське мистецтво, [...] що замінило змістом старе буржуазне, [...] і завдання того мистецтва повинні бути відповідними духові працюючих.” Polishchuk, “Iak dyvytys’ na mystetstvo,” 76.

5 “Крім війни, музики гармат,—дайте культурного будівництва та мистецтва! І цього зараз вимагають якнайширші кола українського суспільства. Пролетаріят ставить трудовий фронт, будуучий культуру, поруч з військовим.” Polishchuk, “Iak dyvytys’ na mystetstvo,” 76.

6 “Другий період пролетарської революції, період творчого, економічного і культурного будівництва. [...] Не вважаючи на голод, господарчі й культурне відродження Радянської України не підлягає сумніву.” “Vid redaktsii,” Chervonyi shliakh, no. 1 (1923): IV. The editorial refers here to the 1921–23 famine in Ukraine. The so-called military communism policies enforced by the Soviet government led to massive food confiscations in the Ukrainian countryside, causing the starvation of several million Ukrainian farmers.

7 Consider Polishchuk's commentary on contemporary Ukrainian culture (or lack thereof) made in 1920: “Хоч би почати вже творити нові культурні цінності, як творять наші сусіди. Всі сила, вся енергія нашої нації пішла зараз у політичну боротьбу, а коли являється потреба духовної поживи від сучасної нашої культури—у нас її майже нема.” Polishchuk, “Iak dyvytys’ na mystetstvo,” 75.
“the construction of socialism.” Yet it was also understood to indicate the active, collective effort of Ukrainian artists to create a culture free of bourgeois or colonial (i.e., provincial or backward) elements.

In order to secure the support of local communist elites and to involve the countryside in constructing a socialist society, the Soviet state began to financially support Ukraine’s cultural and educational institutions, and to promote the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture throughout the USSR as part of the policy of Ukrainization (or korenizatsia, that is, indigenization). Suddenly, after several centuries of colonial existence, Ukrainian became a full-fledged language employed in a full range of cultural and administrative spheres. Hence, influential Ukrainian writer and activist Mykola Khvyl’ovyi could compare the outcome of Ukrainization with the revolutionary victory of the proletariat: “Ukrainization, on the one hand, is the result of the indefatigable will of a nation of 30 million; on the other, it is the only way for the proletariat to master the cultural movement.” And since the rebuilding of Ukrainian culture was crucial to the victory of the proletariat, the de-russification of Ukraine’s urban population was directly linked to the overthrow of bourgeois culture, as both were associated with the politics of imperialism.

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10 Khvyl’ovyi describes this urban proletarian in the following way: “We are speaking of him, the Russian Philistine, who is thoroughly sick of Ukrainization, […] who is in fact no less an internal enemy of the Revolution (perhaps even a greater one) than the Autoccephalous-Stolypininist ‘element’.” Khvyl’ovyi, “Apologists of Scribbling,” 212. Ukrainian original: “Ми говоримо про нього,—про Російського міщанина, якому в печінках сидить оця українізація, […] який по суті є не менший (коли не більший) внутрішній ворог революції за автокефально-столипинський ‘елемент’.” Khvyl’ovyi, “Аполохети писаризму,” 301.
Ukrainization resulted in higher literacy levels across all social classes in Ukraine, including peasants and workers, which in turn contributed to an increased demand for Ukrainian-language newspapers, popular magazines and fiction. In a related development, the rapid industrialization that followed the establishment of the Ukrainian SSR involved a massive relocation of peasant populations—predominantly Ukrainian-speaking—into the cities, a percentage of whom would seek out literary careers.

The steady increase in the number of both Ukrainian-language readers and writers in the 1920s led to rising numbers of novels being written. By 1922–23, Ukrainian Soviet prose had in many senses arrived, yet critics noted a lack of long-form writing. Bilets’kyi’s insightful conclusion foresees its coming: “The year 1925 offered us a large number of novellas, short stories and sketches. In coming years, along with these short literary forms we should expect the rise in our literature of the large form—the novel.”

Financial pressures contributed to the dearth of published novels during the revolution and the Civil War, yet the effects of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the economic recovery in the early 1920s, along with increased demand for Ukrainian-language products, made publishing Ukrainian books (both collections of stories and novels) increasingly possible and profitable by the mid-1920s. Novels could now be published in monograph (i.e., book) form, as opposed to being serialized in literary journals and magazines.

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11 “A mass literacy campaign, which was mostly Ukrainian, raised adult literacy in Ukraine to 74 percent in 1929. At the high point of Ukrainization, in the 1932–33 school year, 88 percent of all students were enrolled in Ukrainian-language schools.” Encyclopedia of Ukraine, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovyč and Danylo Husar Struk, 5 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984–93), s.v. “Ukrainization.”

12 See Oleksandr Doroshkevych, “Literaturnyi rukh na Ukraini v 1924 r.,” Zhyttia i revoliutsiia, no. 3 (1925): 68.

The NEP’s reintroduction of a market economy in which poorly-written books were less apt to sell, gave writers new incentive to work on the appeal of their prose. At the same time, readers began to desire larger prose works, as the critic Feliks Iakubovs’kyi noted: “Our writers sense that the reader is authoritatively requesting a larger story (повість) and novel genre. They attempt to satisfy his or her demand. The recent period is remarkable precisely because a large quantity of prose works has suddenly emerged.” Given these circumstances, likely for the first time in the history of Ukrainian literature economic benefits existed for publishing works in Ukrainian and for developing popular genres that would appeal to large audiences. Under these circumstances, Solomiia Pavlychko claims that the modern Ukrainian novel was born in the 1920s.

In the second half of the 1920s, the novel genre had come to prevail in Ukrainian prose. The short, lyrical, impressionistic stories popular from the beginning of the century through the early 1920s began to be seen as an outdated form, no longer capable of giving expression to the feelings and ideas of the new socio-political order. Moreover, Vira Aheieva suggests that behind this rise of the Ukrainian novel lay a desire to reach a wide readership, in contrast to the more elitist pattern of readership found at the beginning of the twentieth century: “Orientation toward a novel, aside from everything else, also meant orientation toward a wider number of recipients.

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14 “Наші письменники відчувають, що читач владно вимагає більшого жанру повісти й роману. Вони намагаються задовольнити його попит. Останній період знаменний саме тим, що несподівано з’явилася більша кількість прозових творів.” Feliks Iakubovs’kyi, *Vid noveli do romanu: Etuudy pro rozvytok ukrains’koi khudozhn’oi prozy XX stolittia* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1929), 224.

Not literature for ‘the people’ and for ‘the intelligentsia,’ as was often proposed at the beginning of the century, but literature for the reader.”

Not a few Ukrainian writers in the 1920s attempted to attract a mass readership by borrowing elements from popular low-brow genres, a practice which corresponded closely with one of the main avant-garde ideas: bringing art closer to the masses. For example, the first three Ukrainian novels published in the Ukrainian SSR were Amerykantsi (The americans; 1924) by Oles’ Dosvitnii, Pryhody Mak-Leistona, Harri Ruperta ta inshykh (The adventures of Mac-Leyston, Harry Rupert and others; 1925) by Villi Vetselius (the pseudonym of Maik Iohansen) and Ostannii Eidzhevud (The last of the Edgewoods; 1926) by Iurii Smolych. All three were written in a markedly entertaining and engaging style, and were clearly intended to win over the widest audience possible. (The former two also incorporated cinematic elements, which will be discussed later in the chapter.) This orientation towards wider audiences, then, paralleled the avant-gardists’ interest in incorporating elements of popular forms and genres into works of art, and in increasing the entertainment value of such works.

By the end of the 1920s, Ukraine became the centre for artistic innovation and formal experimentation in visual arts, literature, theatre and cinema across the USSR. Mykola Skrypnyk, the People’s Commissar of Education (NarKom Osvity; 1927–33), who was a staunch supporter of Ukrainian political rights in the Soviet government, was also an outspoken advocate for the development of Ukrainian literature and culture. He contributed to establishing the special political climate in Ukraine in the 1920s which afforded more freedom for radical artistic experimentation. Due to this greater degree of freedom, many Russian avant-garde artists and

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scholars who were censored by the Soviet authorities in Russia were nonetheless able to publish their works in Ukraine.\footnote{One of the striking examples is the article “Теорія ’формального метода’” (Theory of “formal method”) by Boris Eikhenbaum, which summarizes the theoretical positions of the OPOIAZ Formalists. It was first published in Ukrainian. See Boris Eikhenbaum, “Теорія ’формального метода’,” \textit{Chervonyi shliakh}, no. 7–8 (1926): 182–207. Russian Formalists were highly criticized at the time in Soviet Russia for promoting elitism in arts and political reactionism. Moreover, \textit{New LEF} contributors intended to publish their theoretical articles in the Ukrainian art journal \textit{Nova generatsiia} after \textit{New LEF}’s dissolution. See “К сведению подписчиков и читателей ‘Нового LEF’,” \textit{Novyi LEF}, no. 12 (December 1928): 45. In 1928–30, \textit{Nova generatsiia} also published a series of Malevich’s important theoretical works on architecture, visual arts, Cubism and Constructivism.}

The period of artistic experimentation in Ukraine was characterized by artistic collaboration and the exchange of ideas, leading to a vibrant artistic scene.\footnote{Similarly, Timothy Benson discusses “the broader discourse of exchange and transformation that defined the avant-garde across Europe.” Benson, introduction to \textit{Central European Avant-Gardes}, 16.} This atmosphere also informed the works of Russian experimental artists working in Ukraine at the time. For instance, when avant-garde filmmaker Dziga Vertov, fired from Sovkino in 1927,\footnote{Sovkino (1924–30) was a film production and distribution organization in the Russian SFSR. It was succeeded in 1930 by Soyuzkino, which oversaw film production in the entire Soviet Union.} was not allowed to carry out his artistic experiments in Moscow, he joined the Odesa studios of VUFKU, where he was able to complete three films: \textit{Odinnadtsatyi} (The Eleventh Year; 1928), the groundbreaking \textit{Chelovek s kinoapparatom} (Man with a Movie Camera; 1929), and his first sound film \textit{Entuziasm: Simfonia Donbassa} (Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbas; 1930). Other notable Soviet avant-garde artists at work in Ukraine in the late 1920s included Vladimir Tatlin and Kazimir Malevich,\footnote{See Dmytro Horbachov, introduction to \textit{Ukrains’kyi avanhard 1910–1930 rokiv: Al’bom / Ukrainian Avant-Garde Art}, ed. Dmytro Horbachov (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1996), 6–7 and Ivan Vrona, “Мої спогади про Володимира Ієвгоровича Татліна,” in \textit{Ukrains’kyi avanhard 1910–1930 rokiv: Al’bom / Ukrainian Avant-Garde Art}, ed. Dmytro Horbachov (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1996), 371–72.} both of whom taught at the Kyiv Fine Arts Institute.\footnote{Kyivs’kyi khudozhnii instytut, a highly prestigious art education institution in Kyiv, formerly known as the Ukrainian Art Academy, which had been founded in December 1917.} While in Ukraine, Tatlin collaborated with Ukrainian writers Mykhail’ Semenko, Geo Shkurupii and
Mykola Bazhan on designing a Constructivist cover for their book, *Zustrich na perekhresti* (Meeting at a crossroads; 1927).

The more democratic political climate for artists, along with a strong emphasis on promoting and developing Ukrainian culture, together gave birth to a remarkably multifaceted literary culture in 1920s Ukraine: various groups and literary organizations were established and published high quality literary journals and art magazines. The new publications offered a forum for discussing the state of Ukrainian literature and culture in the Ukrainian SSR, and for charting its future course. A series of polemical articles and heated exchanges among major Ukrainian literary figures at this time is known in the history of Ukrainian literature as the “Literary Discussion.”

First and foremost, the 1925–28 Literary Discussion focused on “protecting Ukrainian culture, its modernization and reconstruction.” The discussion involved writers, critics and literary scholars concerned with the artistic and political direction of the newly revitalized Ukrainian literature. Several literary organizations took opposing sides in this discussion: on one side, the Neoclassicists, “Lanka” writers in Kyiv, as well as Mykola Khvyl’ovyi and his...

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24 A literary organization (1924–1929) which was renamed MARS (*Maisternia Revoliutsionnoho Slova*) in 1926. Most prominent writers in the organization included Valerian Pidmohyl’nyi, Ievhen Pluzhnyk, Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Hryhorii Kosynka, and Ivan Bahrianyi.

25 Khvyl’ovyi, the most outspoken participant, allegedly started the discussion with his article “Pro ‘satanu v bochtsi,’ abo pro hrafomaniv, spekuliantiv ta inshykh ‘prosvitian’” (published in *Kal’tura i pobut* [April 30, 1925]), a response to a peasant writer from “Pluh” Hryts’ko Iakovenko. Khvyl’ovyi argued against the primitivization of Ukrainian literature and culture caused by the works of authors such as Iakovenko. See Mykola Khvyl’ovyi, “Pro ‘satanu v bochtsi,’ abo pro hrafomaniv, spekuliantiv ta inshykh ‘prosvitian’: Pershyi lyst do literaturnoi molodi,” in *Tvory v p’iat’okh tomakh*, ed. Hryhorii Kostiuk, vol. 4 (New York: Smoloskyp, 1983), 69–83. For more information on the dating of the Discussion, see Shkandrij, *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation*, 195n3.
organization VAPLITE in Kharkiv all agreed that literature should possess high aesthetic qualities and intellectually challenge recipients. On the opposing side, the proletarian writers of “Pluh” (headed by Serhii Pylypenko), “Proletkul’t,” and VUSPP defended mass literature (masovizm), claiming that literary works should be created and consumed by wide proletarian masses versus a select group of professors and intellectuals—i.e., bourgeois elites. The “Pluh” and VUSPP writers ultimately argued that fulfilling its ideological requirement was the most important aspect of a work of literature, which could be accomplished by presenting appropriate content, namely, literature reflecting the socialist reality and communist ideology. It should be noted that these contrasting views on the present and future of Ukrainian literature and culture reflected, to a large degree, the level of professional education of the figures involved: most of those in the first camp had a university education and degrees in philology, while most of those in the second camp had only primary or secondary school degrees.

However, the main aesthetic conflict in the discussion was essentially between Ukrainian modernists and “traditionalist” writers. Thus one of the most pressing questions discussed at a large 1925 public forum was whether the course of Ukrainian literature and culture should align with the European or the “Prosvita” (populist “Enlightenment”) traditions.

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26 See note 6 in Preface.
27 Vseukraïns’ka Spilka Proletars’kykh Pys’mennykiv (All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers).
29 At the peak of the intellectual exchange, close to 800 writers, literary critics and artists participated in a public discussion titled “Shliakhy rozvytku suchasnoi literatury,” which was organized by the Kul’tkomisiia (Cultural Commission) of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and held at the National Library of Ukraine (Всенародна Бібліотека України) in Kyiv on May 24, 1925. Similar public discussion was also held in Kharkiv at the Vasyl’ Ellan-Blakytnyi building (будинок літераторів імені Василя Блакитного) on February 21, 1928.
community organization created in the nineteenth century, aimed to educate Ukrainian society and to promote Ukrainian culture and national identity. Yet “Prosvita” became a metaphor for a narrow, local focus, for an outdated, traditionalist approach to literature synonymous with provincialism, backwardness and philistinism.\(^{31}\)

More specifically, key differences existed between modernists and “traditionalists” in their selection of literary themes and topics, including their treatments of style, genres, literary devices and language. In the Literary Discussion, “Prosvita” literature became synonymous with features of Ukrainian nineteenth-century prose of the so-called “ethnographic-realist school,” such as the idealization of village folk, the stylization of folk speech, simplistic narrative composition, stereotypical themes, and so forth.\(^{32}\)

Writers realized that it was no longer possible to write like nineteenth-century novelists. The 1920s Ukrainian experimental novel was, then, a reaction to what was perceived as the simplified style and stereotypical literary themes and devices of nineteenth-century realist prose.\(^{33}\) As Pavlychko argues, rejecting the worn conventions of the traditional Ukrainian novel

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\(^{32}\) Ahapii Shamrai characterized the defining features of this literature of the “побутово-етнографічна школа” or “old school” as follows: “Народня—до елементарної простоти доведена мова, іноді навіть говірка, звичайний прийом оповідання цією говіркою від першої особи, що вертє нас до блаженних традицій М. Вовчка, спеціально-народницьке трактування своїх тем, що обернулося в літературі 19 століття в трафарет, і нарешті, дуже обмежене коло фабульних ситуацій—все це є характерні прикмети старої школи.” Ahapii Shamrai, “Tvorchist’ S. Vasyl’chenka,” Chervonyi shliakh, no. 4 (1926): 179.

\(^{33}\) Monika Fludernik makes similar observations about the “realism” in realist novels in general; rather than being an exact copy of reality, these texts reflect literary clichés: “Realist texts are, in the standard definitions, mimetic texts: they re-present a fictional reality which iconically reflects our image of what is real. Yet our understanding of what is real derives precisely from well-worn clichés of what should happen, has been known to happen, conventionally does happen, reflecting an array of frames and scripts, conventionalized expectations, moral attitudes and commonsense notions of the agentially and psychologically verisimilar.” Monika Fludernik, Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology (New York: Routledge, 2002), 121; my emphasis. See also Roman Jakobson, “On Realism in Art,” in Language in Literature, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 19–27.
meant, in practice, breaking with the sentimentalism, ornamentalism, moralism and romanticism of nineteenth-century Ukrainian prose. The aim of this dissertation is to consider the Ukrainian experimental novel as an attempt to subvert and redefine literary conventions, especially the themes, narrative modes, character development and composition of the “old school” Ukrainian novels.

Literary journals and publishing houses in the first post-revolutionary years had become flooded with low-brow works. The phenomenon was tightly connected with “proletarization” and democratization of literature and culture in the years following the October revolution. The officials encouraged proletarian writers with worker or peasant backgrounds to enter the literary market and to actively participate in the construction of Soviet literature and culture. This led to production of an immense amount of derivative, low-quality poetry and prose. Zerov lists three main reasons why Ukrainian literature in the early 1920s found itself in such a dire state: “graphomania” (графоманство), a general lack of desire by the young generation of writers to perfect their works, and provincialism in Ukrainian culture.

The reaction to such “proletarization” of literature by Ukrainian literary elites was long overdue. In a number of articles and pamphlets, figures such as Mykola Khvyl’ovyi and Mykola Zerov, the biggest and most outspoken advocates for high aesthetic quality in literature, urged beginning authors to pay attention to the artistic quality of their works and to polish their writing before submitting it for publication. To modernize the Ukrainian novel, the modernists and avant-gardists urged young writers to follow the best European cultural and philosophical

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34 “Народницькі побутові епопеї та солодкаві історичні романи, а разом із ними сентиментальна поетичність, орнаментальність, моралізаторський пафос та всі інші романтичні спадки української прози XIX століття.” Pavlychko, “Roman iak intelektual’na provokatsiia,” 641.

practices, as well as to thoroughly study classical European and Ukrainian literary sources.\textsuperscript{36} Ukrainian experimental novels reflect these discussions and contain numerous, self-conscious comments on the need to perfect the literary craft, as well as to break with traditional literary clichés.

By 1925, Oleksandr Bilets’kyi’s review of Ukrainian prose offered ample evidence of an increased interest in the study of literary technique among young authors.\textsuperscript{37} Numerous other scholarly and critical works published in the second half of the 1920s likewise expressed the need to perfect the literary craft in order to raise the quality of Ukrainian literature.\textsuperscript{38} Lively discussions in the press targeted key aesthetic and formal issues, such as reevaluating the relation between art and reality, the function and purpose of art, and artwork as both a product and an artistic object.\textsuperscript{39}

Even party officials emphasized the importance of maintaining high aesthetic standards in artistic works, as the discussion quickly began to transcend the literary sphere. For instance, when Mykola Skrypnyk focused his attention on the artistic quality of literary works, he also openly criticized overly simplistic political engagements of art; these, more than anything, he argued, were responsible for the backward, provincial status of Ukrainian literature.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} Zerov encourages new writers “перебирати Європу з джерел—а не з других рук.” Zerov, “Европа—Проsvита,” 71.

\textsuperscript{37} “Збільшення інтересу до питань теорії літератури, до теорії літературної техніки—в колі молодих письменників.” Oleksandr Bilets’kyi, “Pro prozu vzahali,” 162–63.


\textsuperscript{40} Skrypnyk argued: “Лякмусовим папірцем, що ми з ним можемо виявити дійсну суть художнього твору і питому вагу різних письменників, повинно бути художньо-мистецьке оформлення літературних течій,
It is quite significant that ideas regarding the decolonization, Europeanization and modernization of Ukrainian culture equally concerned Khvyl’ovyi and VAPLITE writers, Lanka-MARS, Neoclassicists, as well as Futurists—i.e., literary groups radically different in their political and aesthetic stances—because the ideas of modernization and reconstruction were fundamental for the Ukrainian Cultural Renaissance. In other words, the national culture-building project was at the heart of Ukrainian Futurism and modernist literary groups. These sensibilities brought literary movements with diverse ideological views together around a common mission.

Modernist prose writers consciously strove to situate Ukrainian literature within the ranks of world literature. For instance, a founding member of VAPLITE, Maik Iohansen, clearly illustrates this intent in his “Autobiography”: “In my poetry and prose, and in theoretical articles, I unwaveringly tried to raise Ukrainian letters to European standards.”41 A decade earlier (in 1914) the ideological leader of Ukrainian Futurism, Mykhail’ Semenko, declared the Ukrainian Futurists’ aspirations similar to those of the modernists: to raise the quality of Ukrainian art, which was at a primitive level.42 Halyna Chernysh argues that, in contrast with Russian Futurism, which was largely a reaction to Symbolist poetics, Semenko’s “Quero-futurism was
not directed against Symbolism” but against the “provincial and derivative nature of Ukrainian literature.”\textsuperscript{43} In their official slogan, the “leftist” artists of the “Nova Generatsiia” group opposed similar ideas: “We are against national limitations, unscrupulous oversimplification, bourgeois fashions, amorphous artistic organizations, provincialism, three-field \textit{khutorianstvo}, ignorance, and eclecticism.”\textsuperscript{44}

Most importantly, the modernization of Ukrainian literature was also the driving force behind formal experimentation, which is at the core of the novels central to this dissertation. Along with the Futurists, Zerov, Khvyl’ovyi and other VAPLITE members ultimately argued that writing is a craft, just like engineering and architecture, hence it should be closely studied, with high demands applied not only to the content of a literary work but also to its form. Writers were encouraged to focus on “how” as well as “what.” These ideas, of innovating literary devices and perfecting the literary craft, which were tightly linked to the concept of literariness (литературность) developed by Russian Formalists, appeared on a wide scale both in Ukrainian literary criticism and in works of fiction.\textsuperscript{45} They also led literary authors to seek collaboration with other arts, particularly cinema.

\textsuperscript{43} Halyna Chernysh, “Ukrains’kyi futuryzm i dovkola n’oho,” in 20-i roky: Literaturni dyskusii, polemiky; Literaturno-krytychni statti, ed. V. H. Donchyk (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1991), 97.

\textsuperscript{44} “Ми проти національної обмеженості, безпринципного упрощенства, буржуазних мод, аморфних мистецьких організацій, провінціалізму, трьохпільного хуторянства, нещастя, еклектизму.” Title page, \textit{Nova generatsiia}, no. 1 (1927). In the 1920s literary discussion, the term “khutorianstvo” became a metaphor for the primitive, closed-minded and provincial orientation of 19th-century Ukrainian culture. The three-field crop rotation system was used in Medieval Europe and represents here outdated, pre-modern literary methods employed by writers of “old” ethnographic-realist school.

\textsuperscript{45} See note 38 in this chapter.
Cinema as a Vehicle of Modernization: The Aesthetics of Film in the Ukrainian 1920s Literature

Cinema was an art that directly mirrored avant-garde sensibilities. In part cinema also drove modernization, by its influence on other arts, especially literature and the novel, and cinema aesthetics played a crucial role in the construction of a new Ukrainian literature.

As a device suited to reproducing in art revolutionary changes in society, cinema was seen to mirror socialist Marxist ideology in a special sense, in particular, because of its wide popularity and appeal to the masses. In his conversation with Anatoly Lunacharsky, Lenin admitted that “of all the arts for us the most important is cinema.” Lunacharsky also praised cinema for its agitational strength. Agitation through art had a crucial role in the new society: “it excites the feelings of the audience and reader and has a direct influence on their will.”

Throughout the 1920s, cinema was also seen as most promising art to avant-garde theorists and artists. It was particularly praised by avant-gardists for its versatile abilities to satisfy a number of their manifest goals, whether aesthetic, political or social. It was associated at once with construction, technology, experimentation and mass appeal. For Italian Futurists cinema was the artistic medium of choice because it embodied the ideas of synthesis, speed and movement. They believed that in order to survive in the highly dynamic modern era, literary art

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48 The avant-garde artistic movements oriented toward cinema included Ukrainian and Italian Futurists, Soviet Constructivists, French Surrealists, and Dada, among others.
should come to resemble the qualities of cinematic art, with its capacity to be “antigraceful,
deforming, impressionistic, synthetic, dynamic, free-wording.”

Cinema also mirrored avant-gardists’ interest in technology, a crucial modern theme. In
this regard Ukrainian Futurist writer Leonid Skrypnyk praised cinema as the art best suited to
reflect rapid technological, scientific and socio-political advances, such as the invention of the
radio, the theory of relativity, and the socialist revolution. The leader of the Ukrainian artistic
group “Avant-garde,” Valerian Polishchuk, also defined cinema and photography as the most
appropriate media for representing Ukrainian Soviet reality (побут), noting that cinema should
be used as a template for reconfiguring and modernizing the traditional arts.

By its very nature, film art brings awareness to the technology of artistic production, a fact
which aligned superbly with the avant-garde quest to synthesize art with industry, technology
and science. And since it is virtually impossible to create a cinematic work individually, film
also represented the principle of collective production so important for avant-garde artists. In
fact, cinematic production usually involves collaboration between numerous artists—a process

Brain et al. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 208.

50 “Кіно є мистецтво нової ери в розвитку людства. Ця ера ще не мала в минулому нічого подібного
кількістю й велетенськими розмірами подій та досягнень, що її відзначають. […] Як поступові зміни в
існуванні людей, так і ті, що відбувалися відразу, вибуваючи чи прискореним темпом, — завжди
пристосовували до нових вимог всі мистецтва, що існували на ту пору. Але при такому грандіозному
плижкові, що його відбув тепер розвиток людства, старі мистецтва не можуть уже задовольнити цілком цих
вимог, якби вони не пристосовувалися. Мусило було виникнути нове мистецтво. І, щоб виконати це
категоричне ’соціальне замовлення’, з’являлося кіно.” Leonid Skrypnyk, “Pro kino-vyrobnytstvo ta kino-
mystetstvo na Ukraini,” Nova generatsiia, no. 1 (1927): 44; emphasis in the original.

51 See Valerian Polishchuk et al., “Proklamatsiia avanhardu,” Biuleten’ Avanhardu, 1928, 5; “Наше кіно хай
прогонить хуторянщину глухих нечуїв і сліпих на машиновий світ естетів. Хай кіно дасть організовані
шматочками живий омашинений побут радянської Америки—України, нехай виховає в масах потяг до
психологічного омашинення світу. Фото, брат кіно, хай заткне провінційну вибагливість ахироських
мрійників поезією факту. […] Нарешті, театр, що мусить найти нові методи роботи в сполучі з радіо й кіно,
inakше йому прийдеться залишитися кустарним анахронізмом в добу машинового мистецького темпу й
розмноженого виву інших мистецтв для мас.” Polishchuk references Ivan Nechui-Levys’kyi (1838–1918), a
well-known Ukrainian nineteenth-century writer, and AKhR, Assotsiatsiia khudoznnikov revoliutsii (The
Association of Artists of the Revolution, 1928–32) as representatives of provincialism and backwardness in art.
skillfully illustrated in Ianov’skyi’s *Maister Korablia*—thereby embodying the avant-garde ideal of constructing art from elements of various forms (visual, literary-narrative, musical and dramatic).

Given this zeal for film, a desire to include cinematic elements in art *in general* found expression in various media. For instance, incorporating cinema into theatrical performances came to be regarded as a way to develop new forms of theatre. The productions of Les’ Kurbas for the Berezil’ theatre, in which theatre decorations and dramatic action were supplemented with cinematic projections, illustrate such fruitful collaboration between theatre and cinema. Ostap Vyshnia’s “*Vii,*” a contemporary version of Hohol’s eponymous work, also incorporated the cinematic medium: in the play, when Khoma Brut defeats the witch and orders her to fly him to Mars, the flight is cinematically projected onto a screen incorporated into the set.

Cinema also satisfied the social requirements of the avant-garde (both Soviet and Western iterations), inasmuch as it was a “consummate populist art.” Unlike the refined art of the nineteenth century (and also high Modernism), which was accessible only to a chosen few, film appealed to the masses. The first commercial films were “demotic, public, and unrefined.”

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52 A reviewer of the contemporary Ukrainian theatre commends the use of cinematic elements in theatre productions: “гіпертрофія темпу й бажання захопити в одній виставі таку силу подій, що їх вистачило би на три спектаклі, примусила театра подати руху кінематографу.” Ol. Kysil’, “*Novyi ukrains’kyi teatr,*” *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia*, no. 4 (1925): 43.

53 An avant-garde play produced in 1925 by Kharkiv Ivan Franko theatre, with constructivist set and costume design by Anatol’ Petryts’kyi.

54 Dmytro Horbachov, “*Baroko i futuryzm,*” in *Sharovarno-hopashna kul’tura iak dzherelo svitovoho avanhardu* (Kyiv: Smolosky, 2008), 55. As a side note, German theatre of the 1920s was similarly indebted to film and its artistic devices. Bertolt Brecht encouraged collaboration between the arts, and specifically the use of cinematic elements in theatre, as long as, he notes, they are employed “theatrically.” He described how the theatre “made use of epic, gestic and montage elements germane to the latter [film], and even employed the film itself by using documentary material.” Bertolt Brecht, “Concerning Music for the Film,” in *Authors on Film*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 133.

55 Kellman, “*Cinematic Novel,*” 472.

56 Kellman, “*Cinematic Novel,*” 473.
prior art, and Modernist art in particular, was clearly delineated as either “high” or “low.” Low forms were created for the masses, while high art appealed to a select audience and held an exclusive societal status. It employed complex forms and intertextual allusions accessible only to well-educated, intellectual readers. However, when Kellman notes the impact of film on novel writing, he praises film’s status as “vulgar entertainment” accessible to wide audiences (who need not be literate to fully understand and enjoy it). In a similar manner, he continues, “One meaning of cinematic novel would be a rejection of hermetically perfect prose in favor of a contribution to the newly emerging mass culture.”

More than illustrating a mere rejection of high for low, Ukrainian avant-garde experimental novels became a mix of high and low forms. And the elements of popular literary genres (detective stories, mysteries and romances) were typically introduced specifically through cinematic devices and conventions.

In other words, this fascination with the cinematic medium as a form of mass entertainment instigated a search for new ways to reconfigure traditional forms of representation. As Edwards correctly suggests, “Modern artists were drawn in this way to circus and music hall, cinema and pulp fiction, posters and handbills; in part, at least, this was because these artifacts of commodified entertainment suggested ways of making images that departed from, what seemed to them, the worn-out ideas contained in academic art.”

In line with this new fascination with mass art genres, Ukrainian theatre in the 1920s was envisioned in a manner that would reject the old, naturalistic forms and instead incorporate cinematic components, as well as elements of circus performance, with actors transformed into

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57 Kellman, “Cinematic Novel,” 473; emphasis in the original.

acrobats or clowns. An illustration of these new principles of theatre is found in a 1924 Kharkiv Franko Theatre production of the play “Mob,” which was based on Upton Sinclair’s novel *They Call Me Carpenter: A Tale of the Second Coming* (1922). The production, by Boris Glagolin, included a Constructivist stage (designed by Oleksandr Khvostenko-Khvostov) that recalled Dadaist art on account of its “blend of theatre, circus and film.” Circus was an especially important part of the production. Khvostenko designed a revolving stage, while an actor traversed a tightrope above the audience. The effect, and the intent, was to produce a large, attractive spectacle with high entertainment value. The description of a circus performance also plays an important structural role in *Maister Korablia*, where incorporation of the theme indicates the “openness” of the novel to genres with mass appeal.

However, despite its frequent use of elements from popular culture, Ukrainian avant-garde literature never fully aligned with low-brow art. The fascination with mass art went hand in hand with a refined aestheticism and an acute awareness of artistic form. The novels of this period came to combine popular forms with elements characteristic of high modernism, frequently including literary and artistic allusions while playfully subverting the reader’s expectations. Such novels were avant-garde collages, fusing genres, and both high and low sensibilities.

The experimental artistic technique of collage became widely used in avant-garde art just prior to the onset of World War I. Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque developed the

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59 See Kysil’, “Novyi ukrains’kyi teatr,” 40–44.


technique as “the practice of building up the work of art, using materials like sheet iron, rope and glass, as well as found objects like tin cans and labels.” This artistic principle was then transferred to other arts, including music, film, poetry and theater.

In my study I understand collage as a juxtaposition of incongruous and heterogeneous fragments or materials in a novel. As was said, collage also allows for the combination of heterogeneous elements of high or low registers. Moreover, in collages, fragments of artistic forms and non-artistic objects are juxtaposed in such a way that the construction process is visible. Hence, collage renders the artwork polystylistic, such that it transgresses the boundaries of individual genres and arts. As a result, this artistic practice enables both the artist and the recipient to focus on the texture of the work of art.

Collage also emphasizes the fusing of factual and fictional elements and “combinations of traditional art forms with fragments of reality of any kind.” As Sabina Eckmann points out, with collage artists came to incorporate concrete material objects not traditionally or previously used in art. As an innovative practice, collage expanded art’s boundaries by including into the

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64 Clearfield argues that in collage artworks, emphasis is on “the heterogeneity of the artwork, rather than upon its singularity, and the seams are always more interesting than whatever is on either side of them.” Andrew M. Clearfield, *These Fragments I Have Shored: Collage and Montage in Early Modernist Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), 10.

65 For instance, Ianovs’kyi characterizes his first novel as a work which displays its multifaceted heterogeneous construction and its fabricated material: “Застережімось тут—це не робота з готовим матеріалом: залізом, крицею, деревом. Ми маємо показ готування самого матеріалу. Отаку собі домну наче бачимо ми, коли з різномастих, різнопланових, різноплавких елементів тече по рівчаках метал.” Iurii Ianovs’kyi, “Komentari do knyzhok: ‘Prekrasna Ut,’ ‘Krov zemli,’ ‘Maister korablia’ ta ‘Chotyry shabli,’’” in *Tvory*, vol. 5, Virshi, publitsystyka (Kyiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo khudozhn’oi literature, 1959), 368; emphasis mine.


composition non-artistic objects of material reality, such as the found objects (les objets trouvés) and ready-mades, popularized by Marcel Duchamp, as well as advertisements, newspaper clippings, photographs, and so on.

In the Ukrainian context, the idea of synthesizing art and non-art elements was pronounced most explicitly in the manifestoes and theoretical works of the Futurists. Their “Declaration” argues for the construction of new art synthesizing not only high and low, but prose, poetry, painting and film, as well as fusing art with technology: “Deepening the revolution in art, Panfuturism prepares the ground for construction. Construction is meta-art. Meta-art is the synthesis of deformed art and sports.”

Similarly, in the Panfuturist manifesto, Mykhail’ Semenko outlines the shifting borders of the work of art during the period of transitioning to these new forms. Such works, he argues, were to follow the destruction of traditional art as new artists “started redrawing the borders between individual art forms as well as fusing the boundaries of art and life.” In their prose, Futurists likewise subverted traditional fictional devices, incorporating elements of actuality or “life as it is.” The results of these experiments were believed to offer a true alternative to the narrow-minded provincialism of past Ukrainian culture.

This fascination with “life as it is” and with the aesthetics of non-acted film is characteristic for Soviet Ukrainian literature and culture. The Futurists believed that a transformed society required transformed forms of art, ones suitable for the new socio-political

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conditions. Artists perceived the Soviet reality as brighter and more thrilling than any fiction, and therefore the task set before authors was to depict this reality truthfully and without embellishment. They saw an urgent need to reconfigure the boundaries of traditional art and to subvert those conventions and devices that were associated with bourgeois fiction. Instead of traditional literary genres, “Nova Generatsiia” writers contributed greatly to the popularization of nonfiction genres. For instance, literary reportage (літрепортаж) was actively promoted on the editorial page. The editorial also encouraged submissions of more “documents,” reportages, and travel notes for publication, instead of traditional poetry and prose.

Before the 1920s, nonfiction genres were not included in the general field of Ukrainian literature; now, following the lead of the avant-garde artists of “Nova Generatsiia,” literary figures turned to nonfiction genres en masse. For instance, in various forms of life-writing, Soviet Ukrainian writers found appropriate devices for subverting fictional conventions and broadening the scope of literature. The memoir, the autobiography, the diary, the narys (essay

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71 For instance, the editorial of Nova generatsiia introduces literary reportage as a productive genre in the new Ukrainian literature: “Літрепортаж [...] дає, безперечно, далеко більше корисного читачеві в розумінні відчуття ‘домінанти нашої доби’, ніж усі літературні спроби створити ’живу людину’, вона-бо завжди фатально виходить якимось гомункулуєм.” Table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 12 (1928): 362.

72 See table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 2 (1929): 4; “ми звертаємося до наших читачів з проханням надислати нам мовні документи, репортажі, записи—а не вірші й оповідання на ’високі’ теми, які (вірші, оповідання) неминуче йдуть до редакційної корзини. [...] Установка на документальний матеріал одразу виправдусь себе.”

73 Life-writing is an inclusive term used since the eighteenth century to designate biography, autobiography, memoirs, letters, diaries, etc. See Donald J. Winslow, Life-writing: A Glossary of Terms in Biography, Autobiography, and Related Forms, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: Published for the Biographical Research Center by the University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 37. See also Life Writing: Essays on Autobiography, Biography and Literature, ed. Richard Bradford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
or sketch), the travel note, reportage, the feuilleton: all these genres gained importance in the 1920s at the hands of Geo Shkurupii, Dmytro Buz’ko, Oleksandr Mar’iamov, Ivan Mykytenko, Borys Antonenko-Davydovych and others. The main attraction of these forms was their lack of conventional fiction devices and, beyond that, their more direct means of representing actual life.

The earliest examples of interweaving factual elements into fiction are Oles’ Dosvitnii’s novel *Amerykantsi* and his collection of stories about the life of Chinese revolutionaries entitled “Tiunhui” (1925). Yet some of the most notable Ukrainian literary works based on factual material were written in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They include two biographical novels by Viktor Petrov entitled *Alina i Kostomarov* (Alina and Kostomarov; 1929) and *Romany Kulisha* (Kulish’s romances; 1930); a biographical novella by Shkurupii titled “Povist’ pro hirke kokhannia poeta Tarasa Shevchenka” (Story about Taras Shevchenko’s bitter love; 1930) and his collection of travel notes entitled *Monhol’s’ki opovidannia* (Mongolian stories; 1932). All of these examples of life-writing fuse historical facts with highly fictionalized renditions of events.

Perhaps the most productive nonfiction genre was the travel essay (подорожній нарис), which Maik Iohansen popularized in the late 1920s. Here authors offered accounts of Ukrainian

74 For more on Ukrainian facto-graphic literature see Petro Mel’nyk, “Faktova literatura,” *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia*, no. 6 (1930): 184–92.

75 See Mykhailo Dolengo, “‘Povstalyi Skhid’: Pro roman O. Dosvitn’oho *Amerykantsi*,” *Chervonyi shliakh*, no. 4 (1925):” 215; Dolengo astutely points out that “Автор обох книжок вишукує свою художність, одходячи від хроніки, біографії, спомину, від слова, що безпосередньо звязане з живою подією, а не від спеціально літературної традиції.”

76 The title *Romany Kulisha* is a pun, which plays with a double meaning of the Ukrainian noun “роман” as both “a novel” and “a romance.” A prolific nineteenth-century Ukrainian writer, Panteleimon Kulish authored several novels, but Petrov focuses on Kulish’s romances in the biographical novel.

77 Iohansen published several travel essays documenting his own travel to locations in Ukraine and the USSR: *Podorozh liudyny pid kepom: ievreis’ki kolonii* (The journey of a man wearing a cap: Jewish colonies, 1929), *Podorozh u Radians’ku Balhariiu* (Journey to Soviet Bulgaria, 1930), *Try podorozhi* (Three journeys, 1932), *Podorozh u Dahestan* (Journey to Dagestan, 1933), *Pid parusom na dubi* (Under the sail, 1933), and *Kos-Chahyl na Embi* (Kos Chagil on the Emba river, 1936).
or foreign locations from the perspective of a Soviet, proletarian writer. In contrast to a dispassionate journalistic reportage, these travel reportages described various locations in a new and defamiliarized light, and they stood on the border between an essay and a fictional work. Maik Iohansen’s novel Podorozh uchenoho doktora Leonardo ta ioho maibutn’oi kokhanky prekrasnoi Al’chesty do Slobozhans’koi Shveitsarii (Journey of the learned doctor Leonardo and of his future lover, beautiful Al’chesta, to Sloboda Switzerland; 1928–32) echoes the popular travelogue genre, offering an experimental narrative that intertwines portrayals of actual Ukrainian scenery with fictional events and characters. Such a blending of the boundaries in 1920s Ukrainian experimental literature sought to bring art closer to life, reflecting popular slogans of the day.

In the general Soviet context, the biggest proponents of factual literature were the artists associated with the Russian avant-garde periodicals LEF and Novyi LEF, who conceptualized and promoted the idea of “literature of fact” (литература факта). These periodicals are permeated with articles criticizing traditional fiction and exploring the facto-graphic writing style. The artists argued for the necessity of incorporating real life material in literature and for

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78 For instance, Iohansen’s travel essays combine passages emulating cinematic recording of factual material with metafictional commentary, literary allusions and digressions.

79 The novel is hereafter referred to as Podorozh Leonardo. The cinematic elements in this fictional travelogue will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

80 Both are journals of the association “Levyi Front Iskusstv,” or the Left Front of the Arts. LEF was published in 1923–25 and its successor Novyi LEF (The New LEF) in 1927–28. Edited by Osip Brik and Vladimir Mayakovsky (and later by Sergey Tretyakov), the journal published works by Russian Formalists, Futurists and Constructivists. The range of works published included prose, poetry and plays; photographs and photomontages; as well as film and literary criticism.

81 Prominent examples of facto-graphic writing in Russian literature are Victor Shklovsky’s memoir novel Sentimental’noe puteshestvie (Sentimental journey; 1923) and his epistolary novel Zoo, ili pis’ma ne o liubvi, ili tret’ia Eloiza (Zoo, or letters not about love, or the third Heloise; 1923), as well as Yurii Tynianov’s historical novels Kiukhlia (1925) and Smert’ Vazir-Mukhtara (The death of the Vazir-Mukhtar; 1928). For more on factual literature and the documentary turn in Soviet literature and culture, see Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).
portraying it truthfully. A leading Formalist critic associated with *LEF*, Victor Shklovsky, explains the popularity of non-fiction genres in contemporary culture as follows: “The success of the diary, the travel book, and the writer’s notebook can be explained by the fact that today the writer and the viewer experience facts aesthetically, that today there is an orientation towards the engaging narration, towards information. The satirical journalist puts pressure on the fiction writer; the fiction writer packs a real fact into his work.”

Ideologically speaking, photography and non-acted film (неігрова фільма), such as newsreel (хроніка) and educational Kulturfilm (культурфільма) were perfect arts in the eyes of the communists. Among non-acted films, newsreel was particularly promoted as new media that inherently presented life in a facto-graphic manner. Newsreel was praised especially highly for its direct, truthful renditions of life, and it became influential film genre in 1920s Soviet culture.

A frequent contributor to the *LEF* journal and a prolific and revolutionary filmmaker, Dziga Vertov theorized and developed non-acted films and the fact-based newsreel genre in Soviet cinema. In a speech in Paris in 1929 Vertov also defines the significance of the Cine-Eye (Кино-Глаз) technique, which he developed along with his collaborators, the kinoks group:

> “the history of Kino-Glaz has been a relentless struggle to modify the course of world cinema, to

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84 Kinoks (киноки) is a group that Vertov and his collaborator Elisaveta Svilova organized in 1919. The name of the group derives from a neologism kinok, which Vertov devised to differentiate himself and other filmmakers in his circle from traditional film directors.
place in cinema production a new emphasis on the ‘non-acted’ film over the acted film, to substitute the document for a *mise-en-scène*, to break out of the proscenium of the theatre and to enter the arena of life itself.” Vertov’s view of the role of film art elucidates a broader cultural paradigm, one centered around a factual approach to material and life, which gained immense recognition in 1920s Ukraine.

In his theoretical works, Vertov noted the camera’s unique ability to truthfully examine reality, producing Cine-Truth. The major task of filmmaking, according to Vertov, was to capture “life as it is,” eschewing every literary and dramatic convention. He was also a critic of traditional “acted” films, and his seminal work, *Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, was allegedly made without the use of a scenario, intertitles, set decorations, or professional actors—all typical components in film production. While employed at VUFKU from 1927–31, Vertov worked in close proximity to other Ukrainian filmmakers and writers, enabling him to cross-pollinate ideas with these artists.

Most importantly, the aesthetics of non-acted film offered literary authors ways to replace and modernize the devices traditionally used in literature. Besides the obvious characteristics of cinema that attracted experimental artists, film also offered new narrative modes for writers for directly and dispassionately rendering empirical reality. In an article fittingly titled “Liudyna z

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86 The notion of Cine-Truth (Кино-Правда) captures Vertov’s credo to record life unaltered on film. The concept was born of an eponymous film series (1922–25) created by Vertov. Both in his series and theoretical articles Vertov shows that Cine-Truth is an innate truth, present in fragments of actuality, as these are registered on film and arranged through editing. In the chapter entitled “Technological mode: Dziga Vertov and Kino-Communication,” Elizabeth Papazian points out a paradox in Vertov’s emphasis on capturing “life as it is” and his artistic editing or “‘playing’ with the material of film.” Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth*, 72.

87 Specifically, Vertov claims: “We engage directly in the study of the phenomena of life that surround us. We hold the ability to show and elucidate life as is, considerably higher than the occasionally diverting doll games that people call theatre, cinema, etc.” Dziga Vertov, “Artistic Drama and Kino-Eye,” in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O’Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 47.
Monblianom” (Man with a Montblanc; 1929), prolific Ukrainian “leftist” writer Oleksii Poltorats’kyi compares his Montblanc pen, a typewriter, and a radio to the movie camera of Dziga Vertov. The pen is metaphorically compared to a weapon that “besieges facts.”

Emulating such camera perspective, his literary narration represented its material from a point of view beloved by avant-gardists: that of a machine. In this way, the camera eye was adapted as a useful device and a narrative mode of choice for recording factual material in literature.

Camera-eye narration is usually discussed in the context of the modernist novel. Ernest Hemingway’s story “The Killers” (1927) is an oft-quoted early example of camera-eye technique in American literature. The works of American writer John Dos Passos also feature camera-eye excerpts. (Yet though they are explicitly labeled “camera eye,” Dos Passos’ short, fragmentary autobiographical sequences cannot be considered so by any traditional definition.) In this study, I use the term “camera-eye narration” as developed by Norman Friedman in relation to Christopher Isherwood’s 1939 novel Goodbye to Berlin. Friedman defines the technique as

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91 See John Dos Passos’s U.S.A. trilogy (The 42nd Parallel, 1930; 1919, 1932 and The Big Money, 1936). Ianovs’kyi, whose novel features camera-eye narration, explicitly references Dos Passos and Joyce as his colleagues in formal experimentation in the novel genre. See Ianovs’kyi, “Komentari do knyzhok,” 365.

“what seems the ultimate in authorial exclusion. Here the aim is to transmit, without apparent selection or arrangement, a ‘slice of life’ as it passes before the recording medium.”

When describing this narrative mode other narratologists also focus on the “camera eye” as the narrative point of view with the least narratorial presence. Camera-eye narration offers a neutral report, describing visual percepts without revealing the narrator’s feelings or emotions, and without empathy, moralizing, evaluation, reflection or interpretation of events. In other words, it excludes any indication of the narrator’s persona. This narrating medium may be compared to a recording mechanical camera because it is dispassionate and non-reflective and shows only visible phenomena.

Even though scenes in the experimental novels were frequently presented from a dispassionate, depersonalized perspective of the mechanical camera eye, the selection of scenes and their arrangement implied artistic subjectivity. Shklovsky observed similar incongruity between photographic “truth” and artistry in Soviet “non-acted” films: “Although at the basis of cinematography lies photography, the very moment of choosing a shot and the choice of the moment, the moment of cutting in time and space, this very act is an artistic act.”

Early Soviet filmmakers equally emphasized faithful rendition of reality or documenting of factual material and the role of editing in the creative process, finding them essential to film production for their ideological impact. In montage they found an effective propaganda device that allowed them to juxtapose disparate, hitherto unrelated shots and to translate abstract

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94 For instance, referring to Genette and Stanzel, Dorrit Cohn characterizes camera eye as “a type of present-tense narration focused on a visual field from which the speaker remains effaced.” Dorrit Cohn, The Distinction of Fiction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 100n18. See also Gerald Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology, rev. ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), s.v. “camera”; and Fludernik, Towards a “Natural” Narratology, 130.

95 Shklovsky, “Plot is a Constructive Principle,” 269.
political ideas into concrete visual signs and images. For instance, the careful selection and montage of factual material had a highly important propagandistic role in Vertov’s films.  

Specifically, the montage technique enabled Soviet filmmakers to construct artistic truth, for instance by using excerpts of material filmed for other newsreels, or by inserting shots of staged action within a newsreel. In these ways Soviet montage practices led to the modification, even manipulation, of factual material.

In essence, montage is a film-editing technique that governs the relation of shot to shot or that arranges shots into a sequence. In Hollywood filmmaking of the “classical continuity” editing style, editing was used to maintain narrative continuity; it offered a way to organize film shots “so as to tell a story coherently and clearly.” In such films events are presented chronologically and without major omissions or repetitions of action, largely preserving the order, duration and frequency of story events.

However, in 1920s experimental filmmaking, montage was employed as an editing approach used to highlight discontinuities, one which “emphasizes dynamic, often discontinuous, relationships between shots.” The legacy of Lev Kuleshov is especially notable in the development of the theory and practice of montage in this regard. Along with other Soviet film directors, he praised montage as the essence of the cinematic form. In particular, he considered the combination of distinct fragments and images in cinema more important than the fragments

96 Notably, Vertov argues “With the skillful organization of factual footage, we can create film-objects of high propagandistic pressure, without the annoying, suspect affectations of actors and without the romantic-detective fictions of various and sundry ‘inspired’ people.” Dziga Vertov, “Artistic drama and Kino-Eye,” 48; emphasis in the original.


98 See Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 278.

99 Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 432.
themselves: “Cinema is not able to register every individual scene (or fragment). The method of transcending cinematic raw material, the essence of cinema, lies in composition, the change from one filmed fragment to another. In organizing the effect the important thing on the whole is not what has been filmed in a particular fragment, but how one fragment replaces another in the film, how they are constructed.”

Specifically, Kuleshov studied how the juxtaposition of two shots can produce a new meaning. He demonstrated how, through montage, one could create associations and accentuate contrasts or correspondences between otherwise disconnected shots or sequences. His influential theory, which became known as “the Kuleshov effect,” inspired numerous filmmakers to experiment with shot organization.

Another prominent 1920s Soviet filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein, employed a similar editing technique that sought to construct new meanings from analogies or correspondences between disparate shots, permitting in the process the manipulation of factual material. Eisenstein looked at editing as an organizational device rather than one to achieve narrative continuity. In no small part due to Kuleshov’s and Eisenstein’s efforts, montage became in 1920s Soviet films a device allowing filmmakers to confront or shock viewers “with a disorienting and disjunctive set of images.”

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101 Eisenstein’s memoir reveals that at the end of his movie *Bronenosets “Potemkin”* (*The Battleship Potemkin*; 1925), he used, for scenes showing a naval squadron, shots from “old newsreels of naval maneuvers—not even of the Russian Fleet, but of a certain foreign power.” Leyda, *Kino*, 195. Leyda suggests that the ships belonged to the British Navy.

102 See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 284.

103 Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 284.
Along with camera-eye narration, modernist novelists experimented with the use of montage composition in literary works. Historically, the term “cinematic novel” is in fact connected to the presence of explicit editing or montage. The use of montage as a compositional device in literature exemplified a modernist, discontinuous treatment of time. It changed the organization of the novel so as to appear “as if separate chapters, paragraphs, or sentences were written and then edited into nonlinear patterns.” It held keen value in this regard for its ability to render mental processes, including memory. Literary montage contributed to producing fragmentariness within a literary text, emphasizing the lack of continuity or causal connection between parts, scenes and episodes.

104 Modernist novels that practice the montage technique in literature include James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922); John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932) from his U.S.A. trilogy; William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930); Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* (1928); Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927); Andrei Belyi’s *Peterburg* (1922); and Isaac Babel’s *Konarmiia* (*Red Cavalry*, 1926). For a discussion of montage in the latter work, see particularly Marc Schreurs, *Procedures of montage in Isaak Babel’s “Red Cavalry”* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989). See also Clearfield, *These Fragments I Have Shored*; Edward Murray, *The Cinematic Imagination: Writers and the Motion Pictures* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1972) (the use of montage in the prose of James Joyce and John Dos Passos is discussed in chapters 10 and 13 respectively); Sam Rohdie, *Montage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); and P. Adams Sitney, *Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

105 See Kellman, “Cinematic Novel,” 473.


107 In particular, literary montage was found to render the stream-of-consciousness mental processes of James Joyce’s characters. Harry Levin thus defines the cinematic qualities of *Ulysses*: “Bloom’s mind is neither a tabula rasa nor a photographic plate, but a motion picture, which has been ingeniously cut and carefully edited to emphasize the close-ups and fade-outs of flickering emotion, the angles of observation and the flashbacks of reminiscence. In its intimacy and in its continuity, *Ulysses* has more in common with the cinema than with other fiction. The movement of Joyce’s style, the thought of his characters, is like unreeling film; his method of construction, the arrangement of this raw material, involves the crucial operation of montage.” Harry Levin, “Montage,” in *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, 1920–1951, Representing the Achievement of Modern American and British Critics*, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York: Ronald Press, 1952), 143–44; emphasis in the original.

108 Marc Schreurs argues that montage contributes to fragmentation in the text, producing such features as “erratic juxtapositions of contrasting elements (styles, narrative positions, themes/motifs); exchanges of dislocated, disconnected text fragments; illogical transitions in time and space, etc.” Schreurs, *Procedures of Montage*, 1. I only consider the latter characteristics (i.e., temporal and spatial discontinuities) as the effect of montage in the novel; the former features are the result of collage construction.
Because montage contributes to fragmentary or discontinuous narration, it came to be regarded as the most fitting artistic device for capturing the new, fast-changing Soviet reality. As the master narrative of history was disrupted after WWI and the October revolution, the novel, it was believed, needed to adjust its form to reflect these developments.

Traditionally, the novel presented an organic universe, totalizing stories and experiences. As Lukács argues: “The epic gives form to a totality of life that is rounded from within; the novel seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life.” Yet novels emulating cinematic montage refuse or fail to present such a “totality of life.” This radical approach to narrative structure instead produces fragmented, disjointed pictures of the world. Specifically, it renders disjointed perceptions of time, especially the revolutionary time, or time affected by revolution. Ukrainian experimental novels frequently used literary montage to depict the scenes of October revolution in this manner. And in this way, montage in Ukrainian literature functions as an indicator of revolutionary changes in art.

Beyond literary montage, a few notes should be made about the explicit use of cinematic ekphrasis in experimental novels. Leonid Skrypnyk’s novel Intelihent, which I discuss in detail in chapter 3, is structured entirely as an ekphrasis of a fictional movie, while Ianovs’kyi’s Maister korablia, which is discussed in chapter 2, features ekphrases of an experimental film, of a ballet performance, of a painting and of a circus act.

An ekphrasis is typically a literary rendition of a visual work of art or of a scene within such a work. It may describe a real or a fictional image. Gaining popularity in Alexandrian

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110 Examples of such use of literary montage are found in Ianovs’kyi’s novel Maister korablia, Shkurupii’s Dveri v den’ and Skrypnyk’s Intelihent and will be discussed further in the dissertation.

111 See Stephen Hutchings, Russian Literary Culture in the Camera Age: The Word as Image (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 9. For more on ekphrasis see also James A. W. Heffernan, Museum of Words: The Poetics
neo-rhetoric in the second century and remaining a widely used rhetorical device in literature through Middle Ages, ekphrasis is “a polished piece, and detachable (thus having its own purpose, independent of any general function).”\textsuperscript{112}

An ekphrastic description of cinema therefore incorporates discussion of cinematic devices into literature; in so doing it provided experimental writers with space for metafictional commentary on literature’s own techniques as well. Charles Eidsvik makes an astute observation: “the largest conclusion we reach by looking at the cinema’s effect on literature is perhaps the antithesis of what our cinematic reading had led us to expect: film has made writers self-conscious, concerned with their own medium, print; writers have exploited the limits and potentials of print in ways unthought-of before print-artists had to compete with film.”\textsuperscript{113} By explicitly evoking the techniques and processes of film in fiction, Ukrainian experimental novels found ample opportunity for self-reflective commentary about the literary craft as well.

**Cinema Aesthetics in Ukrainian Literature: Early Artistic Practices**

The 1920s was a dynamic and lively decade in every artistic sphere in Ukraine. However, Ukrainian cinema, represented foremost by successful VUFKU, with studios in Odesa and Kyiv, became the nation’s most popular art, with a vast mass appeal, and was generally regarded as an indicator of the nation’s cultural achievements.\textsuperscript{114} Mykola Bazhan noted, in his 1927 review of ten years of Ukrainian cinema since the October Revolution, that the Odesa Film Studio was

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\textsuperscript{113} Charles Eidsvik, “Demonstrating Film Influence,” *Literature / Film Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 114.

