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**Voix sur les ondes : enquêtes orales et témoignages dans le reportage radiophonique (XXe-XXIe siècles)**

# The Radio of the Future and Futurist Poets as its First Engineers

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Le jour où le message sur la victoire de la révolution d'Octobre est diffusé depuis Saint-Pétersbourg, la radio devient une puissante source d'inspiration pour l'imaginaire révolutionnaire. Lénine s'adresse au monde entier, mais seule la flotte militaire dispose alors de la possibilité technique de recevoir un tel signal. Le message devient le média, et la radio devient, selon les propres termes de Lénine, un "journal sans papier et sans distance". La radio fascine non seulement l'avant-garde politique, mais aussi l'avant-garde littéraire. Dans les années 1920, la technique d'enregistrement d'avant-garde (le phonographe) se trouve reliée aux moyens de transmission socialiste (la radio) par une boucle de rétroaction, mais aussi par une bibliographie commune, même s'il peut sembler étrange aujourd'hui de voir les noms de Lénine et de Krouchenykh sur la même couverture. Dans cet article, nous analyserons trois textes sur la radio écrits par les figures clés du futurisme - "La radio du futur" de Khlebnikov (1921), "La langue de Lénine" de Kruchenykh (1925) et "L'expansion de la base verbale" de Maïakovski (1927). Rédigés à différents stades de la révolution politique et technologique, ces textes témoignent de pratiques et de positions politiques fondamentalement différentes.

## Abstract

From the day when the message about the victory of the October revolution was broadcast from St. Petersburg, radio became a powerful resource for the revolutionary imagination. Lenin addressed the whole world, but only the military fleet had the technical opportunity of receiving such a signal at that time. The message became the medium, and radio became, in Lenin's own words, the "newspaper without paper and without distance". Radio fascinated not only the political avant-garde, but the literary one as well. The recording technique of avant-garde (phonograph) was connected with the apparatuses of socialist transmission (radio) by a feedback loop, but also through a shared bibliography of the 1920s, despite how strange it may seem now to see the names of Lenin and Kruchenykh on the same cover. In this paper we will analyze three texts on radio written by the key figures of futurism - Khlebnikov's "Radio of the Future" (1921), Kruchenykh's "Lenin's Language" (1925), and Mayakovsky's "Expansion of the Verbal Base" (1927). Written at various stages of the political and technological revolution these texts point to fundamentally different practices and political positions.

Keywords : radio, futurism, Mayakovskij, Krychenukh, Khlebnikov

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**Mots-clés :**
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A technical history of the radio starts with the invention of the electrical telegraph. It was then only natural for the former to become an important medium of Soviet power, which was inaugurated through capture of the telegraph, before being distributed in packages along with electricity[1]. One might imagine the leader of the Russian revolution speaking *in front* of a wide audience (though the said “in front” changes its meaning as we discuss mediation). In actual fact, radio doesn’t immediately translate into a broadcasting medium but does the job of connecting a number of local points, and its wires usually lead to a military service. While the wireless telegraph first appears on ships and is mostly used for transmitting SOS signals, it is still related to some concrete coordinates on the map[