\textsuperscript{114} The Kyiv studio opened in 1928.
technologically the best in the Soviet Union. The writers employed by the studios were often required to spend time onsite, where they gained firsthand experience of the vibrant, creative filmmaking profession. Collaboration with film crew, as well as direct proximity to the filmmaking process, allowed them to witness closely the technology and production processes of this new art, and this, in turn, impacted how they came to view the literary art and their work as writers.

Ukrainian filmmakers found their hopes for modernization to coincide with those of the Ukrainian writers and critics of the Literary Discussion. In the context of their own medium, filmmakers perceived a need to modernize pre-revolutionary techniques and to create films more reflective of the social, political and cultural changes in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s. They also desired to raise the quality of films produced at VUFKU. The role of Ukrainian writers was crucial in this process, just as the role of cinema was crucial in modernizing Ukrainian literature. In particular, writers were encouraged to submit high quality scenarios, which were essential for the success of the films.

While working at VUFKU in 1924–27, Mykhail’ Semenko attracted many talented young authors to the Odesa Film Studios to pursue this goal. Writers associated with Semenko’s avant-garde organization “Nova Generatsiia,” such as Geo Shkurupii, Leonid Skrypnyk, Mykola Bazhan and Dmytro Buz’ko, collaborated with VUFKU, writing screenplays and composing intertitles. These writers also contributed writings on film theory and criticism.

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116 These discussions on writers’ role in modernizing Ukrainian cinema in the 1920s are reflected in the Ukrainian film periodicals *Foto-Kino* (1922–23), *Kino: Zhurnal ukrains’koi kinematohrafii* (1925–33) and *Kino-visty: Biuleten’ VUFKU* (1928), and in the newspapers *Kino-tyzhden’: Orhan ukrains’koi kinematohrafii* (1927–28) and *Kino-hazeta* (1928–31).

117 See, for instance, Skrypnyk, *Narysy z teorii mystetstva kino*; Mykola Bazhan, *O. Dovzhenko: Narys pro myttsia* (Kyiv: VUFKU, 1930); Iurii Ianovs’kyi, *Holiwud na berezi Chornoho moria* (Kyiv: Ukrteokinovydav, 1930); Iakiv Savchenko, *Narodzhennia ukrains’koho radians’koho kino: Try fil’my O. Dovzhenka* (Kyiv: Ukrteakinovydav,
writers Maik Iohansen and Oles’ Dosvitnii also wrote scripts for films produced at VUFKU and many other Ukrainian writers were employed in the 1920s at VUFKU as movie editors. Iurii Ianovs’kyi, for instance, worked at the studios as an editor (художній редактор) in the scriptwriting department in 1925–26, experience that provided rich material for his seminal novel *Maister korablia*.

The writers employed at VUFKU all left behind works of prose that incorporates cinematic devices. Observing film production, as well as the transformation of their scripts into movies, gave these authors ideas not only regarding thematic material, but also regarding how to rejuvenate their use of narrative devices and prose style. In-depth knowledge of Ukrainian film production in the 1920s inspired writers to adapt cinematic techniques in the narration, composition and character development of their fictional writings.

Specifically, their exposure to film aesthetics made these authors newly aware of their use of tenses. One finds a direct correlation between the tense of movie scripts and the use of the present tense in sequences recreating a camera-eye perspective in literature. The present is the tense typical of the movie scenario or screenplay, and so it is unsurprising to find experimental Ukrainian writers employing the present tense in an atypical fashion in their literary narratives. The present tense has various roles in experimental novels emulating cinematic narration: it is the primary tense of film ekphrasis and a device to achieve simultaneous narration. When used to describe past events, the device creates the effect of immediate, direct cinematic narration.118

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118 Simultaneous narration and the use of historic present will be discussed in more detail in connection to Ianovs’kyi’s novel *Maister korablia*.

1930). For more on the contribution of “Nova Generatsiia” writers to the theory and practice of Ukrainian cinema, see Bohdan Y. Nebesio, “Panfuturists and the Ukrainian Film Culture of the 1920s,” special issue, *Kinokultura*, no. 9 (December 2009), [http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/nebesio.shtml](http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/nebesio.shtml).
On the other hand, the writers did not completely abandon the use of the past tense in their experimental prose. In fact, describing cinematic sequences through past and present tenses—intermingling tenses within a narrative episode, or even within a sentence—created the effect of a more lively depiction and accentuated certain key scenes in the work. Furthermore, Clarence A. Manning concludes that in the Ukrainian language the interplay of perfective and imperfective aspects of the tense also enhances the vividness of the narration.

Experimental Ukrainian literature began to emulate the aesthetics of film soon after the revolution. Two 1919 “film-poems” (поезофільми) by Mykhail’ Semenko, “Vesna” (Spring) and “Step” (Steppe), which were long narrative poems on the revolution and on post-revolutionary changes in the Ukrainian village, offer the earliest examples of literature adapting cinema’s fragmented narration. Though Semenko’s theoretical works and experiments with visual poetry (поезомаллярство) made much more significant contributions to the Ukrainian literary avant-garde, these film-poems marked an important cultural shift: following their publication, experimental writers turned en masse to cinema in search of new material, narrative modes and means of representation.

In practice cinema would prove a rich source for modernizing the themes, composition and narration of Ukrainian literature. Literary theorists and critics soon noted how emulating cinematic narration in prose offered productive devices for constructing new literary forms. For

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119 Manning argues that mixing the past and present tenses is a typical device for achieving lifelikeness and liveliness in Ukrainian literature, from the poetry of Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko to twentieth-century prose. See Clarence A. Manning, *English Tenses and Slavic Aspects*, Slavistica series 34 (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences, 1959), 27.

120 Manning notes that Ukrainian authors’ choice of aspects and tenses sustains “the idea of the picturesque and the vivid.” Clarence A. Manning, *English Tenses*, 33. Similar observations are made in regard to Romance and Germanic languages. Fleischman argues that “a frequent strategy for achieving the highlighted vividness of narrative Peaks is through tense switching, in particular through a shift into the PR [present tense].” Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 142.
instance, in his overview of contemporary Ukrainian prose, Mykola Zerov highlights Jules Romains’ early experimental novel *Donogoo-Tonka ou les miracles de la science: Le bourg régénéré* (Donogoo-Tonka or the Miracles of Science: A Cinematographic Tale; 1920) as a cinematic story-script that inspired many Ukrainian writers.\(^{121}\) The same year, Borys Navrots’kyi set the connection between literature and cinema in a wider context by drawing parallels between the composition, imagery and framing of literary forms with those of cinema, painting and music.\(^{122}\)

Likely the strongest connection between cinema and prose was evident in popular fiction genres—i.e., romance, adventure, mystery and detective stories—which came to prevalence in the second half of the 1920s. As was noted earlier, these middlebrow genres were intended to appeal to the widest audiences possible and to create a mass Ukrainian readership. Already in the 1920s, Ukrainian critics were arguing for a strong correlation between the adventure story (newly popular in Ukrainian literature) and classical Hollywood cinema.\(^{123}\) Kellman argues that the presence of excessive melodrama or romance in novels made them appear “cinematic” to both readers and critics, inasmuch as cinema in its early history was “conceived as simply the repository of gaudy plots.”\(^{124}\) Along a similar line, Tsymbal astutely notes: “In the 1920–30s the concept of a cinematic literary work included a complex of the primary characteristics of cinema: the dynamic, the extraordinary, the entertaining, the fantastic, the visual.”\(^{125}\) For such reasons,


\(^{122}\) See B. Navrots’kyi, “Iak buduiet’sia literaturnyi (prozovyi) tvir,” *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia*, no. 5 (1925): 40–45.


\(^{124}\) Kellman, “Cinematic Novel,” 471.

readers and critics largely perceived the new popular, pulp fiction as sensational, and thus “cinematic.”

In Ukrainian literary criticism these popular literary genres were often categorized as “plot-driven prose” (сюжетна проза), while the Ukrainian writers who practiced and promoted such genres were characterized as *siuzhetnyky*. They include Maik Iohansen, Iurii Smolych, and Oleksa Slilsarenko, along with “leftist” writers Geo Shkurupii and Dmytro Buz’ko, among others. All of these were praised by their contemporaries for constructing intricate and engaging story in their works. These writers also placed emphasis on conflict, action, suspense and entertainment value—all the elements of popular literary genres. Inasmuch as classical Hollywood filmmaking also favored dynamic action, a fast pace, and entertaining stories, reading the prose of *siuzhetnyky*, it was said, evoked the experience of watching a film.

The critics of the day offered specific evidence of cinematic elements in *siuzhetnyky* prose. For example, Oleksa Slisarenko’s 1925 story (повість) “Plantatsii” (Plantations), which reminds one of an action-driven adventure film, leads Bilets’kyi to define it as a “mini cine-novel” and to praise Slisarenko for achieving condensed action and maximum dynamism in the work. Three stories by Petro Panch, “Zelena triasovyna” (The green bog), “Zemlia” (Earth) and “Revansh” (Revanche) which were all published in the 1926 collection *Myshachi*

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126 These terms (*siuzhetna proza* and *siuzhetnyky*) reflect common understanding of “plotted works” as works with certain conventional elements of popular genres. See Iurii Tynianov, “O siuzhete i fabule v kino,” in *Poetika, istoriia literature, kino* (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), 324 (originally published in *Kino* [March 30, 1926]); “В фильмах с ‘захватывающим сюжетом,’ в сущности, дьявольски малый размах—непременная погоня, преследование, более или менее удачное,—и почти всегда—благополучный конец. С вопросом о сюжете обстоит в кино столь же неблагополучно, как и в литературе: сюжетными считаются вещи, в которых есть сложный фабульный узел. Но фабулы ведь не сюжет.” For the distinction between *siuzhet* (plot) and *fabula* (story), see note 71 in chapter 2.


128 “Йому хочеться, приміром, до максимуму довести динаміку дії, не виводячи її за межі побутової імовірності. І йому дається скомпонувати стислу, але сильну повість.” Bilets’kyi, “Pro prozu vzahali,” 159.
nory (Mouseholes), evoke popular films specifically by their use of a tightly woven storylines. And in this regard, says Iakubovs’kyi, they may be compared to Western European novels that incorporate cinematic elements such as Romains’ Donogoo-Tonka.\(^\text{129}\) In the same vein, characterizing Maik Iohansen’s 1925 collection of short stories entitled 17 khvylin (Seventeen minutes), Rostyslav Mel’nykiv uses the term “cinematic” in the context of “eventfulness” and the development of dynamic action.\(^\text{130}\)

Two of the first Ukrainian novels of the Soviet period, Oles’ Dosvitnii’s 1924 Amerykantsi and Maik Iohansen’s 1925 Pryhody Mak-Leistona, Harri Ruptera ta inshykh, also featured entertaining story lines and dynamic action, while skillfully emulating cinematic fragmentary narration. Dosvitnii’s experimental novel organized fictional and factual elements into a montage-like composition of events. Critics agreed on the prevalence of cinematic elements in the work, as they did as well in regard to Pryhody Mak-Leistona.\(^\text{131}\) Regarding the latter, Feliks Iakubovs’kyi compares Iohansen’s novel to popular Hollywood films,\(^\text{132}\) while Kost’ Dovhan’ underlines the novel’s productive use of the montage technique.\(^\text{133}\) Rostyslav Mel’nykiv also commends Iohansen for his cinematic experiments in the novel genre, by which

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\(^\text{129}\) Iakubovs’kyi, review of Myshachi nory, by Petro Panch, Zhyttia i revoliutsiia, no. 2–3 (1926): 137.


\(^\text{131}\) For an analysis of cinematic elements in Amerykantsi see Dolengo, “‘Povstalyi Skhid’,” 215. Dolengo highlights the use of cinematic characterization in the novel and construction inspired by effects of film: “На конструкцію всього роману безумовно впливала сучасна кінематографічна техніка. […] Основна структура роману уривчаста, епізодична, з відповідними перепусками, що їх позначено зірками. Деякі місця в романі конспективно-ліричні, як написи в картині.” Dolengo, “‘Povstalyi Skhid’,” 212.


he specifically means his use of a cinematic narrative, rapidly changing “shots” and settings, and montage.  

As is seen from the examples above, the cinematic medium, and in particular popular Hollywood films, inspired siuzhetnyky writers to develop dynamic action-driven stories in their works. Some later instances of experimental fiction, in contrast, came to incorporate the cinematic devices of popular films in a parodic way. An early example is found in Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s 1925 short story “Mamutovi byvni” (Mammoth’s tusks) from the eponymous collection, which displays the conventionality of cinematic techniques from popular films. Critics unanimously observe the skillful incorporation of cinematic elements in this collection of short stories.  

Ianovs’kyi revered cinema throughout his literary career, and while this preoccupation is best reflected in Maister korablia, here I focus on his earlier work.

The story “Mamutovi byvni” depicts post-revolutionary conflict in the village of Babanka near historic Trypillia. The kurkuls (wealthy peasants who resisted the Soviet regime), along with a militiaman named Ser’oha, conspire to murder a village correspondent (селькор) Semko. By mistake they kill one of their own, kurkul Petro Hundia, while Semko witnesses the crime and reports the murderers to the district militia department. The events in the story are presented in alternating cinematic and dramatic modes. There is a clear pattern in the use of the respective narrative perspectives. The narration of the mysterious murder is portrayed in a cinematic mode, which is in turn framed within an ekphrasis of a dramatic performance featuring a mammoth

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134 „Яскраво виражена кінематографічність викладу, напружене подієва змінюваність “кадрів” та місця їхнього розгортання (Америка, Британія, Франція, Африка, Україна), демонстративний монтаж окремих епізодів, подекуди навіть епатажний.” Mel’nykiv, “Liudyna z khymernym imenniam,” 16.

named Vim. These latter prehistoric events that occurred in the area thousands of years earlier are depicted as a cheap operetta, while contemporary events—are given a cinematic rendition. Through numerous digressions and metafictional commentaries, the narrator consistently parodies elements of the crime mystery story, laying the cinematic devices bare.

The set-up for the crime is described in a conditional mode, narrating the episode as a cinematic medium would render it. Popular conventions from silent film for building suspense are contrasted with “realistic” narration, seen as more appropriate to the type of material being presented (i.e., the Soviet reality): “The first shadow was passing by. Here, of course, we could add a title, ‘In the darkness of the night, a despicable villain raised his hand and ...,’ but I am an opponent of unnatural presentation. I am recording realistically, with no intent to frighten the viewer.”

To expose the conventionality of popular films, the narrator offers two versions of a scene. The first is cinematic, with the use of stunts and special effects to underline the sense of mystery and suspense. This version cuts between medium and close-up shots and is framed in a manner traditional for the mystery genre. It is rendered primarily in the present tense and uses short nominal descriptive phrases that call to mind a script:

Для глядачів, що закохані в трюки,— можна було б тут дати: хата в лісі, і вітні затуляють її всю, крім вікна. Жовтий прямокутник витинається з ночі й пахне таємністю. Окремо на першому плані: темний силует руки, що стукає пальцем у вікно. Тінь, що рухнулась у хаті по шибці вікна. Вагання. Нарешті напис: “скрипнули двері й ...” увійшов Семко. Він міг би зняти з обличчя бороду, вуса й зробитись кимось іншим. Це для любителів трюків.


137 “Перша тінь проходила мимо. Тут, звичайно, можна б поставити напис: “Серед темної ночі підняв гнусний злодій руку і ...,” але я ворог ставання на котурни—я проваджу знімку реальні, не маючи наміру яккати глядача.” Ianovs’kyi, “Mamutovi byvni,” 57. The idiomatic phrase “ставання на котурни” literally translates as “wearing cothurni” and implies lofty, stilted and exaggerated representation in art associated with ancient Greek tragedy.

138 Ianovs’kyi, “Mamutovi byvni,” 58.
For viewers in love with special effects, I could have shown here: A house in the forest with branches covering everything, aside from the window. A yellow rectangle stands out in the night and smells of mystery. Separately, in the foreground, the dark silhouette of a hand taps a finger at the window. In the window, a shadow moves inside the house. Hesitation. Finally, a title: “A squeak of the door and …” Semko entered. He could have taken off his beard and moustache, and transformed into someone else (for the lovers of stunts).

In contrast, a second version of the scene offers a witty description of what actually occurred, self-consciously laying bare the mystery genre’s cheap tricks and clichés: “But in fact: Semko entered Hnat Karpovych’s house. The house was not in the forest—it was in the village. Semko did not tap on the window at all, which saved about half a meter of film. Neither did he take off his beard, because this could only have been done with a razor.”

To sum up, the short story “Mamutovi byvni” explores and plays with elements of cinematic narration, exposing special effects and conventions typical to the mystery and detective genres. At the same time, the cinematic descriptions enable the narrator to present events in a different and defamiliarized light, foregrounding the form and narration of the story and, beyond that, the artifice of artistic creation in general.

Similar to Ianovs’kyi, Geo Shkurupii constructs his 1927 short story “Provokator” (The provocateur) by evoking and emulating a narration and special effects typical of mystery and detective films. However, unlike the parodic use of film narration in “Mamutovi byvni,” “Provokator” consistently utilizes a cinematic narrative mode to render events of the story, presenting brief cinematic sequences narrated in present tense. Comrade Pavliuk, a member of

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139 “Але справді: Семко зайшов у хату Гната Карповича. Хата стояла не в лісі — в селі. Семко зовсім не стукав у вікно, чим скоротив півметра фільму. Бороди він теж не знімав, бо це можна було зробити лише бритвою.” Ianovs’kyi, “Mamutovi byvni,” 58.

140 Oleksii Poltorats’kyi noted the skillful use of cinematic elements in Shkurupii’s “Provokator” to achieve laconic narration, and he encouraged writers to use it as a form of innovation in “leftist” prose: “Конденсована динамічна мова дозволяє лапідарність стилю дорівнювати до лапідарності мови кіно-сценарія.” Oleksii Poltorats’kyi, “Praktyka livoho opovidannia,” Nova generatsiia, no. 1 (1928): 57.
Komsomol,\textsuperscript{141} is working to solve a murder committed at the local post office. An external circumstance constrains the detective and suspects to an enclosed space: all the characters are locked up at the post office due to a raging thunderstorm outside. While stuck inside, Pavliuk runs through various possible scenarios and hypotheses regarding the crime in his mind, and Shkurupii styles these thought processes as cinematic scenes. Gradually, Pavliuk is able to deduce the identity of the actual murderer.

The story is predominantly narrated in the present tense, which creates the illusion of immediacy, as if the events were unfolding on a movie screen. Moreover, all of the characters and scenes are presented as if through a viewfinder: the author closes on certain object or detail, rapidly shifting focus between them. In one scene, for instance, suspense is built by focusing the camera on Pavliuk and a girl he suspects of committing the murder. The deployment of a cinematic camera-eye narration, focusing on characters reactions, generates dramatic tension, with fast cutting portraying a fast, dynamic pace of events. Each new shot is graphically represented as a new line on the page, which differentiates the shots for the reader and further cements the illusion of film sequencing:

Павлюк підійшов до вихідних дверей, повернувся, кинув недокурок і подивився на дівчину.

Вона стоїть у дуже незручній, неприродній позі й очі її бігають, не зупиняючись ні на чому. Павлюк ніби гіпнотизує її.

Ось він вже взявся за защіпку й знову подивився на дівчину, вона стоїть в тій самій позі, а на обличчі з’являється якась розгубленість, вона ніби хоче щось сказати, але не відважується.

Ось дівчина поволі пішла на нього, його обличчя стало запитливим.

Дівчина зупинилася в кількох кроках од нього й подивилась на підлогу. На підлозі недокурок, що його кинув Павлюк. Дівчина байдуже гасить його ногою.\textsuperscript{142}

Pavliuk approaches the exit, turns back, throws away his cigarette butt and looks at the girl.

\textsuperscript{141} Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi, or the Communist Youth Union.

\textsuperscript{142} Geo Shkurupii, “Provokator,” Zhyttia i revoliutsiia, no. 9 (1927): 232.
She is standing; her pose is very uncomfortable and unnatural; and her eyes quickly move from one object to another, without focusing on any one thing in particular. It is as if Pavliuk is hypnotizing her.

He reaches for the door handle then looks back at the girl again. She has the same pose. Her face shows confusion—she almost wants to say something but hesitates.

Now the girl slowly moves towards him. His face becomes more interested.

The girl stops a few steps away from him and looks down at the floor. On the floor is the cigarette butt that Pavliuk threw out. The girl indifferently puts it out with her foot.

The dramatic tension and suspense constructed in this scene is similar to that of a silent film, though in the end it reaches an anti-climax that disrupts the reader’s expectations.

Most importantly, aside from building suspense and playing with the reader’s expectations, the concrete visualizations of this cinematic narration impart equal degrees of “realism” to the representation of the story’s events and to the play of Pavliuk’s fantasies and imagination. The latter is especially important: the visual language of cinema allows Shkurupii to render imaginary scenes in concrete images. The most bizarre imagined sequences are narrated using special effects that emphasize Pavliuk’s subjective point of view. Such techniques are typical of popular murder mystery films: a spinning room, the floor shaking right before the murder takes place, and so forth. In one visualization of Pavliuk’s thoughts, for example, the room is filled with fog, and the camera focuses solely on the girl’s hand with a knife—before cutting to a shot of the telegraphist falling dead on the floor. The next shot presents the girl after supposedly murdering the telegraphist:

Дівчина відходить од нього, під нею хитається підлога, хитаються стіни, вона як п’яна.

Вона кидається до свого батька й ховає голову в нього на грудях …

Павлюк раптом здригається, удар грому повертає його до дійсності.143

The girl moves away from him, the floor is shaking underneath her, the walls are shaking, she looks like she is drunk.

She throws herself at her father and buries her head on his chest …

Pavliuk suddenly shudders; a thunder stroke returns him to reality.

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143 Shkurupii, “Provokator,” 234.
The imaginary crime scenes running through Pavliuk’s mind are inspired by cliché scenes from detective films and novels. For example, while trying to resolve the murder mystery, Pavliuk often refers to crime-solving devices found in Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle’s detective stories. In fact, he looks for patterns and clues inspired by crime, adventure and mystery stories, with his reconstructed possible scenarios also directly influenced by the same popular genres. However, when he discovers the actual murderer, the Provocateur, the situation becomes more serious, and so Pavliuk forgets all about Sherlock Holmes, and, in contrast to building fantasies in his mind, he begins to act like a real Komsomol member.

Critical reception of stories like “Mamutovi byvni” and “Provokator” was very positive, indicating the rising popularity of cinema-inspired fiction in 1920s Ukrainian literature. Elements of cinematic style appear throughout Ukrainian literature into the early 1930s. The following Ukrainian novels and short stories from these years are, unarguably, the direct result of their authors’ avid regard for and conscious preoccupation with the cinematic medium and its aesthetics: Leonid Skrypnyk’s novel Intelihent, Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s novel Soniachna mashyna (The solar machine; 1928), Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s novel Maister korablia and novella “Borodati myslyvtsi znakhodiat’ molodist’” (Bearded hunters find youth; 1929), Geo Shkurupii’s novel Dveri v Den’ (The doors into day; 1929), Dmytro Buz’ko’s novels Pro shcho rozpovila rotatsiika (What the press operator told; 1929) and Holandiia (1930), and, finally, Maik Iohansen’s novel Podorozh Leonardo. These works do not just parody or allude to the conventions of cinema, they explicitly emulate its style and narrative form. And they consistently

144 See Shkurupii, “Provokator,” 231.
deploy its techniques with a larger purpose in mind: to reform the novelistic tradition and, thereby, revolutionize Ukrainian literature. The remainder of this chapter examines these prominent examples of cinema-inspired prose from the late 1920s and early 1930s. Numerous texts are briefly considered, to give a sense for the range of concerns and themes, ending with a closer look at Iohansen’s *Podorozh Leonardo* and Shkurupii’s *Dveri v den’*.

The majority of the cinematic poems and prose pieces penned in the late 1920s and early 1930s were either directly authored by members of “Nova Generatsiia” or first published in that group’s publication *Nova generatsiia*. For instance, the short visual screenplay “Dynamo (Asotsiatsiia vid Vel’sovoho ‘Boh dynamo’): Kino-stsenarii” (Dynamo, inspired by H. G. Welss’s “The Lord of the Dynamos”: a film script; 1928) by Favst Lopatyns’kyi and the long experimental poem “Kharkiv: Kino-symphoniia” (Kharkiv: a cine-symphony; 1929) by Leonid Chernov give examples of incorporating cinematic devices into a poetic form.147 Geo Koliada’s 1929 novel *Arsenal syl: Roman novoi konstruktsii* (The arsenal of forces: a novel of new construction) features an experimental, synthetic form where the author combines cinematic elements with folk-style poetry and ekphrases of paintings.148

Another prolific member of “Nova Generatsiia” who worked for VUFKU was Dmytro Buz’ko. His *Pro shcho rozpovila rotatsiika* offers an example of a cine-story (кіноповість), a genre that became popular in the 1920s.149 Similar to the earlier Ukrainian cinema-inspired prose

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of the siuzhetnyky, this novel is constructed around dynamic action and a fast pace that seems directly borrowed from popular adventure films. However, unlike earlier examples of cinematic-literary intermediality, Buz’ko’s cine-novella moves beyond imitating devices from popular films by constructively employing purely cinematic techniques and devices. Most notably, the novel emulates cinema in its exposition of characters. The characterizations lack psychological motivation, and instead the characters are described through a surplus of external, concrete details. Special focus is given to their actions and gestures, for instance, while speech and dialogue is reduced to intertitles.

Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s cinematic characterization in his Soniachna mashyna also produces schematic characters. Vynnychenko wrote his nostalgic, utopian novel as an émigré in Berlin between 1921–24, yet it was first published in Ukraine only in 1928. The novel immediately gained wide popularity among readers and had an immense effect on Ukrainian writers. Strongly ideological in its message, it presents an optimistic picture of the future, a utopian vision of a post-capitalist society made possible by the scientific discovery of a solar machine that produces food from solar power and grass.

In discussing the novel’s formal structure, critics noted its cinematic narrative mode and devices. For instance, Ivan Lakyza claims that this Wellsian science fiction piece combined the dynamic pace of cinema with elements of the adventure genre. Mykola Zerov, for his part,

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150 In another of Buz’ko’s novels, Holiandiia, representing the life of a village commune after the Revolution, the use of cinematic devices also creates the effect of a schematic portrayal of characters.


offered a thorough catalogue and analysis of the novel’s cinematic elements, including its 
externalized characterizations, script composition, dynamic action and present tense narration.\textsuperscript{153}

Minimal dialogue, a lack of psychological motivation, and an external portrayal of the 
protagonists (emphasizing physical characteristics, gestures, and facial expressions) all strike the 
literary critic as cinematic.\textsuperscript{154} Yet Zerov criticizes Vynnychenko for emulating cinematic 
characterization which reduced descriptions of characters to their several defining external 
features and diminished the expressive effect of his writing.\textsuperscript{155}

All the above examples demonstrate that the portrayal of live or actual human beings in 
early cinema reconfigured characterization in Ukrainian experimental novels. Like Zerov, other 
critics often responded negatively to such external cinematic characterization, by arguing that it 
produced schematic abstract characters.\textsuperscript{156} Early films also produced similar effect, and the most 
straightforward explanation of this schematized portrayal of characters in cinema is found in the 
nature of early silent film, in its lack of sound and colour. In his reaction to early films, 
prominent Russian writer Maxim Gorky compared film to the “kingdom of shadows” because of 
film’s propensity to transform everything living into lifeless, grey shadows, endowing 
cinematography with somewhat “evil” powers.\textsuperscript{157} Most importantly, Gorky emphasized the 
dehumanizing effects of cinematic representation:

\begin{quote}
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153 See Zerov, “\textit{Soniachna mashyna},” 435–56. Zerov also suggests that Vynnychenko might have originally planned to write a movie script, but later reworked it into a novel. Zerov, “\textit{Soniachna mashyna},” 446.
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155 “Показавши своїх дійових людей лише зовні, він не дав їм повної всебічної характеристики, обмежуючись двома-трьома прикметами, достатніми тільки для того, щоб їх раз у раз пізнавати на екрані.” Zerov, “\textit{Soniachna mashyna},” 448.
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156 For instance, Starynkevych criticizes schematism in characterization in Skrypnyk’s novel \textit{Intelihent}. See note 113 in chapter 3.
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\end{quote} 

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157 Maxim Gorky, “The Kingdom of Shadows,” in \textit{Authors on Film}, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 3. German writer Thomas Mann provides similar metaphors when he compares the
Noiselessly, the ashen-grey foliage of the trees sways in the wind, and the grey silhouettes of the people, as though condemned to eternal silence and cruelly punished by being deprived of all the colours of life, glide noiselessly along the grey ground. Their smiles are lifeless, even though their movements are full of living energy and are so swift as to be almost imperceptible. Their laughter is soundless, although you see the muscles contracting in their grey faces. Before you a life is surging, a life deprived of words and shorn of the living spectrum of colours—the grey, the soundless, the bleak and dismal life.¹⁵⁸

Gorky attributes his negative reaction to cinematic representation mostly to the inherent limitations of early cinema technology. In addition to lack of colour and sound, other characteristics of the silent cinema, including its depthless presentation (i.e., the fact that a projected cinematic image is flat or two-dimensional), reduced characters to schematic abstractions.

In failing to offer psychological detail and in focusing on only a few defining features and formulaic gestures, cinematic characterization in literature leads to characters’ dehumanized portrayal. Ortega y Gasset argues that “when we seek to ascertain the most general and most characteristic feature of modern artistic production we come upon the tendency to dehumanize art.”¹⁵⁹ The alleged dehumanization in art stems in general from modern artistic sensibilities and the tendency to depart from naturalistic depiction of human forms and objects, often to the point of making them unrecognizable.¹⁶⁰ The dehumanization of literary characters mimicked the fragmented, abstracted representation of humans in avant-garde art in general. Avant-garde visual arts offer many examples of abstract representations of the human body that only

schematically resemble the actual human form. \footnote{Ukrainian artists whose works represent human characters as abstract or schematic include: Oleksandr Arkhypenko, Oleksandr Bohomazov, and Vasyl’ Ermilov, among others. See also the use of geometric drawings for characters and costumes for plays by Oleksandra Exter, Vadym Meller and Anatol’ Petryts’kyi; or the deformed, fragmented human figures constructed of brightly coloured cones and cubes in the works of Cubists; or the faceless dolls inspired by the Ukrainian folk tradition in Malevich’s later paintings. For the discussion of the latter see Dmytro Horbachov, introduction to \textit{Ukrains’kyi avanhard}, 7.} Like the fragmented human figures and schematic masks of avant-garde painting and sculpture, the characters of Buz’ko, Shkurupii, Iohansen and Skrypnyk present schematic universal types devoid of natural, individual features.

Such schematization was pronounced in these experimental novels, leading critics to confirm a certain “puppetization” of their characters. Thus, Iakubovs’kyi compares Shkurupii’s characters to lifeless marionettes and the narrator, to a puppet master. \footnote{“Ґ. Шкурупій аж ніяк не вважає на своїх героїв, як на істоти більш-менш наділені якимись реальними рисами. Він позбавляє їх навіть власної мови, він поводиться, як хазяїн театру маріонеток. Перед нами мертва гра ляльок, а за нею ввесь час чути дуже знайомий голос їх хазяїна.” Iakubovs’kyi, \textit{Vid noveli do romanu}, 248.} Moreover, the resemblance between the characters and puppets (or marionettes) is often itself foregrounded in Ukrainian experimental prose. For instance, Leonid Skrypnyk’s introduction of actual and allegorical puppets produces satirical effect in \textit{Intelihent}. \footnote{For a discussion of Skrypnyk’s puppets and puppet-like characters, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.}
In a similar manner, characters in Maik Iohansen’s seminal novel *Podorozh Leonardo* are explicitly compared to puppets. The experimental genre of the “landscape novel” proposes to switch the functions of characters and landscape depictions. In an English epigraph the narrator of *Podorozh Leonardo* exposes the characters as “mere cardboard puppets” and “moving
decorations,” subverting their traditional role as active agents in fiction. On the other hand, the novel offers metamorphoses and movements of cinematically rendered landscapes. Cover illustration for Iohansen’s *Opovidannia* (Kharkiv: Rukh, 1932), designed by Vasyl’ Krychevs’kyi, reflects this idea depicting a puppeteer’s hand holding the strings, and the puppets of Leonardo and Al’chesta against the natural landscapes of Sloboda Switzerland.

As in his earlier prose, cinema plays an important role in Iohansen’s novel. This experiment in fusing formalist and cinematic elements was highly regarded by literary critics and readers alike. A gifted poet, writer, translator, scriptwriter and linguist, Iohansen displayed his wide-ranging skills and interests in the construction of this work. Specifically, his experience writing scripts had a direct impact on the novel’s emulation of cinematic framing, camera-eye narration and montage composition.

The novel’s somewhat schematic and fragmentary composition owes to its publication history: the prologue and first two books originally appeared as two separate stories in the

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164 Maik Iohansen, *Podorozh uchenoho doktora Leonardo i ioho maibutn’oi kokhanky prekrasnoi Al’chesty u Slobozhans’ku Shvaitsariiu* (Kyiv: Rukh, 1932), 5.

165 The afterword plays on these ideas of “real” landscapes and puppet-like of characters, reiterating the content of the English epigraph: “Із декоративного картону він вирізав людські фігури, під克莱їв під них дерев’яні цурпалки, грубо розмалював їх умовними фарбами, крізь картонні пупи протягнув їм дріт і весело засовав цими фігурами під палочим сонцем живого, справжнього степу й під вогким риззям справжніх яворів Слобожанської Швайцар’ї.” Iohansen, *Podorozh Leonardo*, 168.

166 See Figure 1.

167 Because of its experimental narration, non-linearity, metafictional commentary, as well as its role in the construction of the new Ukrainian novel, *Podorozh Leonardo* is placed in the context of classic novels in the Central and Western European canon, i.e., Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605–15) and Jaroslav Hašek’s *The Fortunes of the Good Soldier Švejk* (1921–23), works of Stendhal and Laurence Sterne. See “Intermediia patosu,” *Literaturnyi iarmarok*, no. 1 (1928): 199. *Podorozh Leonardo* specifically shows affinity with Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), as well as *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67).

168 Most notably, with Iurii Tiutiunnyk Iohansen co-wrote a script for Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s film *Zvenyhora* (1928). While writing the script for *Zvenyhora*, in the spring of 1927, Iohansen also worked as an editor (мовний редактор) at VUFKU. See Alla Herburt-Iohansen, “Istoriia postannia fil’mu ‘Zvenyhora’,” in *Vybrani tvory*, by Maik Iohansen, ed. Rostyslav Mel’nykiv, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009), 730.
The prologue narrates Don Khoze Pereira’s journey to the south of Ukraine, while the main body of the novel (books 1–3) recounts Al’chesta and Leonardo’s journey through Sloboda Switzerland. During their travels, the foreigners encounter bizarre adventures and meet a set of local characters, and the foreign perspective provides opportunities for extensive playful commentary on Ukrainian culture and the customs of its people.

Numerous formal innovations in the novel show Iohansen as a proponent of formalist literary theory. The artistic approach of ponovlennia or “defamiliarization” (originally ostranenie in Russian), which is crucial to formalist studies, is significant also in the composition of Podorozh Leonardo, as it is in Iohansen’s theoretical studies as well. Among chief techniques for achieving a defamiliarizing effect, Iohansen frequently employed cinematic characterization, camera-eye narration and cinematic editing.

In effect, the novel offers a cinematic journey through Ukrainian landscapes, presenting concrete descriptions of landscapes from the perspective of a moving camera eye. Podorozh Leonardo defamiliarizes vision as such by the use of camera-eye narration. The dynamic, cinematic descriptions of landscapes depart from habitual literary representations of the

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170 The area in the Kharkiv region described in the novel is indeed known as “Switzerland” because of its similarity in landscape. See Mel’nykiv, “Liudyna z khymernym imenniam,” 20n1.

171 The title of Iohansen’s study *Iak buduiet’sia opovidannia* (How a short story is constructed; 1928) also reveals author’s affinity with the theories of Russian formalists. It directly references the titles of formalists’ works. See, for instance, Boris Eikhenbaum, “Kak sdelana ‘Shinel’” Gogolia” (How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ is made”), in *Skvoz’ literaturu* (Leningrad: Academia, 1924), 171–95 (originally published in *Poetika* [1919]) and Viktor Shklovskii, “Kak sdelan Don-Kikhot” (How Don Quixote is made), in *O teorii prozy* (Moskva: Federatsiia, 1929), 91–124.

172 For Iohansen’s discussion of ponovlennia see Maik Iohansen, *Iak buduiet’sia opovidannia*, 26–27.
landscape as a static and inanimate object. And the characters serve as vehicles from whose point of view the novel presents these landscape descriptions. For instance, at one point the narrator offers the description of a boat ride in a lake from Al’chesta’s point of view. As Al’chesta and Orest row through tall reeds, only a narrow strip of sky is visible, while unidentified objects move across the field of Al’chesta’s vision: “as if on a cinema screen a file of live crosses appeared for an instant.” The passage explicitly evokes cinematic imagery, using cinematic framing to indicate Al’chesta’s obscured vision. The scene unfolds slowly, and readers’ comprehension is delayed. On entering the open lake, the field of vision widens to reveal that the “live crosses” are in fact ducks flying above Al’chesta and Orest. Presenting narrative information in this manner through a metaphoric, cinematic frame allows the author to prolong the perception of the scene and to defamiliarize its description of nature.

Another cinematic device, montage, governs the composition of the scenes in book 3. Unlike the rest of the novel, book 3 predominantly narrates fantastic events and metamorphoses in the style of Gogol’s prose. For instance, the visualization of a Leonardo’s dream is constructed as follows:

Ладо моє! Попливли самотворні образи, він не уявляв їх собі, він бачив їх перед собою крізь темряву, барвистіші від життя, яскравіші від галюцинацій.

Перед ним у сутті став Дон Хозе Перейра. Руки схрищені на грудях під киреєю. Обличчя сумне й суворе і брови схрищені зморшкою над хворовитими очима. Зморшка заглибилася і простяглася, і окрім долинка—в ній біг сірий вовк, зайда з далеких лісів. Жовті очі йому спалахнули в темряві, як фари, і от це був льокомотив.

My love! Self-generating images started outpouring; he didn’t imagine them, but saw them in front of him through darkness, more colourful than life, more vivid than hallucinations.

In front of him, in the dusk, Don Khoze Pereira appeared. His hands are crossed on his chest under his coat. His face is sorrowful and grim, and his eyebrows are crossed like a furrow above his sickly eyes. The furrow grew deeper and extended, and now it was a dell—a gray wolf was running there, a stranger from faraway forests. His yellow eyes flashed in the darkness like headlights, and now it was a locomotive.

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173 “Немов на екрані кіна, на мить з'явилася низька живих хрестів.” Iohansen, Podorozh Leonardo, 98.

The montage in this cinematic visualization highlights metaphor and metonymy. Described in a high degree of concrete, visual detail, the dream generates a surreal narrative connected only by the logic of loose association. Gradually closing in on a detail of Don Khoze Pereira’s face initiates an outpouring of images, juxtaposing disconnected shots based on metaphoric visual associations. The sequence is characterized by the fluidity of images and the constant transformation of fragmented shapes into objects. This type of literary montage is paralleled in the novel’s poetic canvas, where sound associations or similarities in the graphic representation of the word govern the construction of phrases and sentences, rather than the words’ meaning or context. Thus cinematic device of montage proves to be deeply ingrained in the texture of the novel.

Besides construction of schematic characters, cinematic devices also served to fulfill an ideological function. For instance, Shkurupii’s first novel *Dveri v den’* presents a multimodal text with numerous framed narratives. Cinematic descriptions and devices are juxtaposed with heterogeneous sections borrowed from popular genres of fiction—and even from non-fiction, including reportage or travelogue. Presenting such a hybrid genre “collage” crossing the boundaries between fiction and fact is characteristic of Ukrainian experimental novels and, as was argued earlier, illustrates the turn towards factual genres in the 1920s. The key components in the composition of this novel are the main story line, which is centered around Teodor Hai; the framed story of a prehistoric tribe, which is later revealed as a product of Hai’s imagination, triggered by his looking at a painting; a narrative of events of the Civil war employing literary montage; a university lecture on industrialization and the construction of the DniproHES (the Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Station); and a reportage of a journey down the Dnipro River.
Critics pointed to the most explicit use of cinematics in chapter 12 of *Dveri v den’*, entitled “Rozhrom” (Total defeat) for its rendition of revolutionary events. As I argued earlier, montage was productively adapted in the Ukrainian experimental novel for structuring the events of the revolution and rendering fragmented, disrupted perception of time. “Rozhrom” chapter is a perfect illustration of this and indeed the most cinematic in the novel. It is narrated in the present tense in short nominal sentences, with scenes of events alternating between shots of varied length. Each scene is numbered and corresponds to a separate paragraph, which makes the chapter resemble a film script. The sequences also use intertitles, both to render direct speech and to explain the connection between various images and scenes.

Other chapters in the novel also incorporate cinematic devices, albeit in a less explicit manner. Perceptive readers will discern, at various points, emulations of shot-framing, distinct cinematic lighting (revealing significant details of the story), and cinematic editing devices (fade, dissolve, superimposition, flashback and flashforward).

Ultimately, similar to the representation of Pavliuk’s fantasies in Shkurupii’s story “Provokator,” film narration is employed here to render the protagonist’s idle daydreaming, while the use of literary montage allows easy movement between imagined sequences and reality. While in his imaginary world, Teodor Hai’s very decisions and actions are informed by cinema, as he identifies himself with popular film heroes. However, a cinematic present tense narration gives an air of concrete reality to the descriptions of Hai’s fantasies. Therefore the reader cannot easily distinguish between real and imagined events until the end of the novel, when the juxtaposition of real and imaginary events is disclosed in the narrator’s commentary:

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175 Iakubovs’kyi notes “Батальні сцени громадянської війни подано сценарієм на 93 кадри.” Iakubovs’kyi, *Vid noveli do romanu*, 260. See also Vas’kiv, “Укрains’kyi futurystychnyi roman,” 2.

176 For instance, the fade-out denotes the end of the daydreaming scene: “постаті […] зникли в його уяві, ніби провалилися в чорну прірву.” Geo Shkurupii, *Dveri v den’* (Kharkiv: Proletaryi, 1929), 18.
“Fantasy was mixed with the actual biography of Hai, Teodor Hai, who was sitting at the pub.” The unreliability of the cinematic narrative sequences is exposed as the narrator reveals that they correspond only to Hai’s cinematically-constructed fantasy world: “His imagination, like a dexterous projectionist unwinding two thousand meters of film in front of him, could conjure up thousands of tales.”

The cinematic devices used in the construction of Hai’s extremely realistic fantasy scenes are highlighted by Shkurupii as clichés from popular film genres, including detective, mystery, romance and adventure. Yet these cinematic daydream scenes also mean to convey the idea of bourgeois art as mere entertainment, thus they are understood as carrying only an idling, petit-bourgeois inertia. These scenarios are contrasted with Hai’s desire for “decisive action,” i.e., his taking a trip to the DniproHES construction site on the Dnipro River.

The description of Hai’s journey reproduces with minor changes an actual reportage “Starym Dniprom v ostannii raz” (Traveling along the old Dnipro for the last time; 1927) co-authored by Geo Shkurupii and Dmytro Buz’ko. This travel essay describes their travel down the Dnipro river, discussing the changing Ukrainian landscapes, the fast pace of industrialization and a dire state of Ukrainization in the area. The collectively written reportage thus also serves as a good illustration of travel writing that revisits and explores Ukrainian cultural spaces.

177 “Фантастія перемішалася з дійсною біографією Гая, Теодора Гая, що сидів у пивній.” Shkurupii, Dveri v den’, 187.
178 “Його уяв, як спритний кіномеханік, що розкрутив перед ним дві тисячі метрів кінофільму, могла вигадати тисячі казок.” Shkurupii, Dveri v den’, 188.
180 The character wants to escape “від міщанства й бездіяльності.” Shkurupii, Dveri v den’, 179. His daydreaming is dubbed as “empty dreams” (“порожні мрії”). Shkurupii, Dveri v den’, 188.
Following his journey down the Dnipro, the protagonist finally gains control over his fantasies and passivity. He is reborn as a proletarian by starting work at the DniproHES, thus opening the metaphoric “doors into day” (двері в день) of the novel’s title, into a “bright future.” Here the contrast between popular fictional genres and factual genres especially comes into play, for towards the end of the novel, the cinematic fictional scenes are directly juxtaposed with reportage, the latter, of course, being the ideologically appropriate literary form for the protagonist’s newfound, proletarian clarity.

To sum up, the majority of writers mirrored cinema aesthetics in their poetry and prose in part as a result of their direct connection to the film industry in 1920s Ukraine. The earliest examples of experimental prose modeled on film are synonymous with what critics labeled as *siuzhetna proza*. These dynamic action-driven narratives reference cinematic elements as cliché devices of popular film genres (romance, mystery, adventure and detective). Moreover, they emulate cinematic narratives to build suspense, create a dynamic pace and, in general, construct engaging works of fiction with mass appeal.

As cinema technology advanced, authors also realized that cinema provided powerful devices both for faithfully representing reality through reportage and for artistic organization of this factual material, devices which could also be transposed into prose. Literary writers saw cinema as an inspiration and embraced its techniques to redefine their narrative modes, characterization and narrative organization. By the late 1920s experimental novels widely mimicked a cinematic style of camera-eye narration, editing (especially in the use of literary montage), and external characterization. For all these reasons, the aesthetics of cinema came to be perceived as a key element in the construction of new literary forms—forms, it was believed,

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more appropriately able to express the emerging socio-political reality. Indeed, film was viewed as such a paramount modernizing art that, by the late 1920s, its aesthetics was placed at the core of the Ukrainian experimental novel.

Due to the impact of cinema aesthetics, experimental novels are filled with concrete visual details. Moreover, the stories are either fashioned as a direct ekphrasis of film or narrated predominantly from the perspective of a (neutral or subjective) camera eye and through the cinematic simultaneous narration in the present tense. Characters are introduced predominantly through gestures, movement and action, which aids in their external characterization even as it leads to their schematic presentation. Finally, in the composition of the narrative material the authors emulate cinematic editing techniques (various effects of montage ranging from continuity and discontinuity editing, to ellipsis, flashbacks and flashforwards, parallel editing and crosscutting), which contribute to novels’ nonlinear organization, fragmentariness, and abrupt spatial and temporal shifts.

Cinema aesthetics permeates two most representative Ukrainian experimental novels of the era, Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s novel *Maister korablia* and Leonid Skrypnyk’s *Intelihent*. These novels illustrate the most direct and successful application of cinematic elements to prose, as both directly and programmatically employ film devices to achieve their distinctive goals. Specifically, in *Maister korablia* the emulation of camera-eye narration and montage organization produce effect of direct rendition of narrator’s memories, while in *Intelihent* the masterful employment of laconic cinematic narration, external characterization and literary montage construct a utilitarian form of cinematic satire. Most importantly, in both novels emulating film aesthetics becomes the key means to revolutionize the Ukrainian novel and to modernize Ukrainian literature and culture in general.
Chapter 2 Writing as Document: Cinema Aesthetics in Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s Maister korablia

Хай простить тому небо, хто підозрює мене в повсякчасному ухилянні від широкої дороги. Я ніколи не любив ходити по дорогах. Тому я й люблю море, що на ньому кожна дорога нова, і кожне місце—дорога.¹

May heaven forgive those who suspect me in constant deviation from a wide road. I never liked to walk along roads. That’s why I love the sea, because there each road is new and each place a road.

Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s Maister korablia (1928) is an experimental novel documenting life in a Ukrainian film factory in the 1920s. Not only does filmmaking serve as the novel’s unifying theme, but film devices also modernize its narrative modes and construction. The work may be characterized as a memoir-novel, an experiment reflecting, in part, the fascination of 1920s Ukrainian writers with the non-fiction genres in both literature and film. Yet although cinema has a tremendous impact on Maister korablia’s aesthetics, the novel transcends the mere imitation of a film. Rather, the novel combines cinematic and literary (or poetic) elements to achieve its overall effect, a rich and dynamically woven texture.

In constructing this memoir-novel Ianovs’kyi emulates two seemingly incongruous aspects of the aesthetic of non-acted film: the capturing of “life as it is” by the camera eye, and the artistic reworking of this factual material by montage. The work presents a film-inspired montage of the narrator’s fragmented memories, shaped into loosely linked narrative sequences directly mirroring his recollections of life at a film factory. Tightly interlaced with these cinematic memories is a whole range of the narrator’s sensory perceptions, something only literary narration can reproduce. Moreover, the main narrative frame of the novel is placed fifty years into the future, thus giving it a utopian quality.

¹ Iurii Ianovs’kyi, Maister korablia (Kharkiv: Knyhospilka, 1928), 36.
The story is narrated through flashbacks, which are in turn framed by digressive reflections and musings on old age, memory, the nature of reminiscing, and the literary craft. The novel’s story, narration and composition are exposed through the many self-reflexive comments by the narrator. *Maister korablia* becomes, then, not just a chronicle of film production, but also a metafictional discussion about literature and artistic construction in general. Such self-reflexivity was, in fact, a defining characteristic of Ukrainian experimental art of the 1920s.

Early in the novel To-Ma-Ki, the narrator-protagonist, states that he has structured his memoirs in this fashion in hopes both of distancing his writings from the conventions of fiction and of rendering his memories in a more direct manner. Later he likens the writing process to sailing on an open sea: just as the sea offers a vast open space devoid of predefined paths, so the writing of a novel should avoid beaten paths. It is not surprising, then, to find *Maister korablia* redefining established literary genres. The metaphor of writing as sailing not only informs To-Ma-Ki’s narration, it also parallels the main intent of the novel itself: to redraw the boundaries of the traditional novel by producing an experimental literary form constructed of elements of several genres and informed by various artistic media.

Ultimately, *Maister korablia* aims to subvert the worn conventions of the traditional novel and to distance itself from fiction in general in hopes of bringing the novel, as a form, closer to *life*. As Ianovs’kyi strove for new modes of artistic expression for the novel, he found much inspiration in the cinema of the day, which was rapidly gaining in popularity. In fact, of the various forms affecting the novel, cinema was to play the most prominent role, both on the thematic level and in the novel’s narrative structure. Cinematic narrative modes provided tools for crafting concrete descriptions in line with Ianovs’kyi’s literary quest for direct renditions of empirical reality. Other innovations included montage organization, which came to replace the
linear story and narrative continuity, and dynamic cinematic characterization, which came to replace conventional character development.

Ianovs’kyi’s search for new narrative modes and his experiments with the novelistic form developed in a context of close collaboration with visual artists and filmmakers, specifically the Ukrainian Futurists of “Nova Generatsiia,” who were at the vanguard of the 1920s Cultural Renaissance. The Futurists promoted the collaboration and fusing of arts as means of breaking from the limitations of traditional art forms. As was previously noted, such formal experiments were intended to raise the quality of Ukrainian literature, to modernize its forms, and to free it from its provincial qualities. The establishment of the Soviet Ukrainian Republic and the new state policy of Ukrainization, which aimed to promote Ukrainian culture and literature among the Russified urban masses, created a productive atmosphere for the revitalization and development of artistic forms and styles in Ukraine. The elevated tone and themes of Maister korablia brilliantly capture and reflect this period of enthusiasm and creative zeal.

Maister korablia, then, is a fictional memoir, based on the author’s own personal involvement with cinema. Iurii Ianovs’kyi experienced firsthand the establishment, development and growth in popularity of this new artistic medium in Soviet Ukraine. His path was a typical one for Ukrainian writers in the 1920s. Mykhail’ Semenko, then editor-in-chief at the scenario department at VUFKU studios, invited the writer Ianovs’kyi to work as an editor. During his tenure at VUFKU (from 1925–27), Ianovs’kyi himself rose to the position of editor-

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2 These aesthetic views of the Futurists will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3, in connection with Leonid Skrypnyk’s experimental novel Intelihent.

3 See Babyshkin, Kinospadshchyna for an overview of Ianovs’kyi’s role in the development of Ukrainian cinema.

4 See Ilnytzkyj, Ukrainian Futurism, 103; see also Babyshkin, Kinospadshchyna, 7–8. Ianovs’kyi’s contemporaries Lazar Bodyk and Les’ Shvachko write in their memoirs that, in effect, during his tenure at VUFKU Ianovs’kyi served as an artistic director (художній керівник) at the Odesa Film Studios. Babyshkin, Kinospadshchyna, 93.
in-chief, in which role he contributed to the development of Ukrainian cinema by writing movie scripts, composing intertitles, editing films and overseeing film production.\(^6\)

Thematically, *Maister korablia* is close to Ianovs’kyi’s theoretical articles and personal recollections published in the monthly *Kino* (Cinema; 1925–33)\(^7\) and in a collection of essays entitled *Holivud na berezi Chornoho moria* (The Hollywood on the Black Sea coast; 1930). Ianovs’kyi’s views on film art, including the highly important role he envisioned for Ukrainian cinema, are exposed in these non-fiction pieces. They offer a personal account of film production at VUFKU and a vocal plea for modernizing Ukrainian cinema and culture. Like *Holivud na berezi Chornoho moria*, *Maister korablia* also depicts in detail cinematic production at VUFKU film studios, in addition to the rich artistic atmosphere of the 1920s in general, and offers subjective portraits of Ianovs’kyi’s VUFKU friends and colleagues, such as the film directors Oleksandr Dovzhenko and Hryhorii Hrycher, and the art director Vasyl’ Krychevs’kyi. Both works serve as excellent monuments of an intensely creative period during the renaissance of Ukrainian culture.

Ianovs’kyi began to employ film devices early on in his literary career. He debuted as a poet, yet film aesthetics first made its way into his oeuvre in two short story collections: *Mamutovi byvni* (Mammoth’s tusks; 1925) and *Krov zemli* (Blood of the earth; 1927). As was noted in chapter 1, the short story “Mamutovi Byvni” (from the eponymous collection) parodies, among Ianovs’kyi’s several scripts only one was produced into a movie, namely, *Hamburg* (VUFKU, 1926).\(^5\)

Oleh Babyshkin describes Ianovs’kyi’s duties at the film factory as follows: “1926 року бачимо вже Яновського в Одесі на посаді художнього редактора Одеської кінофабрики. Яновський ще ближче стає до керма кіносправи на Україні. Обов’язки Яновського насамперед полягали у забезпеченні кінопроцесу досконалими сценаріями, потім—у справді мистецькому втіленні їх у кінофільмах.” Babyshkin, *Kinospadshchyna*, 8.

and lays bare, silent film devices used to build suspense in the thriller, detective and mystery genres. The cinematic tricks and conventions of lowbrow, popular genres are juxtaposed against rich, metaphoric language and artful prose.

By the time of *Maister Korablia*, Ianovs’kyi would come to employ cinematic devices on a much larger scale. Oleh Babyshkin notes that what distinguished Ianovs’kyi from other literary authors emulating the aesthetics of cinema was his “cinematic perception of a literary work” as a whole. That is, he was the first Ukrainian writer *consistently* and *comprehensively* to employ the artistic techniques of cinema in the context of literature. Yet despite his comprehensive use of such aesthetics, no study to date has offered an extensive analysis of cinematic elements in *Maister korablia*. The current chapter fills this gap in scholarship.

**The Literary Seafaring Adventures of *Maister korablia*: New Themes, Settings and Forms in the Ukrainian Novel**

*Maister korablia* is the first Ukrainian novel primarily to revolve around the country’s filmmaking industry. The novel bears the form of a memoir narrated from the perspective of an

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aging, retired filmmaker named To-Ma-Ki. The filmmaker’s exotic name, which sounds both quasi-oriental and quasi-futuristic, is derived from the first syllables of his honorary title, *Tovarysh Maister Kino*, or Comrade Master of Cinema.\(^{10}\) The main story is set in the 1920s, while the narrator speaks from the imagined 1970s; thus it is presented as something that occurred in the distant past—fifty years prior—while *in fact* only a few years had passed between the writing of the novel and the prototype events it depicts. The story takes place at a Ukrainian film factory in a seaport city referred to as *Misto* (City), which corresponds to VUFKU film studios in Odesa. The narrator’s persona is largely autobiographical; Ianovs’kyi’s contemporaries recognized other leading literary and artistic figures of the day in the novel’s various characters as well.\(^{11}\)

Interlaced with this clearly nonfictional material are totally fictitious constructs, of both characters and events, as well as meta-fictional commentary. Standing beside this blend of fictional and factual components—itself a radical innovation in Ukrainian literature—the novel *also* exhibits an open composition that allows for a radically heterogeneous mix of intermedial elements in the narrative, including personal letters from characters to the narrator, a ship’s log (корабельний журнал), ekphrases of films, a painting, a ballet performance, and a circus act. Each of these elements, woven into the fabric of one work, contributes to its construction as a collage, an element which will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

\(^{10}\) “То-Ма-Кi—це звуть так мене—Товариш Майстер Кiно.” *Maister korablia*, 9.

\(^{11}\) The novel, of course, formally resembles a *roman à clef*; among fictional characters cryptic names thinly veiled leading 1920s Ukrainian artists. Heorhii Ostrovs’kyi’s study unravels this connection between fictional material and biographical information in the novel. For instance, Sev’s character is based on the film director Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Taiakh on the Russian ballerina Ida Penzo, the Professor on Vasyl’ Krychevs’kyi, the Director on Pavlo Nечаesa, the tall director on Mykola Okhlopkov, and the briefly mentioned character Mykhail’ on the leader of the Ukrainian Futurists Mykhail’ Semenko. See Heorhii Ostrovs’kyi, “Все, що залишилося... Або автorskій спогад про ліричний роман,” in *Patekynyi frehat: Roman Iuriia Ianovs’koho “Maister korablia” iak literaturna mistyfikatsiia*, ed. Volodymyr Panchenko (Kyiv: Fakt, 2002), 187–230. See also the memoirs of Mykola Bazhan, a fellow 1920s writer and colleague of Ianovs’kyi at VUFKU, entitled “Мaистeр зализнoй тpояндy,” in *Dumy i spohady* (Kyiv: Rad. pys’mennyk, 1982), 9–62.
Before analyzing the key themes and motifs of the novel, a brief overview of the work itself is in order. The novel is composed of nineteen chapters. The first and last frame the entire story and are set in the narrator’s present day, the 1970s, while the remainder of the story takes place primarily in the 1920s. The distant vantage point held by the narrator allows him to reflect authoritatively on the film art of the past, and to contrast it to that of his projected futuristic present.

Chapter 1 introduces the narrator, his family and the major themes of the memoir story. It opens with the narrator characterizing himself as an authority in the country’s filmmaking industry, a man well respected for his films and monographs on cinematography.\(^\text{12}\) The narrator’s old age and esteemed position in society serve as guarantors of the truthfulness of his narration. In addition, narrating his memoirs from the standpoint of the 1970s grants To-Ma-Ki even more accountability and reliability, as by that point he had lived through and knew well the outcomes of all the actions and events of the 1920s. As he says in the opening chapter: “I have no reason to hide whatever has happened. Old age cannot tell untruth. Why would it need it? Whom does it need to sweet-talk or in front of whom does it need to keep silent? One can already see the end of the road and the inevitable. Having lived life, one can have the courage to finally look everyone in the eye.”\(^\text{13}\)

The novel focuses on film culture in Odesa in the 1920s. Chapters 2–6 of this *Künstlerroman* introduce the major characters of the story and its setting, a seaport city. As the main story begins, the narrator, a movie script editor,\(^\text{14}\) arrives at a film factory and meets its

\(^{12}\) “Товариш Майстер Кіно—найвище звання для кінематографіста.” *Maister korablia*, 9.


\(^{14}\) “Мою появу на фабриці мало хто помітив. Хіба що ширі читачі директорських наказів прочитали другого дня, що ’такого то зараховується на посаду художнього редактора фабрики.’” *Maister korablia*, 19.
head, the Director, and its chief editor and the leader of the Futurists, Mykhail’ Semenko.

Chapter 3 then serves as an exposition of three other key figures in the memoir: Taiakh, the tall film director, and the factory’s artistic designer (the Professor). In chapter 4 the narrator describes the writing of his personal constitution, digressing into self-reflection on the distinction between his memoir and traditional fiction. Chapter 5 is dedicated to presenting the narrator’s friend, Sev, a film director, and chapter 6 introduces a sailor named Bohdan.

The rest of the novel (chapters 7–18) then presents a series of the narrator’s seemingly unordered and unstructured memories of his work at the film factory and his romantic affair with Taiakh. These two storylines intertwine and are themselves constantly interrupted both by stories told by other characters and by a variety of heterogeneous materials. Both provide pauses in the main memoir narrative that manifest the narrator’s goal of “constant deviation from a wide road.” For instance, chapter 7 describes a chaotic work day at the film studios, a tragic accident that happened while filming a scene on the sailboat (дубок) “Tamara,” and Taiakh’s departure to visit her aunt in Italy. Chapter 8 then pauses the main memoir story to quote a letter from the narrator’s son, Mike. This letter includes metafictional commentary on the construction of the memoir story, speculation about its characters, and song-like poem by Mike entitled “Pisnia kapitaniv” (The song of captains).

The main storyline documents day-to-day life at the factory, including the relationships between various artists as they collaborate and as they face creative conflicts and arguments. The central narrative tying all of the storylines together chronicles the production of a film directed by Sev, as well as the construction of a ship for the movie. Different stages of filmmaking are illustrated, and in the process the narrative is driven forward. The film generally concerns the

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15 *Maister korablia*, 36.
uprising of the ship’s sailors and their desire to return homeward. The production of the film also serves as a pretext for including the stories of characters secondary in relation to the main narrative. For example, in chapters 9 and 10 the real sailor Bohdan relates his seagoing adventures and love affairs. His escape from a colonel’s brig becomes material used to develop the story in Sev’s movie. Or again, chapter 12 includes stories of travel and nostalgia narrated by other characters.

As was said, the memoir-novel emphasizes not only the production of the movie but also the relationships of the staff, including especially the narrator’s relationships with Taiakh, Sev and the Professor. Taiakh becomes an interest for both Sev and To-Ma-Ki, and the three form a love triangle. Chapter 9 includes a letter from Taiakh to To-Ma-Ki from Genoa, elucidating her feelings for the narrator, and chapter 11 includes a letter of hers from Milano, narrating a romantic encounter and her own nostalgia.

The rest of the novel unfolds in a similarly nonlinear and collage-like manner. For instance, besides including characters’ stories, chapter 12 also describes the narrator starting work on the newsreel about a meeting between the Turkish Foreign Minister and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Chapter 13 portrays the narrator and Bodan violently attacked and stabbed by an unknown offender on their way home from the Professor’s house. Chapter 14 quotes the logbook of the Professor’s ship (“Korabel’nyi Zhurnal ‘Onton’”), in which the Professor offers rather poetic instructions on the selection of material for the ship and on various rituals connected with its building and launch. Chapter 15 shows the narrator and Bohdan

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16 The movie contains and presents two of the novel’s important, recurring themes, namely, sea travel and nostalgia. Sev introduces these themes of the movie early in chapter 5: “Сценарій морський думаю. […]—Море, корабель, наші матроси і нудьга за батьківщиною.” Maister korablia, 52.

17 Using real life stories for artistic production is a theme that parallels the novel’s construction from factual material and reflects the turn towards non-fiction genres in 1920s avant-garde aesthetics.
recovering in the hospital and an ekphrasis of a circus performance attended by Sev and Taiakh. Chapter 16 describes the construction of the ship and includes a letter from narrator’s other son Henry.

Finally, chapters 17 and 18 conclude the main story. In chapter 17 Bohdan carves a symbolic figurehead for the ship, and the ship is launched, while the story of his seafaring adventures ends. Chapter 18 seems to resolve the conflicts in both the mystery and romance storylines. At the end of chapter 18, a second mysterious attack occurs: an attempt to set alight the brig. The fire is extinguished, and the attacker’s identity is revealed later that night when he tries to stab Sev and To-Ma-Ki. It is the fisherman, whom To-Ma-Ki and Sev had beaten up earlier for offending a girl. The main memoir story ends with Bohdan lighting a lamp on the newly constructed brig while a female figure follows in the shadows, suggesting that Taiakh perhaps chose neither of the two figures in the love triangle, but the sailor Bohdan. Finally, chapter 19 serves as a coda, returning, as was said, to the 1970s and summarizing both the memoir and To-Ma-Ki’s life.

Aside from filmmaking and seafaring, the other recurrent theme in *Maister korablia* is the significance of craftsmanship in artistic construction, a theme which resonates strongly with the avant-garde aesthetic. This theme comes to the fore in the chronicling of the building of the ship, which the Professor, Sev and the narrator plan to use as the *mise-en-scène* for the film. In line with Constructivist aesthetic ideas, the ship is at the same time an artistic construction and a functional object. When finished, the artists plan to transfer the vessel to a local navigational

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18 Both the love triangle and the mystery story are components associated with traditional fiction, yet despite the narrator’s overt rejection of conventional fiction devices, he includes them here because they are also associated with middlebrow, popular genres, which greatly appealed to 1920s Ukrainian experimental writers.
school for training purposes, and thus it will not only serve as a movie prop but will fulfill a real, utilitarian purpose.

The novel’s title appears figuratively, contributing to the polysemy of the text. One of the meanings of “maister” is craftsman, artisan or skilled artist. Thus the title of the novel accentuates the artists’ concern with craftsmanship. As carpenters labor to transform the old dubok “Tamara” into a brig for the movie, their work is every bit as celebrated as that of the ship’s chief architect, the Professor. The multifaceted artist Professor, the narrator and the carpenters are all addressed as maister, and each may rightly be called Master of the ship. Moreover, “master of the ship” (маїстер корабля) also denotes a symbolic figurehead. The figure of a Malay woman, which Bohdan carves from a walnut log, is placed at the prow of the ship to protect and guide her as they prepare to launch the brig.19

Yet above all, Maister korablia is a chronicle of film production in 1920s Ukraine. Throughout, the narrator describes the atmosphere of a film studio in concrete scenes. Topics depicted in the novel cover all stages of film production, starting with pre-production (gathering material for the script), script writing, set design, filming and editing. Throughout the text, episodes focus on the process of producing both a factual non-acted film and a feature film. At one point, a brief, masterfully crafted cinematic sequence provides an overview of the early history of film.

While working at the Odesa Film Studios, Ianovs’kyi was a witness to the fervent and chaotic early days of cinema production in Soviet Ukraine. His novel reflects these productive yet tumultuous times, in part by focusing on creative differences between various artists, including issues of artistic control over the final film product. The narrator also reflects on the

19 Bohdan defines the term maister korablia the following way: “Вона веде корабль, оберігає його від рифів і заспокоює хвилі.” Maister korablia, 201.
technological limitations of early cinema production and contrasts them with idealistic
descriptions of the film production processes of the future, descriptions that reach their pinnacle
in an avant-garde film entitled *Bila pustelia* (White desert), a cinematic masterpiece by a young
promising filmmaker named Semper Travytsia.²⁰

While the novel above all concerns film production, the seafaring adventure theme
provides the overarching metaphor for its experimental nature. Seagoing adventures,
homesickness and romantic love are all emphasized at the beginning of the novel, both in a poem
entitled “Prysviata” (Dedication) and in epigraphs from Gogol, Goethe, Dibdin and Horace.
“Prysviata” is composed of classical tercets in iambic pentameter, with a refrain, giving the poem
a songlike air. It establishes the atmosphere of the novel and introduces all of its major motifs:
white-sailed ships, travel, adventure, bravery, and happy, wandering love affairs.²¹

The first of the four epigraphs, from Nikolai Gogol’s seminal novel *Mertvye dushi* (The
*Dead Souls*; 1842), serves as a moralistic commentary, contrasting the tenderness and energy of
youth with the cold desolation of old age.²² Old age in the epigraph indicates an emotional and
creative exhaustion marked by longing for lost spontaneity and imaginative creativity. The
novel’s narrator intersperses comments on old age into his narration, and his supposedly rational
approach to reminiscing and memoir-writing echoes the tone of the epigraph. Yet the novel’s
overall mood remains cheerful, optimistic and romantic. It imparts a sense of celebration of life
and creativity, while memories of the exuberance of youth brighten the narrator’s old age. This
exuberance and artistic creativity is contrasted with the rationality and calmness of old age.

²⁰ The name combines Latin and Ukrainian words that can be translated as “always grass.”
²¹ “Веселий день любови кочової.” *Maister korablia*, 3.
²² “Забирайте же с собою в путь, выходя из мягких юношеских лет в суровое, ожесточающее мужество, —
забирайте с собою все человеческие движения, не оставляйте их на дороге: не подымеете потом!” Quoted in
*Maister korablia*, 5.
The following three epigraphs further celebrate this exuberance, focusing on sea travel and romantic love affairs. The second epigraph cites the epigram “Soldatentrost” from J.W. Goethe’s collection *Gedichte* (1827). It reflects the themes of imperialistic expansion and sea travel to exotic lands, and it implies the countless love affairs of a sailor. The third epigraph similarly romanticizes both sea travel and love between a brave sailor and a beautiful girl. The lowbrow profile of this epigraph, a refrain from a popular song entitled “The Lass that Loves a Sailor” by British author and composer Charles Dibdin, who was famous for his nautical songs, contrasts with the classical form of the final epigraph, a stanza from Horace’s “Odes 1.14” (*Ship Ode*). The latter reiterates the theme of sea travel and again foreshadows the novel’s romantic storyline. As Ortwin Knorr suggests, the ode signifies a love triangle involving a beautiful hetaera who, like the novel’s female protagonist Taiakh, must choose between two lovers.23

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The themes introduced in the epigraphs assist the text of the novel in bridging a gap between Ukrainian culture and Western cultures. The epigraphs, quoted in their original Russian, German, English and Latin—the languages of four major empires—anchor the novel in the Western European literary tradition. Yet novel expands the Western canon with stories of travels to East Asia, Oceania and South America (specifically Java, the Malay Archipelago, the Philippines and the Strait of Magellan), as well as with frequent references to Oriental cultures, such as Buddhist symbols and Malay and Javanese vocabulary. In his cover design for the 1928 edition of *Maister korablia* Vasyl’ Krychevs’kyi foregrounded the novel’s exotic elements by
superimposing a woman’s face onto a schematic drawing of a ship.\textsuperscript{24} The illustration references the symbolic figurehead (маїстер корабля) carved by Bohdan. The androgynous head in a round hat (not unlike Turandot’s) floats above the ship, with closed dreamy eyes rendered as tied-up (not extended) sails. Its features are integrated with the contours of the ship—the keel, mast, and sail ropes.

Like Goethe’s lyrical subject in “Soldatentrost,” the stories narrated by Bohdan and the owner of the trambak (small coastal sailboat) combine sea travel with adventures in foreign countries and countless love affairs with new women, and all this with a longing to return home that ultimately outweighs the desire to pursue love interests. The theme of returning after a distant, arduous, adventurous journey recalls of course the \textit{Odyssey}, another prominent work in the literary canon. Thus in various ways, the novel’s nautical setting brings universal literary \textit{topoi} into Ukrainian literature, while at the same time ushering Ukrainian literature into the ranks of world culture.

At the same time, through the theme of seafaring adventure Ianovs’kyi reimagined the spatial horizons of Ukrainian literature. Setting the story in a port city with the sea as the backdrop for most of the action were innovations that distinguish \textit{Maister korablia} from other Ukrainian prose works. Ukrainian novels were conventionally set in the village, countryside, or (after the turn of the twentieth century) city. Traditionally, naval fiction is absent from Ukrainian literature, even though the country borders two seas, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. In fact, before \textit{Maister korablia} Ukrainian literature rarely described an urban seaport setting and knew

\textsuperscript{24} See Figure 1.
of no such affectionate descriptions of the sea. In his positive and insightful review of the novel, Valer’ian Pidmohyl’nyi highlights this choice as a departure from convention:

While reading [Ukrainian literature], one cannot but marvel that a nation which sat by the sea for centuries, and which even set off on daring sea expeditions, did not notice it in its literature for such a long time, fascinated as it was with the black, motionless soil of its steppes! And it seems perfectly natural that now, finally raising its gaze which was fixed on the ground, our literature has responded to the sea precisely in a romantic way—being so close and directly useful, [the sea] became slightly unreal from this sudden discovery, because it is not yet sensed, not mastered and not conquered in our literature, and because it dazzles with its novelty and the un-experienced temptation of distant horizons.

These comments mark not only the incorporation of a new theme but an important shift in 1920s Ukrainian literature towards the modernization of its themes, style and genres. A fellow writer from the Ukrainian Cultural Renaissance, Pidmohyl’nyi himself contributed to this modernization with novels that depart from conventional themes and settings, and which offer a deeper and more sophisticated mastering of the new material. However, the style and narrative mode of his novels remain, for the most part, in the traditional key, while Ianovs’kyi’s novel offers a much more radical formal experimentation.

Not only does the novel offer new nautical themes for Ukrainian literature, but these descriptions of the sea intentionally depart from previous literary tradition. In one of their first

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25 The sea is featured as a setting in the Ukrainian epic songs called dumy, some of which recount the travails and fates of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in the mighty grip of the sea during naval raids against the Ottomans. Yet Ianovs’kyi strikingly reinvents this seventeenth century oral tradition in the construction of his experimental novel, exposing and subverting the formulaic depictions of the sea in dumy. Before Ianovs’kyi, another innovative Ukrainian author, Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi, also showed fascination with the beauty of the seascape and the power of unbridled passions in his story “Na kameni” (On the rock; 1902). However, Kotsiubyns’kyi’s impressionistic prose focuses on the fluidity and beauty of nature, rather than on the sea as a workspace, as an industrial and urban environment, and as a world of exploration, as it appears in Ianovs’kyi’s novel.

conversations, To-Ma-Ki and Sev discuss traditional literary depictions of the sea, exposing these stereotypical images and epithets: “If only it [the sea] weren’t painted in blue color and with beautiful epithets. A seagull that mews and wails must necessarily be flying above it, and there have to be storm petrels foretelling the storm, and ships with white flaps of sails. They necessarily go forward, and then you perceive the sea as a puddle that is proud of carrying a white-chested ship.”

This conversation prepares the reader for the type of direct and defamiliarized rendition of settings and events found throughout the novel. And as in the nonfiction essays from his collection Holivud na berezi Chornoho moria, such conversations between Ianovs’kyi’s characters mirror the cultural polemics of Ukrainian artists in the 1920s, who recognized a need to renew and modernize Ukrainian literature and art by eschewing worn conventions—in this case, folkloric ornamentation and romanticized portrayals of the sea.

Sev criticizes this imagery typical of Ukrainian folk songs and Russian poetry as a set of literary clichés. He responds to such clichés by promoting new literary depictions of the sea:

The sea is certainly not blue, and the seagull is mewing above it because it needs to eat, and not because it wails for someone. The ships have dirty, grey, weathered sails, and this is the fact that excites me. The ships in the sea hurry to navigate their path, so that a storm does not catch them en route. They are afraid of the sea, and their proud appearance comes from urgency. […] Black terrifying sea surrounds them, an

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27 “Коли б тільки його не змальовували синьою фарбою і красивими епітетами. Обов’язково над ним мусить літати чайка, що квилить-проквилляє, буревісники, що чують бурю, і кораблі з білими лоскутами парусів. Ідуть вони обов’язково вперед, море тоді уявляєш калюжею, яка гордиться з того, що по ній плаває білогрудий корабель.” Maister korablia, 50.

28 Particularly, the phrase “mews and wails” (квилить-проквилляє) refers to the Ukrainian dumy about Cossack naval expeditions in the Black sea. The canonicized image of a stormy petrel is associated with the poem by Maxim Gorky “Pesnia o burevestnike” (Song about a stormy petrel, 1901).

29 Maister korablia, 51.
abyss of water and fury. Sometimes it would beckon with a gentle blue hue, and other times it would join
the sky and start to enchant. And its nature is treacherous, alluring yet harsh.

Sev presents his description of the sea for the sake of conveying its true nature, the essence of the
object described. Such representation is considered of greater artistic merit than conventional
literary depictions.

As was already shown in chapter 1, the perceived need to raise the aesthetic quality of
works of art was a consequence of the Literary Discussion, which anticipated the direction of
Ukrainian culture in the 1920s. The following argument between To-Ma-Ki and the Director of
the film factory exemplifies this point. Contrary to Director’s instructions, the narrator argues for
the need to construct not a replica but an actual ship for Sev’s movie. Soon enough, the
narrator’s arguments transgress the topic of film production to encompass the reconstruction of
Ukrainian culture:

Ти, може, думаєш завше одягати наших людей у драні свитки й вишивані сорочки? Страждання,
злидні, соловейко й постійні мандри зі своєї землі—на землі інші, у каторгу, в ярмо, в перевертні?
Ти думаєш, що ми не можемо підняти якір свого корабля й поставити паруси? Що ми не сильні
dухом і ділами для того, щоб заспівати веселої пісні про далекі краї, про блакитні високості неба,
про бадьорі химери оновленого духу?30

Perhaps you are thinking of always dressing our people in torn peasant garb and embroidered shirts?
Suffering, poverty, a nightingale and constant wandering from our land—to other lands, into drudgery, into
yoke, into renegades? You think we cannot raise the anchor of our own ship and set sail? That we are not
strong in spirit and in actions to start a cheerful song about distant lands, about the blue heights of the sky,
about the jaunty chimaeras of a renewed spirit?

It becomes obvious that construction of the ship means to illustrate a larger point: the need to
raise the quality of art and to modernize Ukrainian culture.31 And the novel itself serves as a
prototype of such innovative, high quality artwork. These innovations in form and narration in
Maister korablia became associated with a new experimental genre, the “fictional memoir.”

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30 Maister korablia, 129.
31 In a similar tone, critics suggest that the polysemic title of the novel also refers to the Ukrainian people, who have
finally become masters or captains of their own state and of their own culture (symbolically presented as the ship),
directing it into a long and successful journey. See Volodymyr Panchenko, “Knyha lehka i zhyttiezhadibna …,”
299.
Documenting Everyday Life: An Experiment in the “Memoir-Novel” Genre

The nautical theme discussed in the previous section serves as a metaphor for changing the beaten course of Ukrainian literature. One of the primary achievements of Ianovs’kyi’s novel was revolutionizing the fiction form by constructing a hybrid, experimental genre which blended the boundaries of fact and fiction. The results may be called a “memoir-novel.” Here the factographic form of a memoir is employed as an alternative to the form of a traditional novel, while the ambitions of a novel are retained. The construction of this new hybrid genre was itself stimulated by the general turn toward non-fiction genres in Ukrainian Soviet literature and cinema.

In a commentary justifying Maister korablia’s frequent digressions, the narrator To-Ma-Ki explicitly contrasts his role to that of a traditional novelist. The passage exposes, even ridicules, the literary devices and conventions used by popular novelists to build suspense and maintain interest. It also mocks the type of reader partial to such fiction:

Я зовсім не хочу відчувати себе романістом. Коли я читаю роман—не мого сина, звичайно,—я уявляю собі заклопотаного автора. Він сидить за столом, повний усякої премудрості, знань і вражень, його лабораторія виробляє елементи майбутнього роману. Іноді автор зупиняється. Перечитує написане. “Це не цікаве нікому, крім мене”——раз!—він викреслює абзац. “Тут читач буде нудьгувати,”——на тобі!—головна обіцянка про майбутнє захоплення вплітається новим абзацом. “Це читач не так зрозуміє,”——героїне, не посміхайся—він тобі дасть тут плаксиву репліку. Автор ховатися за штучками, а його герої ходять по сцені, коли він шарпає за шпагатинку. “Душка автор,—скаже прекрасна читачка—як він уміло ними керує! Який він розумний. Я не могла покинути книжки.”—“Я уявляю його собі красивим мужчиною,—скаже друга,—він, певно, так любить свою дружину.” Розумний автор, якому тільки й треба, щоб його книжку прочитали, не встаючи з місця, за один раз, і здихнули потім, наче після обіду—такий автор досяг мети. Він сідає за інший роман.32

I absolutely do not want to perceive myself as a novelist. When I am reading a novel—not my son’s, of course—I imagine a preoccupied author. He is sitting at the table, full of all kinds of wisdom, knowledge and impressions, his laboratory churning out elements of a future novel. Sometimes the author pauses. He rereads what has been written. “This wouldn’t be interesting to anyone but me”—there you go!—he strikes out a paragraph. “Here, a reader will be bored”—there you have it!—a secret promise about a future infatuation is woven into a new paragraph. “The reader will understand this in a wrong way”—heroine, don’t smile—he will give you here a whiny remark. The author is hiding behind the curtain, and his characters are walking on the stage as he is pulling their strings. “Darling author”—a beautiful female reader will say—“how skillfully he directs them! How smart he is. I couldn’t put the book down.” “I imagine him a handsome man”—another female reader will say—“he must really love his wife.” Wise

32 Maister korablia, 36–37.
author, who only needs the people to read his novel in one sitting, without leaving the room and then sigh as if after having a lunch—such an author has reached his goal. He is sitting down to write another novel.

This passage outlines the traditional concept of fiction and finds it manipulative, the kind of writing that always sustains a hidden agenda. According to the narrator, the novelist typically considers many factors in writing, including the popularity and commercial success of his work. Thus works of fiction are usually crafted according to readers’ expectations, while the author plays the puppetmaster, exercising full control over the story, over the events, and over the characters’ appearance, thoughts, speech and actions.

To-Ma-Ki contrasts the role of a traditional novelist to that of a memoirist. In the following self-reflexive commentary, he presents the memoir as a more appropriate form of literature that reflects the author’s preferences and satisfies his desire for artistic expression:

By writing a memoir I do not intend to subject myself to the practice of writing novels. This is needless for me right now. My novels are already written and are located in libraries (and my film-novels in film archives); in their time, they accomplished what I was striving for. Through them I, as an honest maister, was selling savory food and useful thoughts to consumers. Now I am not writing a novel. I am writing memoirs. I remember a certain segment of life that is dear to me, and I write about it. I am not afraid that my reader will start to get bored or that he will not like the smile of a female character. If I were writing a novel, I would monitor that, and it would not be difficult to pull characters by the strings from behind the stage. All the same, characters are made up, characters are speechless for their author, and he can control them. The matter is different now. I am writing first and foremost for myself, and I find everything interesting. Maybe I don’t want to show a beautiful exquisite construction, but would like instead to present material in a way that each reader can imagine his or her own distinct construction of artistic influence. Those who find it difficult to finish reading may lay the book aside. I will not be offended like a novelist would. That just means it is not yet their time to read my memoirs. Lying in the grave, I can wait a hundred or two hundred years.
In an unapologetic tone, the narrator admits that his writing, his experimental construction, may displease and even shock readers. Yet mass popularity rarely concerned Ianovs’kyi or, for that matter, other Ukrainian artists of the 1920s, as they perceived their works as the vanguard of a radical literary and cultural change.

Ianovs’kyi’s novel exemplifies the shift towards life-writing and the rising popularity of the non-fiction genres in late 1920s Ukrainian literature. Novels based on popular yet contrived narrative situations (traditional middle-brow fiction), it was believed, had exhausted their themes and bored the reader, and so novelists began either to build fiction upon real events or to incorporate truthful, factual material into fiction. In his 1929 review of Maister korablia literary critic Borys Iakub’skyi notices this tendency in Ukrainian literature, praising the memoir form and the originality of Ianovs’kyi’s idea:

Oстанній час якось багато краще читаються та сприймаються не романи (це стосується не так до українських та російських романів, як до перекладних з європейської літератури, що ними так щедро зараз частує нас більшість видавництв), а мемуари, спогади, листування, щоденники. Утопічні та авантурні романи занадто вже набридли та стали якось занадто одноманітні в засобах сюжету та композиції, в своїому заяложеному романтизмові; в мемуарах та щоденниках принаймні маєш справжнє життя, а не якесь фантастичне чи трафаретно підвищене над життєвою дійсністю.

Lately, memoirs, reminiscences, letters, and diaries are somehow much more readable and better perceived than novels (this pertains not to Ukrainian and Russian novels, but to the translations of European literature to which the majority of publishers are generously treating us). Utopian and adventure novels have tired too much and became overly monotonous in their plot and composition devices, and in their clichéd romanticism; at least memoirs and diaries offer actual life, not some imaginary or stereotypically enhanced form of life reality.

Concluding his review Iakubs’kyi encourages Ianovs’kyi to reduce the “exotic ornamentalism” of his style, to tone down his lyrical digressions, and to press on with depicting the “vast and fertile thematic material offered by the period of cultural revolution and socialist

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34 The turn to factual genres in Ukrainian Soviety literature is discussed in more detail in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

35 Borys Iakubs’kyi, “Iurii Ianovs’kyi ta ioho Maister Korablia,” 96; emphasis mine.
The perceived exhaustion of popular literary genres was not the only reason authors turned to life-writing. As was already argued, depicting actual life—or as Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov suggested, “life as it is”—in literature was often proclaimed as one of the key aesthetic goals of 1920s Soviet Ukrainian culture, a part of a broader Soviet turn toward non-fiction forms across the arts: in literature, film, theatre and visual arts. Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s experimental narrative mode in *Maister Korablia* should therefore be analyzed within the context of this turn.

At the same time, non-acted films became a prototype for artistic construction in the novel, reflected both thematically (as has been shown) and compositionally. Similar to non-acted films, Ianovs’kyi’s novel incorporates factual or “life” material and arranges it through literary montage into an artistic composition. The novel also employs a new narrative mode, a camera-eye narration closely corresponding to the cinematic presentation of material. Both literary montage and camera-eye narration are at the heart of Ianovs’kyi’s novel; the remainder of the chapter focuses on these experimental techniques in more detail.

**Redefining the Traditional Novel Genre through the Aesthetics of Film: In Search of New Narrative Modes**

The cinema aesthetic attracted writers because it offered new possibilities for narration and an innovative point of view. By emulating a camera-eye perspective, one was able to achieve a striking effect of immediate narration, as Ianovs’kyi himself declares in the commentary above on the distinction between memoir-writing and fiction-writing.

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One’s perception is guided in such new directions from the opening pages of Ianovs’kyi’s experimental text. Chapter 1 presents the aging narrator To-Ma-Ki sitting at home watching feature films and newsreels transmitted from the national film archive to his television set. These include early silent films and the narrator’s own movies, which trigger memories of his work in the film industry. The scene begins with To-Ma-Ki viewing images of his own orchard from one of the newsreels. The screened images completely absorb the viewer-narrator, as if transporting him inside the screen: “A dense stream of light floods the screen. It vibrates some fraction of a second, flickers, flows—and now I am losing the screen from sight. The door opened in front of me into a beautiful evening dusk. I, as it were, sense the air through this door, the air of the orchard and of the apple blossoms.” The passage presents a common film viewing convention: ignoring the screen, the artistic frame of the medium, and becoming completely consumed by the screened events. The cinematic screen “dissolves” while the picture and on-screen reality overcome the narrator’s awareness of even the frame. The dissolve is itself a film editing technique familiar to readers, and so it alerts them to the scene’s cinematic rendering and invites them to see—or read—it as if watching a movie.

The example orients the reader toward the narrator’s objective, which is also that of the memoir-novel: to relay the narrator’s immediate perceptions from a camera-eye perspective. The subsequent chapter, where To-Ma-Ki’s actual memoirs begin, transports the narrator, as it were, directly into the past. There each memory is depicted similarly to a movie scene; in other words,

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37 “Екран заливає густа течія світла. Воно вібрує якусь долю секунди, міниться, пливе і я вже гублю з очей екран. Розчинилися передо мною двері в прекрасний вечірній присмерк. Я наче чую повітря крізь ці двері, повітря саду і квітів яблуні.” Maister korablia, 13. Ianovs’kyi could be referring here to the poetics of another story by his predecessor Mykhailo Kotsiubyns’kyi, “Tsvit iabluni” (Apple Blossoms, 1902). Both “Tsvit iabluni” and Maister korablia carefully select and record minute details of reality, transforming them into artistic material. Yet in the former Kotsiubyns’kyi dwells on a precise recording of his narrator’s emotional state, as if splitting into a suffering human being and an observing artistic eye. Ianovs’kyi’s novel, on the other hand, “technologizes” the process of observation, distancing himself from it by fusing his perspective and life-material into one cinematic projection.
Maister korablia renders the narrator’s reminiscences about his youth as a series of film episodes streaming on a screen. The memoir-novel is therefore presented as an ekphrasis of a film recreated in the mind of the narrator from his store of memory.

While watching a retrospective of films selected by the film archivist (маїстер фільмотеки), the narrator notes that he has become immersed in the films, whose images bring up memories from his youth. By showing the events of the story as if through a cinematic lens, then, the narrator is able to present past events as present, or as relived and experienced again in real life. As an important artistic goal of To-Ma-Ki’s memoirs is to render past events and perceptions in a direct manner, the emulation of cinematic narration provides a ready tool for narrating these moments with immediacy.

A Poetic Camera Eye: New Narrative Modes in Ianovs'kyi’s Memoir-Novel

Because he is interpolating both cinematic and literary mediums, the narrator renders his direct perceptions of events, people and places through two complementary narrative modes: on the one hand, cinematic visual descriptions that reproduce scenes and settings with photographic accuracy of a mechanical camera, and on the other, literary narration, with its poetic and metaphorical sequences, which are adept at presenting the narrator’s subjective expression. The confluence of these two modes produces the effect of a poetic camera eye.

The history of film in chapter 1 is presented through a cinematic sequence that illustrates this interpolation of film and literary mediums. In the sequence, shots and excerpts of films are juxtaposed to present a retrospective, illustrating the evolution of a film form:

Ось перша картина, як перше слово, видряпане дикою людиною на корi дерева, на стіні печери. Вона має кілька метрів довжини. Потяг підходить до перону. Метушаться, заглядаючи в об’єктив, люди. І все. У залi навіть паніка—так вплинула ця перша картина. Безкінечна хроніка. Гори й озера, море й сніги. Перегони, паради, царi з жiнками й дiтьми (не смiшне вам це слово—цар?), свята й бенкети. Б’є Велика Революцiя. Вона почувається ще ранiш у тривожних кiно-кореспонденцiях з

38 The narrator comments: “Я нiби переживаю все” (I am as if reliving everything). Maister korablia, 14.
фронтах, их подых чути в вітрі, що колище трупи на колючому дротові перед окопами. Б’є Революція, і завмира кіно, фіксуючи лише випадкові моменти на випадковій плівці випадковими апаратами й операторами.39

Here is a first motion picture, like a first word, scribbled by a savage on tree bark, on a cave wall. It is several meters in length. The train is arriving at the platform. People are bustling, looking into a camera lens. And that’s all. There is even panic in the theatre—such was the impact of this first motion picture. Endless newsreels. Mountains and lakes, the sea and the snow. Races, parades, tsars with wives and children (don’t you find this word funny—tsar?), festivities and banquets. Great Revolution strikes. It is felt even earlier in the alarming cine-reports from the fronts, a whiff of it is felt in the wind that is rocking dead bodies on the barbed wire in front of the trenches. The revolution strikes and cinema freezes, recording only random moments on random film by random cameras and cameramen.

The sequence representing the history of cinema starts with the Lumière brothers’ short film _L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat_ (The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station; 1895). The description even includes shots of the audience’s panicked reaction to the movie, although no footage of the first screening by the Lumière brothers is known to exist. The scene projects how the screening might have ensued by constructing a visual, descriptive image. Newsreel shots follow the Lumières’ film, juxtaposing pre- and post-revolutionary films.

In a style typical for Ianovs’kyi’s narration, this newsreel sequence oscillates between two narrative perspectives, combining the narrator’s subjective reflection, poetic metaphors, and similes with purely visual shots and ekphrasis of film scenes. The sequence starts with a subjective reflection, comparing the significance of the first film to the scribbled first word, and it ends by summarizing the effect of the revolution on cinema. As the film is unable to capture the extent of the revolution, the passage about it diverts into a literary summary repeating the adjectival qualifier “random.”

On the other hand, the rest of the sequence is presented in a manner typical to a novel, as a present-tense ekphrastic rendition using literary montage and nominal sentences that show rather than tell. Each sentence represents a visual moment from the film, with the connection between the scenes abrupt and arbitrary. Concrete imagery is used to illustrate abstract concepts.

For instance, the sequence juxtaposes the posh lifestyle of the aristocracy with the human casualties of the war.

Ianovs’kyi presents the majority of the memoir’s reminiscences in a manner similar to this sequence, providing literary-cinematic concrete, visual, and metaphoric imagery for the narrator’s memories. Notably, such poetic camera-eye narration in *Maister korablia* transgresses the limitations of a mechanical camera, which is able to record only visual phenomena at the time of writing the novel.

*Maister korablia* is the first Ukrainian novel to consistently use cinematic camera-eye narration in Ukrainian literature, and in fact its use seems to have been at the cutting edge worldwide.40 Using camera-eye narration allows Ianovs’kyi to register visible and perceptible phenomena of the external world with great accuracy and attention to detail, which reflects the narrator’s declared aim of objectivity in narrating the novel.

In his commentary on old age, the narrator identifies himself with a superhuman being propelled by calm rationality. The self-reflective description, which echoes Gogol’s epigraph, in many ways likens the narrator to a mechanical, inanimate camera apparatus: “A person of my age lives by the brain. This is a sophisticated living being, which I identify with myself. I only watch out that my brain receives its due portion of food and that its cells live normally. My feelings are very conventional: only by habit I like or don’t like someone, respect or don’t respect a certain deed. There is no point in reevaluating what I have been living with. There is little time.”41

40 See chapter 1 for an overview of camera-eye narration in literature.

41 “Моїх років людина живе мозком. Це довершена живі істота, яку я ототожнюю з собою. Я тільки стежу за тим, щоб мій мозок отримував належну йому частку їжі і щоб жили нормально його клітини. Почуття в мене дуже умовні: я тільки по звичні люблю чи не люблю когось, поважаю чи не поважаю такий от вчинок. Мені нема чого переоцінювати те, з чим я жив. Мало часу.” *Maister korablia*, 12.
Like a cinematic camera eye, *Maister korablia*’s narrator professes his “rational” approach to reminiscing and memoir-writing. Such a perspective is possible in part because years of experience afford him a certain vantage point on past events: “I am standing on a high rung, and my age allows me to survey the area from an unassailable mountain. Without obsessing over miniatiae. Without anger. Without pity. Without fear. Without any particular emotions and hatred.”

This self-reflexive commentary orients the reader toward the novel’s ambition, to present a dispassionate and objective retrospective picture of events from the narrator’s youth. However, in reality the narration is neither objective nor dispassionate. On the contrary, the memoir-novel imparts a sense of unbridled poetic creativity. The narrator’s declaration about adhering to cold rationality is part of a literary mystification, a nod to popular discussions in the 1920s about the path of Ukrainian literature away from emotionality, impressionism, and traditional forms of fiction in literature, as well as a nod to the Futurists’ praise of “rational” art. Throughout the novel, the narration remains highly poetic and subjective, even as it weaves cinematic camera-eye sequences into its fabric. The cinematic episodes aid in recreating an exact picture of the past, while masterfully crafted poetic metaphors inject into the narration the exuberance of youth.

The emphasis on cinematically recording visual phenomena is seen in the inclusion of numerous static, descriptive scenes that pause the story’s “time” while giving little to no narrative information. These scenes are presented from the point of view of a camera eye, one which, despite its mechanical nature, is able to perceive beauty and poetry in the world. They

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directly render the narrator’s experiences and perceptions, offering his metaphoric perception of visual phenomena. For instance, a scene at daybreak describing the view of a port from a little boulevard presents the collective, impersonal gaze of the narrator and his friends. The sequence, which opens chapter 6, serves as an establishing shot, setting the background for a fishing scene described later in the chapter:

The sun is still far beyond the horizon. One can hardly discern it touching the clouds. These are not even touches yet. It is a glance from afar, from which the sky shows blue in the spot where the sun will rise. The sea is calm and dark. The air is black at night, and now—gray, and one can see behind the breakwater, behind the lighthouse—the shadows of the sails of three shalandas (Black Sea fishing boats). We left the hotel: Sev, me, and an actor—an indigene. The street is wet from the dew. The lantern glows pale, it has paled like a woman after a passionate night. In front of the hotel there is a small boulevard that sharply descends to a port. The lighthouse has already been extinguished. A steamship with a black funnel and three red stripes on it squeezes out smoke, which drifts slowly in the air and envelopes the port railway station, the port buildings and stores, the grain transfer structures, and railroad cars at the trestle. A steamship with a yellow funnel slowly raises a flag on the mainmast, a black square on a white background. The captain is announcing by this that he is setting sail from our city today to his own country across the sea.

Several sentences in this camera-eye narration are nominal and without verbal predicates, indicating static scene description. Here the camera eye gives only factual information through an array of shots of varied length. In a tracking shot, the camera eye registers a lighthouse, harbourved ships and port buildings. Moreover, phrases such as “one can discern” and “one can see” remove reference to an individual point of view and indicate the depersonalized view of a

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43 The narration of some episodes not directly witnessed or experienced by the narrator lack this metaphoric perception or any indication of the narrator’s subjective point of view. For instance, the scene of the tragic accident on the dubok “Tamara” in chapter 7 is rendered mostly from this “impartial” narrative perspective. See Maister korablia, 76–77.

44 Maister korablia, 57.
camera eye. The narrating “agent”—the camera—records only visual information, with the aim of faithfully narrating the scene.

In contrast to this dispassionate cinematic description of the city and the port, poetic metaphors furnish the descriptions of nature. The sun is presented here in a poetic, metaphoric vision, wherein the pale lantern light is akin to a woman, and the sun, also anthropomorphized, casts glances and touches. A mechanical camera cannot produce such pieces of information. The same is seen again in the final sentence of the passage, in the interpretation of the ship’s flag signals. These poetic, reflective phrases infuse a seemingly objective camera-eye depiction of the city.

“I Am as if Reliving Everything”: Cinematic Present-Tense Narration

As in the examples above, each cinematic scene focuses on factual, visual material. A common element in these cinematic descriptions is that all are rendered in the present tense, which contributes to producing the effect of simultaneous narration.

Present-Tense Simultaneous Narration

One of Maister korablia’s primary experiments with tenses is “simultaneous narration,” or the first-person narration of experiences and events entirely in the present tense.\footnote{For a discussion of simultaneous narration see Dorrit Cohn, “I Doze and Wake”: The Deviance of Simultaneous Narration,” in Distinction of Fiction, 96–108. Other terminology for present-tense narration in literary fiction includes “current report.” Fleischman, Tense and Narativity, 36.} The present tense transmits events simultaneous to the narration itself, directly rendering the narrator’s sensory perceptions. In other words, with simultaneous narration there is no break between narrating and experiencing: “the moment of narration is the moment of experience, the narrating
self is the experiencing self.” This form presents events, experiences, and narration about them as concurrent.

Episodes of simultaneous narration are prevalent in Maister korablia’s framing narrative—the introductory five chapters and the concluding chapter. These episodes usually signify moments of writing and reminiscing, focusing on the narrator deep in thought: “I add more firewood in the fireplace. It warms up slowly, the fire is licking it; it crackles and spatters smoke. I get a throw from the closet and wrap myself in it. I am as if alone in the wide world. It is dark and quiet behind the windows, there is no electricity, and it seems to me as if amid the silence I am catching the last steps of life.” With great detail, the narrator describes his surroundings, movements and processes, as well as his perception of the moment, one marked with solitude and stillness—the prerequisite atmosphere for immersing oneself into one’s memories to draft a memoir. The use of present-tense simultaneous narration here creates the illusion of immediacy, of the direct presentation of the narrator’s experience of events.

Another simultaneously narrated scene reveals the mechanics of the narrator’s reminiscing process. In it, the narrator views a retrospective of the films he had produced and discusses their effect upon his memory:

І, нарешті, починаю іти картини, що в їхньому творенні я брав не абі-яку участь. Я впізнаю декорації, я знаю, як вони виглядають із іншого боку, і я знаю, скільки разів сварився за них архітект із режисером. Я ніби переживаю все. Я можу, заплющивши очі, описувати кожне місце цих чотирьох десятків картин.

Мій розум хоче згадувати! Але я хитрую з ним, я—стара людина. Мені цього тільки й треба, та я ще трохи не поспішаю. Потім я вимикаю екран, вимикаю телефон, світло над головою і віддаюся думкам, повернувшись до кані.

46 Cohn, Distinction of Fiction, 107; emphasis in the original.

47 “Я підкидаю до кані дров. Вони поволі гріються, їх лижуть вогники, потріскують і пирскають димом. Дістаю з шафи плед і кутаюся в нього. Я наче сам на великуму світі. За вікнами темно й тихо, електрики нема, і здається мені, що я серед тиші ловлю останні кроки життя.” Maister korablia, 19.

48 Maister korablia, 14.
And, at last, the pictures start playing, in whose creation I played not an incidental role. I recognize the set decoration, I know how it looks from the other side, and I know how many times an architect fought for it with the director. I am as if reliving everything. Shutting my eyes I can describe each scene of these forty motion pictures.

My brain wants to reminisce! But I am cunning with it, being an old person. This is precisely what I need, but I do not hurry just yet. Then I turn off my screen, turn off my telephone, the lights over my head, and surrender myself to my thoughts, turning towards the fireplace.

The scene is crucial for clarifying the reading of the novel. It illustrates how the viewing of images from the past activates or stirs up memories, which then recreate other sensory details from the moment of the experience, such as smells, sounds, temperature and touch. Subsequent episodes, in fact, directly describe the narrator’s sensory memories in this manner.

Simultaneous narration also allows Ianovs’kyi to portray the narrator as reliving his past in the narrating moment. Presenting his memories through a cinematic lens and in the present tense creates the impression that the events recounted are experienced again in the moment of narration. Notably, present-tense narration also preserves a sense of immediacy in the retrospective portions of the memoir-novel.49

The Historic Present and Rendering Immediate Perceptions

Besides the passages of simultaneous narration prevalent in the framing narrative, Maister korablia combines the present tense with the traditional past tense in narrating the main memoir story.50 Unlike the here-and-now present-tense narration of the frame, the present tense of the main memoir is a historic present. It is used for narrating events experienced fifty years prior to the moment of narration, although the style and sense of simultaneous narration is preserved.

49 The mechanics of shifting between simultaneous narration and the retrospective memoir story, and between framing and framed narratives is discussed in more detail in the following section on literary montage, where I focus on flashback and flashforward in the novel.

50 Ekphrases of art and films (including Sev’s description of his future movie) are typically narrated in the present tense too.
Ianovs'kyi’s use of tenses in the novel strongly correlates with what they signify. Information pertaining to the story’s narration and action is usually rendered in the past tense. For instance, the scenes where Sev, To-Ma-Ki and Taiakh first meet Bohdan and where Bohdan and To-Ma-Ki are stabbed are both consistently narrated in the past tense. Retrospective stories told by other characters are narrated in a similar manner. The switch to the historic present, on the other hand, indicates the rendering of the narrator’s direct perception of events.

The past tense is typical of fictional discourse and is, of course, linked with narration in traditional novels.\(^{51}\) Seymour Chatman characterizes fictional discourse as the recounting of the story as it happened, describing events from memory and then placing the discourse in a later moment and a different place from those in which the story took place.\(^ {52}\) Past-tense narration, then, establishes some distance between the narrator and the events described. Such distancing from the story may give fictional discourse an appearance of construction. The narrator of *Maister korablia*, with his promise to write truthfully about actual events, attempts to remove this distance from his presumably non-fictional text by selective use of the present tense.

The past tense is the natural choice for narrating events past, which is the definition of memoir narration, inasmuch as memoir is an autobiographical genre centered on narration from memory. And since the narrator of a fictional memoir is always conveying memories of his or her perceptions, the discourse in such a novel will simulate the reproduction of its story.\(^ {53}\) Dorrit Cohn notes in regard to fictional autobiographies that “the past tense itself inevitably reminds the reader that they are mediated by memory, presented when they are no longer literally present.”\(^ {54}\)

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51 Dorrit Cohn, for instance, points out “the axiomatic pastness of narrative.” Cohn, *Distinction of Fiction*, 96.

52 See Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 145.

53 See Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 145.

54 Cohn, *Distinction of Fiction*, 107.
Departing from such a precondition, Ianovs’kyi’s narrator strives to portray his memories as present and his past perceptions and experiences as concurrent with the narration. By emulating cinematic narration and employing the historic present tense, his retrospective narrations to a large extent achieve this goal.

Film narration renders experiences as immediately present. Unlike past-tense fictional narratives, the perceived tense of movies is always present: one perceives images and action happening on the screen as factually present, even if they portray past events or visualizations from memory. In the same manner, Ianovs’kyi seeks to create a sense of immediacy in his text through the use of camera-eye narration in the historic present tense.55

For example, the following episode combines dispassionate camera-eye narration with poetic similes, all phrased in historic present. The narrator relays his direct perceptions of running down the Potemkin steps toward the harbor:

По східцях ми біжимо вниз, як школярі. Східців є сот з дві. Добігаємо до вулички, нею йдемо ліворуч, минаємо торговельну гавань, де до берега причалили дубки й великі шаланди, похитуються в ранішньому сні ці дерев’яні будиночки, похитується сіно на деяких з них, і розноситься важке храпіння команди. Дзенькотять ланцюжки, перекинуті з шаланд на беріг. У військовій гавані попритулювалися човни рибалок. Ми підходимо до них і зазираємо з гори, з естокади. Наш актор починає бігати й шукати свого знайомого рибалку, віддаляється від нас і десь зникає. Море тихе й блискуче. Ми ходимо, не розмовляючи. Під нами шаланди, розпустивши паруси, похляскавши ними на тихому вітрі, одна за одною відривають від берега, набравши вітру в парус. Вони довго сповивають у гавані, як нічні птахи, лавірують, хитрають із вітром і врешті, як гуси, випливають за хвильоріз.56

We are running down the steps like schoolchildren. There are about two hundred steps. We reach a side street, walk left along it, and pass the trade port, where dubok and large shalanda boats are moored to the shore; these wooden huts are swaying in the morning slumber; the hay on some of them sways and heavy snoring of the crew resounds. The chains thrown from shalanda boats to the shore jingle. In the military port fishermen’s boats have cozied up. We approach them and glance from above, from a trestle. Our actor starts to run around and look for his fisherman acquaintance, moves away from us and disappears somewhere. The sea is calm and glistening. We walk without talking. Having spread sails, having lashed them in the soft wind, shalanda boats underneath take off from the shore one after the other, having gathered wind in the sails. They sleepwalk for a long time in the harbor like night birds, tacking, playing with the wind, and, finally, like geese swim beyond the breakwater.

55 However, unlike actual cinema, literary cinematic narration only produces the “illusion of immediacy.” See Kellman, “Cinematic Novel,” 474.
56 Maister korablia, 58.
The historic present tense here offers an immediate subjective perception of events, describing them as if unfolding in real time in front of the reader’s eyes. Doing so creates the effect of simultaneous narration, and therefore of a more direct rendition of events.

Here the camera eye focuses alternately on the spatial movement of the narrator and of his friends, which provides narrative cues for the story. Yet most of the sequence describes what is seen after they descend the steps, and these visual images are rendered with great accuracy. In fact, aside from three similes that frame the episode, the camera mostly records concrete visual information, plus a few concrete sounds (fishermen snoring and the clinking noise of boat chains).

Literary or cinematic first-person narration usually offers a limited, subjective perspective. For instance, first-person narration in cinema, as represented in point-of-view (POV) shots, offers the closest rendition possible of human perception, creating (if done well) a believable and powerful account or testimony. Yet the excerpt above is notable in that it recreates a collective perception. First-person plural narration offers the perspective of the narrator and his friend Sev. Visible phenomena are rendered from the point of view of the camera eye, adding information perceptible by their human senses. Through this collective point of view, the narrator attempts to overcome some of the limitations of subjective first-person narration, enhancing the novel’s extensive array of narrative modes and techniques.

As was previously illustrated, Maister korablja surpasses the past-ness and distancing of traditional autobiographical fiction by including passages viewed by the camera eye and narrated in the historic present tense. The novel also transcends the limitations of camera-eye narration by presenting a range of data perceived by the senses—smell, touch, hearing, sight, temperature,

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57 Magny argues that through point-of-view shots “the narrative acquires a greater persuasive value, it has the same force as the testimony of the witness.” Magny, *Age of the American Novel*, 25.
and so forth. Collective point-of-view shots in fact emulate the complete range of both sensory information and metaphoric perception.

For instance, one of *Maister korablia*’s iconic scenes is a sunrise sequence witnessed by To-Ma-Ki and Sev while sitting at a breakwater near the open sea. The scene describes their direct perception of a moment in time by recording a range of sensory details:

A fisherman near us caught a goby. We were sitting facing the open sea where the sun was about to come out and rise in front of us over the City. Distant shore to the left is already taking shape, as if appearing from the valley of night shadows. […] Just at this time the sun begins to rise. It emerges from behind the water, and is instantly reflected in the sea. Because of that it is constantly round and grows only larger and larger. Now it takes off from the water. It is as if someone were stirring a shiny sieve over it. Kittiwakes are screaming behind us. They scream, circling over the water and dropping now and again to the water to catch fish. The sun is shining into our eyes. We tolerate it at first, blink our eyes, and then turn away from the sun and sigh, sensing how warmly sunrays lie on us.

The sequence begins with sentences in the past tense, which provide narrative information and set the background. It then cuts to the narrator and Sev’s subjective perceptions, which are formulated in the present tense. This static descriptive sequence with no story action aptly illustrates the new Ukrainian literature. A fresh depiction of the sunrise is achieved primarily through present-tense camera-eye narration of To-Ma-Ki and Sev’s direct sensations and perceptions. Characteristically, the poetic camera eye combines pure visual information with poetic similes (“as if appearing from the valley of the night shadows”; “as if someone is stirring a shiny sieve over it”). Moreover, to render an exact picture of the narrator’s memory of the episode, a full range of sensory detail is presented, including not only concrete visual imagery but also descriptions of various sounds and the feel of the temperature.

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Multi-sensory data is similarly recorded in a scene describing the processing of film at a lab. The art of the motion picture is characterized as the animation of inanimate images on film, as their transformation into life:

The scent of chemicals and of pear essence filled up all the air in the rooms and hallways. Wherever one can see—film is glimmering. It is drying on the drums—negative and positive—and being carried on racks from the developing and fixing rooms to the washing tanks; in rolls of negatives it goes to the printing machine, which works with red light. Film is lying around on the tables and in drawers, on rollers of the flatbed editor, in round metal tins. The continuous rattle of the rollers, of the large drums for film drying, the uninterrupted splashing of water in the washing room—all this creates a special atmosphere in human work. A pungent and pleasant smell is combined with an abundance of sounds of varying force, lifeless pictures on film are coming alive, and the eye records them as familiar whiffs of life.

This excerpt again depicts its subject through all the senses, complementing the camera-eye narration of visual data. Images of film stock multiply through poetic repetition, and the accumulating visuals evoke the objects and mechanisms of a film-processing lab. The processing of film is treated almost like a magic process, as if inanimate images come alive on film through the incantatory, repetitive movement. On account of this perceptible rhythm, the passage stylistically evokes a symphony or an ode to filmmaking, where objects are the real agents, not humans.60

As is typical of camera-eye narration, no indication is made in this sequence of the persona of the speaker or narrator. Even though the scene refers to various perceptible human

59 Maister korablia, 131–32.

60 In cinema, the animation of inanimate objects is achieved through rhythmic editing, which juxtaposes shots of the objects with close-ups of their parts and fragments. This type of editing is responsible, for instance, for the abstract “dance” of objects in Fernand Léger’s and Dudley Murphy’s *Ballet mécanique* (1924), and for the powerful ideological messages in Soviet silent films. Rhythmic repetition is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, in the section on literary montage.
senses (smell, vision, and sound), the perception is de-individualized so that the film stock, reel (моталка) and developing equipment are the true focus. The narrator’s seeming absence allows the film and film-processing tools to freely evolve, enabling their animation.\textsuperscript{61} Thus the processing of the film occurs as if without human intervention, even though the narrator observes that processing and comments on the solemn working atmosphere (“this all creates a special atmosphere in human work”). The underlining effect is of a neutral camera-eye presenting mechanical tools and objects as independent mechanisms.

The novel also skillfully blends multiple sensory impressions into synaesthetic descriptions. One of the most prominent examples depicts the narrator’s first direct encounter with Taiakh through a confluence of sensory perceptions, in particular comparing her scent to the sound of a violin: “I feel beside me a warm woman’s shoulder, she smells lovely—some sweet, quivering scent, like a sound of a violin.”\textsuperscript{62} Touch, taste, smell, and sound all fuse in a description recording the full range of sensory data detectable to human perception.

**Use of the Present Tense for Dramatic Effect and Narrating Peak Episodes**

Besides genuinely rendering the narrator’s perception of events, present-tense cinematic narration is also used to emphasize a dramatic point in a scene. Embedding a visual scene in the historic present into past-tense narration serves to foreground it within the main memoir story.

I have already noted that the narration of action in *Maister korablia* is primarily formulated in the past tense, while descriptive scenes rendering the narrator’s immediate perception of events are cast in the historic present. Because, as Fleischman argues, “the

\textsuperscript{61} Monika Fludernik aptly defines camera-eye narration as “third-person neutral narrative” in which “a scenario of things evolving as if by themselves can be observed.” Fludernik, *Towards a “Natural” Narratology*, 130.

\textsuperscript{62} “Я відчуваю біля себе тепле плече жінки, вона чудово пахне—якийсь солодкий, тремтячий запах, як звук віоліни.” *Maister korablia*, 53.
unmarked tense of narration” is the past tense (or preterit for Slavic languages), the switch to the historic present in scenes narrated in both past and present can create a sense of dramatic climax in the scene. Alternating present and past tenses within an episode allows Ianovs’kyi to give semantic emphasis to the events narrated in the present tense. Switching to the present creates a narrative peak, similar to the effect of a camera eye closing in on an object.

An example is found in a scene recounting a tragic accident on the dubok “Tamara.” While filming the movie’s final scene at sea, the sailboat capsized due to poor construction, and a few young children drowned. The scene was not witnessed by the narrator directly; it is narrated from the neutral third-person point of view of a camera eye. The present tense is primarily used to set up the scene. The focus here is on the weather, the children, the filmmakers and the sailboat. Signs of the future tragedy are also mentioned, namely, the director notices that the keel is too small in relation to the size of the sailboat, a fact the owner of the boat tries to shrug off while his face nonetheless shows concern, and a few gusts of wind foretell a coming storm.

Toward the middle of the episode, right before the tragic events, the narration switches to past tense:

Сонце сходило перед дубком, обертаючись на мiсцi. Дiти не могли заплющити очей, захопленi таким великим вогнем. Вони сплескували радiсно руками, штовхаючись i вилазячи аж на бугшприт. Кiно-оператор крутив. Режисер стояв позад апарата й радiв вiд сцени, що мусіла бути останньою в його фiльмi. “Парусник з дiтьми пливе назустрiч сонцевi. Вогняний диск пiднiмається над обрiєм.”

63 See Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity*, 24. Fleischman makes her observations primarily based on texts in Romance languages and English. Preterit, or the past perfective is often described as the “basic tense” of narration in Czech and other Slavic literatures. See Lubomír Doležel, *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 26.

64 Dorrit Cohn suggests that switching between tenses creates more vivid narration, not the use of the present tense itself. “The highlighting impact generally attributed to the use of the historical present—variously expressed in terms of enhanced vividness, dramatic effect, or presentification—is accordingly understood as being wholly dependent on its intermittence: if it were not embedded on normal tensual surroundings, its tensual deviance would not stand out.” Cohn, *Distinction of Fiction*, 99.

65 *Maister korablia*, 76.
The sun was rising in front of the *dubok*, revolving on the spot. Children couldn’t shut their eyes, admiring such a great fire. They were clapping their hands merrily, jostling and climbing all the way up to the bowsprit. The camera-operator was cranking. The film director was standing behind the camera, rejoicing from the scene that was to be the last in his film. “Sailboat with children is sailing towards the sun. The fiery disk is rising above the horizon.”

This passage consistently employs the past imperfective, which typically conveys background information; here it presents the atmosphere and sets up the tragic events. At first everything is going according to the script. The sunrise, depicted from the children’s point of view, speaks of a happy exuberance. The camera eye settles on the children’s agitated excitement in witnessing “such great fire,” then it turns to the cameraman and the director as they film and observe the process. Their filming is juxtaposed with what appears to be a descriptive quote from the script in the present tense.

The following paragraph shifts from the descriptive imperfective to the past perfective, a shift which marks the beginning of a sequence of events. Then the text abruptly switches to the present tense (see the middle of the first paragraph below), taking the reader directly into the action:

Having risen, the sun set behind a small cloud that began to grow catastrophically. The children were romping, because adults could not notice them any longer. The cloud sprawled around the sky. The wind, which was blowing in gusts, brought the humidity of raindrops. The cloud caught up with the sailboat and scattered rain over it. The sails got wet, making the masts heavy. The shore is not far away already. The

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66 Cf. Clarence A. Manning, *English tenses and Slavic Aspects*, 29. Analyzing the use of aspect in Marko Cheremshyna’s story *Pysanky*, Manning states that verbs in past imperfective tense prevail in the introduction to the story, while a shift to the present expresses the protagonist’s “absorption in the action of the story.”

67 *Maister korablia*, 76–77.
dubok is swaying its masts way too much. The fishermen are changing the sails. Wet fabric is drooping and flapping unpleasantly. The sails are filled with wind. The masts are leaning almost towards the water. Another windblast presses on, and the masts are falling into the water, shaking out of the dubok a squealing crowd.

The next minute the sky clears, the sun is shining through a broken cloud, and it looks as if it hadn’t rained at all. One hour later the Director is giving a report to a journalist that “because of the unfitness of the dubok for a light cargo and because of its shallow keel, an accident has happened. But luckily the children were saved, except for a few young ones.”

The passage starts by offering a bird’s-eye view of the scene in the past perfective tense, which foregrounds the action and describes a quickly changing sequence of events leading to the accident. The tragedy itself is described in the present tense, and with the shift the camera eye gradually focuses on the sailboat and offers close-ups of the sails, the masts, and the fishermen as they try to avoid ruin. These fragmented depictions of the sailboat lead to the episode’s tragic culmination. The switch to the present tense also builds dramatic tension, in part because the change corresponds to an increase in the tempo. Short sentences now flit from one view to another, creating a dynamic, rising tempo, building even more tension.

The scene ends with a brief journalistic summary of the event which is presented not in the present tense but the past. Here, the perfective aspect again indicates the sequence of events occurring in the past. The director’s media report is short, emotionless and to the point, offering facts about the cause of the accident. It also serves as a conclusion to the episode, explaining the consequences of the boat’s poor construction while dispassionately noting the death of a few young children. The question of victims is underplayed in the official statement, reflecting the dehumanizing sensibilities of the Soviet state, as if the death of a few small children does not amount to a tragedy in the grand scheme. There is a striking incongruity between this unimpassioned report and the tragedy of the scene. The impartiality of the scene, with its

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68 In Ukrainian language “the speaker or writer uses a perfective form in order to indicate the immediateness and rapidity of the change of scene.” Manning, *English Tenses*, 15. Similarly, Fleischman argues that perfective aspect is best suited “to encode the sequence of happenings that constitutes the backbone of a narration.” Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity*, 24.
depersonalized camera-eye narration, allows the narrator to withhold emotion from his statements. Such an effect would be more difficult to achieve if it were narrated from the perspective of a traditional autobiographical narrator.\textsuperscript{69} The entire scene exhibits great control over the space and time of the story, and masterfully builds dramatic tension by alternating camera-eye shots in the past and present tenses.

**Montage of Memories: Constructing a Memoir-Novel**

The simultaneous narration of the poetic camera eye was not the only way in which cinema aesthetics influenced Ianovs’kyi’s memoir-novel. The cinematic technique of montage also affected its organization and narrative structure. In fact, it is not coincidental that the narrator To-Ma-Ki practices montage in his work at the film studios. As editor-in-chief, he arranges and organizes film material through montage to structure a movie, an experience which carries over to the editing and constructing of his own memoirs.\textsuperscript{70} His metaphor of walking off the beaten path also indicates his preference for nonlinear narrative. The use of literary montage as a structuring device in literary texts spiked in Ukrainian experimental prose of the 1920s, as authors departed from linear storytelling in their works. It is important, then, to examine this experimental construction in the new Ukrainian art and culture.

**“Storyless” Construction: The Film Bila Pustelia**

To illustrate the progression of film art, *Maister korablia* distinguishes the narrative organization of future films from that of films of the 1920s. The art of the past is exemplified by

\textsuperscript{69} In contrast, in Kotsiubyns’kyi’s aforementioned story, “Tsvit iabluni,” the first-person, autobiographical narrator constantly expresses his conflicted emotional state at observing his dying child and the need to faithfully record it.

\textsuperscript{70} L. Starynkevych makes similar observations in her review of the novel: “Надзвичайно цікаво простежити, як внутрішнє розуміння авторове щодо процесу компонувки сценарію відбулося на зовнішній конструкції роману. [...] Таким чином, кінотворчість автора-героя стає за основний мотив, що на ньому базується навмисне розби та перекручена, фрагментарна композиційна форма.” L. Starynkevych, review of *Maister korablia*, 274.
Sev’s film, where, he says, *fabula* (the story) will hold the narrative together. As he introduces his idea for the film to a group of friends at a cafe, he describes To-Ma-Ki’s role as one of bringing together the movie’s various storylines: “I will tell about the school and about young sailors on the brig, Bohdan will convey his observations, as well as his and others’ motives for returning to their homeland, and the editor will tie this with firm knots of *fabula*.”

Yet even though *fabula* is mentioned here as important to the development of the film’s narrative, the novel itself actually proposes a different kind of organization for the work of art.

At the beginning of the novel the narrator shares, through a series of flashbacks, his observations about a fictional movie, *Bila pustelia*. He highly praises this avant-garde film, calling it “extraordinary,” “a true masterpiece” and a sign that the film art has reached its apex. He also claims to reflect the enthusiasm of general audiences. *Bila pustelia* exemplifies the film art of the future, and according to To-Ma-Ki its key achievement is its renouncing of *fabula*:

> White Desert is almost a storyless work—from the point of view of a 1930s critic. We have already forgotten that “Line of beauty,” through which the painter Hogarth wanted to unveil the laws of beauty in the eighteenth century. […]  

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71 The use of this term reflects the Formalists’ distinction between *fabula* (story) and *siuzhet* (plot): the former contains the core of the narrative information, a rough outline, or the sequence of events as they have seemingly occurred, while the latter describes the actual arrangement of these story events in the narrative. Iurii Tynianov warns against the confusion between the terms “*fabula*” and “*siuzhet*” in literature or cinema. He argues “Под фабулой обычно понимают фабульную схему. Правильнее считать фабулой—не схему, а всю фабульную наметку вещи. Сюжет же—это общая динамика вещи, которая складывается из взаимодействия между движением фабулы и движением—нарастанием и спадами стилевых масс.” Tynianov, “О siuzhete i fabule v kino,” 325; emphasis in the original.

72 “Я розповім про школу й молодих моряків на бригові, Богдан викладе свої спостереження і мотиви повернення його й інших на батьківщину, а редактор пов’яжить це міцними вузлами фабули.” *Maister korablia*, 106.

73 “Сьогодні я бачив нашу надзвичайну ‘Білу Пустелю’” (Maister korablia, 7). “‘Біла Пустеля’ дійсно шедевр” (Maister korablia, 8). “Кіномистецтво дійшло апогею” (Maister korablia, 8).

74 *Maister korablia*, 11.
It is terrible to hear, when nowadays someone starts talking about fabula as a thread, about characters that do not change their personalities, and about the author who is afraid to jump over the chasm of human conventionalities.

The narrator presents fabula as nearly obsolete in the art of the future. Rather, the reference to Hogarth’s “Line of Beauty,” which unfolds in a nonlinear, wave-like pattern, offers a powerful image of the narrative structure of Maister korablia.75

The film Bila pustelia not only functions as an example of the evolution of cinema art, but it also indicates a change in the aesthetic sensibilities of audiences. To-Ma-Ki’s ekphrastic description of Bila pustelia propagates the idea that in the future films lacking a clear fabula will be commonplace and will replace traditional story- and action-based films. However, a number of the film’s innovative characteristics reflect experimental techniques of film art already present in the 1920s: the rejection of fabula, length (twelve hours), the use of the Schüfftan method,76 and the use of naturalistic imagery.

For instance, the description of the film’s imagery includes a landscape with snow-covered trees (the opening shot), later focusing on an extreme close-up of a naked person superimposed over that landscape. These shots and the following sequence, which shows a woman in birth, are the only tangible information offered about the movie. And because the film lacks a coherent story, the narrator admits his lack of skill to summarize it. Instead he offers his subjective impressions: “I am powerless to recount White Desert. Logically, it does not fall into

75 The term “Line of beauty” was proposed by eighteenth-century English painter William Hogarth in his Analysis of Beauty (1753). It denotes a serpentine (curved or S-shaped) line that, supposedly, provides dynamism and liveliness and creates more appeal in a painting compared to a straight line.

76 A special effect developed by Eugen Schüfftan, this technique was used widely in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1927): “Described briefly, it is a method of combining real sets with small models, or combining photographs with small inexpensive sets in such a way as to blend the two into a whole and make detection by the spectator impossible.” Michel Mok, “New Ideas Sweep Movie Studios,” Popular science monthly, May 1930: 143. 1920s Ukrainian filmmakers and scriptwriters enthusiastically discussed this technique in the Ukrainian film journals Kino-tyzhdendy and Kinozhurnal.
the framework of human coherence. I still quiver from the vigor and force that I felt while watching the picture.”

The discussion of *Bila pustelia* as a film of the future also affords the narrator the opportunity to address the reception of “storyless” experimental artworks. The film description not only indicates that cinema has come a long way in history but also that cinema audiences have become more refined in their aesthetic judgement. This experimental film is highly regarded by critics and audiences, and this despite the lack of elements that typically make a movie successful, such as an entertaining story or dynamic action. Enduring a twelve-hour film without a discernible story in a single sitting seems quite impressive, yet the narrator presents the feat as an ordinary occurrence in the future. Moreover, the viewers are described as receiving aesthetic pleasure from watching the experimental movie, promoting the idea that *Maister korablia’s* recipients ought to accept and appreciate its nonlinear construction, bold naturalistic imagery, and overall experimental form.

For in fact it is *Maister korablia* not *Bila pustelia* which presents a literary work ahead of its time in breaking literary conventions of narrative organization. *Fabula* is not a unifying force in the memoir-novel, nor is its storytelling linear. These traits help the narrator achieve his declared goals of eschewing storytelling conventions and of enhancing the memoir’s authenticity. The narrator declares his intention to present life unprocessed and seemingly unedited, and to present true events as they actually occurred. And for the most part, *Maister korablia’s* recipients ought to accept and appreciate its nonlinear construction, bold naturalistic imagery, and overall experimental form.

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77 “Розповісти ‘Білу Пустелю’—я безсилий. Логічно вона не вкладається в рямці людської послідовності. Я й досі ще здригаюся від бадьорості й сили, що їх відчув я, переглядаючи картину.” *Maister korablia*, 12.

78 In a similar way, Wassily Kandinsky suggests that in the future audiences will be more refined in their aesthetic sensibilities and so will be able to enjoy abstract art. See Wassily Kandinsky, “Reminiscences,” in *Modern Artists on Art*, ed. Robert L. Herbert, 2nd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000), 38.
korablia’s story indeed unfolds “naturally,” imitating the slightly chaotic order of events in real life.

*Creating the Effect of Reality in the Novel: Towards a More “Natural” Storytelling*

Achieving more natural narration in *Maister korablia* is made possible in part by varying the presentation of narrative perspectives. In the main memoir story, a framed narrative, To-Ma-Ki presents events predominantly from the point of view of his younger self, immersed in the story world and experiencing events in the narrating moment as if there were no distance between his narration and those events. The narrator oscillates between the limited perspective of direct, simultaneous camera-eye narration in the framed narrative, and his retrospective omniscient position in the framing narrative.

The former narrative mode equates the moment of narrating with the moment of experience, and in this way closely resembles cinematic narration. It limits the scope of the narrative and the ability to control its course. In transporting himself into the “here and now” of his memoirs, the narrator offers immediate perceptions of episodes from his life without the ability to distinguish what is important from what is less important, or the ability to interpret and reflect on the events. This approach thus narrows the scope of presentation from what is found in traditional autobiographical writing.

Usually, an autobiography or memoir focuses on key events in the narrator’s life and presents defining moments in his or her career. Memory works selectively in an autobiographical narrative. It tends to distort facts or select only those events that seem significant in the present light. As was already stated, since To-Ma-Ki’s intent is neither to write a traditional novel nor to satisfy readers’ expectations, he announces his credo to recount everything non-selectively: “I
am writing first and foremost for myself, and everything is interesting to me.” The narrator allegedly omits nothing in his reminiscences, on grounds that every scene or memory deserves equal attention.

Aside from refusing to recount events and people selectively, To-Ma-Ki also fails to distinguish between background events and key scenes, as is typically done by a narrator in a typical retrospective autobiography. For instance, in the introduction To-Ma-Ki lists the following array of subjects for discussion: “You see, I am equally pleased to speak about cinema, about White Desert, about my youth and old age, about intimate affairs and public affairs. There is no difference in the world between all this; there is nothing important and nothing trivial. Everything is close to me, and trust me that I will not waste a precious bit of time on the dispensable.”

This refusal to mark foreground and background information, along with the refusal to omit details insignificant or less relevant to the story is innovative in view of the traditional novel structure. To-Ma-Ki aims to render events dispassionately, which incidentally also suits the definition of camera-eye narration, where the camera “(presumably) records, without ostensible organization or selection, whatever is before it.” Such narration produces the “effect of reality”

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79 “Я пишу в першу чергу для себе, і мені все цікаве.” Maister korablia, 37.

80 “Ви бачите, мені однаково приємно говорити про кіно, про 'Білу Пустелю,' про мою юність і старість, про справи інтимні і справи громадські. Немає на світі різниці між усім цим, немає важливого і мізернішого. Все мені близьке, і повірте мені, що я не стану витрачати дорогоцінної крихти часу на зайве.” Maister korablia, 14.

81 Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology, s.v. “camera.”
(l’effet de réel) in the novel. Like a camera eye, To-Ma-Ki also registers scenes and details in his memoirs that may be irrelevant or less significant to the story’s progression.

In pursuit of new experimental ways of writing, the narrator also claims to relinquish control over the characters and the story and to abandon the crafted, non-natural sequencing of events. The retrospective narrator of a standard memoir typically selects events from the past and arranges them into a coherent narrative. Maister korablia’s narrator rejects this approach, and with it the principle of coherent storytelling. Instead he seeks to preserve the “natural” manner of the unfolding of events. His seemingly nonselective narration and excessive inclusion of concrete, aleatory details—he claims to capture all the details—aim to produce a more natural narration and the “effect of reality” in his fiction.

Narration typically imposes meaning on a story and feeds the desire of readers or viewers to comprehend the fictional reality. The “effect of reality” is based on the assumption that life resists such signification. As Barthes argues, concrete reality consists of “casual movements, transitory attitudes, insignificant objects, redundant words,” and this “obsessive reference to the ‘concrete’ […] is always brandished as a weapon against meaning, as if there were some indisputable law that what is truly alive could not signify—and vice versa.” This effect is especially convincing in Ianovs’kyi’s camera-eye narration, which presents the narrator as concurrently living, observing, and describing reality in the present moment. For instance, the

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83 See Chatman, Coming to Terms, 40; Chatman argues that “The effet de réel is intrinsic to the medium: film cannot avoid a cornucopia of visual details, some of which are inevitably ‘irrelevant’ from the strict plot point of view.”
narrator paints a dynamic picture of life at the film factory in the 1920s through concrete details of his life, including random, seemingly insignificant sequences presented without explanation.  

The effect of reality is also achieved by describing the characters, scenes, and settings in excessive detail. For example, To-Ma-Ki briefly records this short comment—a sentence long—as he and Sev wait for a *shalanda* to take them fishing in the open sea: “Some old lady (баба) of intelligentsia descent smokes a cigarette and spits in the water, as if she were telling fortunes.” Aside from creating the effect of reality, this scene also aims to recall the atmosphere of life in the 1920s. It perhaps serves as a commentary on old cultural elites, which became déclassé under the new regime: the lady of intelligentsia background transformed into a smoking, spitting fortune-teller. Either way, the scene introduces a moment of comical relief. And in such manner, like Hogarth’s wavy “Line of beauty,” *Maister korablia* oscillates between the sublime and the ugly, between poetic images of the sea and nature and depictions of trivial “reality.”

The effect of reality can be created through a word, a detail, a sentence or an entire scene. For instance, in chapter 2 the narrator includes a short scene that he and other passersby witness in the port. An inebriated man painting the stern of a steamship repeatedly sings two lines from a song, until at some point he loses his balance and tumbles into the sea. One of the witnesses saves the painter from the water, and the painter then silently and gloomily continues his work. The scene is only few pages long and completely irrelevant to the narrative arc of the story, yet it

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85 Aleatory stories are also part of the structure of most experimental Ukrainian novels of the 1920s. Incidentally, Chatman argues that “‘Aleatory’ or random stories are a staple of postmodern literature.” Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 103.

86 “Якась стара баба інтелігентного походження палить цигарку і плює в воду, ніби ворожачи.” *Maister korablia*, 60.

87 The adaptation of pre-revolutionary intelligentsia to the new socialist context is the main focus of Leonid Skrypnyk’s novel *Intelihent*.

88 See *Maister korablia*, 17–18.
is full of concrete details. It is described with similar attention to detail as an episode in chapter 4, which recounts the Director’s past as a sailor.\textsuperscript{89} The latter episode, however, \textit{is} significant, as it helps to characterize the Director by illuminating his life prior to his career at the film factory. On the other hand, the scene with the painter, like scenes in Vertov’s films, de-automatizes narrative conventions by subverting readers’ expectations of what should be included in the memoir.

The following scene also illustrates the narrator’s seemingly nonselective recording of reality. It presents a vibrant, detailed picture of a night in the city. After watching the ballet performance \textit{Iosyf Prekrasnyi} (Joseph the Beautiful), To-Ma-Ki describes himself strolling along the seafront boulevard and thinking about the ballet and its lead female dancer, Taiakh. This scene is then interlaced with random vignettes witnessed in passing by the narrator:

\begin{quote}
Підходжу до пам’ятника, звідки видно огні порту й море. Маяк поперемінно кладе на море то червону, то зелену смугу. Машинально слухаю розмову двох дівчат, добре вдягнених і молодих. Одна плаче і докорівдівг піднімає своєї пожадливості. “Ти вже трьох сьогодні мала, а я ні одного. Що мені—з голоду погибати?” Я переходжу на інше місце, щоб не бути об’єктом їхньої уваги. Стою довго, доки вогники сірників, що запалюються регулярно і догорають до краю, зацікавлюють мене. Гуляючи, проходжду повзд лавку. Бачу мужчину і жінку, що сидять мовчи. Одне тримає сірника, а друге швидко перебирає пальцями обох рук.

Це закохані глухонімі, що почали свою розмову десь при світлі лихтаря й кінчають її тут на тихім бульварі, під подувом морської вільгості.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

I am approaching the monument, from where one can see the lights of the port and the sea. The lighthouse alternately lays either red, or green streak on the sea. Absentmindedly, I am listening to a conversation between two girls, well dressed and young. One is crying and reproaching the other one for her greediness. “You already had three today, and I had none. What should I do—die of hunger?” I move to another spot not to be an object of their attention. I’ve been standing for a long time until match lights, which light up regularly and burn out, capture my interest. Strolling by, I pass a bench. I see a man and a woman that are both sitting in silence. One is holding a match, and the other is quickly gesturing with fingers of both hands.

These are deaf people in love that started their conversation somewhere under the light of a lantern and are finishing it here on a quiet boulevard, under the whiff of sea humidity.

\textsuperscript{89} See \textit{Maister korablia}, 40–42.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Maister korablia}, 24–25.
Both this vignette and that of the drunken painter leave the reader guessing at their significance. They are filled with realistic details and serve as pieces of concrete reality in the novel. Both focus on external details, appearances, clothes, gestures, movements, and conversations—characterizations typical of cinematic narration. While the narrator provides the reader with some clarification of the second scene in the latter vignette (“These are deaf people in love”), the first scene entirely lacks commentary or explanation. The two girls are likely prostitutes arguing over clients. Yet no further clues are offered besides details of their physical appearance and their conversation. Neither is there any explanation of how these episodes are relevant to the main memoir story. Their inclusion has no explicit motivation other than to directly portray the narrator’s night walk in the port city.

These examples show that unlike in a typical autobiography, whether nonfictional or fictional, this experimental novel showcases episodes and tales with no clear function other than contributing to the effect of reality, that is, producing a more “natural” storytelling. The narrator positions aleatory details at particular points allegedly in the order in which they actually occurred, the documenting of which constructs the overall impression that the narrator is presenting “life as it is,” without premeditation. The use of this effect alongside the use of camera-eye narration creates the illusion of presenting the narrator’s unedited, unstructured, and episodic memories.

However, nonselective narration is also a literary mystification upheld by Ianovs’kyi in his novel. Upon a close reading, beside all the seemingly nonselective presentations of reality one also encounters the careful artistic organization of episodes. The novel therefore juxtaposes its “natural” writing principle with the subjective arrangement and blending of both factual and artistic material.
Montage as a Tool of Artistic Expression

The text of *Maister korablia* is also explicitly *edited*, with its sequences and scenes juxta posed through the use of the literary montage technique. The narrator To-Ma-Ki includes several scenes that show him performing duties typical of an editor. Early in the novel, for instance, he recounts a scene where one of his feature films is edited at the studios. Together with the film director he reviews footage and decides which scenes to keep and which to cut.91 The scene is notable because it illustrates a heated 1920s discussion about authorship in film.92 Since he wrote the movie script, To-Ma-Ki considers himself a full-fledged author of the film, and this position allows him mercilessly to cut various scenes as he ardently defends his vision and argues for keeping the film’s high artistic quality.

On another production, the filming of a newsreel, To-Ma-Ki instructs the cameraman which scenes to film, then oversees the process of editing the ample material into a finished product.93 He inspects the raw footage and selects which episodes are to be used as well as their order. These experiences as a narrator and a film editor in turn reflect the manner in which To-Ma-Ki constructs episodes in the *literary* narrative of *Maister korablia*, his memoir. Despite the declarations of inclusive narration, the narrator’s camera eye also subjectively selects scenes and viewpoints which help to construct the novel’s artistic universe.

Similar to 1920s Soviet films that gave prominence to montage as a cinematic device, the novel *Maister korablia* fashions almost photographic images of reality into an artistic work. The cinematic narration of the camera eye, then, also serves as a tool of subjective artistic

92 For the opposing side of the argument and a director’s position, see an article by VUFKU director Favst Lopatyns’kyi “Lyst do moioho priiatelia—tsenarysta,” *Nova generatsiia*, no. 5 (1928): 361–63.
expression. This contradiction between the camera eye as a new vehicle of narration and a means of subjective artistic expression is especially prominent in *Maister korablia*’s use of literary montage.

The novel’s text claims that its artistic organization and arrangement through montage is not at odds with a truthful portrayal of reality in literature, or with the manifested capturing of “life as it is” in non-acted film. In the context of Soviet ideology and the non-acted film aesthetic, the artful (re)organization of filmed material leads to the artistic editing of life. Similarly to the films of Kuleshov, Vertov and Eisensten, the novel *Maister korablia* justifies and supports the artistic editing of life and the modification of factual filmed material through montage by defending subjective, artistic truth as of equal importance to factual accuracy. Several examples demonstrate how the artistic organization, restructuring, and editing of factual material need not contradict the novel’s ambitions to present “life as it is.”

For instance, Sev’s film is based on the stories of Bohdan’s seafaring adventures. Sev supplements these stories with his own invented narrative, presenting the latter as artistically plausible despite being factually untrue. He justifies his invention before a group of friends as follows: “I need this episode in the hold, and I would like to relate to you the way I am producing it. Bohdan didn’t recount it, but I am presenting it not how it happened, but how it could have happened. Are you listening?” Sev’s rendition of Bohdan’s story becomes a full-fledged element in the novel, yet neither Bohdan nor the narrator ever confirm that these events

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94 Michael North makes a similar argument noting that “the camera, celebrated from the first as objectivity incarnate, also came to serve as one of modernity’s most powerful emblems of the subjectivity of perception and of knowledge.” Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

95 “Мені потрібний цей епізод у трюмі, і я його хочу розповісти вам так, як я його роблю. Богдан про його не розповідав, але я беру не так, як було, а так, як могло бути. Ви слухаєте?” *Maister korablia*, 178.
actually happened, making the question of factual accuracy secondary in comparison to the text’s overall artistic goals.

An episode from the production of Sev’s film further illustrates the exercise of artistic freedom to transform factual material through editing. The premise is that repurposing factual footage is justified if it serves the film’s artistic idea. Sev’s film is to be composed from scenes shot specifically for the movie, as well as from footage filmed for other purposes, namely, material originally filmed for a newsreel To-Ma-Ki was producing entitled “Druzhnia zustrich predstavnykiv susids’kykh derzhav” (A friendly meeting of the representatives of neighboring countries).

Sev instructs the cameraman of the newsreel to film the arrival of the Turkish cruiser “Ismet” at the Odesa seaport, and plans to use the shots of the cruiser greeting the Soviet delegation with cannon shots for an utterly different purpose. Through montage Sev plans to present the Turkish cruiser as attacking Bohdan’s sailboat—a sequence opposite to the intention of the cruiser’s visit, as well as to the focus of the newsreel, which portrays an amicable meeting. The shots of factual material are, therefore, rearranged and repurposed to suit the artistic goals of Sev’s film. This episode foregrounds the constructed-ness of the film’s text and provides artistic justification for the manipulation of factual material through montage.

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96 Similarly, Vertov argues for organizing factual footage according to a thematic principle that disregards actual temporal and spatial continuity and the original purpose of the filmed material. He offers an example of juxtaposing shots filmed at different time and in different areas of the Soviet Union and showing that “such things go together, even with thankless footage not specifically shot for this purpose (cf. Kinopravda no. 13).” Vertov, “Kinoks: a Revolution,” in Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O’Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 17.

97 Bohdan explains to the narrator: “а знимали ми для майбутньої картини Сева. Ми знимали з маяка, як ‘Iсмет’ наближається до місця катастрофи, як стріляє в бідного й нещасного парусника. З даху зерноперевантажувача ми знову знимали постріли ‘Iсмета,’ а в кадрі майорив наш прапор.” Maister korablia, 151. Of course, the novel also shows historical irony here, noting that “Ismet” is actually the same cruiser that attacked Bohdan’s sailboat, although in a different location and under different circumstances.
Reflecting on these approaches to the construction of an artistic universe, *Maister korablia* transposes the dynamic editing technique of montage to the organization of a literary work. In particular, literary montage is a fitting tool for replicating the processes of memory.

**Use of Literary Montage in Discontinuity Editing: Nonlinear and Fragmentary Construction in the Novel**

As was discussed, one can hardly discern a coherent story in the mix of *Maister korablia*’s heterogeneous elements and narratives. The text’s narrative aims, above all, to faithfully present the narrator’s *memories*, that is, the nonlinear processes of thinking and reminiscing about the events of his life. With this at the core of Ianovs’kyi’s memoir-novel, it is not surprising that literary montage is his primary tool.

Since montage is merely a device for ordering and piecing together narrative events, and since both literature and film are narrative art forms presenting temporal sequences, montage can fruitfully be employed in either medium. As was shown earlier, Ukrainian experimental writers who worked on screenplays for VUFKU were well-versed in cinematic composition, so turning to montage in their literary works came naturally. Ianovs’kyi’s novel illustrates this experimentation in his cinematic sequencing of events and episodes, and his cinematic manipulation of space and time.

For instance, a newreel sequence on the history of film in chapter 1 seeks to relay the difficulty of reproducing the totality of post-revolutionary life in either film or literature. It emphasizes the effects of socio-political changes on film’s artistic devices, particularly specifying montage as the most suitable tool for portraying revolutionary changes in art and for organizing post-revolutionary art. The sequence contrasts the “endless” flow of newsreel images prior to the revolution with the abrupt, fragmentary succession of random shots in films after the revolution. The fragmented images suggest that film cannot encompass the scope of the
revolution with traditionally available artistic devices. As the straight line of history was violently disrupted with the onset of WWI and the October revolution, so narrative must abandon linearity too. *Maister korablia* is an experiment attempting to parallel this nonlinear, fragmented progression in literature.

The literary montage technique thus becomes a tool for organizing the novel’s visual scenes and episodes. It is closely allied in the novel with the concept of nonlinearity. Like 1920s experimental films, *Maister korablia* emphasizes spatial and temporal discontinuities, promoting the temporal manipulation of the order, duration and frequency of events. In particular, the memoir-novel features numerous flashbacks, flashforwards, narrative ellipses, crosscuts, and narrative jumps, all of which help to shift between framed and framing narratives.

**Nonlinearity and Lack of Continuity between Sequences**

Literary montage became the primary tool for arranging *Maister korablia*’s scenes and episodes. Any sense of continuity between chapters and scenes is disrupted; instead the text is comprised of a long series of short, disjointed scenes. This discontinuity is achieved primarily by the simple omission of causal connections between the sequences.

Examples of nonlinear construction abound in the novel. One of the most striking is the discontinuity found between chapters, where various storylines progress without connection or transition. For instance, in chapter 2 the Director of the film studios requests that To-Ma-Ki write a personal constitution. Chapter 2 ends with the phrase: “I went to write the constitution and was writing it for about a week.” Yet the writing of his personal constitution is relayed only in chapter 4. Chapter 3 concerns other themes entirely.

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Incidentally, To-Ma-Ki begins chapter 4 with his critically important observations on literary digressions, a metafictional commentary on the importance of veering from the beaten path, and on distinguishing the memoirist from the novelist. *Maister korablia’s* own narrative structure thus finds a brilliant mirror in this wandering metaphor. In the constitution itself, the new editor-in-chief articulates in a famous passage the overarching goal of both the novel and his life’s work: he reveals his utmost dedication and pledges his devotion from birth to the cause of advancing the nation’s culture.\(^{100}\)

After declaring at the close of chapter 2 his readiness to write his personal constitution, chapter 3 abruptly begins with a description of an Opera House: “The hall of the first opera theatre in the Republic is all lined in red velvet.”\(^{101}\) The chapter then proceeds to depict the narrator’s experience watching the ballet. The narrator never explains this jarring spatial and temporal move, which produces a disorienting effect in the reader. The connection between chapters 2 and 3 appears simply pieced together. Such fragmentariness is, however, recognizably cinematic; abruptly shifting settings and leaving significant gaps in time are regular film conventions.

Not only is the transition to chapter 3 disjointed, so also is the composition of the chapter itself. Chapter 3 lacks transitions between most episodes and at numerous points detours sharply from linear storytelling. As was just noted, the chapter begins abruptly with the narrator watching a ballet. To this it then adds two loosely connected scenes documenting day-to-day life at the film factory: one in the editing room (монтажна кімната) and another at the filming pavilion, where To-Ma-Ki meets the Professor. No indication is given regarding whether these

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\(^{100}\) See *Maister korablia*, 38–39.

\(^{101}\) “Заля першого в Республіці оперового театру вся в червоному оксамиті.” *Maister korablia*, 21.
three scenes are causally connected or what their chronological order is. Perhaps they are juxtaposed to illustrate the narrator’s credo of inclusive narration. However, the three scenes do seem formally connected. The chapter serves an important expositionary role, introducing two major characters, Taiakh and the Professor, while also elucidating the narrator’s position at the film studios. In this light, each of the scenes could be interpreted as a variation on the themes of artistic quality and of the artist as a craftsman.

Discontinuity is also apparent between chapters 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 7 ends with a scene of the end of a workday at the film factory, while chapter 8 presents Mike’s letter, which pauses the memoir story altogether. Chapter 9 then starts in medias res as follows, without so much as an establishing shot: “Having placed an empty bottle under the table, Bohdan poured for himself and for the two interlocutors from another one, and, having wiped his shaven face with a napkin, he began.”

This opening scene fails to provide any details regarding its setting or major participants, once again leaving the reader disoriented. In what follows, Bohdan proceeds to tell his own story, which spans most of the chapter. When his story ends—as abruptly as it started—the narration cuts to Taiakh’s letter, which occupies the remainder of the chapter.

The visual description of Bohdan before he tells his story barely serves as a formal framing introduction, and any connection either to the previous chapter or to the main memoir story is absent. The dispassionate camera focuses only on Bohdan and his movements, omitting any commentary or evaluation whatsoever. The camera-eye narration provides only slight visual clues that time has passed since Bohdan was rescued from the sea, specifically, his face is clean-shaven. Later it can be deduced from Bohdan’s narration that Sev and To-Ma-Ki are his two

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102 “Богдан, поставивши порожню пляшку під стіл, налив з другої собі і двом розмовникам і, витерши серветкою голене обличчя, почав.” *Maister korablia*, 87.
interlocutors, since Bohdan addresses them as those who saved him from the sea. Yet even this indication is indirect.

Without an establishing shot or a narrator’s commentary, the reader is left to guess where or when the scene occurred. The beginning of the following chapter, chapter 10, offers some information about the setting and purpose of a supposedly similar meeting, where the major characters of the memoir-novel gather to tell stories of their adventures, nostalgia and homecoming. These latter meetings are set at a clandestine café and attended by Sev, To-Ma-Ki, Bohdan, several ladies (Stella, Polia and Mukha), the owner of the trambak, the fisherman, and the Greek owner of the café. However, no explicit connection is made to the meeting in chapter 9, and anyway it is made clear enough that the two are separate meetings. Thus readers are left to establish its purpose and meaning on their own.

Similarly to the “line of beauty” referenced early on in connection with Bila pustelia, Maister korablia’s own storyline is wavy and digressive, with multiple interruptions and irrelevant action scenes impeding its flow. Instead of advancing the story, the digressions delay resolution and foreground discontinuity. Yet these extra-diegetic inserts alternate with episodes from the main memoir story, creating not chaos but a wave-like pattern of narrative peaks and pauses. High-tension episodes and climactic scenes are juxtaposed with delays containing no story action. For instance, after the narrator and Bohdan are stabbed in chapter 13—clearly a peak in the story action—chapter 14 in its entirety quotes from the Professor’s ship’s logbook, offering no information about the narrator’s recovery, and thus pausing the main storyline.

The sons’ letters to To-Ma-Ki are similarly interspersed at important junctions to pause the flow of the story time. The structure and function of the letters will be discussed in more detail in the section on collage.
accident on the *dubok* “Tamara,” while Henry’s (chapter 16) precedes the launching of the new ship and the resolutions of the mystery and romance storylines. The narrator’s metafictional commentary in the concluding chapter notes the importance of these insertions: “Mike and Henry visited me at the breaking points of my memoir: when the autumn meets winter at night and when spring conquers winter.” The inserts not only delay the story’s forward movement, but they also serve as devices to maintain suspense and keep readers invested.

In summary, due to the novel’s montage organization its story time appears fragmentary and nonlinear, with important causal links between various parts of the story missing. Literary montage promotes discontinuity between scenes and chapters, moving the narration with ease between different places and time periods, while the narration omits minutes, days or weeks of story time as it shifts back and forth in time. These temporal ellipses, which are characteristic of To-Ma-Ki’s storytelling, are yet another manifestation of literary montage.

**Ellipsis**

Ellipsis, a cinematic editing technique, alters a story’s duration by eliminating some events from the narration. It violates the linearity of the narration and generates gaps in the story progression. Ellipsis is of course also used in literature. Unlike in film, literary narratives typically provide connections between elided episodes and also motivation for the break. However, with the burgeoning popularity of film in the 1920s, literary authors started using film-style ellipses in literary narratives. In film, intertitles, visual effects (i.e., dissolve, fade-in and fade-out) and significant changes in characters’ appearance may signal elapsed time. Transposed to a literary work, such devices indicate the presence of a cinematic ellipsis and contribute to the fragmentariness of the narrative.

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104 “Майк і Генрі одвідали мене на зломних точках мемуарів: коли осінь зустрічається вночі з зимою і коли весна переборює зиму.” *Maister korablia*, 222.
Once again, Maister korablia both employs and explicitly reflects on this literary device. Reading To-Ma-Ki’s memoirs, the narrator’s son Henry recognizes the need to provide motivation for a certain narrative ellipsis in the story and, being a professional writer, speculates about how his father will resolve the issue:

Тобі треба тепер два тижні часу. Я кажу, що, маючи попередню твою практику, ти якось скомбінуєш, щоб не написати фрази: “Минуло два тижні.” Ти можеш дати розділ про походження води і про вплив моря на психіку, розділ про рибальство доісторичних народів, про справи на кінофабриці, розділ про те, куди можна заподіяти зайвих два тижні. Все це дасть змогу почати дальшу розповідь, маючи результати лікування і наслідки будови. Можливо, що я помилюся, і, пишучи мемуари, ти не побоїшся написати так, як не пишуть майстри роману. Тоді хай тобі мої зауваження допоможуть загубити час.  

Now you need two weeks of time. I say that considering your previous practice I think you will somehow devise how not to write the phrase: “Two weeks have passed.” You can offer a chapter about the origin of water and about the impact of the sea on the mind, a chapter about fishing of the prehistoric peoples, about film factory affairs, a chapter about where one can squander two odd weeks. All this will give an opportunity to begin further narration, having the results of the medical treatment and the outcomes of the construction [of the ship]. Maybe I will be mistaken, and while writing the memoir you won’t be afraid to write in a way, in which the masters of the novel do not write. Then let my remarks help you spend your time.

This semi-humorous discussion of non-traditional ways of communicating the passage of time does indeed present an innovative way of indicating an ellipsis in a novel. Henry’s metafictional remarks replace the traditional summary sentence alerting the reader to the omission of a period of time, while also critically reflecting on the author’s use of ellipsis.

An example of this device in the text is seen at the beginning of chapter 9 (which recounts Bohdan’s story). Readers are left to infer a narrative ellipsis from a few minimal visual signs, such as Bohdan’s appearance. His shaven face as he begins his story indicates a passage of time since his rescue, when he had a beard. A reader familiar with cinema conventions can infer this information and make the necessary connections.

Indeed, ellipsis plays an important role in rendering certain episodes in the novel in a characteristically cinematic mode. The familiar device brings a new dimension to these episodes.

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105 Maister korablia, 192–93.
Consider for instance the description of the ballet *Iosyf Prekrasnyi*. Prior to an ellipsis, the narrator portrays Taiakh dancing passionately in front of Joseph. Then the shot immediately cuts to her presenting Joseph’s clothes to the pharaoh: “Taiakh also drops to the ground. She is rolling on the ground, crawling. Frenzied desire is driving her. Suddenly, the stage has started whirling and spinning around. And, strutting solemnly, Taiakh steps to the centre. She carries Joseph’s clothing to the pharaoh.” The scene condenses the natural duration of time in the ballet and omits showing whether Joseph was seduced by or refused Taiakh’s advances. The symbolic visual representation of the peak of Taiakh’s passionate dance, the spinning stage, is followed by an ellipsis, while the next shot offers the outcome of the action. This characteristically cinematic rendering of the passage of time also marks a climactic scene in the ballet—the one leading to Joseph’s arrest and imprisonment.

Ellipsis plays an important role in the “continuity editing” style, omitting action unnecessary to telling a clear and coherent story. Ellipses typically signify a passage of time in a story and allow one to condense time for a seamless and dynamic storytelling. Film viewers are accustomed to the use of montage and expect a condensed narrative and omissions of irrelevant information. However, alongside narrative ellipses of this sort—which appear regularly in Ianovs’kyi’s novel—important narrative information is also omitted through ellipses, and this while aleatory details which do nothing to advance the story are included.

**Flashback**

Another editing technique, the flashback, is especially helpful in reflecting the workings of a narrator’s memory, making literary montage a most suitable tool for rendering

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107 Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 278.
reminiscences. Though literary works have always incorporated both flashbacks and
flashforwards in their composition, Maister korablia foregrounds these narrative discontinuities.
Reminiscing is typically presented in texts in a nonlinear pattern, setting events out of
chronological order, and the same may be said of the flashforward, a device that presents events
from the story’s future. 108

In Maister korablia, the flashback and flashforward are employed in just this manner, to
shift between the story’s present and past, with the added complication of also navigating
between the framing narrative and the framed retrospective memoir. These montage devices
provide smoother transitions between past and present than the ellipses, and the narrator uses
them to build suspense in the memoir-novel, skillfully demonstrating his control of time.

Temporal shifts between flashbacks and the narrating present are prevalent in the novel’s
exposition (in chapters 1–5) and in the final framing chapter (chapter 19), that is, as the narrator
sets up the story and introduces major characters, and then again as the story concludes. From
chapters 6–19, however, the narration only portrays events from the past, that is, the 1920s.

As was shown in the section on simultaneous narration, the transition between the
narrating present and the memoir story’s past is executed in a characteristically cinematic
manner. The scene at the close of chapter 1, for instance, shows the narrator reminiscing in front
of his fireplace: “Then I turn off my screen, turn off my telephone, the lights over my head, and
surrender myself to my thoughts, turning towards the fireplace.” 109 Chapter 2 then cuts directly
to a flashback of the narrator arriving at the film factory, thus commencing the memoir story.

108 See Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 260.
109 “Потім я вимикаю екран, вимикаю телефон, світло над головою і віддаюся думкам, повернувшись до
капи.” Maister korablia, 14.
Images of fire or a fireplace complement the temporal shifts throughout the expository chapters. They either mark the entry to a flashback (as in the example above) or cut out from a flashback to return to the narrating moment. Overall, these shifts seem to lack any premeditated order. They create the effect of directly rendering the processes of the narrator’s memory, unfolding the events in an organic, yet non-chronological manner.

Fire serves as more than an indicator of the transfer of time in the novel. It is a complex sign that preoccupies the narrator’s thoughts regarding the end of life. The novel’s opening scene shows the narrator as an old man sitting in his room by a fireplace: “I am watching how a beautiful flame, a symbol of the eternal transformation of energy and decomposition of matter, is flickering in the fireplace; I stretch my hands towards it, and it warms up my palms, on which the life line is now reaching the end. Old age obliges one to certain things.”

Fire is also equated with the creative moment; it is the spark that catalyzes the narrator’s reminiscing process and accompanies him in writing the memoir. Symbolically, the fireplace is extinguished by the end of the memoir-novel (chapter 19), indicating that it has fulfilled its role. To an old narrator fire serves as a temporary remedy for ailments, warming his body and gearing up his memory, as is seen in the following framing sequence, which describes the narrating present: “The firewood starts to burn well. It is foul weather outside. The body is getting younger from the warmth. The fire leaps onto my hands and is running through my veins.

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110 “Дивлюся, як перебігає прекрасний вогник, символ вічного переходу енергії й розкладу матерії, простягаю до нього руки, і він гріє мої долоні, на яких лінія життя доходить уже до краю. Старість до чогось зобов’язує.” Maister korablia, 7.

111 The narrator intersperses the following poetic shots of the doused fireplace with his concluding remarks on the memoir: “Кана моя чорніє без вогню, її паща, де звично підстрибували, гойдалися, перебігали і гомонили вогники, виглядає, як беззубий рот. В ній перегоріло все значне та мізерне, смолисте і виснажене.” Maister korablia, 222.
I close my eyes. Time, carry me back." This last phrase-incantation notifies the reader of an ensuing cut back to past events.

Compositionally, shots of fire and the narrator’s fireplace function as links between disconnected episodes. For instance, the shot of the narrator’s fireplace connects the scene with the drunk painter to the scene where To-Ma-Ki begins working at the factory. Immediately following the episode with the drunk painter, a shift to the narrating moment occurs: “I add more wood to the fireplace.” In the lines that follow, To-Ma-Ki arrives at the film factory and meets its Director. The brief interjection of the fireplace connects two disparate scenes while also initiating a flashback, as if a camera were closing in on the narrator’s memories.

The fireplace not only links flashbacks to simultaneous narration, it also links cinematic scenes to the narrator’s digressive musings and opinions. And all these altogether comprise the memoir. The opening chapter, for instance, combines retrospective narration on the narrator’s family, descriptions of the film Bila pustelia, and To-Ma-Ki’s interjections on film art and on the contrast between youth and old age. These heterogeneous elements are all interlaced with scenes of simultaneous narration grounding the narration in the present, that is, with shots of the old narrator sitting by the fireplace or watching the film retrospective on his stereo screen.

The fade is also used to cut out of a flashback within the main memoir story. In this regard, a scene in chapter 13 shows the narrator developing and editing newsreel footage at the lab. A flashback then cuts to earlier in the day when the narrator met Taiakh upon her return from the lab.

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112 “Дрова розгорілися добре. За вікнами негода. Тіло молодіє від тепла. На руки стрибає вогонь і тече по жилах. Я заплющую очі. Неси мене, часе, назад.” Maister korablia, 55.

113 See Maister korablia, 19. I am particularly referencing here the example quoted in the section on simultaneous narration.

114 “Я підкидаю до кани дров.” Maister korablia, 19.
from Italy.\textsuperscript{115} A fade-in then shows the narrator returning to the present, to a busy workday at the lab: “Suddenly, I would come back to reality, take the dropped film and resume the pace of my work, as if regaining consciousness after a long dizziness.”\textsuperscript{116} The use of a fade here serves to convey the narrator’s dreamy state and his feelings after meeting with Taiakh.

\textbf{Flashforward}

Traditionally, stories employ occasional flashbacks and even less frequent flashforwards. \textit{Maister korablia}, however, is predominantly narrated through a series of flashbacks, so much so that they constitute the present time of the memoir-novel. This effect is reinforced by the fact that some flashback sequences are narrated in the cinematic or “historic” present tense (as was discussed above). As a result, cutting out from such a flashback and returning to the simultaneous narration of the narrating moment in effect forms a flash\textit{forward}.

In the memoir-novel’s narration, flashforwards aid in story development and characterization. By offering readers a glimpse into the future, they also help them to connect and interpret events from the narrator’s life, both past and present. The release of future information is also used to generate suspense or, alternately, to give insight into the outcome of present events.

A violation of linear storytelling order through flashforward occurs in chapter 3, amid the narrator’s description of the ballet \textit{Iosyf Prekrasnyi} and right before Taiakh’s dance. The narrator interrupts the ballet performance scene with a premonition regarding the meeting of a woman important in his life. After this digression, a flashforward then cuts to the narrator sitting by his fireplace, looking at a female portrait:

\textsuperscript{115} See \textit{Maister korablia}, 156–57.

\textsuperscript{116} “Я раптом приходив до пам’яті, діставав упалу плівку і входив до темпу справ, наче очуваючи після довгої мілості.” \textit{Maister korablia}, 157.
Я посміхаюся тепер сам до себе, дійшовши до цього місця згадок. Над каною стоїть у мене побільшена картка жінки в купальному костюмі. Жінка сидить на чорному камені. Через ріжок іде напис: “Милому, ідеальному другові з Генуї.” Я дивлюся на знайоме обличчя, мудро (це вам, молоді, здається, що мудро) посміхаюся, бо я знаю більше, ніж скажу, більше, ніж ви знатимете. І повертаюся до залі оперового театру, де вже пройшов антракт і знов погасло світло.

I am smiling to myself now, having reached this part of my recollections. Above the fireplace I have an enlarged photo of a woman in a swimming costume. The woman is sitting on a black rock. Across the corner there is an inscription: “To my dear, ideal friend from Genoa.” I am looking at the familiar face and smile wisely (it seems to you, my young [readers], that it’s wisely), because I know more than I will say, more than you will know. Then I return to the hall of the opera theatre, where the intermission ended and the lights went out again.

Here the portrait above the fireplace facilitates a temporal shift and serves as a visual trigger tying the framed and framing narratives together. The portrait also suggests a possible story development, as the sequence implies a connection between the scene at the opera theatre and the woman in the photo. Yet the connection is never made explicit. A close-up of the narrator’s reaction to the scene (“I am smiling to myself”) juxtaposed with a close-up of the woman’s portrait on the wall also generates mystery and suspense in the reader, as again there is no explicit explanation regarding this woman. The narrator then cuts out of this flashforward and returns to the world of the memoir story. The transition is signaled by a note about the end of the intermission at the ballet performance. In this episode, then, the narrator provides a cinematic transition between a flashforward and the main narrative, and he does so both through the use of literary montage and through his commentary, which is akin to voice-over narration.

As is typical with this memoir-novel, the significance of the woman is not revealed immediately. In fact, the narrator’s self-reflexive comment teases the reader with how much information he knows and how much he will reveal. The juxtaposition of images and scenes from the past and the present, as well as the foreshadowing of an important connection to the woman in the portrait, builds suspense, even though the narrator declared earlier that he would

117 Maister korablia, 23.
not employ such tricks. Furthermore, the narrator sets up clues that will never be fully answered in the story.

In reality, the description of the portrait in his living room and the flashback to the opera theatre is the narrator’s zigzagging way of introducing Taiakh. The association between the two images and the overall significance of Taiakh in the memoir are revealed later, in chapter 9, when the same photo is enclosed in Taiakh’s letter from Genova to To-Ma-Ki:

Листа написано різним атраментом, за кілька прийомів. В кінці закреслено post-scriptum, де стояло запитання про Богдана. Прикладено фотографічну картку з написом: “Милому ідеальному другові з Genova, 2 V.” На картці Тайах сидить у купальному костюмі на камені над бухтою.

В даліні видно дахи Генуї. \(^{118}\)

The letter is written in different ink, in several sittings. At the end, the post-scriptum is crossed out, where there used to be a question about Bohdan. A photograph is enclosed with an inscription: “To my dear, ideal friend from Genova, 2 V.” In the photo Taiakh is sitting in a swimsuit on a rock over the bay.

In the distance one can see the roofs of Genoa.

In this example, the causal connections between the portrait and Taiakh need to be made by the reader. The narrator provides only clues, without fully disclosing all the secrets. In this manner, the flashforward aids in building suspense and generating mystery in the novel.

**Crosscutting**

Crosscutting is used to achieve spatial discontinuity in narration by presenting omniscient knowledge of events occurring simultaneously in different locations. It is also used to shift between parallel story lines.\(^ {119}\) In *Maister korablia*, this editing device foregrounds the lack of connectedness between scenes of parallel action. Because the reader receives information about these scenes step by step, crosscutting also generates suspense.\(^ {120}\) Most importantly, it allows the narrator to oscillate between the view of the film editor, equipped as he is with an omnipresent

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\(^{118}\) *Maister korablia*, 102.

\(^{119}\) See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 275.

\(^{120}\) Ibid.
camera eye, and the limited perspective of the simultaneous narration, which represents the narrator’s immediate, subjective perceptions and which is presented through point-of-view camera shots.

A good example is found in chapter 10. This chapter uses crosscutting to parallel simultaneous scenes of a mysterious gunboat entering the harbor, and of guests at a clandestine café telling nostalgic stories that supply Sev with ideas for his film. The chapter starts with a neutral camera-eye shot of a gunboat, offering only factual information:

In the evening a gunboat entered the City’s port. Having circled several times around the harbor, it anchored, not mooring to the trestle. We were sitting at a clandestine café, where you can get remarkable black coffee, two or three pipes of opium, and contraband wine, “Blood of the earth.” Ladies, slightly hoarse from merriment, entertained us. Everywhere in the port, ships’ bells were struck. They were struck three times—it was eleven o’clock. Sullen chimes gradually resounded on all the decks.

Someone left the gunboat by boat to the City. I breathed in some fresh air, choked on it and started coughing. In front of me on the yard’s pavement was my vomit. I wiped my mouth and returned to my friends at the café.

Crosscutting shifts the focus to parallel action at the café, which is shown from the narrator’s point of view. These point-of-view shots comprise an establishing shot for the scene, describing the café atmosphere while the gunboat is entering the port. The chapter’s second paragraph follows a similar pattern, first showing an impersonal view of the gunboat and then cutting to the subjective perceptions of the narrator. Such crosscutting between locales and perspectives builds tension in the episode and generates suspense regarding the purpose and significance of the gunboat in the story.

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121 Maister korablia, 103.
As Sev shares his vision of the ship for the film to those in the café, and, specifically, of the “Ismet” attacking Bohdan’s sailboat, yet another reference to the gunboat interrupts him: “The bells were struck four times somewhere outside. It was midnight. The engine started working on the gunboat, the whistle resounded over the water, and someone’s steps on the pavement were heard.”

As the lens crosscuts to sounds from the gunboat outside the café, the culmination of Sev’s story is delayed.

Once again, mention of the gunboat and the crosscut to an ambiguous location (“somewhere outside”) accumulates more questions than answers. The crosscutting enables ambiguity by shifting between a neutral camera view and To-Ma-Ki’s personal comprehension of the events. The external sounds from the functioning gunboat do reposition the reader in space and orient him or her in time (“it was midnight”), yet the indefinite pronouns accompanying this repeated crosscutting (“десь надворі,” “somewhere outside”; “чиїсь кроки,” “someone’s steps”) maintain mystery and suspense.

These parallel actions are finally brought together in the chapter’s final episode, where the narrator and his friends see the gunboat personally and voice their curiosity about it: “We all went outside together. The sea was glistening near random lanterns. It was empty and quiet in the haven. We saw the gunboat. “Why did it come here?” we all thought.”

The characters’ collective wondering only confirms its mysterious purpose and adds to the suspense initially created by crosscutting.

In a pattern typical for Maister korablia, clues and answers to the characters’ questions here appear in a nonlinear sequence. The following chapter, chapter 11, offers no information


123 “Надвір вийшли всі разом. Вилискувало біля випадкових лихтарів море. У гавані було порожньо й тихо. Ми побачили канонерку. ‘Нащо вона сюди прийшла?’—подумали ми всі.” Maister korablia, 115.
about the gunboat or its significance; instead it contains Taiakh’s second letter, which serves to pause the narrative altogether. The narrator registers the gunboat again in a scene in chapter 12, where the narrator films the arrival of the Turkish Foreign Minister and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs: “I started to survey the haven and the street as if before a military campaign. Yesterday’s gunboat was standing on raid.” Yet still no answer about the significance of the gunboat is provided. Its significance is disclosed only in chapter 13, where it plays an important role in a complex diplomatic ceremony, greeting the Turkish Foreign Minister with several cannon shots as he arrives on the cruiser “Ismet.”

Crosscutting makes the gunboat a recurring symbol in several chapters. Most importantly, it frames the beginning and end of chapter 10, introducing a theme disconnected both thematically and functionally from the stories narrated at the café. Similarly to ellipses, flashbacks and flashforwards, this montage technique contributes to the novel’s nonlinear narration.

Traditionally in the Ukrainian novel, readers expected the narrator to navigate them skillfully through the story, and to provide logical connections or even didactic moralizing conclusions about it. But in this memoir-novel, literary montage foregrounds the discontinuity between scenes and chapters, and there is no discernible or coherent story, nor regular or reliable transitions between its parts. And so Maister korablia instead generates suspense and uncertainty in readers. Readers thus have an important role in reconstructing the story’s meaning; like

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124 “Я почав роздивлятися гавань і вулицю, як перед походом. Учоращя канонерка стояла на рейді.” Maister korablia, 127.

125 For the entire scene see Maister korablia, 145–46.
viewers of experimental films, readers of *Maister korablia* are urged to synthesize, interpret and find coherence and connections in the story on their own.  

**“Poetic” Editing through Rhythmic Repetition**

Ellipses, flashbacks and flashforwards violate the narrative’s duration and chronological order, while crosscutting creates spatial discontinuity in *Maister korablia*. The sequencing of narrated events is also disrupted through the repetition of words and phrases in distinct rhythmic patterns.

In fact, the rhythmic organization of Ianovs’kyi’s novel positions it closer to a poetic form than to a large prose work. Incidentally, the poetic form was also becoming popular in experimental films in the 1920s. These non-narrative or “storyless” films are often characterized as “poetic” because their structure is organized on rhythm, repetition and parallelism, methods common to poetry. As I argued before, Ianovs’kyi’s novel relies on neither story nor continuity editing to arrange its narrative material. Causality is also thwarted. Like poetic films, the novel finds alternative ways to organize its diverse material.

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126 Bordwell similarly observes that the editing in Eisenstein’s montages “constructs correspondences, analogies, and contrasts that interpret the story events. The interpretation is not simply handed to the viewer; rather, the editing discontinuities force the viewer to work out implicit meanings.” Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 287; emphasis in the original.

127 A characteristic example is the cinema of Oleksandr Dovzhenko, which was recognized for its poetic, lyrical elements. Largely because of Dovzhenko’s legacy, “poetic cinema” is frequently described as the national Ukrainian cinematic style. See Joshua First, “Ukrainian National Cinema and the Concept of the ‘Poetic’,” special issue, *Kinokultura*, no. 9 (December 2009), http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/9/first.shtml. See also Larysa Briukhovets’ka, ed., *Poetychne kino: Zaboronena shkola* (Kyiv: ArtEk, 2001).

128 For instance, Dovzhenko produced lyrical works seemingly without a story. Lewis Jacobs aptly observes: “Neither of these works [*Arsenal* and *Earth*] has a story; both spring from moods, concepts, and images of Ukrainian legends. Both contain some of the most sensistive pictorial compositions the screen has ever known, superbly related in angle, tone, and movement.” Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), 323. On the distinction between “poetic” and “prosaic” films, see Viktor Shklovskii, “Poeziia i proza v kinematografii,” in *Poetika kino: Perechityvaia “Poetiku kino,”* ed. B.M. Eikhenbaum, 2nd ed. (Sankt-Peterburg: Rossiiskii institut istorii iskusstv, 2001) (originally published in Moskva: Kinopechat’, 1927).
The poetic qualities of Ianovs’kyi’s prose are not limited, then, to metaphors enriching his camera-eye narration. And the use of rhythmic repetitions to achieve this effect is enabled, to a large degree, by the literary montage technique. For instance, the sequence on the history of film parallels and repeats the phrase “revolution strikes” and the word “random,” showing, to powerful effect, the narrative unable to find any more apt signifiers for such an epic event.

The rhythmic presentation of material is encountered from the novel’s first line: “Gray hair obliges one to certain things.” Slightly altered, the sentence recurs in the last line of the paragraph: “Old age obliges one to certain things.” It also frames the entire novel by reappearing at the beginning of the final chapter (chapter 19), as To-Ma-Ki seeks to reassure the reader of the truthfulness of his narration.

Another declaration recurs in both chapters 1 and 19. The narrator, in his self-reflexive framing narrative, offers this complete overview of his life: “Life rich with experiences lies in front of me like a raised-relief map of my Republic.” This visual metaphor reappears in chapter 19, thus enveloping To-Ma-Ki’s memoirs and guiding the reader by showing the narrator’s omniscient position in the novel. The presence of such repeated formal elements in the frame also serves to bring closure to the story.

129 “Сиве волосся до чогось зобов’язує.” Maister korablia, 7.
130 “Старість до чогось зобов’язує.” Maister korablia, 7.
131 See Maister korablia, 222.
133 Shklovsky observes a similar tendency in “poetic” films (i.e., Vertov’s Shestaia chast’ mira; The sixth part of the world; 1926), which achieve closure or resolution through formal rather than semantic elements: “существует прозаическое и поэтическое кино, и это есть основное деление жанров: они отличаются друг от друга не ритмом, или не ритмом только, а преобладанием технически формальных моментов (в поэтическом кино) над смысловыми, причем формальные моменты заменяют смысловые, разрешая композицию. Бессюжетное кино—есть ‘стихотворное’ кино.” Viktor Shklovskii, “Poeziia i proza v kinematografii,” 92.
The Memoir-Novel as an Avant-Garde Construction

Rather than a linear or coherent story, montage devices, rhythmic editing and framed construction structure *Maister korablia*’s narrative sequences. Collective artistic production and the artistic principles of collage are also integral to organizing both its narrative and non-narrative materials. In collage Ianovs’kyi found a most fitting tool for juxtaposing the novel’s prose and poetic styles, its variety of genres, and its “fragments of reality.” The use of this tool reflects the avant-garde aesthetic concepts of construction and of art as craft.

An engineer by vocation, Ianovs’kyi highlighted construction as an important artistic principle in literature. In a short, self-reflexive piece written for *Universal’nyi zhurnal* (Universal journal; 1928–29), he identifies himself as an engineer rather than a traditional literary author: “I don’t consider myself a writer. And the profession of a designer-engineer (інженер-конструктор), from which only two years of studies once separated me, remains closer to me. […] As an honest worker, I want to be a *craftsman* (маїстр) and a designer-engineer too.” In this account, Ianovs’kyi reflects the ideology of a Soviet state that favored engineering, construction, collective production, and collaboration between artists over individual artistic endeavor. Artists in the traditional sense were criticized, leading Soviet avant-gardists to prefer being designated as engineers, constructors, craftsmen or workers.

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135 Vertov, for instance, labels traditional artists and playwrights in particular as “high priests of art.” Vertov, “Artistic Drama and Kino-Eye,” 49.
A Collage of Genres in Maister korablia

In an attempt to revise the traditional elements of fiction, Ianovs’kyi takes an engineering-inspired approach to constructing and crafting his novel. This artistic method is reflected most prominently in the novel’s collage construction. His innovative use of collage creates a synthetic form that is overtly self-reflexive, whereas the traditional novel presents its fictional universe as a straightforward, organic entity. As compared to examples of literary montage in the novel, which predominantly join narrative sequences, collage concerns the layout of the novel as a whole.

The hybrid genre of the memoir-novel in fact is made possible by its collage construction. For instance, the use of montage to repurpose filmed material for Sev’s production suggests the juxtaposition of fictional materials with factual, non-artistic materials in an overall artistic construction. Similar to the manipulation of factual material in Sev’s film, Maister korablia too blurs the line between fact and fiction. Fictional narratives of exotic seafaring adventures and elements of mystery and romance genres are confluent with facto-graphic reportage interlaced with autobiographical facts and descriptions of historic events. From the mention of current film productions at the Odesa Film Studios, to the use of real people for characters’ prototypes, to depicting actual letters, photographs or works of art—all these and other suchlike “fragments of reality” permeate the novel. For instance, in the newsreel To-Ma-Ki is producing, one can recognize the actual VUFKU newsreel “Zustrich Chycheryna z Rushdi beiem” (The meeting of Chicherin with Rushdi Bey; 1926), which is based on a historic meeting.

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136 Other novels that reflect an engineering construction are Yevgenii Zamiatin’s My (We, 1921), whose training in naval engineering is reflected in the novel, and Leonid Skrypnyk’s Intelihent. I discuss the latter novel in connection with Skrypnyk’s engineering background in the next chapter.

137 Heorhii Ostrovs’kyi’s interview with the ballerina Ida Penzo (Taiakh’s prototype) reveals that in his novel Ianovs’kyi presented almost unchanged letters from Penzo and described her actual photograph sent to Ianovs’kyi. See Heorhii Ostrovs’kyi, “Vse, shcho zalyshylos’…,” 209.
in Odesa between the Turkish Foreign Minister, Tewfik Rushdi Bey, and the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgiy Chicherin, to discuss future collaboration between Turkey and Soviet Ukraine.\textsuperscript{138}

Or again, the central storyline of producing a movie about sailors’ mutiny and return home corresponds to a movie titled \textit{Povstannia mertvykh} (Insurrection of the dead), which was being produced at VUFKU studios in Odesa in 1927. Borys Sharans’kyi wrote the script, Ianovs’kyi edited the film and worked on the intertitles, and Oleksandr Dovzhenko directed it. The film was never finished or released, although the script was later reworked into a film for a Georgian film studio.\textsuperscript{139}

Beside references to actual people, settings and movies, the novel’s collage structure features ekphrases of actual and fictional works of art. \textit{Maister korablia} contains numerous commentaries on visual art forms such as film, ballet and painting. Among elements that stand out in the texture of the novel are its descriptions of a circus performance, the avant-garde film \textit{Bila pustelia}, a ballet performance of \textit{Iosyf Prekrasnyi}, and a painting by Vincent Van Gogh. The latter two reference actual artworks easily recognizable by Ianovs’kyi’s contemporaries.

The ballet’s description matches that of a constructivist ballet of the same name performed in Odesa in 1926–27, when the events of the memoir took place.\textsuperscript{140} Premiering in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre’s experimental stage in March 1925, the ballet offered a striking


\textsuperscript{140} See \textit{Maister korablia}, 52.
example of avant-garde artistic production. The music was characterized as passionate and emotional, and the choreography included elements of acrobatics and sport dance. Ekphrases of the ballet and of other artworks are used in the novel to recreate the atmosphere of the 1920s and the spirit of avant-garde art production. More generally, ekphrastic descriptions of various artworks bring experiences of other art forms to literature, strengthening the heterogeneity of the novel’s construction. The collage effect is created not only through ekphrasis and the repurposing of factual and fictional material, but also by incorporating fragments of diverse genres: poems, letters, a memoir, literary criticism, the ship’s log, a newspaper report, instructions on shipbuilding, etc. These disparate generic elements are positioned in a way to highlight their qualities and make more visible and striking their contrast with the surrounding text.

**The Use and Effect of Cinematic Collective Artistic Production in the Memoir-Novel**

The idea of constructing a novel from a collage of genres and elements of art forms corresponds with the principle of collective artistic construction native to film production. The novel follows this model inasmuch as it is produced not only from heterogeneous materials but also through active collaboration. This model of artistic construction was favored not only in avant-garde circles; it was also seen as a prototype for the construction of a new Soviet Ukrainian culture as a whole.

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141 The production of *Iosyf Prekrasnyi* involved collaboration between prominent musicians and visual artists; it was choreographed by Kasyan Goleizovsky (who also wrote the libretto), with music by S. N. Vasilenko, and constructivist costumes and stage design by Boris R. Erdman. For Erdman’s constructivist illustration depicting an abstract character from the ballet, see *Ukrajinska avangarda, 1910–1930: Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb, 16.12.1990–24.2.1991*, ed. Marijan Susovski, Tihomir Milovac and Branka Stipančić (Zagreb: Galerije grada Zagreba, 1990), 94.

In this regard, film became the epitome of avant-garde art. *Maister korablia* presents cinema as a synthetic medium fusing visual, verbal and kinetic art forms, and combining the efforts of the screenwriter, cinematographer, artistic director, film director, editor, actors, engineers, scholars, and others. And it explicitly seeks to reflect this texture and this production process in its own texture.

Both *Maister korablia* and Ianovs’kyi’s articles on film-making published in the collection *Holivud na berezi Chornoho moria* portray the atmosphere at the Odesa Film Studios in the 1920s. They show the technical details and creative complexity of early film production, as well as the clash of artists’ egos leading to pitfalls in collective production. Frequent arguments ensue over creative authority and misunderstandings between a film director and a script-writer, or between a cameraman and an artistic director. The narrator, the Professor and Sev vehemently criticize the incompetence of employees at the film factory and their desire to cut corners in film production. Their arguments often reflect discussions about the need to modernize Ukrainian culture and to uphold high artistic standards in their scripts, film decorations, and film editing.

The novel mirrors this messy, collective, democratic creative process in its composition by intertwining numerous stories and distinct voices in its narrative. Indeed its various artists-craftsmen are a part of its collage construction. All of the characters aid in its collective crafting, versus merely serving minor mechanical roles as in traditional fiction.

Yet while the narrator disparages individual authorship in film production and presents collaborative authorship as the ideal, he is candid that the ideal may remain unattainable due to the position and functions of the film director: “The conversation concerned the film directors, of whom I had to take charge. There were seven of them. At the time, they were dictators of the
factory. They remained as such even until our days, notwithstanding all the witty reasoning about collective film production, about collective shot framing, and about collective montage.”

_Maister korablia_ aspires to reflect its ideals by limiting To-Ma-Ki’s role as a narrative “dictator.” In contrast to the omniscient narrator dominant in the nineteenth-century Ukrainian novel, To-Ma-Ki relinquishes some control by narrating from the limited perspective of his younger self, immersed in the universe of his memoir. This seemingly democratic narrative position also allows the narrator to include discourse narrated by other characters, creating the effect of collective production. Similar to discontinuous montage organization, this effect parallels post-revolutionary socio-political changes in 1920s Soviet Ukraine. Presumably, as the state lacks a strong authoritarian center or figure and is led and constructed by the people, so the novel seems to lack an omniscient narrator and is constructed collectively by several individuals.

The idea of collectivity affects To-Ma-Ki’s autobiographical narration in the main memoir story in numerous ways. As I noted before, even in the episodes of cinematic camera-eye narration, the narrator often offers a collective narrative perspective, as he and his friends or colleagues from the film factory witness a certain scene. For instance, in the episode in the port about the drunk painter, the narrator witnesses the scene together with other passersby: “Several gawkers—and I among them—stand looking at the stern.” The fishing scene in chapter 6 also uses plural first-person narration, combining the collective perceptions of the narrator, Sev, and the actor. Plural first-person narration also occurs in scenes at the clandestine café. This collective perspective recreates an atmosphere of camaraderie and creative zeal at these

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143 “Розмова йшла про режисерiв, яких я мусiв узяти. Їх було семеро. Вони були за тих часiв диктаторами фабрики. Вони ними залишились i до наших днiв, не зважаючи на всi дотепнi мiркування про колективну постановку фiльму, про колективне оформлення кадрiв i про колективний монтаж.” _Maister korablia_, 20.

144 “Декілька позiхайлiв—i мiж ними я—стоїмо, дивлячись на корму.” _Maister korablia_, 17.
meetings, in which likeminded artists discuss travel, film production, and the construction of the ship.\footnote{In contrast, the scenes by the fireplace present the narrator’s solitary perspective, as they portray him in deep solitude reminiscing upon the past.}

Besides often offering a collective perspective in To-Ma-Ki’s main memoir story, the novel’s heterogeneous texture is woven from materials “authored” by distinct characters. Documenting their unique voices and narrative styles creates the illusion that the novel is constructed by numerous contributors, rather than being a fictional piece written by one author. The preservation of unique features of each material in this collage is key. Similarly, each element documenting and reproducing the characters’ individual perspectives is foregrounded. The varied voices of the letters, adventure stories, ship’s log, and so forth build up the texture of the novel.

Giving each character the opportunity directly to express their views and opinions also reconfigures traditional characterization. For instance, the narrator’s two sons, Mike and Henry, are introduced through their letters, which comprise chapters 8 and 16 respectively. The younger son Mike is an airplane pilot, while the older Henry is a professional writer.\footnote{The name of the younger son alludes to Ianovs’kyi’s colleague working at VUFKU and a fellow member of VAPLITE, Maik Iohansen, and the name of the older points to an American writer, O. Henry, whose stories were popular in Ukraine in the 1920s. Ianovs’kyi admitted that he was reading O. Henry while writing the novel \textit{Maister korablia}. See Ianovs’kyi, “Ia trymaiu vas za gudzyka …,” 44. O. Henry was also the subject of Formalist studies. See Boris M. Eikhenbaum, “O. Genri i teoriia novelly,” in \textit{Literatura: Teoriiia, kritika, polemika}, 2nd ed., Russian Study Series, no. 66 (Leningrad: Priboi, 1927; repr., Chicago: Russian language specialties, 1969), 166–209 (originally published in \textit{Zvezda}, no. 6 [1925].} These characters might represent two radically different paths in life and two different approaches to artistic and literary creation. Mike, the aviator, embodies perpetual movement and reflects the avant-gardists’ radical revision and destruction of cultural tradition (he literally destroys an ancient...

manuscript and old furniture in his father’s home), while Henry, the writer, is more reflective and respectful of past artistic legacy.

Both letters validate the memoir’s authenticity and serve as fragments of reality in a heterogeneous collage. Mike and Henry’s letters add reflective, metafictional commentary and project the differing reception of the novel by two types of readers: a mass reader and a professional writer. Because of their different backgrounds and personalities, their responses to and prescriptions for the father’s memoir differ dramatically. Both letters analyze and criticize the narrator’s memoir as if it were a traditional fictional novel, yet while Mike focuses on intrigue and story development, Henry questions his father’s use of traditional devices. The letters neither advance the narrative of the main memoir story nor contribute to any causality or continuity in the novel, but they comment on its construction in real time, as it is being constructed. Along with narrator’s own digressions on writing the novel, the sons’ metafictional commentaries highlight the process of its construction.

While some characters are introduced into the narrative through letters, others (including Bohdan, Polia, and the owner of the trambak) are introduced by directly relating their own experiences through stories told at the café. Considering that the main memoir story is presented as a cinematic projection featuring camera-eye narration, the characters’ individual adventure stories may be said to exhibit remnants of traditional narrative modes. Bohdan, for instance, recounts his seafaring adventures and travels in various locations in such a manner, and Polia and the owner of the trambak offer similar stories as well. Stylistically these stories represent the oral

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148 For instance, the letters address one major unresolved question: whether Taiaikh becomes To-Ma-Ki’s wife or chooses the sailor Bohdan.
storytelling tradition and foreground the characters’ skaz,\(^{149}\) preserving stylistic details of their speech, such as the mixture of Ukrainian and Russian words in Polia’s speech, nautical terms in the trambak owner’s speech, or ship-building jargon in Professor’s logbook. The individual features of these characters’ speech and their unique writing styles present the effect of collective narration while aiding in characterization.

Unsurprisingly, the manner in which characters are described is also informed by cinema. In this regard, Ianovs’kyi experimented with dynamic external characterization. Namely, the novel renders characters’ thoughts, emotions and psychological states by focusing on their external appearance, including their gestures, movements, facial expressions and speech. Documenting characters’ voices is consistent with cinematic external characterization in that the narrative shows their actions and cites their speech directly.

A striking example of this type of characterization comes at the introduction of Taiakh’s character. Among other artists in this Künstlerroman, she is a sensual and talented ballet dancer who attracts male attention, and indeed becomes a love interest for Sev, To-Ma-Ki and possibly Bohdan. Yet the first two men treat her as a respected friend, and the love triangle never stands in the way of that friendship. In fact, the relationship between Sev, To-Ma-Ki and Taiakh forms the basis of a powerful union of likeminded artists. The female protagonist is introduced primarily through the ekphrastic description of the music and dance in Iosyf Prekrasnyi. Her nickname in the novel, Taiakh, symbolically imparts characteristics of her on-stage character to her persona. Her passionate nature and eroticism in real life inform the expressive style of her

\(^{149}\) Skaz is a form of fictional narrative stylized as oral speech, particularly, using slang or dialect words to preserve the speech of a narrator of skaz. As a literary concept skaz was developed and studied by Russian Formalists. See particularly B. M. Eikhenbaum, “Kak sdelana ‘Shinel’ Gogolia”; and Mixail Baxtin, “Discourse Typology in Prose,” in Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), 180–82 (originally published as “Tipy prozaicheskogo slova,” in Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo [Leningrad, 1929], 105–35).
dance. Thus the emphasis on the expressivity of her body and on her passionate and erotic movements in the dance parallel her attractiveness in real life, and reinforce her characterization as an object of desire for many male characters. A group composition danced at the end of the circus performance also foreshadows Taiakh’s story, illustrating the way most men treated her before she met the narrator and Sev.¹⁵⁰

Pure cinematic narration provides no access to the minds of characters, and therefore at times cinematic characters lack psychological motivation. *Maister korablia* avoids these pitfalls by citing Taiakh’s letters to To-Ma-Ki, which directly render her thoughts and emotions. Letters contain perhaps the most personal expression of one’s inner self. Moreover, her letters seem integral to the main structure of the story itself. Not only does her second letter elucidate her behaviour and motivations, it also serves as a variation on the theme of homecoming and nostalgia, an important leitmotif in the novel.

Including characters’ stories and letters allows the “natural” inclusion in the narration of characters’ thoughts and emotions, which would otherwise not be directly accessible to the camera. This feature makes the characters in the novel appear more believable and human, in contrast to the schematically depicted characters of other Ukrainian experimental novels, which rely on cinematic external characterization alone. The following chapter of this dissertation shows how, in another novel, the constriction of camera-eye narration to external visible phenomena and characters’ appearances produces the effect of a dehumanized, schematic characterization, a quality often criticized by reviewers.

¹⁵⁰ See *Maister korablia*, 185–86.
Conclusion

By emulating cinematic narration in literature, and by blending the boundaries between genres, art forms, fact and fiction, *Maister korablia* presents a daring experiment in the novel form and a model of the new Ukrainian literature. The novel documents day-to-day life at a film factory in 1920s Ukraine and reflects the fascination of Ukrainian writers with the cinematic medium during the Cultural Renaissance, when all spheres of Ukrainian politics, society, and culture were undergoing rapid modernization. Being more than merely a key theme, the aesthetics of cinema truly modernizes the narrative techniques in *Maister korablia*, which essentially becomes one of the first Ukrainian literary works to adapt cinematic devices to the narration, composition and characterization of a novel. Unique features in this regard include poetic camera-eye narration, montage organization and dynamic cinematic characterization.

While producing a cinematic work is one of the central themes in the novel, the emulation of film aesthetics is also a tool allowing the author to address the problem of collaboration between art forms. In this regard the novel, which is framed as a memoir, also features a heterogeneous collage structure with loosely connected storylines. Its collage includes characters’ letters, non-diegetic stories and metafictional observations, as well as poems, songs, ekphrases of films, a painting, a ballet performance and a circus act.

Furthermore, through its emphasis on factuality, as well as its self-reflexivity, fragmentariness and collage construction, *Maister korablia* reflects various aspects of avant-garde aesthetics and Soviet ideology. Specifically, cinematic narration is selected as the most appropriate device for the portrayal of empirical reality in art.

This chapter has focused on the impact of cinematic techniques on the novel’s narration, composition, characterization and overall aesthetics. First, Ianovs’kyi’s novel exhibits approach to factual material determined by an aesthetic of non-acted cinema, while also emulating the
propensity of film to translate abstract concepts into concrete visual images. Second, on a compositional level, cinema affords one freedom to manipulate the filmed material, i.e., to juxtapose narrative scenes and sequences through editing. Ianovs’kyi seeks to introduce such montage-inspired juxtapositions, discontinuities, and temporal shifts into his literary narrative. Finally, cinema epitomizes avant-garde ideas regarding collective artistic production and of the collective work of art, since it involves the collaborative effort of artists working in different media (visual, verbal, cinematic and dramatic). Similarly, film production becomes a model in Maister korablia for the collective construction of a novel.

Poetic Camera-Eye Narration

In particular, Ianovs’kyi’s novel experiments with different types of narrative perspectives, several of which are inspired by cinematic practices. Events are predominantly seen through the narrator’s eyes but presented from the perspective of a movie camera. The narrative modes blend highly subjective, autobiographical, first-person perspectives with the limited perspective of a neutral camera eye. Scenes are presented through autobiographical retrospective narration and poetic camera-eye narration, presenting the narrator’s direct or immediate perceptions of events with the focus on perceptible phenomena.

This camera-eye narration allows Ianovs’kyi to render acute perceptions of a poetic subject, depicting what is visible and perceptible without interpretation or reflection. Yet he also transgresses the limitations of the camera. Unlike a mechanical camera, Ianovs’kyi’s poetic camera-eye narration covers the full range of human sense perception, including imaginative, metaphoric viewing a machine cannot reproduce. Poetic camera-eye, therefore, is a hybrid narrative perspective combining the features of mechanical and human perception, with the aim

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151 Such a view of the camera eye is in direct opposition to the notion of the Cine-Eye of Dziga Vertov, who contrasts the advanced, precise vision of the mechanical camera with the imperfect human eye.
of rendering the narrator’s experiences and observations truthfully. Several scenes are also narrated from a *collective* point of view, combining the narrator’s subjective perspective with that of collaborators and colleagues.

**Use of the Historic Present Tense**

While some narration in the novel is set in the traditional past tense, most settings and scenes are rendered in the “cinematic” present tense. Using the present tense to narrate past events contributes to the effect of simultaneous narration, where the narrating moment truly coincides with the experiencing moment. The historic present creates the illusion of transporting one into the past and giving a direct rendition of the perception and experience of these past events. The narrator is “as if reliving everything” through cinematic scenes and sequences projected on the cinematic “mindscreen.” Experiences and perceptions appear more dynamic and immediate due to this form of narration. Therefore, the historic present tense helps to immerse the reader fully in the unfolding events of the story.

In deviating from the traditional use of past tense for narrating past events, the cinematic present tense also has the power to highlight a dramatic peak or culmination in an episode. It creates the effect of a close-up on a significant detail or scene. The limited close-up perspective afforded by camera-eye narration simultaneously allows the narrator to withhold then gradually reveal story information, generating suspense in the narrative.

In contrast to the perspective of a narrator immersed in the story world, To-Ma-Ki is an omniscient narrator with complete retrospective knowledge of his life’s events, and his skills as a studio film editor inform the construction of his memoir-novel. The careful selection and

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152 *Maister korablia*, 14.
arrangement of episodes in a narrative reflect the role of a film editor, and these duties correspond closely with the presence of various montage techniques in the novel.

**Literary Montage**

The memoir-novel’s construction is based on literary montage, framing, and rhythmic editing, all of which are characteristic of experimental films of the time. With its use of literary montage, *Maister korablia* rejects linearity and narrative continuity, the standards of narrative fiction. The text is composed of visual sequences joined through montage techniques, which foreground both temporal and spatial discontinuities in the novel. The former are foregrounded through flashbacks, ellipses and rhythmic repetitions, and the latter through crosscutting. The lack of coherent transitions or causal links between scenes also contribute to its fragmented narration.

Editing in general and crosscutting in particular denote the narrator’s omniscient knowledge of events. The narrator hides or withholds important narrative information through crosscutting and ellipses. Furthermore, crosscutting and flashforwards tease the reader by gradually revealing story information and offering glimpses of future story development. These suspense-building practices help to keep the reader invested in the story, despite the narrator’s declarations of not being concerned with satisfying readers’ expectations.

Yet despite his role as an omniscient editor, the narrator *presents* the story-world from a limited perspective. The narrative unfolds as if in real time as it is being read. *Maister korablia* declares its intention to mimic the natural unfolding of events in this way, and also to narrate them non-selectively. Numerous aleatory details and scenes, apparently irrelevant to the main story, create an “effect of reality,” even as the recording of these scenes vis-à-vis the main story confuses and disorients the reader.
The narrative’s seeming incoherence makes it as inchoate as real life, since in the here-and-now of the experiencing moment the meaning, significance, and coherence of events is rarely obvious either. Since the text offers no definitive answers but only a set of clues and possibilities, there are multiple ways to interpret its disconnected stories and episodes, and this further contributes to the effect of reality. Thus Ianovs’kyi’s experimental memoir-novel nudges the reader to infer meanings and to “imagine his or her own distinct construction of artistic influence.”

**Collage of Genres**

Even though the narrator declares his intention to eschew all fictional devices, elements of popular and middlebrow genres are embedded in this memoir-novel, creating the impression of a collage. As I argued in the introductory chapter, Ukrainian experimental novels playfully yet enthusiastically incorporated such elements. This blending of fact and popular fiction is characteristic of Ukrainian literary experiments in the 1920s. Fragments of romance, seafaring adventures and mystery enliven the chronicle of daily events at the film factory and invest readers in the story. On the other hand, frequent metafictional comments lay bare these fictional devices, preventing substantive association with the characters or complete immersion in the story world.

By weaving into the novel metafictional commentary on cinema, literature and the arts, as well as notes on film production and shipbuilding, Ianovs’kyi brings attention to the texture and material of the novel, as well as to the technology of “making” a novel, if one were to use the Formalists’ terminology. The novel’s heterogeneous collage construction reflects important

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153 Chatman argues that instead of presenting one clear message through these aleatory fragments “the text only supplies clues for a range of stories.” Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 103; emphasis in the original.

154 *Maister korablia*, 37.
1920s theoretical discussions on the technology of artistic production and on exposing or “laying bare” artistic devices—to quote the Formalists again.

Collage juxtapositions, the incorporation of fragments of reality, and the blending of elements of various literary genres highlight the “seams” between these fragments. These contrasts and juxtapositions generate dynamism and great dramatic tension in the novel. They constantly engage the readers and encourage them to supply connections between disjointed individual parts.

In *Maister korbalia*, descriptive visual sequences of camera-eye narration are interlaced with poetic metaphors, as well as insightful and extensive commentary on Ukrainian culture, artistic production, the human condition and the end of life. Film-inspired devices and collage innovations, in conjunction with the poeticism of Ianovs’kyi’s prose, led to the construction of a highly successful experimental work that revitalized Ukrainian literature, and readers and critics highly regarded Ianovs’kyi’s work for accomplishing that feat. Positive reviews of the novel also indicate its success with a mass readership. As the critic Borys Iakubs’kyi noted: “One should state right away: Іu. Ianovs’kyi’s novel *Maister korablia* became one of the biggest events in our literature last year. […] The novel is read with pleasure, as one can judge thus far from the demand for it at libraries and bookstores.” The experimental novel was reprinted three times in large press runs during the early 1930s.

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155 For instance, in his review Borys Iakubs’kyi concludes that Іurii Ianovs’kyi should be recognized as майстер for his literary output. See Iakubs’kyi, “Іurii Ianovs’kyi ta ioho *Maister Korablia,*” 98.

156 “Треба відразу сказати: роман Ю. Яновського ‘Майстер корабля’ став за одну з найбільших подій літератури нашої минулого року. […] Роман читають залюбки, скільки можна досі судити з попиту на нього по бібліотеках та книгарнях.” Iakubs’kyi, “Іurii Ianovs’kyi ta ioho *Maister Korablia,*” 93.

Ianovs’kyi’s memoir-novel is a hybrid fusing fact and fiction, and cinematic and traditional literary narrative modes. As a result of his radical formal experimentation and subversion of fictional convention, Ianovs’kyi managed to construct an engaging literary work with stimulating narration. His poetic camera-eye narration and the rendition of memories through montage composition produced a striking cinematic dimension of in the novel. Moreover, the presentation of a collaborative artistic construction and combination of forms, styles and genres well-served the novel’s one unifying idea: the construction of a new novel genre and, by extension, of a new Ukrainian culture.
Chapter 3 Writing as Social Criticism: Literary-Cinematic Satire in Leonid Skrypnyk’s “Screened Novel” Intelihent

The great difficulty for me: choosing words so impressive that even your unaccustomed visual imagination is forced by them to see what is taking place on the screen. In the combinations of letters on the page of the book try to see my live hero—no, not alive, but filmed, flat and colourless, silent and, therefore, more than alive, more palpable than what is attainable for a human being in life.

The 1927–28 novel Intelihent: Ekranizovanyi roman na shist’ chastyn z prolohom ta epilohom (The intellectual: a screened novel in six parts with a prologue and an epilogue) by a multitalented Ukrainian Futurist Leonid Skrypnyk was envisioned as an experimental genre of Ukrainian literature, which intended to serve the ends of the socialist state. In particular, Skrypnyk’s choice of the literary-cinematic satire genre fulfilled avant-gardists’ quest for rationality and functionality in art.

Futurists argued that in the new state literature should reject individualism and emotions and, in contrast, proposed “rational” approach to writing, aiming to render literature intellectually stimulating. Skrypnyk accomplishes these aesthetic and ideological goals by conceiving an unconventional novelistic form, a “screened novel,” placed at the intersection of

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1. Leonid Skrypnyk, Intelihent, 7.

2. Skrypnyk’s conception of the new art largely aligned with Futurists’ manifested goals of rationality and functionality in art. For instance, the editorial of the journal Nova generatsiia praises his analysis of the function of art: “аналіз цих мистецьких форм з точки погляду максимальної програми панфутуризму, що з неї виходить гасло заникання мистецтв в атмосфері раціональних, функціональних вимог, що до них неминуче приводить новий, соціалістичний етап культури, побуту й життя людства.” Table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 4 (1929): 2.

fictional literature, cinema and *publitsystyka* (non-fictional civic writing). Echoing the fascination with non-fiction genres in Ukrainian literature of the 1920s, Skrypnyk highly regarded *publitsystyka* for its ability to have a “rational” impact on the recipient. Similar to *publitsystyka*, numerous direct addresses to the readers accomplish the novel’s utilitarian goal: to satirize the vices, character and mentality of intelligentsia in contemporary Soviet society.

Finally, the novel’s literary-cinematic form offers powerful expressive means for constructing this satire.

The text of the novel, in effect, presents a literary adaptation or “translation” of a film screening along with running commentary on that film. The result is a new hybrid genre synthesizing two distinct narrative modes and two complementary narrative perspectives: a dispassionate ekphrasis of the film screening interlaced with a disruptive and ironic metafictional commentary on the novel, the film, its characters, and various matters both relevant and unrelated to the story. The novel’s harsh satire results from the juxtaposition of these two modes, producing a powerful impact on the reader without excessive emotionality or didacticism. Yet despite the novel’s unique and radical formal experimentation and its significant contribution to modern Ukrainian literature, Leonid Skrypnyk’s *Intelihent* has not been properly addressed in literary scholarship in Ukraine and in the West, and thus it deserves a thorough and detailed study.

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4 I use the Ukrainian term *publitsystyka* throughout this dissertation. *Publitsystyka* is a journalistic genre that typically presents the author’s subjective opinions, as well as his or her analysis and evaluation of pressing current issues. *Publitsystyka* writing usually has an agenda; it is an attempt to shape public opinion on social and political matters, or to influence political institutions. It is also a hybrid genre combining a journalistic style with literary devices and elements of civic writing and propaganda. Skrypnyk argues that the literary devices in *publitsystyka*, in contrast to their use in traditional fiction, aim to serve ideological rather than aesthetic purposes. See Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 35.

5 “Публіцистика по своїх завданнях завжди соціального характеру, по своїй методі суто-логочного впливу на свідомість—належить більше до соціального, ніж до старого мистецтва.” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 34.

6 Myroslav Shkandrij and Oleh Ilnytzkyj have overviewed Skrypnyk’s screened novel *Intelihent* in the context of avant-garde Ukrainian prose and brought the attention of a wider readership to the author. See Myroslav Shkandrij,
Leonid Skrypnyk’s novel *Intellihest* was first serialized in the then-newly established Ukrainian journal *Nova generatsiia*, an official publication of the eponymously named literary-artistic organization of Ukrainian Futurists. An editorial comment introduces the novel in the journal as “the first attempt at a programmatic leftist novel.” Therefore, as with Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s *Maister korablia*, Skrypnyk’s strong ties with Ukrainian Futurism, his engineering background, and his connection to the film-making industry in Ukraine all affected *Intellihest*’s narrative, stylistic devices and construction, as well as its characterization. Yet unlike Ianovs’kyi, Skrypnyk was a core member of “Nova Generatsiia.” For all these reasons, his experimental screened novel should be read in the context of Ukrainian “leftist” culture.

Skrypnyk’s obituary in *Nova generatsiia* lauded him as a talented and prolific “leftist” writer, a theoretician and journalist at the forefront of the construction of the new Ukrainian culture. During his short career he showed diverse and multi-faceted interests and displayed a wide array of professional skills: he worked as a railway engineer, the head of the Odesa VUFKU film laboratory, a photographer, a journalist, an art theoretician and a literary author.

Actively involved in the Ukrainian film-making industry, Skrypnyk authored a reference book

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10 The obituary in *Nova generatsiia* offers the following impressive list of Skrypnyk’s professional achievements and qualifications: “Інженер шляхів комунікації (будував Мурманську залізницю), інженер-хемік (фотограф—теоретик і практик, кінематографіст теоретик і практик, завідував кінолабораторією Одеської кінофабрики), людина великої загальної й спеціальної освіти, діяч великої культури й різноманітної кваліфікації.” “Leonid Skrypnyk,” *Nova generatsiia*, no. 3 (1929): 5.
on photography and a monograph on film art. Both were the first monographs on photography and cinema in the Ukrainian language. The combination of his literary and journalistic career, his experience working in cinema and photography, and his engineering background—i.e., his significant contributions to the fields of art, science and technology—makes Skrypnyk a quintessential avant-garde artist.

The main narrative of the novel focuses on the biography of its protagonist, Intelihent, whose name gives the work its title. Throughout, the novel refers to the main character only by this common name, which can be translated as “an intellectual,” “a refined, cultured person,” or, more precisely, “a member of the intelligentsia.” Yet the reaction of contemporary readers was to find the satire directed not against the intelligentsia but against the petit bourgeois or philistines (міщани). A brief note is therefore needed to clarify the distinction between the terms “intellectual,” “intelligentsia” and “bourgeois intelligentsia” in Ukrainian culture of the 1920s.

More than merely a group of intellectuals or highly educated and cultured people, the self-defined “intelligentsia” played an important role in nineteenth-century Eastern European history. The Ukrainian noun intelihent is similar in meaning to its Polish and Russian counterparts, especially in that it transcends narrow definitions of “intelligent,” or “critically thinking.” In the nineteenth-century Russian Empire of which Ukraine was a part, the

12 See Skrypnyk, Narysy z teorii mystetstva kino, 77.
14 The Ukrainian term intilhentsiia, Polish inteligencia and Russian intelligentsia all have a common root in the Latin intellectus (intellect, intelligence, understanding). For the distinction between the terms “intellectuals” and
intelligentsia envisioned their role in broader terms as the “intelligence” or “consciousness” of the nation, and in this vein they actively sought out and took on leading roles in society and culture.\textsuperscript{15}

However, these views of the intelligentsia as the cultural and political leadership of the country changed significantly during the early Soviet period. In the first post-revolutionary years, some of the old intelligentsia chose or were forced to emigrate to the West, while those who remained in the Soviet Union were forced to adapt to the new regime. The Soviet government treated this intelligentsia similarly to how they treated the pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie, that is, with contempt.\textsuperscript{16} As Timo Vihavainen notes, “during the 1920s, the Bolsheviks considered the intelligentsia to be, a priori, an unreliable petty bourgeoisie element with philistine views and a philistine psychology.”\textsuperscript{17} The target of Skrypnyk’s satire in \textit{Inteliinent} is precisely this philistinism and moral degradation of the old bourgeois intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{18} Along such lines, “bourgeois” and “intelligentsia” came to be conflated during this turbulent time.

\textit{Inteliinent} has the form of a \textit{Bildungsroman}, and, similar to Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s memoir framework in \textit{Maister korablia}, its main biographical line shows affinities with the “life writing”


\textsuperscript{16} See, for instance, one of the definitions of “intelligent” in Dmitrii Ushakov’s dictionary, which has a pejorative connotation: “человек, социальное поведение [которого] характеризуется безволием, колебаниями, сомнениями.” \textit{Tolkovyi slovar’ russkogo iazka}, ed. D. N. Ushakov, 4 vols. (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe slovarno-entsiklopedicheskoe izdatel’stvo “Sovetskaia entsiklopediia,” 1934–40; repr., Cambridge, MA: Slavica publishers, 1974), s.v. “intelligent.” The dictionary offers an example of the term’s usage by Lenin, which is telling in this regard: “Вот она, психология российского интеллигента: на словах он храбрый радикал, на деле он подленький чиновник.”


\textsuperscript{18} Oskar Reding confirms readers’ speculations, arguing that Skrypnyk indeed created a “biting satire of a bourgeois intelligent” (“вся повість є, розуміється, що залишилася, і єдиною сатирою на цього ж буржуазного інтелігента”). Oskar Reding, “\textit{Lyst do chytachiv},” 49.
form popular in the 1920s.\footnote{Another \textit{Bildungsroman} famous for its use of experimental narrative techniques is \textit{The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy}, by Laurence Sterne. There are numerous similarities between Skrypnyk’s and Sterne’s novels. Both foreground visuality and the graphic layout of the text. Both frequently address their readers, digress from linear story-telling, and self-consciously lay bare literary devices. Russian Formalists studied these elements of experimental narration in the latter and, in general, reinstated \textit{Tristram Shandy} into the literary canon.} Paradoxically, however, compared to Ianovs’kyi’s use of cinematic narration, which faithfully documents the life of the narrator of \textit{Maister korablia}, Skrypnyk’s experiment in literary-cinematic intermediality produces a different effect and leads to a different kind of text. While, as was argued above, the emulation of cinematic camera eye narration in Ianovs’kyi’s novel generates an effect of simultaneous narration and of close narrative distance, the presentation of Intelihent’s life story from within the boundaries of an imaginary movie screen creates instead a double mediation that \textit{increases} the distance between the narrator and the protagonist, and between the text and its readers. This emotional distance and lack of empathy for the protagonist is crucial in generating the novel’s satire.\footnote{Henri Bergson argues that in order to laugh at the satirized characters, viewers or readers need to dissociate themselves from the characters: “Now step aside, look upon life as a disinterested spectator: many a drama will turn into a comedy. […] To produce the whole of its effect, then, the comic demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to intelligence, pure and simple.” Henri Bergson, \textit{Laughter: an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic}, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan: 1911), 5.}

The contrasting effects of the emulation of film narration in Ianovs’kyi and Skrypnyk illustrate that an ekphrasis of film projection is not \textit{itself} responsible for generating Intelihent’s greater narrative distance and ironic perspective. The main film story employs specific film devices that contribute to painting a satirical schematic portrait of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Interlacing the film ekphrasis with narrator’s overt metafictional commentary further enhances this ironic distance. This chapter focuses on the satirical effect produced by the juxtaposition of the cinematic ekphrasis with the narrator’s ironic commentary.
The Life of a Common Man: Intelihent’s Story, Composition and Major Themes

The novel’s subtitle, “a screened novel,” foregrounds cinematics as its chief narrative mode from the start. Unlike other experimental Ukrainian novels of the 1920s that emulate cinema aesthetics or incorporate cinematic devices, Intelihent is an experiment in seeking to present its story entirely as an ekphrasis of a film. In other words, the story is presented through a verbal account of a cinematic projection, i.e., through the narrator describing for the reader a movie playing on a movie screen. Thus, film narration frames and structures the fictional universe of the novel, providing new tools for composition and character exposition, as well as reconfiguring the narrator’s position in the text.

The simplicity of Intelihent’s narrative structure is striking, especially in comparison to other Ukrainian experimental novels. Unlike Maister korablia’s set of discontinuous and non-linear story lines, Intelihent’s story unfolds in linear, chronological order, following one story line—the uneventful life of its non-heroic title character, Intelihent—from conception and birth until adulthood. The only interruptions to this linearity are the narrator’s intrusive comments. Nonetheless, similar to Ianovs’kyi’s novel, montage organization is key in Intelihent, as the film story selects representative episodes from the protagonist’s life and arranges them in a clear pattern. In introducing Intelihent’s story to the reader, the narrator notes: “an excerpt from his entire life is made—few saturated drops. Thirty five years of life of my hero will pass in front of you in about three hours.”

Throughout the novel, metafictional commentaries touch on various aspects of the depicted film and, by implication, novel. For instance, to orient the reader to this atypical novel

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21 “З усього життя його зроблено витяг—небагато насичених крапель. Тридцять п’ять років життя моєї герої пройдуть перед вашими очима за яких-небудь три години.” Intelihent, 7.
the narrator discusses the use of its major elements or “materials,” such as film montage, intertitles, and commentary. As in a high-quality engineering construction, each “material” is clearly labeled and has its unique function. Each constructive element also visually stands out in the text of the novel, with film narration rendered in regular font, the intertitles in all caps, and commentary in a smaller font resembling stage directions in a dramatic text.

Readers accustomed with silent films of the 1920s will find the film scenes and sequences of Intelihent familiar, as its use of film storytelling devices is conventional and corresponds with the practices of those following the continuity editing system, or, more rarely, the Soviet montage school. Specifically, characterization is developed by employing such devices as characters’ reaction shots and close-ups; the film material is organized via ellipsis, fade-out and crosscutting; and new episodes are introduced using intertitles, which also fill in characters’ speech.

Yet unlike the majority of 1920s films viewed in Ukrainian movie theatres, Intelihent’s film story runs alongside a simultaneous commentary. The commentator’s role is somewhat fused with that of a traditional omniscient narrator in literature. As in Maister korablia, where the narrative perspective is split between emulating a dispassionate camera-eye point of view and a self-reflexive, retrospective point of view, the narrator’s function in Intelihent is also twofold: on the one hand, he provides a faithful verbal rendition of the action on the screen, while on the other hand, he comments, explains, and clarifies the film action, interrupting the narrative whenever he deems it necessary. However, the constant juxtaposition and interlacing of these two narrative modes to generate satire makes the novel a unique experiment in Ukrainian literature.

The novel Intelihent is composed of six parts, a prologue, and an epilogue. The novel starts with a prefatory epistle titled “To the reader” (“До читача”), in which the narrator urges
the reader to imagine watching a film in a theatre: “Imagine, dear reader, that you are in a movie theatre.—*I hope you like cinema.*—A screen is in front of you, the aspect ratio of which is four to three … Outside the screen is black emptiness. The world does not exist.”

The reader is invited to immerse fully in the movie’s universe, completely shutting off all external stimuli and blocking out external reality. In this manner the narrator addresses a typical film-viewing convention—ignoring the cinematic screen frame—one which was addressed in Ianovs’kyi’s novel in a similar context.

The opening lines of *Intelihent* establish cinematic ekphrasis as the novel’s primary medium of expression and prepare the reader for the recurrence of such apostrophes. As was said, each part and section of the novel is interspersed with the narrator’s ironic comments and digressions, which in the main address the conventionalities and bourgeois sensibilities of the film and novel. The opening commentary of the frame therefore indicates that actual immersion in the film story may be somewhat problematic, if not totally impossible, as the apparent photographic “realism” of the film narration is constantly and sharply contrasted with the narrator’s metafictional remarks regarding its artifice.

The text of the novel indeed has the form of a *Bildungsroman*, describing the development of Intelihent’s character from birth until maturity, yet unlike traditional novels of this genre, *Intelihent* focuses on how the hero descends into moral decay, mechanization, and disharmony with society. The film narrative focuses on habits and vices that directly result from Intelihent’s bourgeois upbringing and education, portraying him as a mirror and product of the social values and culture of this class. For instance, the prologue shows Intelihent’s parents in the

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22 “Уявіть собі, дорогий читачу, що ви сидите в кінотеатрі.—Сподіваюсь, ви любите кіно.—Перед вашими очима—екран, сторони якого мають відношення три на чотири … Зовні екрану—черна порожнеча. Світу нема.” *Intelihent*, 7.
events preceding his conception, suggesting that even before his birth various factors came into play which would shape his future identity.

Each of the following six parts of the novel then focuses on a significant episode or stage in Intelihent’s life; here literary montage is instrumental in selecting the most telling episodes from his childhood, schooling years, marriage, and adult and professional life. The pace of each part varies greatly, and their duration ranges from a few days to several years. For example, part 1, “First years” (“Перші роки”), spans some fourteen years of Intelihent’s childhood and early teenage life, while part 6 is confined to a single afternoon.

The first half of the novel generally pertains to events in Intelihent’s life before the October revolution. Following the episodes from Intelihent’s childhood and early education in part 1, part 2, “Intelihent’s youth” (“Юність Інтелігента”), shows him when he reaches 18 years old and starts attending a university. This part deals with various educational moments and experiences during his student years, including his first love and his first visit to a brothel. Part 3, entitled “Intelihent’s maturity” (“Дозрілість Інтелігента”), considers the beginning of his career as a lawyer, his marriage, as well as the mobilization in the Tsar’s army during World War I.23

A watershed moment in Intelihent’s life comes at the onset of the October revolution. Toward the end of Part 3, the revolution strikes and shakes up Intelihent and his family’s world. The mission to reform the old social order makes it impossible for Intelihent and his class to carry on with their lifestyle, and the remainder of the novel tracks Intelihent’s awkward attempts at adapting his life to the new Soviet regime. Part 4, titled “A member of the ‘I. I.’ (‘Intimidated Intelligentsia’) party” (“Член партії ‘И.И.’ [‘Испуганная интеллигенция’]”), portrays him and his wife escaping the revolution to the South of Russian Empire. The film shows them arriving at

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23 The titles of parts 2 and 3 have a similar structure, indicating continuity and parallelism between these early stages of Intelihent’s life.
a “large Southern city” but only alludes to the fact that it is located in Ukraine.\(^{24}\) Intelihent and his wife attempt to maintain their lavish lifestyle there, yet when the Bolsheviks establish power in Ukraine too, the couple is forced to conform to the new political reality.

Part 5, entitled “For the benefit of Soviet motherland” (“Радянській батьківщині на користь”), cuts directly to contemporary time and details Intelihent’s workday at a nameless Soviet institution.\(^{25}\) It portrays his life in the new socialist society while satirizing his transformation into an ardent bureaucrat. Intelihent is shown occupying an administrative post as the head of the “Bureau of rationalization, standardization, normalization, taylorization, fordization, utilization, etc.” (“Бюро раціоналізації, стандартизації, нормалізації, тейлоризації, фордизації, утилізації і т. інш.”). There he overzealously follows the procedures outlined in the manual on rationalization, even though most gainsay common sense. After an absurd bureaucratic incident that leads to a conflict with the director (Intelihent refuses to replace the director’s broken pen, citing regulations on economy and rationalization), he is demoted. He then searches for justice at a higher office, ambiguously and ironically named “Appropriate institution” (“Відповідна установа”), yet his pleas remain unanswered.

Part 6, titled “Intelihent’s personal day” (“Особистий день Інтелігента”), portrays a day off work. Utterly destroyed by the incident with his director and feeling misunderstood and undervalued both at work and at home, Intelihent searches for consolation with another woman. However, at her apartment he is confronted with the arrival of a “young man” who seems to be a

\(^{24}\) “Людна вулиця великого південного міста.” \textit{Intelihent}, 102. The vague phrase “a large Southern city” most likely refers to Kyiv, as it was a recognizable trope for such a city in the discourse of the Russian Empire. In fact, Alexander Kuprin’s description of the city in his novel \textit{Iama} (\textit{The Pit}; 1909) contains this exact phrase. The parallel to Kuprin’s \textit{Iama} is particularly applicable for \textit{Intelihent}, as both novels shocked readers with their naturalistic portrayals of day-to-day life at a brothel.

\(^{25}\) The commentary establishes the timeframe for the part: “Дія відбувається в наші дні.” \textit{Intelihent}, 105.
more capable and dashing suitor, and Intelihent is forced to leave. The following scenes show a despaired and dejected Intelihent getting drunk at a second-rate pub and seeking the services of a street prostitute. She rejects his advances too, as Intelihent doesn’t have enough money. At home Intelihent reconciles with his wife, and part 6 closes with a conventional silent movie parting shot: an iris fade-out zeroing in on Intelihent and his wife kissing.

Finally, the epilogue shows the birth of Intelihent’s baby, portrayed in a manner nearly identical to his own birth. The episode employs similar shots, a similar order of shots, and the same language as his own birth, and these parallels visually and thematically connect the end of the novel to its beginning. The commentary even mentions that the actors playing the mother, father and doctor in the epilogue look familiar. The adult Intelihent is played by the actor who portrayed his father in Part 1, and his wife is portrayed by the same actress who played his mother.

Intelihent is structured around a cyclical repetition of events in human life. In a manner similar to Maister korablia, Intelihent’s closure comes not from story development but through formal elements: parallelisms, repetitions, and a cyclical frame. After the camera moves in for a close-up on the face of Intelihent’s baby, the epilogue follows convention by fading to dark.

Yet the cyclical nature of the story is reinforced as a final, additional frame of the movie then

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26 He is ironically labeled with a Russian phrase “типовой ‘молодой человек’.” Intelihent, 135.
27 “Інтелігент обіймає Марію Савишну. Довгий поцілунок. Діяфрагма.” Intelihent, 143.
28 The commentary attempts to explain that it is done, arguably, for the sake of economy: “Це—Марія Савишна. Але вона якось чудно подібна до матері Інтелігента … Мабуть, заради режиму економії, обидві ролі грає одна актриса.” Intelihent, 144. An earlier comment makes a similar observation about the actor who plays adult Intelihent: “Ви можете помітити, що роль дорослого Інтелігента грає той самий актор, що грав роль батька на початку фільму. Чи зробив це режисер заради режиму економії, чи з якоюсь іншою метою—виявиться далі.” Intelihent, 39.
29 “Обличчя немовлятка, нещасного й миршавого. Гірко плаче … Екран темніє … ” Intelihent, 144.
appears: the title “Etc.,” which replaces the conventional movie ending, “The end.”

This frame indicates that Intelihent’s story is not finished but will continue and carry over to subsequent generations. Moreover, the concluding commentary reinforces this cyclical effect by admitting “Yes! There is no ending . . .” The comment forces the reader to associate Intelihent’s story with life itself, which, unlike fictional stories, has no ending but is constantly evolving.

Most importantly, cyclicity, repetitions and parallelisms are instrumental in emphasizing the universal, commonplace features of Intelihent’s experience. As the commentator explains towards the end of part 6, the film has aimed to render the common, habitual occurrence of events in the life of its main character: “The next episode is so ordinary, that I don’t even know why exactly the film director included it in the picture . . . However, all the episodes of this picture are also totally ordinary . . .” On this note, “zvychainyi” (ordinary or common) becomes a frequently repeated epithet in scene descriptions and commentary about the intelligentsia; it emphasizes a lack of the extraordinary in Intelihent’s life and actions.

Moreover, since the title character is not portrayed as a unique or prominent individual—as is clear in his being named by the common noun “intelihent”—he brings to mind the Everyman of the eponymously named medieval play. The settings of the novel are portrayed in a similarly ambiguous fashion, and this from the very start—the prologue opens with an

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30 “Але ось якийсь напис з’являється ще із затемнення . . . Дивіться. І Т. Д.” Intelihent, 145.

31 “Так! Кінця немає . . .” Intelihent, 145.

32 “Черговий епізод такий звичайний, що я навіть не знаю, навіщо, власне кажучи, режисер вмістив його в картину . . . Проте,—всі епізоди цієї картини теж цілком звичайні . . .” Intelihent, 142.

33 The following narrator’s comment further demonstrates this: “Мій герой—не виняток у цьому випадку . . . Він взагалі не виняток . . .” Intelihent, 42.

34 See Ilnytskyj, Ukrainain Futurism, 320. Oleh Ilnytskyj aptly observes that other “common” characters in Skrypnyk’s short stories also resemble Everyman in their characteristics.
establishing shot describing a large but nameless city. Like the composite city portrayed in Vertov’s *Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, Intelihent’s geographic space is generalized and typified. The ambiguity of the novel’s setting and the lack of individuality of its characters suggest the story as a common occurrence, one transpiring seemingly anywhere and concerning seemingly anyone in the Soviet state. This generalization also contributes to producing an effect of constructing an “objective” study of a species—a representative of the bourgeois intelligentsia—from the typical events of Intelihent’s life.

In turn, the cyclical structure of the novel and the generalized names of its characters and setting foreground the habitual repetition of events in Intelihent’s life and the universality of his traits, which demonstrate that his character is not in fact a unique individual, but rather a representation of the backward bourgeois intelligentsia of the new Soviet society. The generalization of the protagonist’s character traits also serves as a useful tool in producing the novel’s satire.

Social satire of the bourgeois intelligentsia

The concluding remark of the framing commentary reinforces the idea of the perpetuity of the habits of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Even though the new regime proclaimed that the revolution had reformed the country’s political and social order, bourgeois vices were not completely eradicated in the new state. The novel offers various examples powerfully illustrating the continued presence of the characteristics and undying habits of the bourgeoisie in contemporary Soviet society. In a symbolic scene, while obtaining a permit to leave the country, Intelihent, dressed in proletarian clothes, takes off his pince-nez in order to better fit in with the

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35 One possible prototype for the city of Intelihent’s childhood and youth is Kharkiv. However, this hypothesis is not supported with any specific details that would unambiguously characterize the city in the novel, besides the use of the Ukrainian language in posters and signs.
new ruling class.\textsuperscript{36} But the bourgeois intelligentsia is shown adapting only in external appearance to the new regime, while not altering their morals, manners or idle lifestyle in any fundamental or significant manner.\textsuperscript{37}

These characteristics of a bourgeois \textit{intelihent} are never directly or explicitly mentioned in the novel, except for one brief and rather vague remark: “He is extremely resilient and has carried his main biological features intact from the darkness of millennia to our days. For instance, a disdain for brute physical force (and physical labor), which attests to his refined soul …”\textsuperscript{38} Oskar Reding provides a good summary of the satirized features of the bourgeoisie in the novel, focusing on such characteristics as cowardliness, selfishness, political opportunism and materialism.\textsuperscript{39}

Skrypnyk frequently incorporated satire in his literary works.\textsuperscript{40} In one article he explicitly declared social satire as the goal for the novel \textit{Intelihent}.\textsuperscript{41} I argue that the novel’s satirical portrait of bourgeois intelligentsia is constructed based on principles outlined in Henri Bergson’s study \textit{Laughter}, specifically his idea that the basis for laughter and comedy is “something

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} See \textit{Intelihent}, 90.
\item \textsuperscript{37} A similar focus on the undying mannerisms of the bourgeois intelligentsia is upheld in Mykola Khvyl’ovyi’s satire “Ivan Ivanovych,” which was first published in \textit{Literaturnyi iarmarak}, no. 7 (1929) and later included in volume 3 of Khvyl’ovyi’s collected works (1930). Khvyl’ovyi’s \textit{povist‘} also bears a striking resemblance to the aesthetics and narrative structure of \textit{Intelihent}, including the construction of a generalized literary type of bourgeois \textit{intelihent}, satirizing this \textit{intelihent} through mechanical repetitions of phrases and gestures and through the ironic use of metafictional commentary, frequent digressions and direct addresses to the audience.
\item \textsuperscript{38} “Він надзвичайно життєздатний і свої основні біологічні ознаки доніс цілі з пітьми тисячоліть аж до наших днів. Наприклад, презирство до грубої сили (їй роботи), що свідчить про витончену душу …” \textit{Intelihent}, 145.
\item \textsuperscript{39} “Трусливий, хитропристосований до різних режимів політичної влади, шкурницький та egoїстичний щодо збереження своїх мізерних матеріальних цінностей у нашій собачки-больонки.” Reding, “Lyst do chytaчiv,” 51.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Skrypnyk’s other satirical story is “Materialy do biohrafiї pys’mennyka Loputs’ky,” \textit{Nova generatsiia}, no. 11 (1928): 293–303. The story exposes the bourgeois characteristics of a Ukrainian writer, Loputs’ka, and the circumstances of the Ukrainian literary scene through a series of brief disconnected episodes.
\end{itemize}
mechanical encrusted on the living.” Peter Christensen aptly notes that Bergson’s formula can be thus applied to the Soviet bourgeoisie: “it is bourgeois life that is something mechanical still encrusted on the vital Soviet state.” Laughter is at the heart of comedy, but Bergson also emphasizes laughter’s social corrective function. There is very little laughter or comedy in Intelihsen; Skrypnyk’s satire is harsh and bitter, yet it uses Bergson’s formula to achieve this very ironic distance and sarcasm, and to humiliate its recipients. Thus, Skrypnyk’s literary-cinematic satire becomes utilitarian, “a form of purposeful laughter.”

Bergson’s idea was enthusiastically welcomed by Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet Commissar for Enlightenment (Narkompros), who argued in his article on cinematic satire that humour and satire were necessary for the proletariat to target the “vestiges of bourgeois mentality” in contemporary state. In this sense, Skrypnyk’s novel aligned with Soviet film satire expressing an urgent need for the correction of bourgeois vices in order to complete the social reform project of the Soviet state. Moreover, the novel contains a striking mix of fictional

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42 Bergson, Laughter, 37.
44 “Laughter, then, does not belong to the province of esthetics alone, since unconsciously (and even immorally in many particular instances) it pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement.” Bergson, Laughter, 20.
45 Bergson concludes his study noting that “laughter doubtless exercises a useful function.” Bergson, Laughter, 197.
and factual elements, of entertainment and propaganda, constructing a new art in line with Marxist ideology. 48

Most importantly, the strikingly harsh effect of Intelihent’s satire is forced on readers in a violent manner, frequently identifying the reader as belonging to Intelihent’s circle, or as his identical copy in actual life. Several times the narrator urges each reader to see himself/herself in the protagonist. In the prefatory address, for instance, readers are told that hero of the film, Intelihent, is not only easily recognizable, but “lives among you, and often—even within you.” 49 Readers found this all-encompassing generalization quite offensive. 50 In this sense, the novel also serves, then, as a satirical, exorcizing text written by an author-intelihent for bourgeois intelligentsia readers. 51 Intelihent offers its satire from within, and its effect is all the more persuasive for this tack. The harsh lashing satire seeks to unsettle and activate each reader by bluntly revealing the underlining vices of the bourgeoisie as their own vices.

**The Avant-Garde Framework of the Novel**

Skrypnyk’s engineering background is evident in the novel in his emphasis on the material qualities of the work of art, on functionality over ornamentation and aesthetics, and on constructing the text from heterogeneous elements or materials. This emphasis on constructing a new culture, as well as on the synthesis of arts in the novel directly reflects the aesthetic theories

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48 Lenin considered such artistic works with agitational value equally important, if not more important than the newsreel and educational films: “there should be artistic propaganda for our ideas in the form of entertainment films, depicting fragments of life and permeated with our ideas—both so that they should bring to the country’s attention things that are good, improving and uplifting, and so that they should castigate things that are bad here and in the life of other classes and other countries.” Anatoli Lunacharsky, “Conversation with Lenin. II. Newsreel and Fiction Film,” in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896–1939*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 57.

49 “Мій герой живе серед вас, а часто—і всередині вас.” Intelihent, 7.


51 At the end of the prefatory address, the narrator mockingly reminisces about his younger self, who also aspired to join the ranks of intelligentsia and who now wears the attributes of his class. See Intelihent, 8.
of Ukrainian Futurism. Incidentally, these features also align the novel with constructivist aesthetics.\(^{52}\) However, despite the close proximity in ideological views and aesthetic platforms, Ukrainian Futurists and Soviet Constructivists remained completely separate and distinct artistic organizations, as contributors to *Nova generatsiia* were wont to ardently emphasize.\(^{53}\)

The Futurists’ ideals of constructing “leftist” art were also tightly connected to the task of modernizing Ukrainian literature. As was already noted, leading 1920s Ukrainian writers and literary organizations considered modernization and the raising of the quality of Ukrainian literature their utmost priorities. This need for a regeneration of Ukrainian culture was considered equally important by artists from opposing literary groups and organizations. However, unlike other literary groups, Ukrainian Futurists envisioned such modernization in the most radical terms, promoting the total destruction of old, bourgeois artistic forms and the further construction of new “leftist” art from the fragments of the old.

Futurist aesthetic ideals are closely reflected in Skrypnyk’s theoretical views, and they also largely inform his artistic practices. He authored numerous theoretical and polemical articles on the theory of “leftist” culture.\(^{54}\) These articles were to form a larger study, a monograph on so-called social and a-social arts, yet his untimely death at age 36 prevented him from

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\(^{53}\) For instance, in response to Vladimir Trenin’s criticisms of *Nova generatsiia*, Geo Shkurupii rebuked that their organization was not a personification of the “New LEF.” See Shkurupii, “Syhnal na spoloh druziam—fal’shyva tryvoha,” *Nova generatsiia*, no. 11 (1928): 327–34. For a discussion of the polemical exchange between the two groups, see Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 137–40.

completing this work. Key to Skrypnyk’s theory is the term “social art,” which is equivalent to the “meta-art” (метамистецтво) or “post-art” (післямистецтво) of the Futurists, especially in its antithesis to both past classical art and current experiments in “destructive art.”

Along with the Futurists, Skrypnyk rejected destructive tendencies in art because it no longer fulfilled the requirement for meta-art with a utilitarian role in society. In contrast, the construction of functional art was put forward as a motto for “Nova Generatsiia” artists:

> Рациональні вимоги, поставлені перед мистецтвом сьогодні, переключають його на конструктивний шлях функціональних мистецтв.

> Функціональні мистецтва відграють соціально-корисну роль в загальному процесі соціалістичного будівництва.

The rational demands placed on art today change its course to a constructive course of functional arts.

Functional art plays a social-utilitarian role in the general process of socialist construction.

This journal’s editorial encouraged writers to develop and experiment with functional genres, which the journal itself frequently published. According to Ukrainian Futurists, art had to be placed alongside science in a position where it could contribute to building a new and improved socialist state. In a radical redefinition of what constitutes art, Leonid Skrypnyk actually defines science, engineering and technology as “older” social arts, and newspaper, radio and television as “younger” functional arts. Specifically, in visual arts, Skrypnyk highlights the poster

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55 Skrypnyk died of tuberculosis in Kharkiv on February 23, 1929.

56 The editorial of Nova generatsiia notes: “Скрипників термін ‘соціального мистецтва й мистецтва асоціального’ збігається в цьому розумінні з панфутуристичним терміном ‘післямистецтво’ (метамистецтво) в антитезі до минулих мистецтв (класичне й нове, ліве, деструктивне мистецтво).” Table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 4 (1929): 2.

57 Title page, Nova generatsiia, no. 1 (1929).

58 For instance, the editorial of Nova generatsiia reflects these goals by encouraging their contributors to send in “functional” literary works: “На цьому місці вважаємо за зручне звернутися до наших співробітників із таким зауваженням: в журналі надалі основну увагу буде звертатися на функціональну літературну продукцію. Отже, надіслайте вірші об'єктивно-соціального значення, зроблені в напрямку нашої лівої практики.” Table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 2 (1928): 84; emphasis in the original. See also Chernysh, “Ukrains'kyi futuryzm i dovkola n'oho,” 112.

59 See Skrypnyk, “Hazeta,” 53. These ideas regarding functional art correspond with the theories of Soviet Constructivists, who considered art and artists as playing a key role in Soviet society through their direct
as an artistic form with a clear utilitarian role, mainly due to its inclusion of written text and its ability to provide a “rational” message. Meanwhile, agitation or propaganda poetry offer examples of functional arts in poetry. Among other literary forms, scholarly literature and newspapers also play functional roles, and he cites these as examples of new social arts.

In other words, to play a socially utilitarian role, a literary work had to stimulate readers intellectually. Ideologically, such functional literature was considered a tool for the “rational” organization of the society and, therefore, as in line with the ideals of the new social art. Characteristically similar aesthetic ideas regarding the need for the “rationalization” of art spread across cultures, art forms and genres, a fact which shows their significance in the framework of the Soviet avant-garde.

engagement in the political process, and as advancing the day to day life of Soviet citizens through their “commitment to designing everyday useful objects.” Lodder, “Soviet Constructivism,” 359. Specifically, being committed to the radical redefinition of traditional art and the synthesis of art with technology, constructivists designed and produced utilitarian products, such as propaganda posters, workers’ clothes, newspaper stands and buildings.


“Є ще категорія літератури мистецької без лапок, що вона обслуговує соціальне мистецтво, як наукова, або й сама складає соціальне мистецтво, як газета.” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 34; emphasis in the original.

See the conclusions to Poltorats’kyi’s article on Panfuturism: “Ідеологічно витриманої треба назвати таке мистецтво, яке буде організовувати психіку читача відповідно до центрального спрямування доби пролетарської революції. [...] В основному до цього часу мистецтво розраховане було діяти на емоції, а не на організоване началь людської психіки. Новаторська роль панфутуризму полягає в переведені емоціональності мистецтва на раціональний збудник. Таким способом особа людини стане максимально організованою й максимально цілеспрямованою для організованої акції.” Oleksii Poltorats’yi, “Panfuturyzm,” Nova generatsiia, no. 2 (1929): 49.

Cf. the similar intent expressed in the prose of LEF writers: “Underlying these formal experiments was the avant-garde belief that a complex form that demanded the intellectual involvement of the audience for its understanding would force the recipient to develop his analytic capacities and to become a more rational better organized member of the new society.” Halina Stephan, “Lef” and the Left Front of the Arts, Slavistische Beiträge 142 (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1981), 166. For instance, an avant-garde composer associated with LEF, Vladimir Kashnitskii, also argues for the need to introduce rationality into music, devising the so-called music of fact or intelligent music (умная музыка): “Нам нужно заменить свободу эмоции, т.е. музыку, сделанную по законам чувства, диктатурой интеллекта, требующего от слушателя напряженной ориентировочной работы. Необходимый для организма эмоциональный заряд слушатель в этом случае будет иметь от факта, живьем включенного в звуковую картину (фонохроника) [...] тогда, как раньше он этот заряд получал от собственного 'нутра,' не обогащаясь внешней объективной действительностью, а наоборот,—замыкаясь от нее в уютной камерности
**Attack on the bourgeois art**

In contrast, the old, bourgeois arts stood on the opposite side of the spectrum of functionality, chiefly because these arts did not lead to their “rational” perception. Both in his theoretical works and in the novel *Intelihent*, Skrypnyk attempted to challenge the view of literature as entertainment, traditional for bourgeois society. He believed that bourgeois literary (or artistic) works manipulate readers’ emotions, and therefore play no useful role in society.\(^{65}\) Skrypnyk rejected individual emotions or irrationality in art, in line with the slogans of the Ukrainian Futurists, who pronounced art “dead as an emotional category of culture.”\(^{66}\) Skrypnyk’s radical position towards old, bourgeois art (i.e., “the value of an artistic work equals zero”) reflects his extreme “leftist” views, which the novel also illustrates.\(^{67}\)

The novel’s satire is especially harsh in regard both to this bourgeois art and to its consumers, the turn-of-the-century bourgeois audiences. The kitschy art produced and consumed by the bourgeoisie is a direct indication of their degraded morals and values. Early in the novel Skrypnyk includes a vibrant example of the typical bourgeois art. The prologue depicts Intelihent’s parents attending an operetta performance at a second-rate theatre, and this

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\(^{65}\) The “emotional” perception of a literary work is often parodied in other Ukrainian experimental novels. Ianovs’kyi’s *Maister korablia*, Iohansen’s *Podorozh* and Shkurupii’s *Dveri v den’* satirize and mock readers who enjoy low-brow, popular genres and action-driven stories, romances, and adventures.


\(^{67}\) However, Skrypnyk’s radical anti-art position was not fully shared by the editorial of the journal, which prefaced his article “Асotsial’ni i sotsial’ni mystetstva” with a note: “Леонід Скрипник, як відомо, стояв на максимальних позиціях щодо буржуазних мистецтв і ревізії їх пролетарським мистецтвом. Багато його тверджень не є виявом погляду редакції на ревізію мистецтв, а деякі вирази, що зустрічаються і в цій статті (як ‘мистецтво у нас перебуває в стані перманентного банкрутування’, значіння продукції мистецького твору ним ‘дорівнюється нулю’ і т. д.) є властивостями журналістичного пера Л. Скрипника.” Table of contents and commentary, *Nova generatsiia*, no. 11 (1929): 2.
performance serves as an epitome of devalued bourgeois art.\textsuperscript{68} The performance combines a kitschy artistic form with elements of eroticism that tickle the viewers’ most primal sexual emotions.\textsuperscript{69} Moreover, after the operetta the parents attend a cheap restaurant, another attraction popular with the bourgeoisie. Here, the novel satirizes these turn-of-the-century consumers of art and their obsession with low-brow forms of mass entertainment.\textsuperscript{70}

Most importantly, Intelihent is conceived at the end of prologue, and thus the kitschy performance scene creates a metaphor suggesting that his conception may be the direct fruit of his parents attending this cheap event. In other words, the prologue shows that bourgeois art has a significant role in shaping the morals and manners of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Kitschy, bourgeois art contributes to producing bourgeois intelligentsia.

The prologue’s concluding commentary further strengthens this metaphor, comparing bourgeois art to manure or fertilizer nourishing the growth and development of individuals like Intelihent: “We know that from manure wonderful flowers grow. Manure is also the soil for such delicacies as, for instance, a champignon. However, my hero is rather a flower than a champignon … Well, there it is—I couldn’t have forced him to grow out of thin air: you wouldn’t have believed it. I gave him an excellent soil: soft, fertile, aromatic, gentle and warm

\textsuperscript{68} The operetta is introduced in the text via an enormous kitschy and ridiculous sign that captures the essence of the performance: “Величезна, криклива, безглузда, з претензією на художність афіша. […] !!!ГВОЗДЬ СЕЗОНУ!!! !НАЙПІКАНТНИШІЙ ФАРС! !ПІДВ'ЯЗКИ ПАСТУШКИ! !!!НЕЗРІВНЯНА ДІВА!!!”\textsuperscript{\textendash}Intelihent, 9.

\textsuperscript{69} The phrase is used in the commentary to explain the couple’s expectations before the performance: “Нудота ще не здала позицій сподіванці специфічної розваги, надії на лоскотання зів’якіх емоцій.” Intelihent, 10.

\textsuperscript{70} Catriona Kelly argues for a similar enthusiastic response to forms of mass entertainment by Russian Symbolists: “[they] had an insatiable appetite for urban low life, especially its entertainments (café-chantants, cheap restaurants, suburban resorts, red-light districts).” Catriona Kelly, Petrushka: The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 145. Further in the novel, Skrypnyk’s commentator satirizes with especial harshness and sarcasm the bourgeois intelligentsia’s ubiquitous visits to brothels.
manure …” Intelihent is likened to a flower on the notion that the flower has no useful purpose but serves a purely decorative or ornamental function. He is even more useless than champignon mushrooms, a bourgeois delicacy. Throughout the novel Intelihent is ironically compared to a flower for his idleness, artificiality, and focus on external appearance and status. At the same time, the phrase “kvit natsii” (crème-de-la-crème, or, literally, the blossoms of the nation) is used sarcastically to describe Intelihent, signifying the high elitist position the intelligentsia envisioned for themselves in the society.

All classic art forms—opera, drama, prose fiction, poetry, and music—are subject to criticism in Skrypnyk’s view, as they represent the old, bankrupt and decaying bourgeois world order. Skrypnyk’s major point of contention was the individualism and emotionality of the old art. He considered such art harmful and dangerous to society, inasmuch as they fed and stimulated the “individualistic emotions” of their consumers. Moreover, it is illustrative that for Skrypnyk old artistic forms are incapable of serving a functional role or having a “rational” influence in society. For instance, Skrypnyk does not consider theatre as able to “fulfill any functional role” because, by feeding viewers’ emotions, it provides nothing more than “a-social aesthetic pleasure.”

These points are amply illustrated in the novel’s prologue, the objective of which is to reveal the useless and harmful effects of bourgeois art like the cheap operetta. When the

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71 “Ми знаємо, що на гною зростають чудесні квіти. Гній—також ґрунт для таких ласощів, як, приміром, шампіньйон … Проте, мій герой—скорше квітка, ніж шампіньйон … Ну, так ось,—не міг же я примусити його виростати з повітря: ви б не повірили. Я дав йому прекрасний ґрунт: м’який, родючий, ароматний, ніжний і теплий гній …” Intelihent, 17.

72 The editorial of Nova generatsia suggests a similar characteristic of “a-social,” old, bourgeois art: “‘А-соціальні мистецтва’—це ті мистецтва, що їх характеристикою означає є походження з емоцій індивідуалістичних і живлення ними тих же емоцій.” Table of contents and commentary, Nova generatsiia, no. 2 (1929): 4.

73 “Нестроможність театрву до виконання будь-якої функціональної ролі ... Роля театрву—живлення всіх асоціальних емоцій, постачання асоціальної естетичної насолоди та збудження цікавості, єдина мета якої—імпульсувати та інтенсифікувати знов таки ті ж емоції ...” Skrypnyk, “Teatr,” 45–46; emphasis in the original.
orchestra starts playing an overture, the commentary characterizes the “mission” of the theatre music in the following terms: “to create a cheerful, jolly mood, to raise the tone of life, to convert pessimists into optimists, to restore the energy of those who have been tired by senseless work or, even, by idleness … Oh, the mighty, beneficent influence of art! During the entire prologue you will be convinced of its might many times.”

It is not coincidental that the kitschy performance of an operetta is chosen as a representative form of bourgeois decaying art. Skrypnyk especially singles out opera as an ultimate a-social art; irrational and sensational, it stands in contrast to the functional art “leftists” were constructing. Moreover, Skrypnyk believes that opera has always appealed especially to the aristocracy and to the intelligentsia, “the aristocracy of the spirit.” His novel shows this art as a distorted version of a classical opera, or of “highbrow” art. It is devalued by bourgeois society and transformed into a second-rate kitschy form.

The scene titled “Divine diva” (“Божественна діва”) introduces the setting and performer of the operetta: “Stage decorations resemble in style the ‘backgrounds’ of provincial photographers. Leaning nicely with her wide posterior against cardboard ruins and with one foot coquettishly placed on the piece of Ionic column made from papier-mâché—this is a divine diva onstage.” Both the performer and the setting of the operetta are shown as caricatures. The diva plays her role in a flirty way. The camera specifically reveals the artifice of theatre, focusing on

74 “Утворювати бальорій, веселий настрій, підвищувати тонус життя, перетворювати пессимістів на оптимістів, повертали сили тим, що втомулися від безглуздої роботи чи навіть, від байдужування … О, могутній, благотворний вплив мистецтва! Протягом усього прологу ви переконуватиметеся цієї могутності не раз.” Intelihent, 10.

75 See Skrypnyk, “Teatr,” 46.

76 “Опера завжди була аристократичною. Спочатку вона трималась на аристократії титулованій, потім на аристократії банкового рахунку, врешті на ‘аристократії духу’—на інтелігенції.” Skrypnyk, “Teatr,” 47.

77 “Декорації сцени своїм стилем подібні до ‘фонів’ провінційних фотографів. Файно спираючись широким сідалищем на картонні руїни й кокетливо поставивши одну ніжку на шматок іонійської колони з пап’є-маше, на сцені—божественна діва.” Intelihent, 10.
fake details imitating classical architecture, while the background and stage décor are constructed of cheap materials like cardboard and papier-mâché.

The performance, the decorations, and the singer thus all become signs of degradation in bourgeois society. In the following scene of a performance by the diva, the film portrays the vulgar-looking, overweight singer in a grotesque way; she is as inauthentic and ridiculous as the decorations:

Діва має тіла в зайвій кількості. Діва співає. Запливлими й безбожно окресленими чорною і синьою фарбами чарівними очима вона намагається кидати в публіку стріли й блискавки коетування й грайливості. Іноді, з невідомих причин, діва задьористо здригує однією ногою, а потім пристукує другою. Від цього численні округлості чарівного дивного тіла тримтять і дрижать, як вершковий крем.

The diva possesses a body of excessive amount. The diva is singing. She attempts to shoot at the audience arrows and lightnings of coquettishness and playfulness with her puffy, charming eyes, lined outrageously with black and blue liners. Now and then, for unknown reasons, the diva provocatively shakes one leg and then taps with another. Because of this, the numerous curves of the diva’s charming body tremble and jiggle like whipped cream.

The scene emphasizes the huge gap between the false pretentious details of the performance and what it aspires to be—a classy opera act. Similarly, aspirations of grandeur are characteristic of Intelihent’s behavior throughout the novel. However, the scene clearly shows that the operetta is in no way concerned with artistic quality. It is simply a pretext for cheap thrills and the stimulation of emotional responses from the audience. It is also important to note the intent focus on the physical appearance of the diva. Her body is described as grotesque and deformed, underlining her unhealthy body proportions; she has puffiness even under her eyes; and with absurd gestures she attempts to seduce the audience.

The consumers of this second-rate art piece are portrayed in similarly grotesque way: the audience at the operetta is a physically decaying and idle social group. A tracking shot focuses

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78 Intelihent, 11.

79 Moreover, the film ekphrasis occasionally enlists the purely literary device of simile to complement the visual description.
on individual faces from the audience; each is a certain type of bourgeois intelligentsia, ranging from adolescent students to petit-bourgeois merchants to elderly government officials to aristocrats. Various parts of the theatre illustrate the hierarchical structure of bourgeois society: theatre boxes are occupied by aristocrats or wealthier bourgeois and the cheap seats by petty bureaucrats and poor students. Yet despite differences in social status and material rank, each audience member is portrayed as a caricature through grotesque images exhibiting degrees of moral depravity and physical decay. For instance, a young man sitting in the box is explicitly labeled as a “degenerate”: “a young fop, squeezed into a narrow tailcoat. The edges of a collar cut deeply into his moldering cheeks. Both his forehead and chin recede. A degenerate.”

This overview of the bourgeois audience further illustrates Skrypnyk’s generalization about the degradation of the aristocracy and bourgeois intelligentsia. Their reactions to the performance further prove the point. While focusing on the reaction shots, the commentary sarcastically notes viewers’ individual reactions to the performance, which are in fact all identical in nature. For instance, during a scene titled “In the cheap seats” (“На гальорці”), he presents a clerk and his reaction to the operetta: “A petty, little bureaucrat with a latent hemorrhoid. His countenance is attentive … In a natural response to what he is hearing, his lips have softened and droop with slobber. Parts that are particularly good bring sweet smiles on these lips.” Another audience member there has a similar response to the performance, despite a gaping difference in age: “A youth of about sixteen years old. He looks very uncertain—
without a doubt a highschool student … The young man is looking at the stage greedily, with all
his being.”83 Both the clerk and the student’s physical reactions are identical. Moreover, their
reactions to the diva’s performance illustrate Skrypnyk’s postulate that all bourgeois art only
stimulates primal sexual emotions.84 Skrypnyk’s depiction of a bourgeois operetta audience
within an ekphrasis of a film provides a contrastive foil to the audience of the novel, yet it also
allows the narrator to further blur the lines between the fictional and real audiences, as well as
that between art and reality.

Skrypnyk’s commentary on bourgeois art appears again at the end of part 6, thus
symbolically framing the novel. An episode titled “There is one road in life” (“Дорога в жизни
одна”) is interrupted with the following comment about restaurant music, which further
illustrates the novel’s critical position on bourgeois art:

The restaurant music followed its own path, which was not determined by any revolutions or wars to any
extent. That is a separate, fascinating autonomous universe.
Not so long ago delicate “Chrysanthemums” made the hearts of our parents tender. Not so long ago
beautiful souls were experiencing beautiful Dostoyevskian “anguish.” From such soil wonderful, aromatic
flowers have grown. Flowers of the twentieth century, their aroma reeks of contemporaneity, reeks of the
latest day …

The commentary returns to the same radical ideas expressed earlier in the prologue,
making bourgeois art and forms of mass entertainment equal in influence to social and economic
factors in the twentieth century. Moreover, the popular Russian romance song “Khrizantemy”
(Chrysanthemums) and high literary canon—Dostoyevsky—are bundled together, implying that

83 “Юнак років шістнадцяти. Вигляд дуже непевний,—не інакше, як гімназист. […] Юнак жадібно, всією
істотою, дивиться на сцену.” Intelihent, 12.
84 See Skrypnyk, “Teatr,” 49.
85 Intelihent, 138.
they all have an equally harmful effect in society, producing and shaping a generation of idle, passive bourgeois intelligentsia. The commentary is also remarkable in its repeated application of exalted epithets characterizing bourgeoisie and bourgeois art: “fascinating … universe” (чарівний … світ), “beautiful souls” (прекрасні душі), “beautiful … ‘anguish’” (прекрасні … ‘надриви’), “wonderful … flowers” (чудесні … квіти). Similarly, the diva’s eyes and body in the prologue are repeatedly characterized as “charming” (чарівний). These repeated epithets indicate lack of substance, genuineness, or real value in bourgeois culture underneath its pretentious decorum. Further along in the same comment the narrator argues that low-brow bourgeois culture, ironically defined as “refined culture” (рафінована культура) has no substance but consists only of adornments.86

In contrast, the text of Intelihent rejects emotionality, and its narrative resorts to minimal ornamentation. Its experiment at the construction of an alternative artistic form, its social satire and its distanced ironic narrative perspective appeal to readers’ “rational” perceptions and urge them to reevaluate preconceived notions of the role of literature and culture in society.

**Film Ekphrasis as a Tool of Character Development**

In the preface to the novel the narrator offers a set of explicit instructions inviting his readers to recreate a movie in their imagination.87 He admits that the ekphrastic representation of cinematic images depends upon readers’ ability and willingness to conjure up in their minds concrete images from verbal descriptions. By implication, then, the readers are urged to bring their own experience of film-watching into the reading of literature and, therefore, invited to a

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86 “Сути й зовсім немає: самі оздоби.” *Intelihent*, 139.

87 See *Intelihent*, 7; see also the epigraph to this chapter.
cinematic reading of the text. Supporting these clear instructions on how to read the screened novel, the film ekphrasis evokes cinematic devices to help to relay Intelihent’s life story as if it were unfolding on an imaginary movie screen.

Skrypnyk selects film ekphrasis to tell Intelihent’s story because in part it has no association with traditional fiction. In his article on literature, Skrypnyk argues that because of the fictional core of literary works, consumers do not trust literary authors. Furthermore, in failing to “rationally” impact the reader, literature exemplifies the type of old, a-social art in need of reform.

However, elsewhere Skrypnyk points out that cinema, and especially non-acted cinema, has a contrary effect on the viewer compared to traditional fiction, even though, paradoxically, the footage in such non-acted films may also have been artistically organized and thus altered. As I discussed in chapter 1, cinema can create a more believable illusion of reality than literature. Skrypnyk argues that because of this effect, cinematic scenes and images have a more powerful “documentary and rational” impact on the viewer, one similar to the influence of reality itself.

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88 See Eidsvik, “Demonstrating Film Influence,” 115.
89 “‘Красному письменнику,’ художнику—не вірять. Адже ж художник, як відомо кожному споживачеві, ’вигадує’ свої твори. Навіть коли й не вигадує, то ’художньо відображає’—а це, врешті, все едне. ‘Фантазія’.” “Literatura,” 39; emphasis in the original.
90 Skrypnyk argues: “Отже, [...] переконлива міць фотографії остільки велика, що елемент публіцистичної певності з’являється часто при дуже далекому, навіть, від ідеалу наближені до дійсності.” Skrypnyk, “Mystetstva sotsiial’ni i asotsiial’ni,” 28; emphasis in the original.
91 Skrypnyk ardently praises the powerful impact of so-called “real” or non-fiction film (“реальний фільм”) on the consumer: “Справа в тім, що споживач [...] бачучи крізь, так би мовити, прозору стінку фотографії дійсності—майстерну підробку дійсності цієї підробки помітити не може. Він бачить дійсність. Вплив дійсності—безпосередній, чи через фотографію—є документальний і раціональний.” Skrypnyk, “Mystetstva sotsiial’ni i asotsiial’ni,” 29; emphasis in the original.
For instance, viewers frequently perceive an actor as an actual person (“дійсна людина”), and a film often achieves the weight of *publitsystyka.*

Describing in an article his objectives for the novel *Intelihent,* Skrypnyk compares the language of his novel to that of “dry” and “factual” journalism. Emulating a mechanical camera eye allows him to construct highly visual narrative sequences, while preserving the dispassionate, laconic, and “dry” style of *publitsystyka.* Therefore, in his experimental genre, the screened novel, Skrypnyk approaches the revolutionary task of constructing a functional and “rational” art. He attempts to accomplish these objectives by synthesizing fragments of the old, “deformed” art of literature with both the cinematic and non-fictional (or journalistic) elements of the new art.

**“Aesthetics of Utility, Economy and Convenience”: Laconic Camera-Eye Narration**

In contrast to the individualism and emotionality of traditional literature and arts, Skrypnyk’s novel emphasizes an aesthetics of functionality. This new vision of the function of art corresponded greatly with the overall aesthetics of the journal *Nova generatsiia,* where the novel was first published in serial form. According to art historian Dmytro Horbachov, the main principles influencing *Nova generatsiia*’s graphic design were in line with constructivist aesthetics: “Aesthetics of utility, economy and convenience reigned on the pages of the magazine. It radiated ‘materialism’ and technicism—the categories inscribed on the banner of

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92 “Тоді, зфотографований документально, такий актор сприймається гладачем не як актор, а як дійсна людина. Кіно досягає, таким чином, суто публіцистичної переконливості.” Skrypnyk, “Mystetstva sotsiial’ni i asotsiial’ni,” 28; emphasis in the original.


94 These goals for construction of new meta-art correspond to those proposed in the Futurists’ “Declaration.” See note 68 in chapter 1.
A similar utilitarian aesthetics characterize the novel, including, specifically, Skrypnyk’s choice of film ekphrasis to narrate Intelihent’s story.

In comparison to Ianovs’kyi’s experimental novel, there is a striking difference between Ianovs’kyi’s metaphoric poetic camera-eye narration and the laconic, economical writing of Skrypnyk. His film ekphrasis typifies this type of camera-eye narration, whose terse style characteristically aligns Skrypnyk’s writing with that of other “Nova Generatsiia” writing, such as the non-fictional reportage of Geo Shkurupii, Dmytro Buz’ko or Oleksii Poltorats’kyi.96

Commenting on his use of this style, Skrypnyk outlined the guiding principles of the new “leftist” novel: stylistic economy, brevity, and laconism. These principles, in turn, corresponded to an overall increase in the tempo and terseness of modern life:

Лівий роман мусить бути як-найбагатіший змістовно.
Життя йде скаженим темпом, теж нечуваним і небувалим.
Життя людей стає все більш лаконічне.
Ми вже літаємо літаками, а не їздимо на волах.
Така “дрібниця,” як загальне прийняття скорочень назв установ то-що, дуже показна річ.
І так само “скороченим,” лаконічним, мусить бути лівий роман.97

The leftist novel must be the richest in content.
Life proceeds at a furious speed, also unheard-of and unprecedented.
The life of people is becoming more and more laconic.
Now we fly airplanes, don’t ride oxen.
“Triviality” such as the general acceptance of the abbreviated names of the institutions, etc. is a very remarkable matter.
In a similar way, the leftist novel must also be “abbreviated,” laconic.

Notably, this passage also illustrates the laconic, speedy tempo of Skrypnyk’s non-fiction articles, as he juxtaposes short, simple sentences in a fragmentary style. Each sentence starts a new line, representing a rapid, slightly disjointed flow of thoughts and ideas.

95 “Естетика утилітарності, економії і зручності панувала на сторінках журналу. Від нього віяло ‘речовинністю,’ техніцизмом—категоріями, накресленими на прапорі ‘Нової генерації’.” Horbachov, introduction to Ukrains'kyi avanhard, 10. English translation source: Horbachov, introduction to Ukrains'kyi avanhard, 382.

96 Cf. chapter 1 and the section on the factual genres in Ukrainian literature in the 1920s.

Similarly, the economy of Skrypnyk’s camera-eye narration in *Intelihent* corresponds to the laconism of his non-fiction. The opening lines of the novel illustrate these principles:

Осінь. Вечір. Велике місто.
Мокро. Мжичить. Блищать від вечірніх вогнів тротуари й брук.
Візниковою таратайкою їдуть мужчина й жінка.98

Autumn. Evening. Large city.
It’s wet. It drizzles. The sidewalks and the cobblestone roadway glisten from the evening lights.
A man and a woman are driving in a carriage.

Here the narrator emulates an observing, mechanical camera-eye, one dispassionately presenting purely visual perceptible phenomena. The camera’s dispassionate report is rendered in simple, prosaic, terse and unemotional language, often using nominal sentences, perhaps thus aiming to emulate in print the “flat,” two-dimensional appearance of film. The narrator typically offers no judgment, emotion, or reflection in his narration, reserving such subjective opinions for the film commentary.

Moreover, the narration features a sparing use of stylistic devices, thus closely reflecting the avant-garde aesthetics of economy, “rationalism” and functionalism in art. The functional presentation of material in *Intelihent* may be a direct result of Skrypnyk’s engineering background and constructivist aesthetics. Instead of valuing the purely ornamental quality of the literary elements of a text, he values their functionality. Other Futurists also rejected any embellishment or ornamentation of their prose, arguing that they serve no utilitarian role in a work.99 Thus, Skypnyk severely limits the use of specifically literary devices in his novel, and

98 *Intelihent*, 9.
99 This emphasis on the simplicity and utilitarianism of the artistic form parallels the aesthetic ideals of Soviet constructivists, which placed simplicity and functionality in contrast to bourgeois lavishness and excessive ornamentation: “Показной роскоши буржуазного быта конструктивисты противопоставляли простоту и подчеркнутый утилитаризм новых предметных форм, в чём видели олицетворение демократичности и новых отношений между людьми.” *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 3rd ed., s.v. “konstruktivizm.”
whenever a simile, metaphor, metonymy, or epithet does appear, it is usually to foreground a visual association between two images, as is emphasized in cinematic editing.100

The opening sequence also illustrates how the graphic page layout attempts to mimic the cinematic structuring of a narrative. Each line of the text corresponds to a cut and a new shot.101 Such graphic delineation of cinematic sequences parallels the layout and composition in poetry.102 The scene starts with an establishing shot of the city and the setting, each subsequent line representing a closer shot and gradually closing in on the couple driving in a carriage. The camera offers only essential, brief details, and unlike in traditional prose there are no lengthy introductory descriptions of the landscape, setting or characters.

The film ekphrasis is primarily rendered in the present tense, laconically relaying perceptions of the movie as it unfolds simultaneously, in real time. These nominal sentences, that is, sentences without a verbal predicate, succinctly depict a succession of shots in the film narration without any perceivable action, thus creating an effect of static descriptive narration.103

Besides employing sentences without a verbal predicate, the film narration throughout the novel

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100 Skrypnyk rather contentiously argues that this economy of style characterizes publitsystyka, as well as the “classical” prose: “‘Класична’ проза—найближча до публіцистики по економічності вжитку сутно-мистецьких засобів. Епітетів, метафор, метонімій, контрастів, уподоблень і т. д., і т. д.—в ній найменше.” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 36.

101 Skurupii’s story “Provokator” has a similar layout. See the last section of chapter 1 for my discussion of the story.

102 Notably, Iurii Tynianov emphasized the analogy between organization of semantic units in cinema and poetry: “Кадри в кино не ’развертываются’ в последовательном строе, постепенном порядке—они сменяются. Такова основа монтажа. Они сменяются, как один стих, одно метрическое единство сменяется другим—на точной границе. Кино делает скачки от кадра к кадру, как стих от строки к строке. Как это ни странно, но если проводить аналогию кино со словесными искусствами, то единственной законной аналогией будет аналогия кино не с прозой, а со стихом.” Iurii Tynianov, “Ob osnovakh kino,” in Poetika, istorii literature, kino (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), 338; emphasis in the original (originally published in Poetika kino, ed. B. M. Eikhenbaum [Moskva, 1927]).

103 Like in other Slavic languages, in the Ukrainian language the copula, or auxiliary verb “be” is often omitted in sentences in the present tense.
also frequently employs sentences without a subject, thus fluctuating between sequences of
description and those foregrounding pure action, that is, between stasis and dynamism. 104

**External Characterization**

Overall, the film ekphrasis evokes silent film techniques of Hollywood films (especially comedies and melodramas), as well as Expressionist and Soviet films of the 1920s, all of which were familiar to moviegoers. Specifically, there is a striking parallel between the tools of characterization and the artistic means of expression employed in *Intehient* and those used in Lev Kuleshov’s *Neobyichainye prikliucheniiia mistera Vesta v strane bol’shevikov* (*The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*; 1924). Through a series of comedic episodes, Kuleshov’s film ridicules American misperception of the Bolsheviks, but also self-consciously incorporates details of the style of Western cinema. 105 The means of expression used in Kuleshov’s film and those emulated in Skrypnyk’s novel include “gestural” acting; close-ups on facial expressions; special effects to visualize characters’ dreams and mental states; symbolic details in characters’ costumes; the Kuleshov effect; parallel editing and fast cutting to increase the pace in the scene; as well as the ironic, parodic use of intertitles. 106

**Cinematic Symbolism: “Filmic Conversion of Things into Signs”**

With the goal of constructing economic or laconic narration, Skrypnyk employs various cinematic tools to illustrate abstract ideas. To this end, fragmented visual images of concrete

104 Notably, a similar contrast between background information or the description of states and action corresponds to the juxtaposition of present and past tenses. This effect will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

105 Kuleshov’s artistic method is arguably inspired by American and German films, such as “American silent slapstick, the detective genre, Griffith’s editing technique, and the use of light practiced by the German expressionist filmmakers.” Vlada Petric, “A subtextual reading of Kuleshov’s satire *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924),” *Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash*, edited by Andrew Horton (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 66.

106 See Vlada Petric, “A subtextual reading of Kuleshov’s satire,” 73.
objects, typically presented through close-ups, focus on the expressive details or characteristic features of various objects, which become expressive signs.

As was already noted, *Intelihent*’s characters are uniform and stereotypical: they are repeatedly referred to by common names and not by their individual names. Only the personal names of Intelihent’s wife, Mariia Savyshna, and of her father, Sava Eremiiovych Stoletov, are known. Instead, each character is attributed a “nickname” based on his or her distinguishing or characteristic feature: the governess, the doctor, the general, the civilian or senior student, the handsome student, the soft student, the well-dressed manager, the unshaven manager, etc. These monikers replacing proper names are repeated throughout the novel whenever the character is mentioned.

Mykola Zerov argues that cinematic narration is defined by literary descriptions which consistently focus on one main feature of each character. The use of such repetitive, syntactic constructions for characterization typically results in underdeveloped, static, or stock characters who move through the course of the story without changing their ways. In this sense, similarly to characters of expressionist films, *Intelihent*’s characters “behave as prescribed by their social roles. There are no surprises in this regard, no interesting psychological discoveries.”

107 Similarly, *Maister korablia* also features generalized names for its characters and locales. However, in Ianovs’kyi’s novel these general designations and common names such as Professor, Director, tall film director, or City, film factory veil well-recognized locations and actual artists employed at the Odesa Film Studios. The narrative is packed with numerous details and hints that help to unravel this cinematic roman à clef.

108 Bergson that in a similar way in comedy a proper noun is “speedily swept away, by the very weight of its contents, into the stream of common nouns.” Bergson, *Laughter*, 163.

109 For a discussion of these repeated features and their role in cinematic characterization see M. Zerov’s review of the novel *Soniachna Mashyna* by Volodymyr Vynnychenko. Mykola Zerov, “*Soniachna mashyna*,” 435–56. For my overview of cinematic elements in Vynnychenko’s novel, see the last section of chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Moreover, focusing on typical and general—rather than individual—qualities of a character is instrumental in constructing Intelihent’s wide-ranging satire.\textsuperscript{111} What Bergson notes about comedy equally applies here: “Comedy depicts characters we have already come across and shall meet with again. It takes note of similarities. It aims at placing types before our eyes.”\textsuperscript{112} In this light one can argue that Intelihent represents a \textit{typage}, offering a caricature of bourgeois intelligentsia. Skrypnyk’s satire \textit{aims} to portray such generalities and stock characters, which serve as a metaphor for the bourgeoisie’s inability to change, and as a commentary on the permanence of their vices and lifestyle in the new Soviet society.

On the other hand, cinematic characterization typically offers a schematic, abstract portrayal of an individual.\textsuperscript{113} Rather than aiming for a realistic depiction of the psychological states of various individual characters, then, film ekphrasis (as found in Intelihent) runs in the other direction, focusing on external symbolic details. The protagonist in Intelihent is, according to the narrator, “not alive, but photographed, flat and colourless, silent and, therefore, more than alive.”\textsuperscript{114} Skrypnyk thus turns this seeming limitation of cinematic schematic characterization into a productive device that furthers the aims of his writing. As Formalist scholar Iurii Tynianov argues in his seminal study on cinema, “The ‘poverty’ of cinema, its flatness, its lack of colour—are in fact its constructive essense.”\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{111} Bergson expressed similar observations in regard to targeting generalities in comedy: “because laughter aims at correcting, it is expedient that the correction should reach as great a number of persons as possible. This is the reason comic observation instinctively proceeds to what is general.” Bergson, \textit{Laughter}, 170.

\textsuperscript{112} Bergson, \textit{Laughter}, 163. Moreover, titles of classical comedies are “names of whole classes of people” (i.e., \textit{Le Misanthrope}). Intelihent is an excellent example of such a title as well.

\textsuperscript{113} One critic labeled the title character a “lifeless abstraction” (“Мертва абстрактність”). See L. Starynkevych, review of Intelihent, by Leonid Skrypnyk, \textit{Krytyka} 6 (May 1929): 160.

\textsuperscript{114} Intelihent, 7.

\textsuperscript{115} “Бедность кино, его плоскость, его бесцветность—на самом деле его конструктивная сущность,” Tynianov, “Ob osnovakh kino,” 328. Formalists were concerned about the demise of characteristic language of silent films with the introduction of sound. The title of Roman Jakobson’s article is an indication of this. See Jakobson, “Is the Cinema in Decline?” in \textit{Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions}, ed. Ladislav Matejka and
In essence, Intelihent is an artistic construct; he is transformed into a sign of his class, a condensed idea or a generalized type, rather than represents a specific individual. As with typical cinematic narration, film ekphrasis in Intelihent aims to produce a prototypical bourgeois individual who appears “more than alive.”

Cinematic camera-eye narration thus contributes to the construction of laconic narration by selecting concrete visual images and transforming them into cinematic signs. In his article on cinematic representation, Roman Jakobson points out the propensity of film to describe a person or object by focusing on one of their significant parts; he aptly notes that “Pars pro toto is a fundamental method of filmic conversion of things into signs.” If so, then film produces signs in part by fragmenting a depicted object through a variety of shots (medium-long, medium close-up, or close-up). The close-up especially contributes to cinematic signification.

In Intelihent, both the bourgeois intelligentsia and the proletarians are characterized through a set of stereotypical signs. The former usually have grotesque, deformed bodies and carry or wear attributes of their class (a briefcase, a white collar, pince-nez, or an excessive amount of jewellery), while the latter are represented through symbolic details of their class such as boots, black coats or budenovkas.

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116 Intelihent, 7.
117 Jakobson, “Is the Cinema in Decline?” 146.
118 Ibid.
119 Incidentally, Nahirny also argues that the intelligentsia did not have a firm definition at first: “The first usage of the term [intelligentsia] was loose enough to lump together all people who carried briefcases and distinguished themselves from the populace by their soft white hands and their starched shirts.” Vladimir C. Nahirny, The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), 5.
120 A hat or cap worn by the Russian Red Army in the Civil War as part of their uniform.
Figure 3 Adol’f Strakhov, cover design of Leonid Skrypnyk, *Intelihent* (Kharkiv, Proletaryi, 1929)

The cover design of the 1929 edition highlights such attributes of the intelligentsia: a hat, pince-nez, a suit and a white collar.\(^{121}\) The illustration maintains a simple and laconic aesthetic, constructing an abstract portrait of Intelihent in geometrical shapes and basic colors. The protagonist is schematically depicted as a faceless figure devoid of distinguishing features, which foregrounds his character as typical of his class rather than as a unique individual.\(^{122}\)

\(^{121}\) See Figure 1.

\(^{122}\) This caricatured illustration of Intelihent parallels the abstract, schematic representation of social classes in Soviet 1920s propaganda posters. For instance, *Intelihent’s* portrayal of bourgeois characters resembles Vladimir Mayakovsky’s caricatured depiction of classes in his drawings for the satirical ROSTA windows (propaganda posters for Rossiiskoe telegrafnoe agentstvo, or Russian Telegraph Agency that were typically displayed in windows). Mayakovsky used primary colors and simple schematic drawings to portray generalized types rather than individuals.
The back cover illustration further strengthens the notion that Intelihent remains an unreformed bourgeois only mimicking the appearance of a Soviet citizen. He is portrayed partaking in typical bourgeois activities, i.e., drinking, smoking and dancing in a sexually explicit manner. Notably, the rationalization slogans referring to events from parts 5 and 6 appear upside down here, demonstrating the intelligentsia’s superficial adoption of the new regime’s guidelines.

In the novel itself, Intelihent, his wife, and other intelligentsia are frequently portrayed by their characteristic bourgeois attributes. The scene “In the blessed South” (“На благословенному півдні”) focuses solely on such external details:

Busy street of a large southern city. A large impressive building. On the door—a large impressive sign:

Intelihent is dressing for a soirée. A tailcoat suit.
Intelihent’s wife is dressing for a soirée. A large quantity of jewellery and a décolleté ...
Bolonka (a bichon-type lap dog) is sitting on a pouffe, wagging its little tail ...
At the ball. Décolletés, tailcoats, military uniforms—German, Hetman state, Russian. —It is merry.

This passage is characteristic in the novel, as it succinctly communicates certain ideas through a series of shots of various lengths. Since material possessions and social standing are extremely important to the identity and value system of the bourgeoisie, a series of shots focuses on signs of the couple’s status. A medium-long shot shows their large house, close-up shots

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123 Intelihent, 102.
show expensive clothes and jewellery, and the door sign and bolonka (which was traditional for the bourgeoisie) represent their wealth. Moreover, repetitions of the same objects-signs at the ball portray the bourgeois intelligentsia in toto as uniform without individuality.

As generalized as the aristocratic, bourgeois characters may be, the proletariat are portrayed in no greater individual detail. Rather, this new political power is also symbolically represented through cinematic signs; in particular, they are repeatedly reduced to abstraction by being depicted through close-ups.¹²⁴ For instance, the extreme close-up of marching boots (“Enormous boots enter the frame”) signifies the de-individualized masses that overthrew Nicholas II and the aristocracy.¹²⁵ The fragmentation of the human body through a close-up shot transforms the boots into a trope, a cinematic sign.¹²⁶ They stand in as a symbol for a group of Red Army soldiers; later in the sequence their marching step represents the violent, unstoppable and advancing force of the Bolsheviks.

The image of the violent, de-individualized force of the new regime is also constructed in an artfully executed and eerie scene of the Bolsheviks’ arrival:

Двері товарного вагону з величезною пломбою. На дверях напис крейдою: “Nach Russland”—до Росії.
Двері зникають. За дверима шерега замаскованих незнайомців, одягнених в чорні плащі з відбійками. Руки всім схрищени на грудях. На їхніх плащах, як на сандвічах, уздовж усього шерегу напис: “бо-ль-ше-ви-ки” …
Інтелігент обурюється.¹²⁷

The door of the cargo wagon with an enormous seal. An inscription in chalk on the door: “Nach Russland”—to Russia.
The door fades away. Behind the door a line of masked strangers, dressed in black coats with cowls. Everyone’s arms are crossed at the chest. The inscription on their coats, like on sandwiches, along the entire line [reads]: “bo-l-she-vi-ks” …
Intelihent fumes.

¹²⁴ Tynianov also demonstrated that objects of empirical reality transform into “artistic material” and signs in cinema (“видимая вещь заменяется вещью искусства”). Tynianov, “Ob osnovakh kino,” 332.
¹²⁵ “Величезні чоботи входять у кадр.” Intelihent, 80.
¹²⁶ The use of a close-up shot here corresponds to the function of a synecdoche in literature, which names a part of something to refer to the whole, or vice versa.
¹²⁷ Intelihent, 83.
First, shots of the train appear, which are then replaced with a medium-length shot of masked strangers. The line of faceless men is followed by a medium close-up shot of their black coats and crossed arms. Finally, the camera focuses on an inscription on their coats reading “Bo-l-she-viks,” which reveals the identity of the strangers. By gradually focusing on the details of the Bolsheviks’ appearance, the film sequence reveals narrative information and creates an ominous effect that builds dramatic tension. There is no perceivable movement in these static images, yet intercutting between shots of different camera angles creates dynamism in the scene. The Bolsheviks are portrayed as a force to be reckoned with, despite not being completely comprehended by the intelligentsia.

Kuleshov famously demonstrated that a combination of disconnected shots produces new meanings and associations. Illustrating the Kuleshov effect, these shots of the Bolsheviks are intercut with shots of outraged and scared intelligentsia, creating the impression that Intelihent and his friends are aware of, or even personally witness, the Bolsheviks’ arrival, even though the shots are clearly disconnected in space and, possibly, time. Furthermore, no concrete information is offered regarding whether the trains arrive in Ukraine or elsewhere in the former Russian empire. The narrative rather creates a concrete cinematic sequence that represents an abstract idea—the ubiquitous spread of Bolshevism.

These cinematic signs portray the Bolsheviks as a collective force. Moreover, presenting the strong force that overthrows representatives of the aristocracy as a rhythmic march of revolutionaries versus specific individuals symbolizes the power and unity of the proletariat,

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and their singular passion for a common idea. In line with Soviet ideology, the novel presents the proletariat, crowd, or masses as a collective agent who actively participates in history, in contrast to those in Intelihent’s circle.

**Expressive Close-Up: The Focus on Characters’ Reactions**

The dynamic force of the nameless, aggressive masses is constantly contrasted with the passivity of the individualistic, materialistic, and conformist intelligentsia. The novel satirizes the protagonist in particular and, with him, the entire bourgeois intelligentsia as weak, idle and uniform. In close-up shots and shots focused on characters’ reactions, Skrypnyk found tools for foregrounding these bourgeois qualities.

Even though literature is more equipped than film to render characters’ inner processes, memories, imagination or thinking, film has developed tools to dramatize these elements through concrete images of phenomena visible to a human eye or mechanical camera. Film narrative requires the audience to infer characters’ motivations and mental states from visual information. This practice in some instances encouraged novelists “to aspire to the visual presence of film, to attempt to abandon concepts for percepts, telling for showing.” Skrypnyk’s screened novel emulates a cinematic means of external characterization by communicating its characters’ internal states through their actions, gestures and facial expressions.

In particular, the screened film conveys Intelihent’s subjective states and perceptions through point-of-view shots. For instance, the brothel interior is shaking and doubles as Intelihent’s perception is gradually affected by alcohol. Or again, point-of-view shots

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129 Furthermore, the commentary reinforces this significance of the image of marching people for the Bolshevik symbolism: “Ви чуєте мірний крок? Спільний крок, міцніший кроку ’в ногу,’—ним керує ритм душ. Раз! Два!” Intelihent, 80.


131 See Intelihent, 51 and 52–53.
dramatize Intelihent’s state when the look of the street changes as a result of his skewed perception: “A bright sunny day. A busy, joyous street. Intelihent is leaving the institution with a briefcase under his arm. He stopped and slowly, sullenly gazed around … The sunny summer day darkened. The street, crowded with sullen people that hardly walk, grew quiet and sullen …”  

In the above sequence, conventional for films of the continuity editing system, the narration cuts to point-of-view shots offering Intelihent’s subjective perspective after portraying him looking around the street. The film narration contrasts the establishing shot of a busy, sunny day in the city with Intelihent’s point-of-view shots, effecting a transformation of the outside world under the influence of Intelihent’s depressed and sullen mood. The series of transformations are appropriately rendered in the past tense to indicate this dynamic, dramatic change (“day darkened”; “street … grew quiet”). Moreover, the language of the ekphrasis repetitively characterizes the details of outside world with the epithet “sullen” (“похмурий”), demonstrating the encompassing range of Intelihent’s depression.

Because the purpose of Intelihent is to satirize the bourgeois lifestyle and its values in the new Soviet state, the film narration predominantly describes bourgeois characters. Most scenes focus on the gestures and expressions of these characters during interactions with one another. In particular, the film narration employs expressive close-up shots of characters’ reactions that emphasize their bourgeois values and mechanical responses to a variety of events and situations.

For instance, scenes of Intelihent’s childhood and youth serve to illustrate the effects of his upbringing and education on his adult personality. The scenes often present interactions
between his parents, his teachers, and his older, more experienced friends, with emphasis on their impact on Intelihent. The opening scene of the episode titled “Intelihent’s childhood” (‘Інтелігентове дитинство”) presents a family at the dinner table in Intelihent’s home:

Інтелігентові років чотири. Хоробливий, худорлявий, золотушний хлопчик. Сидить за столом на високому стільнику й бовтає ложкою в супі. Мати умовляє його їсти. Обличчя Інтелігентове сконцентровано-байдуже. Мати улещує.133

Intelihent is around four years old. A sickly, thin, scrofulous boy. He is sitting at the table in a high chair and stirring his soup with a spoon. The mother is begging him to eat.

Intelihent’s face is concentrated and indifferent. The mother is coaxing.

Here Skrypnyk constructs a typical silent pantomime, consistently employing external cinematic signs in a “behaviorist style of narration.”134 The scene starts with an establishing shot, a brief exposition presenting the conflict—Intelihent refuses to eat his meal. Intelihent’s gestures show boredom, and he reacts with indifference in response to his mother’s requests to eat. The description of Intelihent’s indifference remains static and is repeated three times in the scene, to demonstrate that he is unaffected by his mother’s cajoling.

In a manner typical of the novel, the focus on Intelihent’s facial expression in this scene serves in developing his character. The novel often intercuts shots of action or dramatic conflict with reaction shots of people witnessing the scene. These shots are predominately described through close-ups, thus making the close-up an important tool for dramatizing a character’s perception of a situation. In silent film, the close-up allowed filmmakers to achieve high dramatic tension by highlighting a character’s face, the most animated and expressive part of the human body.135 In Intelihent, the close-up reflects the response of characters to other characters’

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133 Intelihent, 26.

134 David Bordwell defines the “behaviorist style” in the following way: it exposes the film characters “only ‘behaviourally’ through their words, gestures, expressions, routines and decisions.” Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 53–54.

135 To this effect, Barbara Wyllie argues that the close-up shot of the face is “the most expressive vehicle of communication in silent film.” Barbara Wyllie, Nabokov at the Movies: Film Perspectives in Fiction (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003), 13.
actions or speech, and it also conveys characters’ mood, emotions and reactions to various events.

Returning to the table scene, after the initial sequence a clash is shown between two contrasting perspectives on parenting—that of the mother and that of the father. It is once again constructed through juxtaposed shots of the parents’ gestures and reactions: “The father stopped eating. He is observing events, clearly not approving of it. He starts getting irritated … The mother noticed and is making an attempt to begin to talk to the child in a serious tone. Intelihent’s face, concentrated and indifferent, suddenly turns sour. Intelihent drops the spoon and sulks his eyes.”

This slightly escalated dramatic confrontation between the parents is signaled by shots of the mother and the father observing the situation and reacting to each other’s actions, which also draws a change in Intelihent’s reaction. His facial expression becomes downcast when his father interferes disapprovingly.

The scene then turns into an open emotional confrontation, a passionate argument between the parents leading to a dramatic ending:

The father jumped up and resolutely approached the son, he categorically orders him to eat. Intelihent cast a glance at the mother. The mother cast a glance at the father—the lightning-glance, the glance of an angered lioness.

Intelihent started bawling. […] The father grabbed Intelihent under his armpits and drew him from the table. Intelihent is screaming, kicking. The tigress mother dashed headlong to help.


137 Intelihent, 27.
The father hurled the darling son onto the ottoman. The darling son is thrashing his arms and legs, screaming hysterically. The mother furiously pressures the father. The father obstinately upholds his position. Boisterous gesticulation. A geyser of words … A governess, who is sitting at the table, a hopelessly dry miss, slowly shrugs her sharp shoulders, rolls her eyes and sighs in a well-mannered—European way.

The episode, which is exemplary for the novel, creates a lively and relatable scene by its use of tenses. Similar to *Maister korablia*, the alternation of tenses is a tool to achieve more dynamic narration in *Intelihent*. Moreover, as the majority of *Intelihent* is narrated in the present tense (imperfective aspect), the switch to the past perfective tense creates the effect of closing in on a significant action or an important change in the scene.

For instance, the establishing shots of this episode, which convey background information, are rendered in the present tense, while a switch to the past tense signals the father’s decisive action, following his irritation. Notably, the shift from present to past perfective happens abruptly, often within the same sentence, indicating a change in state for Intelihent and the mother (he starts whining and screaming and the mother defends him), while the present imperfective tense describes static passive states, such as Intelihent’s indifferent expression and his mother’s ineffective coaxing. The past perfective tense also denotes a fast-changing sequence of actions escalating the dramatic conflict after the father’s decisive acts.

The mother’s primal, emotional approach to parenting is contrasted with the father’s strictness. Again the camera focuses on Intelihent’s reactions to show that neither approach has any effect on the boy. And contrasting both of their animated emotional exchanges, the episode ends with a cut-away shot of Intelihent’s European governess, who is *not* being affected by the situation. It is, in fact, the only shot of the governess in the novel. Further on, with her indifferent, blasé reaction, the governess serves as a foil in other dramatic situations.

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138 See note 119 in chapter 1, specifically, Manning’s comment about the effect of the shift between the present and past tenses on the liveliness and lifelikeness of narration.
Puppets and Automatons: Mechanical Characteristics of Bourgeoisie

Throughout the novel, the repetition of characters’ gestures or facial expressions consistently marks their automatic, unnatural response to situations. The tool serves to emphasize the mechanical features of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Most importantly, the repetition of characters’ gestures and movements becomes a powerful metaphor likening them to automatons, which is instrumental in creating a satire of the bourgeoisie.

For example, the governess’s repetitive gestures of cold indifference, but also annoyance with Inteliherent and his family (shrugging her shoulders, rolling her eyes and sighing), come at the end of each of three unique dramatic scenes from Inteliherent’s childhood. Her reactions are identical in each case, making her resemble, if what is alive resists repetition, an inanimate mechanism.

Moreover, intercutting between the repetitive gestures or expressions of a character and shots of inanimate objects allows Skrypnyk to establish a parallelism between characters and lifeless automatons. Notably, the episode portraying Inteliherent’s birth in part 1 is constructed in such a manner. The following passage describes the beginning of labor:

Години йдуть за годинами. Маятник мірно й спокійно лічить секунди життя. Голова матері, мов у корчах кидається на подушках в нестерпних муках. Обличчя лікаря професійно-спокійне. Постать батька невпинно бігає по сусідній кімнаті …

The hours pass. The pendulum counts the seconds of life rhythmically and calmly. The mother’s head moves as if in convulsions on the pillows in unbearable pain. The doctor’s face is professionally calm. The father’s figure is running incessantly around the adjacent room …

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139 See the above example. In another scene she repeats the same series of gestures: “Гувернантка поволі підводить сухі, колючі плечі, закочує очі під лоба і виховано—по-европейському—зідхає …” Inteliherent, 28. See also Inteliherent, 30.

140 Inteliherent, 19.
The remainder of the episode follows roughly the same pattern, with each scene repeating the above series of shots, only slightly reorganizing the order of the constituents. This rhythmic repetition, alongside shots of a swinging clock pendulum, visualize the passage of time and set a tone of anticipation and waiting accompanying the mother’s labor.

Moreover, this sequence is again structured on the contrast between stillness and movement. A shot of a “peaceful” clock and a close-up of the doctor’s professional, calm and indifferent expression starkly contrast with an expressive close-up shot of the woman’s head moving in agony and a medium shot of the father’s erratic movements. The medium shot of the father’s silhouette, pacing in the adjacent room, indicates his inability to comprehend the situation or to alleviate his wife’s suffering.

As was shown earlier, each new line denotes a cut, and the juxtaposition of these shots constructs associations and meanings not present in the individual shots themselves. The repeated intercutting between shots of a peaceful clock and close-ups of the doctor’s calm face, for instance, suggests an affinity between the doctor and the clock—an inanimate object. In particular, amid the woman’s complicated labor, an analogy is made between the doctor’s calm, mechanical reaction to her suffering and the calm indifference of a clock. The analogy is reinforced by repetitions of the adverbs “peacefully,” “calmly” (мирно, спокійно), and also “indifferently” (байдуже), which are all used to describe the clock as it counts time and the expression on the doctor’s face. Further in the episode, when the mother’s labor is not progressing well, the episode cuts away to a shot of the doctor’s assistant, a medical attendant, whose face likewise shows neither concern nor emotion (“Her face is tired, but indifferent”). Finally, the narrator’s commentary characterizes the professional, habitual perception of birth by

141 “її обличчя стомлене, але байдуже.” Intelihent, 20.
the doctor and his assistant as cool and dispassionate, as they have both attended numerous births and no longer see any mystery in the “act of childbirth.”

Intertitles for the scenes are also repeated in a rhythmic pattern, signaling a parallelism between these different parts, while also a disparity between everyone’s experiences. The title “Mother’s pains …” (Муки матері …) is contrasted with the titles “Father’s pains” (Муки батька), “Doctor’s pains” (Муки лікаря), and “Newborn’s pains” (Муки народженого). Repeated intertitles distinguish the meaning of suffering for each participant in each scene. For instance, the title “Doctor’s pains” ironically exposes the doctor’s vanity, as the cause of his suffering is his concern for his professional credibility when the labor takes too long. This type of suffering is satirized compared to the mother’s very real, physical pain. Therefore, the parallelism between the doctor and the clock, the mechanical repetition of his learned professional reaction, and the rhythmic repetition of the titles altogether construct a powerful metaphor satirizing the lifeless, machine-like features of the bourgeoisie.

**The Mechanization of Intelihent**

Similarly to the governess and to the doctor, many other members of the intelligentsia in the novel, such as Intelihent’s teachers and professors, are also portrayed as lifeless automatons, the effect again being accomplished through a repetition of their mechanical gestures or static, lifeless expressions. In other words, the idea is that a certain cyclicality and mechanization of life produces bourgeois intelligentsia characters like Intelihent. In this regard, part 2 describes Intelihent’s university professor as follows:

Професор на катедрі не звертає на нього жодної уваги.

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142 “Багато разів уже бачив цей пузатий дітній мужчина з’явлення нового життя. Давно вже це з’явлення згубило для нього всякий елемент значності. ‘Акт дітонародження’—що може бути звичайнішого?” *Intelihent*, 18.
The professor at the podium pays absolutely no attention to him. The professor is old, dry, nearsighted, and, probably deaf. He is not reading, but mutters like an automaton. Like the governess and the doctor, the professor shows indifference to his students and disinterest in his work. Moreover, here the narrator explicitly compares him to an automaton. Further in the episode, a repeated shot of the muttering professor is intercut with shots of bored students and sleepy Intelihent, most of them somnolent as a result of his lecture.

Skrypnyk also uses film devices to contrast these mechanically repeated gestures and expressions with natural life, which he presents as spontaneous, unordered and chaotic. For instance, young Intelihent’s reaction to the above-mentioned university lecture is instructive, especially in view of the transformation he undergoes upon reaching adulthood. Unable to endure the senseless lecture, he silently leaves the classroom: “Intelihent is in the hall, he stretched, shook his head a little, fighting off sleep, took a deep breath and walked off with a jaunty, breezy step …” The scene presents a natural, healthy response to the situation, as opposed to that of a mechanical automaton.

In essence, the overall film narrative shows how, throughout his youth, Intelihent endures a series of educational moments (of lifeless bourgeois education) on account of which he gradually loses his spontaneity and humanity, and is transformed into a mechanical automaton. For instance, another scene from his childhood, titled “Street children” (“Вуличні діти”), shows children’s joy playing in puddles after the rain: “The splashes are flying, sparkling, shining in the

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143 *Intelihent*, 41.

144 Bergson notes: “The truth is that a really living life should never repeat itself. Wherever there is repetition or complete similarity, we always suspect some mechanism at work behind the living.” Bergson, *Laughter*, 34.

145 “Інтелігент у коридорі, потягнувшись, помотав головою, відганяючи сон, зіхнув повними грудьма і бальорим, свіжим кроком пішов …” *Intelihent*, 41.
sun … Exuberant joy on children’s faces … Their eyes are sparkling, shining like splashes.”

This passage illustrates again the classic use of editing to construct a metaphor, suggesting an association between consecutive shots. The children’s’ happy state is communicated by juxtaposing shots of sparkling splashes of water with shots of their faces. The last sentence of the episode also foregrounds this likeness through a simile. Later in the episode, the same sequence is repeated and intercut with shots of the hovering mother, who together with the servants and the governess abruptly remove Intelihent from the puddles, and from the fun and joy of childhood.

Another example shows Intelihent a bit older but still possessed of his humanity and compassion. When a youthful Intelihent first visits a brothel, his reaction to a certain scene shows a contrast between his perception of the new situation and his friends’ accustomed response. The scene presents an inebriated young student beating a prostitute at the next table. Impressing the reader with its absurdity, ugliness and grotesque details, the fight causes an anxious and uneasy reaction in Intelihent. Yet a close-up, focusing on Intelihent’s emotional reaction to the scene, is contrasted with the expressions of his companions, a handsome student and a soft student: “Something extraneous caught Intelihent’s attention. Tearing himself away from his appetizers he looks sideways with certain uneasiness. The handsome one is looking with a smile. The soft-as-wax one glanced and immediately returned again to the appetizers ...” These more experienced patrons are unimpressed by the fight and act indifferently toward

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146 “Бризки летять, блищать, сяють на сонці … На обличчях дітям—вакхічна радість … Їм очі блищать, сяють, як бризки.” Intelihent, 29.

147 “Щось стороннє звернуло на себе увагу Інтелігента. Відірвавшися від закуски, він дивиться вбік з певною тривогою. Красивий дивиться з посмішкою. М’який, як віск, глянув і зараз же знову повернувся до закуски ...” Intelihent, 50.
it. The handsome student’s reaction shows that the experience is habitual for him, as he is even mildly amused.

The example portrays Intelihent as a naïve but still ethical and compassionate human being, one able to gauge and react to the situation naturally. Similarly, as a child he was able to find joy in simple activities, and as a student he refused to participate mechanically in numbing, boring lectures. The rest of the novel, however, steadily progresses towards the complete annihilation of Intelihent’s humanity and his eventual transformation into a bureaucratic machine. In contrast to scenes portraying Intelihent’s natural response to events in his childhood and youth, the novel’s later scenes show an adult Intelihent more accustomed to the bourgeois mechanization of life.

The rationalization of work processes, which the adult Intelihent comes to ardently endorse, illustrates this mechanization. Bergson aptly notes that a bureaucratic official reaches “complete automatism,” for he “performs his duty like a mere machine.” The opening scene of part 5 presents a meeting at the bureau of rationalization that shows Intelihent’s transformation into a zealous bureaucrat:

Intelihent is listening with a business-like attentive expression. He makes frequent notes in his notepad … The presenter presents … The listeners grow numb … Intelihent is unwaveringly attentive. The avalanche of materials stops in an instant. At first no one understands that the presentation is finished. Intelihent is applauding. The listeners wake up more or less suddenly. They join Intelihent.

149 Intelihent, 106–7.
The presenter bows awkwardly and indifferently, and again, pays no attention to the audience.

The episode intercuts between shots of the speaker, the audience and Intelihent, showing their respective reactions to a boring presentation. The reaction of the audience contrasts greatly with a close-up showing Intelihent’s focused expression. Some in the audience have natural, sleepy expressions, and even the speaker is portrayed as disinterested, yet Intelihent’s enthusiastic response shows his transformation into a bureaucratic machine.

“Live Puppets on Screen”: Puppet Performance in the Novel

Most importantly, the novel establishes a strong parallel between the automated bourgeoisie and puppets. The protagonist’s “lack of elasticity,” as exemplified in the episode above, is a reason for laughter and therefore at the core of Intelihent’s satire.\(^{150}\) His rigid automatism keeps him from reacting like a living, adaptive human being; instead we “see a man as a jointed puppet.”\(^{151}\) The image of a human as a puppet stands alongside the mechanical repetition of characters’ expressions and gestures, and the parallelism drawn between characters and objects; all these devices contribute to the novel’s satire.

The puppet theatre \textit{vertep}, popular in Ukraine since the seventeenth century, presents religious nativity plays with satirical and comic \textit{intermediia} (interlude). Interest in this form of popular theatre resurfaced in the 1920s. The fascination with \textit{vertep} was reflected in Ukrainian modernist prose, poetry and drama, for instance, in Arkadii Liubchenko’s story (повість) “Vertep” (1929) and in Mykola Kulish’s drama \textit{Patetychna sonata} (Sonata pathétique; 1929). \textit{Intermediia} was revived as a genre in the journal \textit{Literaturnyi iarmarok}.\(^{152}\) And a decade earlier

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\(^{150}\) Bergson, \textit{Laughter}, 9.

\(^{151}\) Bergson, \textit{Laughter}, 30.

Les’ Kurbas recreated *vertep* in his play *Rizdvianyi vertep* (Christmas *vertep*; 1919). His actors were directed to imitate the mechanical speech and motions of puppets.  

At its core, Ukrainian *vertep* is a form of mystery or morality play. It is related to the Russian *balagan* and to the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, both of which centre on puppets as stock characters in a predefined set of stories. Ukrainian artists argued for the need to revitalize *vertep* performance in the Soviet era, especially as a propaganda tool. Les’ Kurbas, for instance, praised the satirical and propagandistic role of a *vertep* performed in 1923 in Kyiv and Mezhyhir’ia by the students of the Mezhyhir’ia College of Ceramic Art (Межигірський художньо-керамічний технікум). Their satire of religious superstitions and caricatured presentation of contemporary events in capitalist countries met with immense success with audiences in both cities. Kurbas’ contemporary, Iurii Smolych, similarly argued that because of its topical, polemical orientation, the revamped *vertep* should play a role in Ukrainian villages, serving as a “live newspaper, a forerunner of a new theatre and cinema.”

Puppets, masks, marionettes and mannequins also held appeal for modernist artists outside Ukraine. Particularly, puppets attracted artists for their capacity to subvert the

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conventions of representational theatre.\textsuperscript{157} Blok’s play *Balaganchik* (The fairground booth; 1906) references the Russian *balagan* tradition (a form of popular theatre performed at a fairground booth or *balagan*). Similar to the characters in *Intelihent*, the characters in Blok’s play “like the masks of pantomime, are universal, that is, they cannot be associated with the actors who play them.”\textsuperscript{158}

Yet the most striking parallel to *Intelihent*’s puppet-like characters is Leonid Andreev’s turn-of-the-century play, titled *Zhizn’ cheloveka* (The life of man; 1906), which also presents its bourgeois characters as puppets or marionettes.\textsuperscript{159} As the title suggests, *Zhizn’ cheloveka* follows the life story of its protagonist, Man, with each part focusing on a specific period of Man’s life cycle from birth to death. Incidentally the title character also possesses a generic name reminiscent of the “bourgeois everyman.”\textsuperscript{160} Yet unlike Andreev’s play, Skrypnyk’s story is structured in a cyclical manner, ending not with the protagonist’s death but the birth of his son. The repetition of details concerning the son’s births suggest that he is to become yet another bourgeois everyman.

Most importantly, in both *Zhizn’ cheloveka* and *Intelihent*, the puppetization of characters is used as a device to construct satire of the bourgeoisie. The association with puppets produces an overarching metaphor for the bourgeois intelligentsia, signifying their conformism and

\textsuperscript{157} See Kelly, *Petrushka*, 171.

\textsuperscript{158} Kelly, *Petrushka*, 151. The similarity between *Balaganchik* and *Intelihent* transcends their treatment of characters as masks or puppets; both works feature as a figure an explicit commentator, referred to as “Author.” Through this metafictional commentary both *Balaganchik* and *Intelihent* reveal their artifice, i.e., acknowledge that all characters and events in their stories are fictional creations.


\textsuperscript{160} Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 238.
pliability, their helplessness and lack of agency.\(^{161}\) In a way, the characters in *Intelihent*, like Andreev’s characters, are “helpless figures controlled by the strings of the bourgeois way of life and by destiny.”\(^{162}\) Materialism, along with other superficial values of the bourgeois lifestyle, controls the lives of the characters in both works.\(^{163}\)

For instance, in the episode “They arrived …” (Прийшли …) in part 3 of *Intelihent*, members of Intelihent’s “Hromada” (Society) are overthrown by the revolutionaries (“The general falls over like a puppet …”).\(^{164}\) Each member is explicitly compared to a puppet, and the “Hromada” itself represents a range of bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The sequence is constructed in a rhythmic pattern, each line followed with identically repeated sequence focusing on different characters. For instance, the shot of the general falling over is followed with shots describing other members of the “Hromada,” i.e., a distinguished lady (“поважна дама”), a distinguished civilian (“поважний цивільний”), and distinguished relics (“поважні мощі”), also falling.\(^{165}\)

To reinforce the puppet-like presentation of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, the film actually incorporates scenes from a puppet play performance.\(^{166}\) The puppets represent either

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\(^{161}\) Similarly, by comparing a man to a marionette, the Symbolists made parallels between “the helplessness of the puppet and the helplessness of the human being.” Kelly, *Petrushka*, 171. Segel carries this point even further by arguing that the Symbolists’ interest in puppets and marionettes was consonant with the overall sensibilities of the turn of the century: “the puppet figure became the perfect embodiment of the turn-of-the-century metaphysical outlook that saw humans as tragically helpless playthings of Fate, of occult, supernatural powers that they had no more ability to control than a marionette the strings or wires animating it.” Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 235.

\(^{162}\) Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 239. Segel also astutely notes here that “Andreev’s conception of his characters is typical of the modernist metaphoric use of the puppet and marionette.”


\(^{164}\) “Генерал перекидається, як лялька …” *Intelihent*, 80.

\(^{165}\) The embodiment of the decaying bourgeoisie is the character of the chairwoman of the “Hromada,” characterized earlier through an oxymoron: “live relics” (“живі мощі”). *Intelihent*, 67.

various classes or abstract ideas. Employing elements of a puppet play in Skrypnyk’s experimental narrative is unique, considering that puppets were not typically found in early silent films. Even though the revitalization of the puppet play form was popular in the avant-garde theatre tradition, use of marionettes or puppets in film was not prevalent. In particular, puppet figures are introduced in a scene announcing the onset of WWI:

На екрані—живі ляльки. Мішок, одягнений у фрак із написом на пузі—1,000,000,000, з ніжками, ручками й головою в німецькій касці, сильна насідає на дві інші такі самі ляльки: французьку—з півнем і англійську—в циліндрі зі смугастою англійскою стрічкою … Віддаля стоїть ще одна лялька … Німецька лялька примушує худнути обидві ляльки. Сама вона при цьому пухне.

Live puppets on screen. A sack dressed in a tail-coat with an inscription on the belly—1,000,000,000, with tiny legs, tiny arms and a head wearing a German helmet vigorously pressures the other two similar puppets: a French one—with a rooster and an English—wearing a top hat with striped English ribbon … In the distance another puppet is standing … The German puppet forces both puppets to become thinner. It swells at the same time.

Puppet play offers concrete imagery for the representation of historic events. With a few concentrated puppet pantomime scenes, Skrypnyk finds an economical device for representing grand and tumultuous events. He also employs them for their highly expressive power. Notably, the puppets are portrayed in a non-naturalistic way, as shapeless sacks adorned with symbolic details that characterize them as German, French and English powers.

On the other hand, the puppets stand for the aristocracy, the ruling powers and the bourgeois elites of the defunct world order. Portraying once powerful leaders of empires as

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167 Segel describes two instances of producing puppets specifically for film. In 1924, Fernand Léger used a marionette of Charlie Chaplin for his film *Ballet Mécanique*. See Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 247. And two years later, in 1926 Alexandra Exter designed and created a set of marionettes for a film by a Danish film-maker Peter Urban Gad (however, the film was never realized). See Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 245. Incidentally, Exter’s marionettes were influenced by Constructivist aesthetics; they are “geometric in shape and appear most like constructions of boldly colored cubes and cylinders.” Segel, *Pinocchio’s Progeny*, 249. Puppets were also used to a great effect in early stop-motion animation, for example, in the innovative works of Vladislav Starevich. In this context, however, puppets were employed to appear as living beings (actors), in contrast to avant-garde works that underscored and laid bare their marionette nature.

168 *Inteliherent*, 68.

169 Bogatyrev praised the tendency in Czech puppet theatre to reject naturalistic presentation, which, he argued, contributed to its higher expressiveness (“выразительность”). Highly stylized and non-naturalistic in their appearance and gestures, these puppets became pronouncedly more expressive than human actors or naturalistic puppets. See Petr Bogatyrev, *Cheshskii kukol’nyi teatr i russkii narodnyi teatr* (St. Petersburg: Opoiaz, 1923), 18.
imobile puppets symbolizes their loss of power and agency in the world. This concept is especially foregrounded in the following scene, where Tsar Nicholas II is depicted as a puppet with wires controlling his motions\textsuperscript{170}: “The puppets return dragging behind some very intricate mechanism: small wheels, levers, strings, wires. The mechanism is being set up in the centre. It has an inscription: ‘diplomacy.’ The puppets draw toward it the puppet that was standing aside. This is Nicholas II. They tie strings from the mechanism to his hands, legs and head.”\textsuperscript{171} In addition to puppets representing once-powerful elites, the puppet play also uses an allegorical mechanism as a concrete sign for an abstract idea, diplomacy, as well as concrete details representing national symbols.\textsuperscript{172}

The following puppet play scene from the episode “They arrived …” also portrays the confrontation between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the proletarians, on the other:

Лялька Миколи ввесь час додержується лялькової непорушнoсти ... На вулицях бурхливi маніфестацiї. Над головами мають прапори ... Знову ляльки. Микола, як i ранiш, непорушний. Жандарм метушиться бiля кулемета ... Величезнi чоботи входять у кадр. Летить у бiк жандарм з кулеметом. Далi летить Микола ... Лялька Миколи лежить боком у повному ляльковому спокої ...

[...]

Бурхлива маніфестацiя робiтникiв.\textsuperscript{173}

The puppet of Nicholas always preserves puppet-like immobility … Boisterous street manifestations. Flags flutter over the heads … Puppets again. Nicholas, as earlier, is immobile. Gendarme is fussing by the machinegun … Enormous boots enter the frame. Gendarme and the gun fly aside. Then Nicholas flies …

\textsuperscript{170} Similarly, puppets represent the aristocracy in the staging of a mass festival in Petrograd, titled \textit{Toward the World Commune} (19 June 1920). The spectacle presented the confrontation between the revolutionaries and the Tsar’s forces. Specifically, in the final confrontation the Red Guards defeat a large puppet of Tsar Nicholas II. For discussion of the festival, see David Roberts, \textit{The Total Work of Art in European Modernism}, Signale: Modern German Letters, Cultures, and Thought (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 215.

\textsuperscript{171} “Ляльки повертаються, тягнучи за собою якiсь дуже хитрiй механізм: колiщатка, важiльця, ниточки, дротики. Механізм устанавлюється посерединi. На ньому напис: ‘дипломатiя.’ Ляльки тягнуть до нього ту ляльку, що стояла остеронь. Це Микола II. До рук, нiг i голови його прив’язують ниточки вiд механізму.” \textit{Intelihent}, 69.

\textsuperscript{172} Similarly to allegorical “diplomacy” in \textit{Intelihent}, the morality play \textit{Everyman} uses allegorical characters that personify an idea, such as Fellowship, Kindred, Good Deeds, Knowledge, Goods, etc.

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Intelihent}, 80.
Nicholas’s puppet is lying sideways in complete stillness of a puppet …
[...] Boisterous workers’ rally.

The puppet of Tsar Nicholas II is consistently characterized throughout the sequence as inanimate and immobile. This effect is achieved through repeatedly describing him with the epithet “puppet-like” (ляльковий), which is understood as synonymous with something still, lifeless, and immobile (“додержується лялькової непорушності,” “у повному ляльковому спокої”). The episode is constructed by intercutting between scenes of puppet play and shots of marching workers and revolutionaries, juxtaposing the static immobility of the former with dynamic force of the latter. Framing this episode within repeated shots of demonstrating workers creates a stronger contrast between the puppet play and actual life. Moreover, the scene shows the masses—a crowd of common people—taking the reins of history during the revolution; this presents the proletariat as a collective force, as a true agent in world events.

Further in the same episode, the symbol of rhythmic marching steps overthrowing the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, and the Tsar is contrasted with Intelihent’s similar repetitive motions in his attempt to join the revolutionary forces:

На якомусь перехресті Інтелігент, видравшись на тумбу, в оточенні невеличкої юрби, промовляє. Інтелігент жестикулює, б’є себе в груди ... Проголошує:

“Ми знищили ЦАРАТ!”

[...] Інтелігент із хоробрим і революційним обличчям підходить до ляльки Миколи і революційно перекидає її кінчиком черевика ...

“Ми знищили АРИСТОКРАТІЮ!”

Інтелігент революційним кроком підходить по черзі до генерала, дами, цивільного й мощей—і революційно знищує їх кінчиком черевика ...

Оплески юрби.

The commentary directly signals this cut from puppet play to reality: “Гра в ляльки скінчилась! ... Далі знову—життя ...” Intelihent, 69.

Intelihent, 81.
At some intersection, having climbed onto a pedestal, Intelihent delivers a speech, surrounded by a small crowd. Intelihent is gesticulating, beating his chest. … He declares:

“WE DESTROYED TSARISM!”

[…] With a brave and revolutionary expression Intelihent approaches the puppet of Nicholas and tips it over in a revolutionary way with a tip of his boot …

“WE DESTROYED ARISTOCRACY!”

With a revolutionary step Intelihent approaches in turn the general, the lady, the civilian and the relics—and destroys them in a revolutionary way with a tip of his boot … The crowd applauds.

The scene again is structured in a rhythmic pattern distinct for the novel, intercutting revolutionary slogans with Intelihent’s supposedly revolutionary gestures. Intelihent clearly envisions himself performing a heroic role as a revolutionary. Delivering his proclamation from a pedestal in front of an audience that applauds his speech further enhances the effect of a well-orchestrated theatrical act. Throughout this performance, he attempts to demonstrate his loyalty to the new regime. Yet his loud declarations are paired with his feeble attempts that only mirror the earlier act of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and represent the mimicerSy of the bourgeois intelligentsia in the new socialist order.

The scene demonstrates Intelihent’s own declarations and gestures as only mechanical repetitions of the actual events, confirming yet again his resemblance to a puppet. His actions serve only as a caricature of the preceding dynamic revolutionary sequence, with their very mechanical, imitative nature rendering them insignificant. These repetitions also expose the comic nature of Intelihent’s actions.176

176 Moreover, Bergson describes “the periodical repetition of a word of a scene” as a traditional comedic device. Bergson, Laughter, 36. See also Bogatyrev, Cheshskii kukol’nyi teatr, 57.
That is, the repetition of the same descriptor helps to reveal not only Intelihent’s puppet-like, mechanical gestures, but also his hypocrisy and artificiality.177 Contrasting the epithet “revolutionary” (революційний) with Intelihent’s repetitive gestures generates irony and satire. Like the governess, the doctor, and Intelihent’s teachers, who show affected, indifferent responses to various dramatic situations, the adult Intelihent lacks genuine natural reactions to situations too. As the above examples illustrates, he responds to the revolution with theatricality, feigning a patriotic, revolutionary pathos (he overthrows the puppet of Tsar Nicholas II “in a revolutionary way”). The artificiality and revolutionary fervor of Intelihent’s performance seem to represent the bourgeoisie’s response to the revolution. These affectations and repetitive, falsely brave gestures are contrasted with Intelihent’s actual fear of the new regime. After the shots of the Bolsheviks fade-in from behind the door of a train, the bourgeois intelligentsia reacts in the following manner: “The scared and outraged faces of Intelihent’s acquaintances flicker in turns, while he is in turn whispering something into their ears, after which he gets outraged and gesticulates.”178 Their anxious, frightened, and infuriated reactions to the Bolsheviks’ arrival are generalized through the repetition of the facial expressions of Intelihent and his friends. Moreover, the frequent outrage of Intelihent and his wife, which owes to their lofty self-perceptions and bourgeois sense of entitlement,179 is repeated in response to post-revolutionary situations.

And yet, as artificial and construed as Intelihent’s self-perception is, his anxiety, fear, dejection and desperation in response to the October revolution seem to represent the genuine

177 The narrator further stresses the ironic use of repeated adjectives by accumulating the epithet “патріотичний” in the characterization of Intelihent’s feelings: “обурення і патріотичний біль патріотичної душі моєї герої...” Intelihent, 82.

178 “По черзі промигують перелякані й обурені фізіономії знайомих Інтелігента, що їм він по черзі шепоче щось на вухо, після чого обурюється й жестикулює ...” Intelihent, 83.

179 See Intelihent, 83, 95, 97.
and natural reaction of the bourgeoisie. The final sequence of the puppet play illustrates Inteliherent’s actual perceptions of the new regime: “Inteliherent’s face is covered with hands. Through his fingers, he is throwing fearful glances at the puppet-winner. Carefully he stands to attention. Scared, he looks carefully and intently. He smiles timidly, coaxingly. He bows indecisively. A smile again. A bow again. Timid step towards the puppet. A smile. A bow. A step. Another step …”

This sequence shows Inteliherent pleading allegiance to a winning puppet (what power it represents is not even defined). His timid yet flattering gestures (a bow and a smile) are mechanically repeated with each new step toward the puppet. The descriptors of these gestures constantly emphasize scared reactions. The sequence resembles a ceremonial procedure or a ritual. Most importantly and characteristically for the rest of the novel, the episode illustrates that Inteliherent is constantly performing a series of repetitive gestures, instead of engaging in fully-conscious intentional actions, which, according to Bergson, also signals a character’s automatism.

Because of their repetitive gestures, Inteliherent’s characters resemble lifeless, puppet-like automatons. Yet the novel’s satire stems not only from portraying Inteliherent’s mechanical,

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180 The contrast between Inteliherent’s affected patriotic behaviour in reaction to mobilization and his actual feelings is reinforced in the following sequence:

“Інтелігент у ‘громаді’ говорить патріотичну промову. Йому милостиво плещуть ...
Інтелігент вдома, настроєний зовсім не патріотично. Пригнічений. І дружина пригнічена не менше ...” Inteliherent, 69–70.

181 „В Інтелігента обліччя затулене руками. Крізь пальці з острахом поглядає на ляльку-переможницю. Обережно береже руки ’по швам.’ Перелякано, обережно вдивляється. Боязко, улесливо всміхається. Нерішуче вклюняється. Ще раз—усмішка. Ще раз—поклін. Боязкий крок до ляльки. Усмішка. Поклін. Крок. Ще крок ...” Inteliherent, 104.

182 Bergson notes: “Action is intentional or, at any rate, conscious; gesture slips out unawares, it is automatic. In action, the entire person is engaged; in gesture, an isolated part of the person is expressed, unknown to, or at least apart from, the whole of the personality.” Bergson, Laughter, 143.
unnatural reactions to events, but also from crosscutting and montage juxtapositions that emphasize the contradictions between Intelihent’s dreams and aspirations, on the one hand, and his actual actions, on the other.

**Literary Montage: Cinematic Narrative Structures in *Intelihent***

Like other cinematic devices in *Intelihent*, the use of editing evokes the familiar features of silent films, conforming primarily to the function of editing in films of the classical continuity system. I have already discussed how the editing device of inter-cutting creates a parallelism between people and objects, and how the rhythmic repetition of certain shots within a sequence produces puppet-like characters. Moreover, like in *Maister korablia*, Skrypnyk employs film-editing devices to temporally organize and structure narrative sequences in *Intelihent*. Yet unlike the fragmented and discontinuous textual organization of *Maister korablia*, the film story in *Intelihent* is narrated in a linear fashion, so there are no flashbacks or flashforwards, and the narrative continuity is largely preserved. The conventional editing techniques of ellipsis and crosscutting become productive tools for constructing minimalist and utilitarian form of cinematic narrative, the former also allowing to effectively deploy ironic metafictional commentary to the reader without losing track of the main narrative.

**Ellipsis**

In the preface, when the narrator introduces the use of film devices in the novel, editing is foregrounded as a tool for structuring the novel’s narrative: “thirty-five years of the life of my dear hero will elapse in front of you in a fast-flowing sequence of ‘montage fragments,’ which

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183 The structure and editing style of *Maister korablia* are different because they reflect the narrator’s processes of memory; thus they feature more frequent jumps in time and space, and a more discontinuous montage narration.

184 The use of ellipses as a pretext for including narrator’s commentary will be discussed in detail in the section on *benshi*. 
have extracted from this life all the essence, all that was striking and significant in it for the hero himself, and all that was interesting and important for those who lived around him.” These “montage fragments” for the most part form a continuous narrative line, telling the story of Intelihent’s life. They are described as the most characteristic moments of that life, illustrating its various formative stages. Through temporal ellipsis, lengthy periods of time are condensed to a few hours of viewing and, in this case, reading time. Such use of ellipsis is typical of classical continuity editing, supporting the convention of excluding or elapsing information irrelevant to the story.\(^{186}\)

Ellipsis editing thus helps to construct an economic narrative, extracting from Intelihent’s life only episodes relevant to the story and allowing no accidental or excessive details. Ironically, however, in this case the “essence” is boring, mundane and monotone, repetitive and ordinary. Contrary to all his aspirations of grandeur, the selected fragments illustrate only the hollowness and insignificance of Intelihent’s life. Nonetheless the frequent commentary suggests that the excluded episodes are even more insignificant and repetitive than what is shown on screen.\(^{187}\) For this reason, ellipsis becomes in this novel a productive tool for satirizing the bourgeoisie.

The novel primarily uses the fade-out to indicate a temporal ellipsis of a significant period of time between two episodes.\(^{188}\) Through the placement of fade-outs and the length of the ellipses, the pace of the novel attempts to reflect the pace of the main character’s life, with the

\(^{185}\) “Тридцять п’ять років життя моєго дорогого героя пройдуть перед вашими очима в швидко течії зміні ‘монтажних шматків,’ що витягли з цього життя всю суть, все, що було яскравого й значного в ньому для самого героя і цікавого й важливого для тих, що жили круг нього.” Intelihent, 7.

\(^{186}\) See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 278.

\(^{187}\) The narrator notifies the reader that the screened novel offers only the “cream”: “Ви ж, як читач, маєте право на ‘вершки’.” Intelihent, 105.

\(^{188}\) This is usually consistent with the use of ellipses in continuity editing, i.e., “a dissolve indicates a brief time lapse and a fade indicates a much longer one.” Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 277.
Soviet revolution demarcating the key moment when the tempo of both the life and the narration speed up. The first few parts of the novel, which focus on Intelihent’s early life, are more slowly paced, as is the ending, which portrays the narrator’s present-day events (i.e., the late 1920s). Each episode in these parts seems more continuous or drawn-out and is described in significant detail. These parts also feature fewer ellipses than the fast-paced section on the revolution. For instance, in parts 1 and 2 ellipses are placed only at the end of each major segment (infancy, childhood, teenage years, high school and university years), and they indicate longer elided periods of time—several years, or even a decade. The fade-outs in these parts of the novel produce smoother, more conventional transitions between episodes and scenes.

Moreover, fade-out is used to mark the end of a scene or episode. For instance, towards the end of part 6, after an episode at the bar, the film narration explicitly signals the transition: “The screen gradually fades to dark …”\(^{189}\) Further emphasizing this effect, the narrator himself comments on the use of fade-out in film, explaining: “This means the end of an episode. … Of course, one of the many similar ones …”\(^{190}\) Besides elucidating the use of this editing device, which is consistent with the rest of the novel, the comment also reemphasizes the lack of the extraordinary in Intelihent’s life.

On the other hand, in part 3 fade-outs occur more frequently and indicate shorter elided periods of time (a few hours or days). The narrative pace in parts 3 and 4 speeds up, as the narration covers shorter periods of time in less continuous sequences and with fewer details. The pace of the narration here mirrors the fast-changing revolutionary events and the intelligentsia’s confusion or disorientation in face of them. The tempo in this regard reflects life itself during and

\(^{189}\) “Екран повіль темніє …” Intelihent, 140.

\(^{190}\) “Це означає кінець епізоду … Одного з багатьох подібних, певна річ …” Intelihent, 140.
after WWI and the October revolution, a period more saturated with significant events and drastic socio-political changes.

More importantly, in part 4 fade-outs end the scenes and are accompanied with an indication of a slight pause in the narration, thus these ellipses also signify a semantic break. Skrypnyk lauded a similar use of fade-out in Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s film *Zvenyhora*, where, through a fittingly placed fade-out, Dovzhenko creates a powerful contrast between the glorious industrial drive into the future and nostalgia for the ancient past. Such a use of fade-out destabilizes the viewers, spikes their expectations and, thus, puts greater emphasis on the shots that follow it.191

For instance, after Intelihent and his wife are shown packing their jewellery and material possessions, the following shots are mentioned: “Screen fades to dark … A pause …”192 Then the next shot cuts to an enormous red flag, covering the entire screen, which symbolizes the establishment of Bolsheviks’ regime. And again, after showing “a circle of Intelihents” (“Коло Інтелігентів”) mourning the fall of great Russia, the screen fades to dark in a long fade-out.193 The commentary further explains that this darkness is “black and hopeless,” like Intelihent’s

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192 “Екран темніє … Павза …” Intelihent, 87.

193 “Коло Інтелігентів сидить у похмурій розпущі, розпачливо хитаючи головами … ‘ЗАГИНАЛА ВЕЛИКА РОСІЯ’ … Екран темніє … Довга темрява …” Intelihent, 87.
despair indicating the shock and destabilization that intelligentsia experienced. Such ellipses reflect the break in time, but also the inability of intelligentsia to comprehend the extent of revolutionary changes.

“The Film Attempts to Catch up with Life”: Fragmentary Montage and Discontinuity Editing

In comparison to the continuity editing used throughout the novel, the narration of revolutionary events employs fragmentary editing that foregrounds discontinuity in the narrative, in imitation of the disrupted order of events brought on by the revolution. A popular editing device in early Soviet silent films, fragmentary montage became a cinematic convention for portraying revolutionary events. And emulating these films, Skrypnyk uses discontinuous narration, with fast cutting and fragmentary montage, to represent the revolution in Intelihent. In fact, along with other prominent Soviet filmmakers, he regarded montage as the essence of cinema and the most important element of cinematic language.

The portrayal of revolutionary events through literary montage has also been a popular device in Ukrainian experimental literature. For instance, as was shown earlier, Shkurupii’s novel Dveri v den’ emulates cinematic montage sequences in portraying scenes of the Bolsheviks’ revolt. Shkurupii’s novel also employs literary montage to structure fast-paced revolutionary scenes, which are contrasted with the use of traditional continuity editing to structure Hai’s imaginary daydreaming scenes, as well as episodes of his idling or passive bourgeois inactivity. Moreover, through cinematic scenes Dveri v den’ also constructs a social

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194 “Чорна й безнадійна, як розпука мого героя, що втратив усе, що є цінного для громадянина: батьківщину, волю, посаду—все ...” Intelihent, 87.

195 For Skrypnyk’s comprehensible theory of montage see Skrypnyk, Narysy z teorii mystetstva kino, 65–76. His work precedes publications of Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein in Russia.
criticism of the old bourgeois intelligentsia, who are living in a dreamy state of “non-doing” (недіяння) instead of actively participating in the construction of socialist life.

Similar to other examples in literature, the fragmentary montage in the following scene of Skrypnyk’s novel represents the chaos of the revolution, as perceived by Intelihent:

Fragmentary montage reflects the fast, chaotic unfolding of events during the revolution; specifically, fast cutting, jerky shifts in time or ellipses and abrupt juxtapositions create a quick tempo and discontinuity in this sequence. Again, the fragmentariness of the narration mirrors the rupture in the linearity of time and history.

Moreover, even smaller units of the sequence—sentences representing shots—present fragmentariness and an increased narrative pace. The film ekphrasis typically features short nominal sentences. Yet as the revolution begins to dominate the narration, the sentences and characters’ speech become fragmented as indicated by frequent suspension points. These

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196 Intelihent, 85.
fragmented elliptical sentences depict jerky film sequences and, along with fast cutting they emphasize chaos in the lives of bourgeois intelligentsia.

The film’s visual special effects also underline Intelihent’s mental state. Quick, flickering shots of buildings, crowds, and white banners are intercut with fragmented and multiplied shots of Intelihent’s face; then, these fragmented faces are superimposed over the shots of the outside chaos. Intelihent’s speech is also fragmented, until he eventually grows mute. This “live mosaic” of Intelihent’s disembodied faces and of his fragmented speech represents the complete loss of individuality and the disorientation of the old bourgeois intelligentsia at encountering the unstoppable power of the crowds and of the new regime.\footnote{Incidentally, Intelihent’s reaction parallels the clash of the individual and the masses portrayed in modernism. As Levenson argues, “encounter with the crowd became a condition of modernity—sometimes traumatic, sometimes utopian, often mixed and indeterminate.” Michael Levenson, \textit{Modernism} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 66.}

This excerpt also illustrates how fragmentary montage serves a clear utilitarian function in constructing a strong socialist symbolism. The chaos of the revolution and the “dance” of Intelihent’s fragmented and multiplied mug shots come to a halt as they are intercut with the ubiquitous red flag leading the crowds and enveloping the entire screen. The slow, steady movement of the flag is in stark contrast to the previous fast-cutting between shots of objects and Intelihent’s faces. The sequence uses this concrete sign of the new regime—the red flag—in combination with the popular Soviet slogan “All powers to the Soviets!” to represent an abstract idea: the victory of the Bolsheviks and the establishment of the Soviet power.

\textit{Crosscutting}

Another popular film editing technique, crosscutting, is also used for structuring \textit{Intelihent’s} film story. Like in \textit{Maister korablia}, one of its functions is to build suspense and dramatic tension in a scene. For instance, the episode ironically titled “Bolshevik horrors”
(“Більшовицькі страхіття”) uses crosscutting to generate suspense and to illustrate the bourgeoisie’s extreme fear of the Bolsheviks:

In Intelihent’s pretty apartment, he and his wife are sitting at the table dejected, in silence … Suddenly both shuddered, glanced fearfully at each other. A doorbell. Intelihent, with a deliberate indifference proposes that his wife opens the door. The wife, sincerely frightened, flatly refuses …

Intelihent courageously walks out.
He listens carefully in the hall by the door …
Outside someone’s trembling hand is pressing the bell …
With extreme caution, Intelihent opens the door, keeping the chain on. As soon as he took off the last latch, someone sharply pushes the door inside. Intelihent leaps aside …
At the doorstep—his father-in-law’s worried face.

As the title of the episode suggests, Intelihent and his circles are terrified of the Bolshevik regime because of the horrors associated with it. The intelligentsia anticipates the worst from the new power, as their old routines and lifestyle have abruptly come to an end. The crosscutting technique fittingly represents their tension, extreme panic and fear. The camera first focuses on Intelihent and his wife’s dejected expressions and then their surprised and anxious reactions to the arrival of an unknown visitor, signaled by a doorbell ring. The episode dynamically juxtaposes shots of Intelihent and his wife waiting at their apartment with close-up shots of a hand ringing the bell. Cutting outside reveals little information, as the extreme close-up of a trembling hand ringing the bell limits any details of the visitor’s identity and generates suspense in the scene. The tension is suddenly resolved at the end of the scene, as the visitor turns out to be Intelihent’s father-in-law, who is as anxious and terrified as Intelihent and his wife.

198 Intelihent, 88.
As was argued earlier, the narration in parts 5 and 6 slows in pace in contrast to the fast-changing revolutionary sequences of parts 3 and 4. In particular, the episode in part 5 titled “Long live the program of economy and rationalization!” (“Хай живе режим економії та раціоналізація!”), which describes Intelihten’s workday as head of the bureau of rationalization, offers an excellent example of slow, drawn-out and detailed film narration. The pacing of the episode replicates the extremely detailed and elaborate following of bureaucratic procedures, documenting each and every gesture and repetitive motion of its characters.

The episode opens with the director breaking his pen and writing an order for its replacement. His simple request leads to a series of repetitive interactions between employees of the organization, all in the vain attempt to secure a new pen for the director. The episode, which spans eight pages and comprises half of part 5, constantly crosscuts between the director, who is growing more and more furious and impatient with the situation, and the employees, who blindly follow the program of economy and rationalization.199 The following scene shows the secretary and the courier explaining the situation to Intelihten, who is portrayed at the head of the elaborate bureaucratic pyramid:

Секретар і кур’єр підходять до столу Інтелігента.
Інтелігент щось пише. Не підводячи голови, пальцем тиче в “РОЗПИС ПРИЙОМУ”. Жестом просить лишити його одного.
Секретар домагається.
Інтелігент підводить голову. Обличчя дуже незадоволене. Категорично відмовляється вести розмову.
Секретар притискує ордер до серця. Переконливо доводить …
Начальник у своєму кабінеті перебуває в стані закам’янілої люти.
[…]
Інтелігент показав на низ розпису, де поруч його підпису стоїть підпис начальника, і коротко розвів руками:
“ЦЕ—ТЕЖ РОЗПОРЯДЖЕННЯ Т. НАЧАЛЬНИКА”!
Секретар умовляє з відчаєм …
Люте обличчя начальника …

199 In contrast to the definition of rationalization, i.e., the economic streamlining of the workflow, Intelihten oversees a mindlessly mechanical adherence to the new office rules, which impede the actual streamlining of work processes. Rationalization is here linked first and foremost to the bureaucratization of work procedures.
Інтелігент, нарешті, бере ордер. На обличчі певне вагання …

The secretary and the courier approach the Intelihent’s desk.
Intelihent is writing something. Without lifting his head he pokes his finger to “THE RECEPTION SCHEDULE.” Makes a gesture asking to leave him alone.
The secretary demands.
Intelihent lifts his head. Extremely displeased countenance. Flatly refuses to carry on a conversation.
The secretary is pressing the order to his heart. Argues persuasively …
The director in his office remains in the state of petrified fury.
[

Intelihent showed the bottom of the schedule, where alongside his signature there is director’s signature, and curtly shrugged his shoulders:
“THIS IS ALSO THE ORDER OF COMRADE DIRECTOR!”
The secretary is pleading with despair …
The director’s furious face …
Intelihent finally takes the order. His face shows certain hesitation …

Crosscutting in this excerpt builds tension that leads to a culmination of the conflict; namely, in the shots that follow Intelihent refuses to fulfill the director’s order in view of certain regulations of economy and rationalization. Cinematic tension is achieved in this scene by presenting two simultaneous actions, one occurring at the director’s office and the other at Intelihent’s desk. The crosscutting builds dramatic tension, as there is a great disparity between calm, self-assured look of Intelihent, who is bureaucratically dragging time and delaying the execution of director’s order, and the enraged and befuddled director.

His mechanical reaction to the conflict demonstrates Intelihent’s full transformation into a bureaucratic machine, and crosscutting is the key device showing how his “idealistic” position as head of the rationalization program leads to the director’s furious reaction and, eventually, to Intelihent’s downfall. When the director sees Intelihent’s signature on the rejected order, he calls Intelihent to his office and demotes him. The contrast between Intelihent’s and the director’s responses in the scene emphasizes Intelihent’s rigidity and unwillingness (and inability) to adapt to new and unforeseen circumstances. Yet, from Intelihent’s rigid, limited point of view, the lack of recognition of his contribution to the rationalization agenda is the true drama of terrifying

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200 Intelihent, 115–16.
proportions. According to Bergson, such lack of elasticity and absentmindedness in a person are the core subjects of comedy.²⁰¹ Skrypnyk by his satire intends to correct these features in society as a whole.

In addition to building dramatic tension, crosscutting also creates a sense of omniscience in the narrative and presents the viewer or reader with a range of narrative details, “an unrestricted knowledge of causal, temporal, or spatial information.”²⁰² For instance, at the beginning of the scene in an episode titled “At the blessed South” Intelihent and his wife act as if the order of their life has remained untouched. They carry on with their former day-to-day activities and posh lifestyle, illustrated by shots of their elegant clothes and abundant jewellery. Then, Intelihent initiates a conversation expressing the intelligentsia’s fears that revolution will reach the South too:

> В кімнаті курців. Невеличка група мужчин. Інтелігент промовляє. Гукнув на гетьманського офіцера, що проходив повз, і звертається до нього. Офіцер робить жести заспокоєння. Інтелігент з сумнівом хитає головою. Офіцер переконує, говорить впевнено:

> “НІЯКА ЧЕРВОНА СВОЛОТА НАМ ЗАГРОЖУВАТИ НЕ МОЖЕ.”

> В залі—танки … Раптом—кілька мірних дрижань, наче відгук далекого землетрусу …

> В кімнаті для курців—те саме …

> Інтелігент переляканий, але задоволений (“Ага, а я що казав!”). Офіцерові трохи ніяково. Інтелігент многозначно й тривожно підносить пальця вгору.

> Екраном, у тому самому темпі, що були дрижання, ідуть шерегами в ногу чоботи. Крок їх рівний, міцний, точний …²⁰³

In the smoking room. A small group of men. Intelihent is making a speech solemnly. He called on an officer of the Hetman state,²⁰⁴ who was passing by, and addresses him. The officer makes placating gestures. Intelihent shakes his head in doubt. The officer is persuading, speaking confidently:

> ‘NO RED SCUM CAN THREATEN US.’

²⁰¹ Bergson argues: “The laughable element … consists of a certain mechanical inelasticity, just where one would expect to find the wide-awake adaptability and the living pliability of a human being.” Bergson, Laughter, 10; italics in the original.

²⁰² Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 275.

²⁰³ Intelihent, 102.

²⁰⁴ The Hetman state, or Ukrainian State, existed from 29 April–14 December 1918. The head of the state, Hetman Pavlo Skoropads’kyi was supported by the Central Powers and many anti-Bolshevik Russian officers and nobility. See Encyclopedia of Ukraine, s.v. “Hetman government.”
Dances in the ballroom. Suddenly—several rhythmic vibrations, like an echo of a distant earthquake …
Exactly the same occurs in the smoking room …
Intelihent is frightened, yet satisfied (‘Aha, I said so!’). The officer is a bit embarrassed. Intelihent raises his finger, meaningfully and alarmingly.
Across the screen, ranks of boots are marching rhythmically, at the same pace as the preceding vibrations. Their marching step is uniform, strong, precise …

The sequence crosscuts between shots of the smoking room, the ballroom and an unidentified location. The viewer is presented with an omniscient point of view, as crosscutting connects shots from these disconnected locations and perspectives. Even though montage here foregrounds spatial discontinuity, it promotes a sense of causality and temporal simultaneity between the shots.  

The scene presents a typical silent-movie pantomime, where almost no words are used; only gestures communicate the intelligentsia’s alarmed reaction to the possible advance of the Bolshevik army to Ukraine. Initially, the sequence presents a relatively peaceful atmosphere in the ballroom and smoking room. Yet, the advance of revolutionary forces is foreshadowed with several rhythmic shudders sensed by Intelihent. The Hetman state officer’s affirmation that the Red Army presents no threat is refuted as shots of his self-assured look are juxtaposed with images of advancing marching boots. Moreover, the cut between the rhythmic vibrations in the ballroom and soldiers’ boots indicates an association between them, as the vibrations are identical in rhythm to those of the marching boots.

The scene is also illustrative in its use of literary montage to construct powerful signs: the rhythmic vibrations and, later, the images of boots signify the unstoppable drive and advance of the Bolshevik army to Ukraine. As I argued before, by focusing on an extreme close-up of the boots, these objects are fragmented and transformed into a cinematic sign. Furthermore, the montage of rhythmic, collective marching steps promotes continuity in the narrative by

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205 See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 275.
symbolically linking these shots to an earlier, similar march that overthrew the aristocracy and bourgeoisie in another part of the Russian empire.

This montage also portrays the immense gap and contrast between, on the one hand, the relative calm of the old lifestyle and routines of the bourgeoisie and, on the other, the imminent changes brought on by the revolution. As opposed to the disorderly and irregular manner of the dance of white banners in the sequence described earlier—which signifies the chaos of the early revolutionary years—the rhythmic and precisely marching bootsteps mean to illustrate the power and orderliness of the new regime. Their collective unity and uniform movement can also be contrasted to the failing individualism of the bourgeoisie, represented by shots of Intelihent marching out of step with the rest of the soldiers. By implication, one of the roles of satire in Intelihent is to ridicule those marching “out of step” with society.

“Visualizing Contradictions”: Montage as a Tool to Reveal the Discrepancy between Intelihent’s Fantasy and Reality

Skrypnyk’s novel is a vehement satiric attack on the lifestyle, arts and culture of the bourgeois intelligentsia. The novel’s prologue addresses the latter two themes, deriding kitschy and second-rate bourgeois art. The rest of the novel offers harsh social criticism of the group’s character, specifically their hypocrisy, moral relativism, weakness, cowardliness, and conformism. The satire is produced, in particular, by montage juxtapositions that flaunt discrepancy between the aspirations and actions of the main character, Intelihent.

This disparity is constructed, first, by juxtaposing intertitles with visual sequences. Intertitles are an important structural element of the novel. As in most early silent films, intertitles play a vital role in providing explanations and causal links in the narrative. Appearing

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206 See Intelihent, 72.
in all capitals, the intertitles also visually structure the novel, demarking each part and episode. Moreover, when bordered with a frame, they stand out graphically on the page, in replication of various signs, posters and slogans (for example, the door sign of Intelihent’s home in the South or a poster for the operetta performance).\(^{207}\)

In essence, the intertitles are employed ironically, satirically narrating and revealing contradictions in the delusional self-perceptions of the bourgeoisie. The titles themselves often construct this subtext. For instance, in an episode in part 1, “Intelihent’s teenage years” (“Інтелігент-підліток”), discrepancies between scene titles and scene content skewer the meaning of bourgeois education. The repetitive titles “Education” (“Освіта”), “Education further continues” (“Освіта триває далі”), “First fruits of the education” (“Перші плоди освіти”), etc. contrast the narrative content about protagonist’s “street” education, where older school friends teach him bad habits like smoking, talebearing on his classmates, and stealing money from his parents.\(^{208}\) Part 2 features an episode titled “Sport” (“Спорт”), which describes Intelihent playing billiards and losing his allowance to a gambler. The billiard room is filled with smoke, and the situation is far from any definition of a healthy sports activity.

Like the contrast between the visualizations of Intelihent’s dreams and reality, the intertitles also bring out an ironic contrast between the ideal, desirable, but imagined situation and the true state of affairs in bourgeois society. For instance, part 2, “Intelihent’s youth,” is subdivided into two episodes: “Almost a student” (“Майже студент”) and “A student” (“Студент”). The first shows Intelihent’s exhilarated state after finishing high school and his lofty expectations from this new stage in life to become a university student. The second,

\(^{207}\) This emphasis on the visual nature of the literary text also aligns Intelihent with the aesthetics of Ukrainian Futurism, for instance, in comparison to Mykhaił’ Semenko’s visual poems.

\(^{208}\) See Intelihent, 31–38.
however, contrasts these expectations with mundane and ordinary reality: it opens with a remarkable scene titled “Everyday life” (“Будні”), which describes Intelihent suffering through a boring university lecture.

Two further episodes from part 2 offer a stark contrast between Intelihent’s dreams and reality. “Happiness” (“Щастя”) describes a starry-eyed Intelihent in an elated state after kissing a girl he fancies, while the following sections “… One can’t go home in such spirits!” (“… Не можна ж іти додому в такому настрої!”) and “Morning” (“Ранок”) contrast his idealistic perceptions of his first kiss with the grim reality of his sexual initiation with a prostitute. The lengthy episode at the cheap and dingy brothel contrasts Intelihent’s emotional perceptions and romanticization of love and sex with the realistic, unromantic and even mundane atmosphere of his first sexual experience.209

The brothel scene itself, which leads to Intelihent’s sexual initiation, is constructed with contrasting shots of the image of the idealized girl and extreme close-ups of the face of the prostitute sitting next to him. First the narrative offers Intelihent’s dream-like point of view, affected by alcohol: “Intelihent is effete and completely drunk … Lost in his drunken reverie, he is shaking his head. … A girl … She is dressed in white and luminesces, like a little cloud in summer … A dream, something unearthly …”210 The cinematic sequence focuses on a drunken Intelihent, then cuts directly to his vision. The fragmentary narration, conveyed through elliptical sentences, offers a cinematic visualization of Intelihent’s disjointed dreamy thoughts. The last lines then actually transgress the purely visual description that would be available to the camera by offering both a simile (comparing the girl to “a little cloud in summer”) and a reflection on

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209 Ilnytzkyj argues that the novel perpetuates “[t]he notion of love and sex as an atavism that contravenes reason and intellect.” Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism*, 319.

210 “Інтелігент розніжений і зовсім п’яний … П’яно замріявшись, хитає головою. … Дівчина … Вона одягнена в біле і світиться, як хмарка влітку … Мрія, щось неземне …” *Intelihent*, 54.
Intelihent’s thoughts (“A dream, something unearthly …”). Comparing the girl to light and a cloud emphasizes Intelihent’s idyllic, inebriated perception of her as an ethereal being.

This idealistic image is juxtaposed with a completely different type of a girl, representing the prosaic and shocking reality:

Сусідка сердито шарпає Інтелігента … Інтелігент трошки отямився і подивився їй прямо в обличчя …
На весь екран фізіономія. Вона п’яна. Очі безглузді, тупі. Професію видно в кожної зморшці, в одутлих щоках, у грубо намашених віях і бровах, в опущених кутках губ, з яких горілкою та огірками змито помаду.211

Intelihent’s neighbor yanks at him angrily … Intelihent came to his senses a little bit and looked her straight in the face …
A face filling the entire screen. She is drunk. The eyes are senseless, dull. One can see the profession in each wrinkle, in the swollen cheeks, in the crudely smeared eye-lashes and eye-brows, in the lowered corners of the lips, from which lipstick has been wiped away with vodka and pickles.

First focusing on the eyes, the most expressive part of the body, the camera proceeds by panning over the grotesque and distorted details of the prostitute’s non-ethereal face in a series of extreme close-ups. The use of the extreme close-up further deforms and fragments the prostitute’s body. Skrypnyk employs these distorted human shapes symbolically, to communicate an abstract idea: the immense disparity between Intelihent’s idyllic visions and shocking reality.212

The novel also presents the disparity between Intelihent’s self-perceptions and aspirations for grandeur and his actual and unsavory actions, illustrating Intelihent’s almost child-like inability to distinguish imagination from reality. The term “intelligentsia” was synonymous with high elitist positions and leadership roles in society and culture.213 The speeches, slogans and toasts Intelihent delivers demonstrate his aspirations for these roles. His university graduation

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211 Intelihent, 54.

212 Expressionist films frequently use extreme close-ups to a similar end. For instance, John D. Barlow argues that in Dr Mabuse, der Spieler (Dr Mabuse: The Gambler, 1922), directed by Fritz Lang, an extreme close-up of a disembodied Mabuse’s head creates an abstraction: “The struggle between the two wills is captured in this moment: the eerie face filling the whole screen is the visual abstraction of his determination to conquer the police commissioner.” Barlow, German Expressionist Film, 115.

213 See Malia, “What is the intelligentsia?” 5.
toast presents him as joining the ranks of the intelligentsia to serve the people, or narod:

“Friends, narod is waiting for us!” 

The scenes in the next part show Intelihent in his day-to-day work, serving as a secretary of society to “save fallen women.” Yet, contrary to the bent of his imagined stature, in this very passage Skrypnyk portrays Intelihent as a hypocritical and immoral man for, Ironically, he is also patronizing prostitutes in earlier parts of the novel. The contrast illustrates the bourgeois intelligentsia’s prudishness and hypocrisy, as they were often considered the high moral standard bearers of society.

In contrast to Intelihent’s self-perceptions and self-representation, the film shows him as an average man, weak and narrow-minded, and contributing nothing valuable to society, to say nothing of serving a meaningful leadership role. As was shown earlier, contradicting the definition of the term, this intelihent brought no special skills, exceptional intellectual abilities, or virtues to the workplace. Later, in part 3, in announcing his joining of the Provisional government, Intelihent starts his speech by saying, “We, the intelligentsia, crème de la crème of the nation, we must loudly declare …” Moreover, in a stark contrast to its elated register, his speech is interrupted by the harshly satirical and comical cut-away shots of the bourgeois audience busily chewing on food, after which he declares, “… War until victory!” Yet the scenes that follow portray him as a spineless coward frightened by the crowds of revolutionaries and contributing nothing to the cause but empty slogans.

In his work on photomontage, Steve

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214 “Товариші! Нарід чекає на нас!” Intelihent, 61.
215 “Секретар громади християнського спасіння падших жінок.” Intelihent, 68.
216 See Vihavainen, Inner Adversary, 2.
217 “Ми, інтелігенція, цвіт нації, ми мусимо голосно проголосити …” Intelihent, 81.
218 “… Війна до перемоги!” Intelihent, 81.
Edwards argues that montage “was particularly geared to visualizing contradictions.” Such a use of montage in *Intelihent* leads to a satirical effect, inasmuch as it points out the disjunctions, contradictions, delusions, and artificiality that inform the behavior of the bourgeois intelligentsia.

**Introducing *Benshi*: The Narrator as a Film Commentator**

Besides explicitly structuring the novel around a film ekphrasis—a radical innovation in itself—Skrypnyk introduces another device, namely, that of a film commentator. In the preface, Skrypnyk’s narrator explains his role as an interpreter of film: “In those passages, where it will be too difficult for your unaccustomed visual imagination to see my hero in the uniform combinations of black letters on white paper—refer to me. The author and your friend, I am always by your side. I will be for you the interpreter, such as one always present in a Japanese movie-theatre.” The addition of a film commentator clearly divides the narrator’s role between providing, on the one hand, affectless camera-eye narration and, on the other, ironic, polemical commentary.

As the narrator suggests, the introduction of the commentator in the novel directly parallels the tradition of silent film screenings in Japan, where, unlike in Europe or America, a live oral narrator, or *benshi* (literally “orator” or “speaker”), provided introductory remarks and running commentary during the screening. *Benshi* narrators were skilled and highly educated

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221 “В тих місцях, де надто трудно буде вашій нетренованій зоровій фантазії побачити моєго героя в одноманітних сполученнях чорних літер на білому папері,—звертайтеся до мене. Я, автор і ваш друг, ввесь час поруч вас. Я буду для вас тим тлумачем, що завжди присутній в кожнім японськім кіно.” *Intelihent*, 8.
222 The two narrative modes are rarely fused; for instance, film narrative only occasionally introduces metaphors, similes or otherwise expresses the narrator’s subjectivity, while the ironic commentary rarely infringes upon the “objectivity” of the camera.
performers, who became central characters in silent narrative films in Japan. In fact, they were an essential part of Japanese films until the mid-1930s, long after the appearance of sound films, which technically rendered the role of the benshi redundant.

The function of benshi narrators was twofold: filling in the dialogue for local kabuki-derived films and mediating imported Western films. Regarding the latter function, Standish argues that benshi narrators typically served as intermediaries between foreign films and Japanese audiences. They played an important role in explaining historical and cultural facts unfamiliar to Japanese audiences, as well as in reading and translating foreign intertitles. In many aspects, Intelihent’s commentator resembles the functions of a Japanese benshi. The new form of the screened novel is a foreign medium needing interpretation and clarification for the reader, and the narrator thus mediates between the depicted film and the readers. In other words, aside from “translating” film images into printed words through film ekphrasis, he also constantly interprets those images. And in this regard the commentator performs numerous other traditional benshi functions: summarizing elided story action; giving access to characters’ thoughts; and clarifying the use of certain film devices.

One of the commentator’s functions in the novel is to provide links that maintain narrative continuity in the film story. As I already showed, temporal ellipses serve as an effective editing device for extracting the most representative episodes from Intelihent’s life. The narrator’s commentary summarizes events occurring during those ellipses. At times, the

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commentator also summarizes events already shown in the film. For instance, the opening commentary of part 6 recaps the entire story of Intelihent’s life as presented in the novel.\textsuperscript{227}

In order to illustrate the repetitive, commonplace nature of Intelihent’s life, the summaries of off-screen events often list the same events that were previously shown in the episode. The commentary thus further reinforces the cyclicality of Intelihent’s life. For instance, concluding commentary of part 1 prefaces a summary of elided scenes with the following projection: “The screen fades to dark again for a long time. Nothing new, or significant will happen to my hero until the end of his teenage years.”\textsuperscript{228} The summary of “hallmarks” of Intelihent’s teenage years that follows merely duplicates the scenes previously shown on screen, that is, high school lectures, cramming, stolen money and cigarettes from his father, harassing the maid, etc. The commentary’s summary of events identical to those in the film underlines the banal, pedestrian nature of the protagonist’s life.

The summary of Intelihent’s university years plays a similar function in the novel. After desolate Intelihent returns home from Dr. Katz’s office, the screen fades to dark. The following commentary then briefly summarizes the elided time: “Days, weeks and months passed monotonously. By day—sleep during lectures, and by night, when there is money—sleeplessness at some Petrovska’s teahouse. Cramming before the exams—you will see that still …”\textsuperscript{229} Again, this summary shows that the film ellipses omit episodes similar to those already featured. Moreover, the comment provides a link to the next episode by making a prediction (“you will see

\textsuperscript{227} See Intelihent, 123.

\textsuperscript{228} “Екран темніє знову надовго. Нічого нового, значного не трапиться з моїм героєм до самого кінця його підлітства.” Intelihent, 38.

\textsuperscript{229} “Дні, тижні й місяці пройшли одноманітно. Вдень—сон на лекціях, вночі, коли є гроші,—безсоння в якійсь Петровській чайній. Перед іспитами—зубріння,—це ви ще побачите … ” Intelihent, 59.
that still …’). And indeed the following scene shows Intelihent mechanically studying (‘cramming’) for his final exams.

Further on in the summary of elided university years the narrator supplies incidental, extradiegetic information describing what happened to Intelihent’s love interest after his first visit to a brothel: she started dating a handsome student. Here the commentary satisfies the reader’s desire for closure in the romantic love story line, even though the narrator himself admits that the information is irrelevant to the main story. Such summaries help Skrypnyk to achieve laconic narration, as the commentary considerably shortens the length of the narrative and advances the story.

Another function of the *benshi* is to illustrate a character’s thinking processes, dreams and emotions by providing “voice-over narration of ‘inner states’.” In a similar manner, the commentary in Skrypnyk’s experimental novel often presents visualizations of Intelihent’s thoughts. Characteristically, these visualizations are often crafted as cinematic scenes.

For instance, in the episode “Once again the fruits of education” an establishing shot shows Intelihent standing outside Dr. Katz’s office: “‘Venereologist’s office of Dr. I. Katz’ … Intelihent is standing by the sign, staring apathetically ahead …” While he is staring blankly, the commentary cuts directly to a visualization of Intelihent’s thoughts:

Думки, що ледве ворушаться і вихорем мчать в мозку моєго героя, також природні й зрозумілі: він стріляється, потім лежить у труні, дуже красивий—сам теж дуже красивий … Старенький попик зворушливого вигляду зворушливо править панахиду. Зворушливо пахтить ладан, що легкими, блакитними хмарками піднімається з кадила, яке так стримано й знаменно раз-у-раз побрязкує. Заплакані старі—папа й мама,—заплакане обличчя її … Раптом, як голова, відрубана сокирою, думка вмирає в корчах страждання ...

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230 “Далі мені не хочеться розказувати. Все це, нарешті, безпосередньо не стосується картини. Та й дівчинине вже, здається, немає …” *Intelihent*, 59.


232 “‘Венерологічний кабінет д-ра І. Каза’ … Інтелігент стоїть біля таблички й тупо дивиться вперед …” *Intelihent*, 58.

The thoughts that barely stir and rush like a whirlwind in my hero’s brain are also natural and understandable: he shoots himself, then he is lying in a coffin, which is very beautiful—he too is looking very beautiful … A little old priest, of a moving appearance, movingly serves the memorial service. The frankincense smells touchingly; it rises in light, blue little clouds from the censer, which repeatedly clanks in such a reserved and significant manner. His old folks in tears—papa and mama—her face in tears … Suddenly, like a head cut off with an axe, the thought dies in spasms of suffering …

While literature is far better equipped to render characters’ mental or psychological states, film developed a system of artistic tools to dramatize these internal states as well. One popular cinematic technique involves introducing a “visualization of conceptual thought in ‘mindscreen’ effects.” Notably, even though these “mindscreen” sequences are included in Intelihent’s commentary, each is executed in a distinctly cinematic manner, that is, as a description of a sequence of shots playing in Intelihent’s mind.

The scene presents Intelihent’s imaginary suicide, a moving memorial service, and the saddened reactions of his parents and a girl. This “mindscreen” illustrates Intelihent’s exaggerated perception of a seemingly routine event, a visit to the venereologist after attending brothels. Yet unlike in the film ekphrasis the narrator here includes ironic commentary on Intelihent’s response: suicide is clearly not a “natural and understandable” response to venereal decease. Moreover, the commentator describes the visualization through an oxymoron (thoughts “barely stir and rush”), similes (“like a whirlwind”; “like a head cut off with an axe”) and a metaphor (“spasms of suffering”), tinting the seemingly cinematic scene with elements of his subjective expression.

Similar to how literary montage and external characterization function in the novel, the description of Intelihent’s suicidal thoughts satirizes the disparity between his self-image and his actual life. After showing Intelihent’s thoughts in the commentary, the film cuts back to

234 Chatman, Coming to Terms, 159; emphasis in the original.

235 Such a portrayal likens Intelihent to the heroes of Expressionist films, who also exhibit “excessive, overwhelming responses to everyday situations.” Barlow, German Expressionist Film, 25.
Intelihent walking away, instead of actually shooting himself. Moreover, the rhythmic structure of the visualization of his thoughts contributes to painting a satirical portrait of Intelihent. In specific, the mechanical repetition of the descriptors “beautiful” (“красивий”), “movingly” (“зворушливо”) and “in tears” (“заплаканий”) generate a comical effect, as they demonstrate the mechanization of his thought processes.

Finally, Intelihent’s commentator is akin to a Japanese benshi in that he regularly explains technical aspects of films, including aspects of foreign films unfamiliar to the audience. For instance, the narrator frequently describes confusing edits or discusses film’s structure, praising the director’s choice of artistic devices. He highlights montage in particular as the device most appropriate for rendering the quickened pace of life and discontinuous line of history brought on by the revolution.

Elsewhere Skrypnyk describes the immense effect of war and revolution on artistic representation in general, especially how these tumultuous events transformed the once-limited range of artistic perception. Several commentaries in the novel show the aesthetics of film also affected by the revolution, as the following selection illustrates:

Екран потемнішав. Темп картини стає що-раз шаленіший. Фільм намагається навздогнати життя. Безперервна нитка, що зв'язує подію з подією, напинається і місцями вривається. Монтаж стає переривчастий, іде плижками ... Життя мчить вихорем ... Події сприяють враженню вибухів, бо безпосередній свідок їх не в силах усвідомити їхнє зародження, розвинення й розв'язання: надто мало часу, надто велике події ... Темп картини стає що-раз схудніший ... Роки п'ятнадцятий, шістнадцятий ... щось відчувається ... The screen grew dark. The movie’s pace becomes all the more furious. The film attempts to catch up with life. The continuous thread that ties events together stretches and breaks here and there. The montage

236 “Інтелігент із одчаєм хитнув головою і швидко, похилявшись, пішов вулицею ...” Intelihent, 59.


238 Skrypnyk argues: “Справа у впливові війни та революції на художню концепцію нашого оточення. Справа в заміні нашого власного ’кутика зору’ на реці (цей кут у людини—два градуси)—на той широченний кут,—повних 360 градусів,—що його нам дала спочатку війна, розплющивши нам очі, а потім революція, що навчила нас бачити весь обрій навкруги. Надійшла пора використати ці ’уроки війни’ та ’надбання революції’. ” M. Lans’kyi, “Livyi roman,” 37.

239 Intelihent, 77–78.
becomes discontinuous, proceeds in jump cuts ... Life whirls along ... Events produce an impression of explosions, because their immediate witness is incapable of comprehending their formation, development and denouement: there is not enough time, the events are too grand ... The movie’s pace becomes all the more raging ... The years 1915, 1916 ... something is in the air ... This comment provides important clarifying links and analyzes the function of discontinuity editing in the film ekphrasis. It is made during a temporal ellipsis, which the narrator uses as an opportunity to explain the film technique of fragmentary montage. The style of the commentary is itself fragmentary and elliptical, mirroring the style of the film narration. Ellipsis points occur frequently within the commentary to indicate its jerky, fragmentary nature. The narration, in turn, conveys disconnected thoughts that jump from one concept to another, rather than flow linearly. Thus here montage becomes a metaphor for the discontinuous perception of time and non-linearity of history during the war and revolution.

Moreover, the meaning of pre-revolutionary events is compared to explosions, and metaphors of subverted linearity are repeatedly employed (i.e., the broken thread of the story and of history, alongside disconnected events with no clear indication regarding their beginning, middle or ending). The commentary on the fragmentariness of time hardly provides any clarity or causality. Instead of a coherent story, the film represents the sensation and perception of pre-revolutionary events in a non-linear manner.

The narrator highlights the correspondence between the use of film devices and the rising pace of life by rhythmically repeating, throughout the commentary in part 3, two phrases: “The film attempts to catch up with life” and “The movie’s pace becomes all the more furious ....” The phrases demarcate separate episodes leading to the revolution. They also serve as a leitmotif, indicating that fragmentary montage conveys a condensed perception of time and a

240 See Intelihent, 80, 82, 83.
sensation of an increased pace of life. The placement of this commentary is also notable, as it appears long before the film narration actually employs the editing technique. Thus it serves as a violent foreboding of the revolutionary events.

The beginning of part 4 portrays the defeat of the Provisional Government and the triumph of the Bolsheviks, symbolized by the ubiquitous red flags. The opening scenes render the chaos of the revolution in fragmentary montage, the technique referenced in the earlier commentary. Part 4’s commentary then prepares the reader for the further use of experimental film devices:

Попереджую: на екрані робиться ка-зна-що, нічого не зрозумієш, єрунда, плутанина якась, кількоразово комбінований кадр, напливі та інші хитрі штуки режисера й оператора … Нарешті, звичайно, ви зрозумієте. Нарешті, в кінці цієї частини, навіть мій герой зрозумів. Дещо він зрозумів і з самого початку. Ну, дивіться …

I warn you, god knows what is happening on the screen, nothing is clear, nonsense, some mishmash, a multiple exposure shot, dissolves and other artful devices of the film director and of the cameraman … Finally, of course, you will understand. Finally, at the end of this part, even my hero understood. Some things he also understood from the very beginning. Well, watch …

These remarks not only summarize various visual special effects but also foreshadow the chaos of subsequent scenes. The intent is to make both the bourgeois characters and readers finally comprehend the extent of what is happening. Both the commentary and the scenes that follow thus seek to render the complexity of life events through experimental film devices.

While commenting on the use of film devices, the narrator takes the opportunity to satirize the artistic conventions of bourgeois films. For example, numerous times he comments on the use of fade-outs to censor scenes of intimacy. These comments, along with the entire prologue, illustrate the Futurists’ criticism of veiled, indirect portrayals of sexuality in bourgeois art. The screen usually fades to dark when Intelihent masturbates or whenever a couple becomes

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241 This leitmotif first appears early in the novel, during a fade-out between scenes of Intelihent’s birth and infancy: “Бо картина йде шаленим темпом, намагаючись навздрогнати життя.” Intelihent, 21.

242 Intelihent, 84.
intimate (such as the wet nurse and her boyfriend, or Intelihent and the prostitute). The first fade-out of the novel appears at the end of the prologue, omitting a scene of intercourse between Intelihent’s parents. The following commentary is then added: “The film director, of course, appropriately placed a fade-out here … The great mystery that is being performed right now in the spouses’ bedroom is but too familiar to all of you. And it is anti-aesthetic to show matters that are familiar, old and clear …” \(^\text{243}\) Besides explaining the film’s use of the fade-out, the comment also reinforces the conventionality of bourgeois art, which omits certain scenes out of prudishness, citing aesthetics as the reason. Out of decorum, bourgeois film refuses to portray “life as it is.”

**Subverting Literary Clichés: The Commentary on Bourgeois Art**

Several *benshi* saw their position of film commentators as an opportunity to give political or social commentary, or to “declare their views of the world to an audience and have those ideas reinforced with moving visual images.” \(^\text{244}\) Similarly, *Intelihent*’s narrator frequently uses his film commentary as a vehicle to expose the dominance in society of bourgeois artistic conventions. *Maister korablia* demonstrated how eschewing literary clichés and conventional artistic representation became the top priority for new Ukrainian artists like To-Ma-Ki, the Professor and Sev. Similar goals are fostered in Skrypnyk’s novel, which also constructs a new form not associated with the bourgeois art of the past. Like Ianovs’kyi, Skrypnyk also critiques works of the literary canon; however, this criticism is never explicit or direct. Rather, with an irony typical for Skrypnyk, the commentary exhibits the inauthenticity of bourgeois art and its construction of tropes that serve as models for actual experiences.

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\(^{243}\) “Режисер, звичайно, доречи зробив тут затемнення ... Велика тайна, що чиниться зараз у спальні подружжя, аж надто відома всім вам. А показувати речі відомі, старі й зрозумілі—не художньо …” *Intelihent*, 17.

\(^{244}\) Dym, *Benshi*, *Japanese Silent Film Narrators*, 46.
Notably, in his article on the leftist novel, Skrypnyk defines the art of the past as “non-rational.” He describes it through a list of literary clichés it produced, in particular attacking its sentimentalism, psychological mannerisms and affectations. He also attacks the works of specific writers like Anton Chekhov and Knut Hamsun, and specific tropes, like Dostoyevsky’s “superfluous” men. Remarkably, no Ukrainian author or work is mentioned on this list; the references are solely to Russian and European high literary canons. Similarly, the works cited or referenced in Intelihent stem from the same traditions. The lack of Ukrainian sources is partially explained by the dire state of high art in Ukraine, which was not nearly as established in its traditions as it was in Russia or Western Europe. Yet, this lack of bourgeois or aristocratic artistic traditions in Ukrainian literature was also recognized as facilitating the construction of proletarian literature and art in Ukraine. The literary clichés criticized by Skrypnyk reflect the frequent objects of the Futurists’ attacks: the decadence, sentimentalism and psychologism of early modernism and, specifically, Symbolism. Destroying these “vestiges of the past” in literature was considered the Futurists’ primary goal and the only way to achieve truly “rational,” utilitarian art. Like the cardboard and papier-mâché sets of the kitschy operetta performance in the prologue, the clichés were signs of devalued bourgeois art, and so Intelihent’s narrator also consistently subverts them.

245 See M. Lans’kyi, “Livyi roman,” 38; “Часи сантиментальних розмазувань, гастрономічних смакувань виділеного яйця, психологічних викрутасів та вивертів, достоєвщини та гамсуновщини, часи “зайвих” людей та чеховських слюнтяїв, […] словом, часи того, що з боку виробничого є нераціональне, кустарне, непотрібне й невигідне,—ци часи минули назавжди.”

246 In this regard, Mykola Sulyma aptly notes that the conditions predetermining the need for avant-garde destruction of art were starkly different in West European and in Ukrainian contexts: “Трагізм ситуації—для української культури і для М. Семенка—полязав у тому, що перелік пам’яток та імен, які треба було скидати з пароплава сучасності, в багатьох європейських літературах вміщувався на певній кількості сторінок, а в літературі українській він, власне, зводився до одного імені—Тарас Шевченко.” Mykola Sulyma, “‘Dukh miiv zakhopleni mozhyvostei futurnykhs,’” in Mykhail’ Semenko, Vybrani tvory, ed. Anna Bila (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2010), 645 (originally published in Slovo i chas, no. 12 [1992]).

247 See Shkandrij, Modernists, Marxists and the Nation, 34.
On the other hand, the frequent references to the literary canon would be easily recognized only by educated, well-rounded intelligentsia readers. This rich literary intertext in fact required readers with fairly broad knowledge of contemporary discourse in literature, culture, politics, philosophy and economy. This fact further demonstrates that the text was specifically targeted at the intelligentsia.

Ultimately, as the commentary on censoring sex scenes shows, the text of the novel suggests that representation in bourgeois art is filled with clichés. Literature is presented as an art influencing the daily life and perceptions of the bourgeoisie, yet the fact that their experiences are frequently described through literary clichés exposes their artificiality. For instance, in a summary of the night at the brothel, the commentary focuses on a drunken young visitor; he fuses reality with literary illusion, calling a prostitute by the name of a fictional character, Sonia Marmeladova from Dostoevsky’s novel *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*; 1866).248 Earlier examples have already shown Intelihent concerned mostly with external appearances and status, rather than genuine experiences. In order to illustrate his inauthenticity, the commentary often describes his perceptions, feelings and thoughts by literary clichés, rather than naming them directly. Doing so further satirizes the lifestyle and values of bourgeois characters, demonstrating their detachment from real life. For instance, one commentary depicts Intelihent falling in love through a set of literary topoi: “My dear reader! But my hero is in love. In love with his first love. *Eros and Psyche, Daphnis and Chloe, ‘Torrents of spring’ …*”249 To

248 “Хлопчик-студент стоїть навколішки перед побитою ним дівчицею і називає її Сонею Мармеладовою.” Intelihent, 55.

represent his feelings of love the commentary employs the titles of literary romances. The three references are classical literary topoi and recognizable examples of idealized romantic love.

Actual geographical places are replaced with artistic topoi, too. When the protagonist and his wife flee to the south of the Russian empire, the novel describes it through familiar literary images. Instead of naming the place directly, the title of the episode references Aleksei Tolstoi’s poem “Ty znaesh’ krai, gde vse obil’em dyshit” (Do you know the land, where everything breathes of abundance; 1840s), mocking Intelihent’s idealization of his place of exile. The commentary following the title of the episode ironically addresses the poetization of places in bourgeois art:

“ТУДА, ГДЕ ВСЕ ОБИЛЬЕМ ДЫШИТ” …

“… где реки льются чище серебра …” Ну, и т. д. Багато дехто з членів “І. І.” справді пішли куди далі—ж до місцевостей, wo die Zitronen blühen, а були й такі, що докотилися до місць, що їх жоден поет не оспівав … Мій герой обмежився руським текстом … 251

“WHERE EVERYTHING BREATHES OF ABUNDANCE” …

“… where rivers flow purer than silver …” Well, and so on. Many of the members of the “I. I.” party actually went much further—as far as the localities, wo die Zitronen blühen, and there were such members that ended up in places, which no poet has praised … My hero limited himself to a Russian text …

Specifically, the line from Tolstoi romanticizes Ukraine as a bountiful paradise—a land of cherry orchards and endless steppes, colourfully dressed women and brave Cossacks. The location is presented not as a real place but as a poetized, idealized space, an image ingrained in the minds of intelligentsia under the poem’s influence. The idealization reflects the aspirations of the intelligentsia to flee the revolution and find a calm haven in Ukraine. Notably, Tolstoi’s poem parallels the composition of a song, “Mignons Sehnsucht” (Mignon’s longing), from

250 “Eros and Psyche” is a story from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (second century AD) and *Daphnis and Chloe* is a pastoral romance by Longus (second century AD), which, incidentally, was translated into Russian by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii in 1896. Merezhkovskii is frequently referenced in the text of the novel as the epitome of an intelihent. Finally, “Veshnie vody” (Torrents of Spring) is a 1870s novella by a Russian realist writer Ivan Turgenev, which depicts melodramatic story of a landowner Sanin and his idealized first love.

251 Intelihent, 92.
Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*; 1795–96). A line from the song is cited in the commentary, to denote Italy, where many intelligentsia members emigrated as well.252

“My Dear Reader!”: Frequent Apostrophes to the Reader

One final notable feature of *benshi* narration in *Intelihent* is the use of self-reflexive metafictional commentary, including frequent addresses to the readers. In this regard Skrypnyk’s commentary significantly differs from traditional *benshi*, as the latter typically occurred simultaneous to the unfolding of the film story. In *Intelihent* the inclusion of these apostrophes and digressions requires *pausing* the main film story. Nonetheless, through their use the novel acquires an important metafictional dimension attempting to remove the boundary between life and fiction. Through the figure of the film commentator, Skrypnyk is able to introduce a voluble, opinionated narrator who digresses on various topics, including the work’s construction.253

Skrypnyk praised *publitsystyka* for its ability to achieve a “rational,” functional impact on the “consumer,” specifically in that *publitsystyka* allowed the reader to “hear the author directly.”254 In Skrypnyk’s view, addressing the reader directly is crucial in building a trustworthy relationship between the “author” and the readers or “consumers.” In this sense the

252 “Wo die Zitronen blühen” is also a waltz by Johann Strauss II—a bourgeois genre par excellence.

253 Chatman argues that such a narrator is “richly endowed with powers to summarize, enter characters’ minds, describe people and places, interpret, judge, generalize (often quite gratuitously), draw abstract conclusions, discuss what might have happened but didn’t, meditate upon the nature of novels in a ‘self-conscious’ way—and so on.” Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 165. Chatman further notes that such a “flamboyantly voluble” narrator is typical in postmodernist, self-reflexive fiction. For a discussion of self-consciousness in postmodernist fiction see Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981).

254 Skrypnyk outlined the importance of the direct address typical of *publitsystyka* in his work on theatre: “Сама форма драматургічної п’єси цілком забезпечує від будь-якого публіцистичного значення. Споживач, абсолютно позбавлений можливості почути автора безпосередньо, що є неодмінною ознакою споживання публіцистичного твору, не вірити драматургічному творові.” Skrypnyk, “Teatr,” 41; emphasis in the original.
The polemical, journalistic commentary further enhances the novel’s socially utilitarian satire. This satire is accomplished on several levels. On the surface, the narrator seemingly comforts the reader by providing ample ironic distance between the reader and the characters. Yet this distance also allows the narrator to construct a satire of Intelihent’s philistinism and bourgeois values. As Bergson argued, the ability to laugh at someone requires the distanced perspective of a “disinterested spectator.”

The narrator self-consciously describes his role as an external commentator and “author,” aiming his commentary to establish a close relationship with the reader and to construct the semblance of an intimate, trustworthy space in the novel, in which the narrator directly addresses his interlocutors-readers and anticipates their possible reactions. In this regard the narrator often invites the readers to relive the narrator’s experiences, creating a level of closeness and familiarity. The commentary addresses different types of readers, appealing to the unique experiences of each: male and female readers, younger and older readers, proletarian and bourgeois intelligentsia readers.

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255 See note 20 in this chapter.
258 “Ви, мій читачу, коли ви молодій, навряд чи зрозумієте красу нічного вартування на тротуарі біля театру в змаганні дістати за полтинник квитка на ‘самого’ Шаляпіна.” Intelihent, 42.
259 “Ви мусите пам’ятати, мої старші читачі, рафінованого творця, генія нової музики,—незабутнього автора пальців, що тхнуть ладаном.” Intelihent, 138. The narrator references here a popular Russian romance by Aleksandr Vertinskii “Vashi pal’tsy pakhnut ladanom” (Your fingers smell of frankincense; 1916) dedicated to a popular actress, the star of silent cinema, Vira Kholodna.
260 “Товаришу інтелігентний читачу мій, не кажіть мені, що вам в ресторані Скрябін більш подобається, ніж ‘Лахміття серця’!..

Товаришку, всіх інших гатунків читачу мій, коли ви по ресторанах і не буваєте, все ж не обвинувачуйте мене в тому, що говорю про дрібниці.” Intelihent, 139.
Yet despite creating a level of closeness and trust, the commentary consistently assaults readers for their bourgeois aesthetic sensibilities. In fact, through his apostrophes the narrator performs an act of ideological “exorcism,” satirizing the bourgeois intelligentsia’s vices as if from the inside. It is made explicit that the novel is written by an intelihent author for intelligentsia readers. From the start, the narrator reveals to his readers that he is one with the protagonist.⁶¹ Any ironic distance from the described film, that would allow the reader to comfortably observe the satirized intelihent, is subverted by the narrator.

The readers’ philistine comfort is disturbed by frequent direct addresses urging them to recognize their acquaintances, or even themselves, in intelihent. For instance, an apostrophe to the reader regarding intelihent’s mimicry of a “revolutionary” performance (in part 3) suggests that the reader is the protagonist’s acquaintance and a member of the same class.⁶²

In the commentary visualizing intelihent’s suicidal ideation after his visit to Dr. Katz, the narrator addresses his male readers; he sarcastically shares statistical data that more than fifty percent of men in cities attend brothels and argues that they are thus definitely familiar with intelihent’s experience.⁶³ By attacking and satirizing intelihent’s vices and values, the novel directly attacks readers’ vices and values, thus fulfilling its manifested utilitarian role. In fact, the novel directly suggests that intelihent and the reader are one and the same:

Я не знайомив вас досі з моїм героєм офіціяльно. Ви знаєте все його життя, але не знаєте першого пункту його анкети: ім’я, по батькові, прізвище …
Я і не буду вас знайомити. Кожен з вас сам знає цей перший пункт. Я не протестуватиму, коли відповідей буде стільки, скільки читачів …

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⁶¹ Cf. the narrator’s commentary on his boyish aspirations to one day wear a pince-nez and a white collar (i.e., to become an intelihent). The narrator concludes: “Багато років вже я сам ношу і комірець, і пенсне …” Intelihent, 8.

⁶² “Ви, сподіваюся, згадали його: він ваш старий знайомий.” Intelihent, 81.

⁶³ “Та сама статистика стверджує безперечно, що серед вас, мужчини-читачі, коли ви мешканці міста, більша половина знайома з особистого досвіду з переживаннями моєго героя ... Ви — нормальні ...” Intelihent, 58.

⁶⁴ Intelihent, 128.
I haven’t yet officially introduced you to my hero. You know his entire life, but you don’t know the first item on his curriculum vitae: his name, patronymic, and last name …
And I will not be introducing you. Each of you knows personally this first point. I will not object, if there are as many answers as there are readers …

While arguing that Intelihent generalizes and typifies the features of the bourgeoisie, the narrator also implies that readers will understand Intelihent’s motivations and a stance in life because these directly reflect their own lives. The novel attempts to erase the boundary between reader and protagonist and, by implication, to render permeable the boundary between art and life.

The direct attack on readers’ bourgeois sensibilities is further stressed when the cyclicaliry of the novel is imposed on them:

Цеб-то? … Нема кінця? …
Так! Кінця немає … Починайте дивитися з початку!
Вам не хочеться? —Шкода … Шкода, бо доведеться. І вам, і вашим дітям, і вашим онукам …265

That is to say? ... No ending? ...
Yes! There is no ending … Start watching from the beginning!
You don’t feel like? —It’s a pity … It’s a pity, because you will have to. You, and your children, and your grandchildren …

In one of the book’s final apostrophes, the commentary is instrumental in destroying an illusion the novel upheld from the beginning—that it presents a simultaneous narration of a film screening. After the final film fade-out, the narrator reveals that, in fact, there is no film:

Зовсім темніє … Тепер, коли ви в кіні, ви маєте право чекати напису: “Кінець.” …
Картина скінчилась. Можна бути одвертим. —Річ у тому, що це—не зовсім кіно. Я ж вас просив лише уявити собі, що ви в кіні, і я не знаю навіть, чи ви моє прохання виконали.
… Коротко кажучи—це зовсім не кіно …266

It fades to dark completely … Now, if you are in a movie theatre, you have the right to expect the title “The end” …
The picture has finished. I can be frank. —The fact of the matter is that this is not quite cinema. Didn’t I ask you to only imagine that you were in a cinema, and I don’t even know if you complied with my request. … In short—this is not cinema at all …

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265 Intelihent, 145.
266 Intelihent, 144–45.
The commentary boldly admits that the film was only an artistic device in *Intelihent*, a fact which subverts readers’ expectations for closure in the story. By arguing that there is no movie, the narrator suggests that the novel portrays real life. The narrator thus plays with narrative distance in an attempt to redraw the boundaries between art and life.

**Conclusion**

Skrypnyk’s goal with *Intelihent* was to create a new artistic form, one which would serve a utilitarian function and fulfill the Futurists’ aspirations of constructing “rational” art. The novel should be analyzed in light of this conception of art, for it stands as a model of Ukrainian Futurism and an avant-garde novel *par excellence*. Through its experimental form, explicit ekphrasis of film narration, and presentation of the figure of the film commentator, *Intelihent* exemplifies the emerging post-revolutionary artistic form, violently attacking the bourgeois sensibilities of its readers with radical aesthetic means.

The main story of *Intelihent* is structured as a *Bildungsroman* centered around the formative stages and adult life of its protagonist. At the core of the novel is the satire of Intelihent, a prototypical representative of bourgeois intelligentsia. In its essence, the novel tackles a key problem in post-revolutionary society, namely, the perpetuity of the character, mannerisms, and lifestyle of the bourgeoisie. The novel offers social criticism of their moral, physical and intellectual degradation, and in particular its satire targets the perceived philistinism carried over by the bourgeois intelligentsia into the new socio-political order.

Most importantly, the novel offers extensive criticism and satire of bourgeois art and culture, subverting the idea of literature as entertainment. Skrypnyk’s pointed satire takes aim at the traditional novel and its bourgeois readers. According to Futurists, the reader was no longer expected to be fully engrossed in the artistic universe of a novel or to associate emotionally with
its characters and their stories. Instead, *Intelihent* builds ironic distance into the narrative, which aims to make an intellectual impact on the reader, thus fulfilling the requirements of constructing a functional, utilitarian art.

**Film Ekphrasis**

Radically redrawing the boundaries of individual art forms, the novel centers around the description of a movie. The depicted movie becomes a vehicle for bringing the visual expressiveness of film into literary narration. The depicted movie becomes a vehicle for bringing the visual expressiveness of film into literary narration. In his series of articles on the new social art, Skrypnyk praised cinema for its ability to reach the “documentary certainty of a photograph” and to produce an impact more powerful than in other arts. The novel’s scene descriptions conjure up cinematic imagery in the reader’s imagination, thus promoting the cinematic reading of the text.

Moreover, infusing the film-like narration with the documentary qualities of *publitsystyka*, the novel aims to represent life in a new way. The epilogue reveals that the featured film does not correspond to any actual movie, suggesting that it portrays life itself. This comment reinforces an association between the depicted film and a study of a “living” specimen of bourgeois intelligentsia. This study presents Intelihent as a condensed idea of a man pieced together from various representative features of the bourgeois intelligentsia. The use of cinematic symbolism impacts this construction too, as it transforms represented objects into

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267 “Треба зауважити особливо отой могутній вплив художнього кіна на споживача, який не має рівних собі по інших мистецтвах. Причина тут—саме в документальній певності фотографії, яка примушує споживача вірити кінові, навіть художньому.” Skrypnyk, “Mystetstva asotsial’ni,” 28; emphasis in the original.

268 Vertov describes similar construction of a perfect cinematic image of a man applying his montage method: “I am kino-eye, I create a man more perfect than Adam. […] I am kino-eye. 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.” Dziga Vertov, “Kinoks: A Revolution,” 17.
signs, making the hero appear “more than alive.” Film ekphrasis is thus instrumental in constructing a prototypical bourgeois intelihent and in artistically structuring his life as if it were unfolding in the form of movie sequences suggestive of a social-biological cycle.

Notably, the narrative mode of the film ekphrasis can be defined as a “laconic camera eye,” which is characterized by concrete visual descriptions rendered predominantly in the present tense, short nominal sentences, and a minimum of metaphors or “embellishments.” The explicit emulation of laconic, economical film narration accomplishes Skrypnyk’s goal of achieving a “rational” impact in art.

**External Cinematic Characterization**

In particular, the novel offers an ekphrasis of a cinematic satire, evoking particular visual and cinematic devices that contribute to the social criticism of the bourgeois intelligentsia. The film narration uses devices of cinematic characterization to foreground representative features of the intelligentsia. These include dramatizing characters’ psychological states through gestures and facial expressions, using close-up shots to show characters’ reactions, and using extreme close-ups to emphasize characteristic or meaningful details of characters’ appearance.

Oskar Reding argued that the film form of Intelihent’s main story line is an ideal tool for generalizing individual features of an intelihent and for showing the main character as a universal type. Indeed, all of Intelihent’s features and characteristics are universal. Moreover, the fragmentation of various characters’ bodies through close-up shots and the mechanical repetition of their gestures and expressions both help to create a de-individualized, schematic type of an intelihent akin to a puppet. By such techniques the novel constructs a caricature image

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of a bourgeois Everyman, and presents a powerful historical commentary on the adjustment of the bourgeoisie in post-revolutionary Soviet society.

Film ekphrasis serves as a most appropriate tool for satirizing the bourgeoisie’s obsession with their constructed self-image, external appearance and status, inasmuch as cinematic characterization ably foregrounds the artificiality and pretense of their life, as well as their *inauthentic* experiences. For instance, instead of partaking in real life and playing an active role in the revolution, Intelihent is shown placing himself at the centre of a theatrical performance which presents a simulacrum of the real revolution and which exposes the intelligentsia’s mimicry in the new society.

Overall, throughout the novel the film narrative maintains the focus on Intelihent, offering exclusive access to his mental states—including thoughts, dreams and aspirations—through visualizations and point-of-view shots. It also visualizes stories from his imagination in concrete detail. However, the contrast between these subjective visualizations and the reality of the situation expose Intelihent’s hypocrisy, vanity and artificiality, and foreground his delusions of grandeur and detachment from reality. The juxtaposition of his less-than-heroic actions in reality with his aspirations generate a dramatic irony that contributes to the novel’s satire.

**Literary Montage**

The narrative structure and composition of the novel is also greatly affected by film. Key cinematic editing devices aiding in its structuring include ellipses, crosscutting, and rhythmic repetitions. The use of these devices parallels their use in films of the classical continuity editing style. For example, the ellipses (represented through fade-outs) omit insignificant episodes and action irrelevant to the story. Or again, parallel editing or crosscutting within a sequence is used either to present simultaneous action or to create suspense or tension in a scene.
On the other hand, along with the use of classical continuity editing devices the film narrative also emulates experimental film editing techniques that contribute to non-linearity and fragmentariness in the narrative. There is a clear difference between the use of continuity editing in the chapters describing Intelihent’s childhood, youth, and later stages of his life and career, on the one hand, and the use of fragmentary, discontinuous sequences to describe WWI, the October revolution, and the Civil war, on the other hand. The use of literary montage thus largely corresponds with the non-linear narration of the chaos of the revolution and the intelligentsia’s disorientation in the face of such life-shattering events.

**Benshi Commentary**

The fusion of literary and cinematic media results in two complementary narrative modes: one providing an ekphrastic translation of a film story as it unfolds on the screen, and another, providing a commentary on the film story. These two modes correspond to two narrative perspectives: that of an effaced narrator rendering the dispassionate perspective of a camera eye, and that of an opinionated narrator-commentator (*benshi*). The introduction of the figure of a *benshi* commentator was itself another radical innovation that made the novel’s experiment unique. Unlike the style and language of the film ekphrasis, the narrator’s voice in the overt metafictional commentary is highly voluble and polemical, frequently making biting satirical remarks.

A number of similarities may be observed between traditional *benshi* commentators in Japanese film and the narrator in *Intelihent*. Both summarize action occurring on and off screen and link together what seems disconnected in the film. Both explain and comment on the technology of cinema. And both give access to characters’ thoughts (the commentary in *Intelihent* dramatizes or visualizes these thoughts, similar to a film ekphrasis). Finally, both craft political and social commentary. Notably, *Intelihent*’s narrator also furnishes the novel with
extensive commentary on bourgeois art and novels, including the ubiquitous use of artistic clichés. He also offers digressive opinions on various ethical, philosophical, and political topics, including the society, norms, morals and culture of the bourgeoisie.

Yet, Skrypnyk’s commentator also transgresses traditional roles of benshi. In the film’s running commentary, Skrypnyk also mirrors the preferred style of the Futurists, namely, of publitsystyka. That is, he directly addresses his readers and leads a constant dialogue with them. Such frequent apostrophes often forcefully liken the readers to the bourgeois intelligentsia. The aggressive attacks on the bourgeois reader in the commentary support the overall objective and aesthetics of the novel: to assault the philistinism and bourgeois aesthetic sensibilities of the reader.

The novel’s general effect is thus a pointed satire of the perpetuity of bourgeois mannerisms in Soviet society. The double lens of film in literature produces an ironic narrative distance in the presentation of Intelihent’s story, while criticism of the bourgeois intelligentsia is accomplished mostly by the interplay of the film ekphrasis and the ironic commentary (including the intertitles, which often comment on the film).\textsuperscript{270} The narrative distance is subverted in the narrator’s addresses to the reader, as he reveals his own affinity with the protagonist, and moreover, exposes and exorcizes the bourgeois qualities in his readers.

Skrypnyk’s experimental novel also largely meets the avant-garde requirements for a new art, serving a utilitarian role in its satire, and also laying bare its own constructedness, visuality, and production principles. The novel’s goals are reinforced by the visual construction of the text itself, from the schematic cover illustrations to the graphic representation of the distinct narrative modes, intertitles and headings. A constructive principle also governs the combination of

\textsuperscript{270} For instance, the commentary on the prologue ironically repeats the bourgeois critics’ argument that art influences each recipient individually, yet the film shows an identical, shared reaction to the diva’s performance.
literature with ekphrases of various media (cinema, a puppet play, and an operetta) and of other artistic and non-fictional discourses. Characterized by elements of journalism, polemical publitstyka, and propaganda, these non-fiction genres represent Skrypnyk’s vision of new social arts with a utilitarian function, designating the novel’s satire as a tool to reshape the new Soviet society.

Despite these notable formal innovations, critics and the general public alike did not respond to the experiment of Intelihent with enthusiasm. At a public meeting in Odesa dedicated to Skrypnyk’s screened novel, proletarian readers criticized it as a form much more inaccessible to wider audiences than a traditional novel. Responding to their criticism, Oskar Reding defended Skrypnyk’s choice of an experimental hybrid form, expressing the belief that the screened novel genre would eventually find its reader. Another reviewer, L. Starynkevych attacked both the schematism of the novel’s characters and its lack of national characteristics, which, in her view, made the novel sound like a translation from another language. Earlier in her review she did also praise the novel’s innovative narrative techniques.

Following such cool critical reception of the novel, Skrypnyk himself admitted to some of its shortcomings. Overall, his experiment aimed to achieve the impact of publitstyka in a literary work. By combining elements of fiction, cinematic narration, and publitstyka, he aimed to construct a “rational,” functional artistic form. In a series of articles on social arts Skrypnyk admitted that through this synthesis he intended to offer a transitional genre “as a necessary

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concession to a contemporary reader who finds pure publitsystyka, as well as pure science ‘boring’.\(^{274}\)

However, Skrypnyk also concluded that the manifest goal of a “rational,” utilitarian artistic form with the impact of a publitsystyka was unattainable in a fictional work.\(^{275}\) His article further shows the impossibility of producing fully utilitarian forms in literature without diminishing the work’s artistic quality, or, vice versa, of introducing elements of direct publitsystyka discourse into fiction without readers treating it as an artistic device.\(^{276}\)

Skrypnyk’s experiment succeeded, inasmuch as it effectively incorporated cinematic narrative modes and composition into a literary work. Moreover, the synthesis of cinematic ekphrasis with overt metafictional commentary produced new opportunities for modernizing the role of the traditional fictional narrator. All these proved excellent devices for revolutionizing Ukrainian literature.

Finally, the novel’s strongest point is the construction of a generalized, universal character-type through cinematic means. Not only would Intelihent’s situation be recognizable to any urban dweller living in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, but it also pertains to certain classes of people more broadly, and even to humanity in general. The cinematic sequences in a way constitute a parable of human life, while the cyclicality of Intelihent’s story parallels the cyclicality of events in any life, including the passage from birth to childhood, to youth, to

\(^{274}\) “Це можна розглядати, як необхідну поступку сучасному некультурному читачеві, що для нього чиста публіцистика, як і чиста наука,—’скучні’.” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 38; emphasis in the original.

\(^{275}\) “Перший з них [напрямки експериментування], заздалегідь засуджений на невдачу, можна формулювати так: добитися мистецькими засобами публіцистичного (характером і актуальністю) впливу на читача.” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 38; emphasis in the original.

\(^{276}\) “Річ ясна, що мої ремарки було сприйнято, як художній прийом ... Звичайно, що це й справді—художній прийом. Отже, я здискредитував себе в головному, що потребно мені було, як лівому для моєї мети,— здискредитував себе, як публіциста. Цим одним я вже підірвав функціональні можливості, з розрахунку на які мій роман було задумано. Заведенням же публіцистичного елементу я зменшив, звичайно, й ’художню’ цінність речі. На щастя це мене мало турбує ...” Skrypnyk, “Literatura,” 39; emphasis in the original.
maturity and to the birth of one’s own children. *Intelihent* conjures up powerful scenes that force readers to reflect on the philistinism, hypocrisy, opportunism, consumerism, materialism, and obsession with status in their own lives, as these aspects of human nature are universal, like the figure of Intelihent.
Conclusions

This study has examined the emulation of film aesthetics in literature as a primary vehicle of modernizing the Ukrainian experimental novel in the late 1920s. Through the juxtaposition of cinematic, fictional and nonfictional elements, Ukrainian writers produced innovative works that redrew the boundaries of traditional genres, art and reality, as well as reconfigured the relationship between the text and the reader.

Chapter 1 explored cinema aesthetics in the Ukrainian experimental novel in a historical context. It analyzed the implications of emulating three key cinematic devices in storytelling: dispassionate camera-eye narration, literary montage as a device for narrative organization, and external cinematic characterization. These aesthetic concepts, transposed from film analysis to literature, were analyzed in experimental short stories and novels from the 1920s. Different aspects of the intermedial relationship between cinema and literature were examined, as was the function of cinematic devices in the construction of the fictional universe of the experimental novel. Chapters 2 and 3 examined the use of cinema devices in Iurii Ianovs’kyi’s *Maister korablia* and Leonid Skrypnyk’s *Intelihent*, key novels of the period that emulate film devices. These works show an overt fascination with the cinematic medium, which affects their selection of themes, narrative modes, construction and characterization.

Film production functions as a major theme in the memoir-novel *Maister korablia*, and cinematic camera-eye narration was specified as the narrative mode most appropriate for directly rendering the narrator’s memories and perceptions. The novel uses this narrative mode to reduce the distance between the narrator’s memories and their presentation. *Intelihent*, on the contrary, incorporates cinematic narration to *increase* the distance between the narrator and the protagonist. Presenting the protagonist’s story through the double lens of film ekphrasis and
publitstystyka-like commentary generates satire of the bourgeois intelligentsia and contributes to a perspective of ironic distance.

**Camera-Eye Narration**

The major functions of camera-eye narration are to defamiliarize depictions and to achieve higher expressivity in literary narration. Novels using this technique present their scenes through concrete cinematic visualizations, with most sequences rendered in the present tense, in contrast to conventional past tense narration. Present-tense cinematic visualization aims to reproduce in the novel the immediate unfolding of cinematic narratives. Dynamically alternating between present and past (and between perfective and imperfective aspects) also contributes to a more lively narration and highlights certain key events.

While both employ the technique, the two novels produce different versions of camera-eye narration. *Maister korablia* blends autobiographical and cinematic narrative modes in an attempt to directly render the narrator’s memories. These concrete visualizations are presented as if projected on the narrator’s “mindscreen.” Some scenes are depicted from the dispassionate point of view of a camera eye, yet the novel also enhances camera-eye narration by registering the full range of the narrator’s sensory perceptions and highly imaginative vision. *Maister korablia*’s narrative mode can therefore be characterized as a poetic camera eye, which challenges and transgresses the limitations of the mechanical camera.

On the other hand, Skrypnyk’s camera-eye narration aims to offer a “rational” and dispassionate perspective on the events, protagonist, and characters. Typical camera-eye sequences in *Intelihent* are rendered in a minimalist manner, through simple and short nominal sentences in the present tense without excessive “ornamentation” such as epithets, metaphors and similes. If a metaphor or metonymy is included, it usually foregrounds visual associations...
between images or objects. In this sense film ekphrasis in *Intellihent* is employed to create what may be characterized as laconic narration.

**Literary Montage**

Ideologically, cinema served as the most suitable vehicle for modernizing the Ukrainian novel. A fairly new artistic medium, cinema *represented* modernity, technological progress and dynamism. Moreover, in the late 1920s the aesthetics of non-acted cinema offered Ukrainian avant-gardists devices for the direct rendition of “life as it is” in the newly popular genres of “factual” literature.

However, artists also recognized that the photographic “realism” of cinematic representation was part of an artistic illusion skillfully constructed by the new medium. Skrypnyk comments in his article on the illusory “truthfulness” of the cinematic image: “Of course, the ‘great liar’ ‘lies’ more than any other art. But in this case the statement is complicated by the fact that no other art offers anything even close to that acute ‘documentary’ certainty or ‘truthfulness’ that is a typical feature of cinema.”¹ The experimental novels of the day mirrored these issues in their themes and narrative devices. For instance, a scene from the newsreel production in *Maister korablia* demonstrates how, through montage, cinematic images can simultaneously replicate actual events and generate ideas not originally present. The idea of cinema’s inherent photographic “realism” is challenged as montage introduces the potential for the artistic construction of a cinematic world. Even as the mechanical camera faithfully recorded life material, an artist—a cameraman, editor or film director—selected and edited this filmed

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material. Cinematic montage thus brings awareness to the subjectivity of vision and the subjectivity of artistic construction.

Artists of the 1920s argued that narrative structures in the novel needed to reflect the radical socio-political changes of the day. Experimental novels produce fragmentary, discontinuous, nonlinear narratives through the emulation of montage. In *Maister korablia*, ellipses, flashbacks and flashforwards reorder To-Ma-Ki’s memories in a nonlinear pattern, mimicking the nonlinear unfolding of his memory, while *Intelihent* uses fragmentary narration as a visual metaphor for the nonlinear and abrupt experience of time during the revolution. Another editing device, crosscutting, helps both narrators to switch effortlessly between parallel actions occurring simultaneously in different places, which generates suspense in the narratives.

For Skrypnyk, literary montage also came to serve as the most appropriate device for visualizing contrasts between the intelligentsia’s aspirations of grandeur and their actual behavior, that is, between their dreams and reality. Exhibiting this immense gap conveyed their hypocrisy, opportunism and inauthenticity and contributed to the satire of the bourgeois intelligentsia.

**Cinematic External Characterization**

The effect of cinematic characterization is most evident in Skrypnyk’s *Intelihent*, which predominantly uses cinematic devices for character exposition. Meanwhile, *Maister korablia* offers characters’ direct voices by including their letters or personal stories. Because *Intelihent* consistently emulates camera-eye narration, it offers the impersonal point of view of an external observer. The camera records visible phenomena and surface appearances, and as a result the mental processes and psychological motivations of characters are typically revealed to the reader through their reactions, facial expressions and gestures, as well as through visualizations of their thought processes. Here cinematic devices of characterization are instrumental in communicating
the protagonist’s inauthenticity and obsession with constructing his self-image. The repetition of Intelihent’s expressions and gestures also emphasizes his transformation into a mechanical puppet and contributes to constructing a universal type or Everyman.

Cinematic external characterization reconfigured the characters of the traditional novel. Ukrainian experimental literature produced schematic characters that reminded critics of the abstract, flat and two-dimensional characters of early silent films. The fragmentation of the human body through close-ups and rhythmic montage organization also contributed to producing schematic, even dehumanized, characters. Similar effects were achieved in the avant-garde visual arts, which often portrayed grotesque, fragmented and deformed human bodies. In this manner, the Ukrainian experimental novel parallels the abstract representation of the human body in paintings by Alexandra Exter, Kazimir Malevich and Vadym Meller; in Cubist collages; and in the ballets Isyf Prekrasnyi by Kasyan Goleizovsky and Petroushka by Alexandre Benois.

**Avant-garde Aesthetics**

Both Maister korablia and Intelihent display an overt fascination with avant-garde aesthetics. Specifically, both echo the concept of artistic construction from heterogeneous materials. Intelihent also foregrounds the Constructivist idea of functionality in art and attempts to construct a “rational” and socially utilitarian novel. The concept of functionality is also reflected in Maister korablia, specifically in the depiction of the construction of the ship, which is simultaneously an artistic and a utilitarian object. Yet despite aligning with Soviet avant-garde aesthetics, both novels treat the official ideology with ambivalence. Even though Maister korablia’s narrator includes passages where he idealizes the proletariat, the majority of the protagonists are not proletarians, but artistic elites. Meanwhile, the experimental form of Intelihent is hardly accessible to the masses; it appeals to the intelligentsia and to artistic elites
rather than to proletarian audiences. Thus the novel illustrates a paradox of avant-garde art: aspiring to transform the masses, yet enjoying little popular success.

The avant-garde themes of innovation and artistic experimentation were at the heart of Ukrainian experimental literature. In *Maister korablia*, the theme of sea travel, which was unexplored in Ukrainian literature, and the idea of veering from the beaten path both metaphorically represent the exploration of new ways of storytelling. Similarly, in *Intelihent* a harsh satire of the bourgeois intelligentsia corresponds with the novel’s subversion of traditional bourgeois art and novelistic conventions. By eschewing traditional literary devices and clichés, *Intelihent* exemplifies the bourgeoisie’s artificiality and obsession with a constructed self-image, one often borrowed from literature and art.

The novels also align with avant-garde aesthetics in adopting a collage composition. This contributes to their open structure, a structure which allows them to absorb elements of various media, including both high and low art. Along with traditional narrative elements, the novels also incorporate ekphrases of film, a ballet, a puppet play, a circus performance, elements of non-fiction or *publitsystyka*, as well as “fragments of reality” or “life material.” Moreover, both include self-reflexive, metafictional commentary on the composition of the novel and its devices. As collage compositions, the texture of each heterogeneous element is highlighted in the novels.

The juxtaposition of film ekphrasis narration and metafictional *benshi* commentary are visually underscored in *Intelihent*, being graphically represented in the text by different font sizes, capitalization, visual frames and spacing. In *Maister korablia* collage produces the effect of an open composition that allows the recording of characters’ *skaz* narratives. As a result, both novels lack one strong centre and reject monologic narration.

The novels not only “lay bare” their own constructedness by showing the individual materials used in the process of artistic creation, but they also include their own possible
reception. As Vertov’s *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* simultaneously presents both a film and an audience viewing that film in a theatre, so Ianovs’kyi and Skrypnyk’s readers are inscribed in their experimental novels through direct narratorial addresses. Frequent apostrophes in the novels mock their bourgeois readers and violently attack them in the attempt to destabilize their aesthetic sensibilities.

The use of heterogeneous collages and a lack of causality between parts further reconfigures the relationship between the avant-garde text and the reader. This collage composition and openness frees readers to invest their own meanings and find their own significance in the fragmented mix of materials. These experimental novels thus engage the reader, making them co-creators in the construction of its artistic universe.

Ianovs’kyi’s narrator expresses his fascination with collective production and critiques the position of a film director as that of a totalitarian dictator of a film production. This view represents the pluralism and democratization of artistic processes in the late 1920s. However, this artistic freedom and unbridled experimentation was brought to a total halt in Soviet art with the official adoption of socialist realism in 1934. The experiment of the 1920s Ukrainian novel is thus as significant as it was short-lived. Formulaic, cliché and highly regulated totalitarian art came to dominate art in the late 1930s. Traditional narrative modes and literary devices “combatted” by experimental authors were resurrected. And in an evolution of Futurist ideas, the totalitarian art of socialist realism became the ultimate utilitarian art.²

² Boris Groys argues that “Socialist realism was not created by the masses but was formulated in their name by well-educated and experienced elites who had assimilated the experience of the avant-garde and been brought to socialist realism by the internal logic of the avant-garde method itself, which had nothing to do with the actual tastes and demands of the masses. […] Under Stalin the dream of the avant-garde was in fact fulfilled and the life of society was organized in monolithic artistic forms, though of course not those that the avant-garde itself had favored.” Boris Groys. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (London: Verso, 2011), 9. He also demonstrates that European avant-garde art evolved to “neotraditional” art, such as Soviet socialist realism, French neoclassicism, or the traditional English, American and French prose of the 1930s and 1940s.
At the same time, the de-individualization and dehumanization of this experimental literature served as a gruesome foreshadowing of the dehumanizing policies of the Stalinist state. In the 1930s the individual was indeed reduced to a functional cog in the totalitarian machine. Following upon this dehumanization, the collectivization campaign in Ukraine exterminated millions of ethnic Ukrainians in Holodomor; this campaign was accompanied by the eradication of Ukrainian artistic and national elites in the political terror of the 1930s.

Yet the artistic revolution of the late 1920s and early 1930s revolutionized Ukrainian literature by producing novels of high artistic quality. Through this unparalleled formal experimentation, Ukrainian avant-gardists ardently strove to be a substantial part of the international avant-garde. Futurist journal *Nova generatsiia* consistently promoted new aesthetic ideas and new art by not only Ukrainian but also Central and Western European avant-gardists, placing Ukraine in the wider global network of artistic exchanges. Such drive for avant-garde’s “internationalization” was a top priority of Ukrainian experimental artists, as it was as well for the vast majority of Central and East European avant-gardists in the 1920s.3

The experimental incorporation of cinematic devices in literature marks an important shift in the search for new expressive means and narrative modes in literature from other media. Film aesthetics also proved to be a productive experimental device in European and North American literature in the 1920s and beyond, thus again aligning the aspirations of Ukrainian authors with those of their international counterparts.

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3 Timothy Benson illustrates this point by noting the avant-gardists’ holding of international artistic exhibitions in the 1920s: “Taken together, these events conveyed the yearning for a world beyond, so perfectly embodied in the works of Teige and Štyrský: an assertion of belonging, no longer just to the local scene of café, atelier, and literary circle, nor even just to like-minded artists and intellectuals in other localities, but to human destiny.” Timothy O. Benson, “Exchange and Transformation: The Internationalization of the Avant-garde(s) in Central Europe,” in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 200), 62–64.
American novels in the 1920s directly reflect the popularity of film in American culture and are also motivated by the authors’ experiences working for film studios. In particular, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), as well as the prose of Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos all feature experiments with narrative perspective and montage organization explicitly affected by film aesthetics.\(^4\)

In the following decades, the “golden age” of American cinema (as embodied by Hollywood film production) inspired the genre of the “Hollywood novel,” emblematic examples of which are Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* (1939), F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon* (1941), and Budd Schulberg’s *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941).\(^5\) The novels of Russian-American writer Vladimir Nabokov (in particular his 1932 *Camera Obscura*) have also been characterized as direct results of Nabokov’s high regard for cinema and his fascination with Hollywood.\(^6\) All these novels frequently emulate cinematic devices and focus on film production thematically.

The rise in emulating cinematic devices in Ukrainian experimental fiction coincided with the popularity of film and the significant achievements of the Ukrainian film industry in the 1920s. The experiment of the French *nouveau roman* of late 1950s and 1960s also paralleled writers’ direct involvement with the film industry. Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon and others actively sought new modes of artistic expression from cinema, closely collaborating with the experimental filmmakers of the Nouvelle Vague (or New Wave) film

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movement. For instance, like the novels of Iановський and Скряпник, the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet are predominantly written in the timeless “cinematic present.”

Viewing literary-cinematic experimentation in 1920s Ukraine in this broader context demonstrates its significance in a wider cultural context. Ukrainian authors successfully introduced into literature cinematically-inspired narrative modes decades prior to and independently from American and French writers. Their experimental narratives also made a significant impact on future literary experiments in Ukraine, specifically on the Ukrainian postmodernist prose of the 1990s.

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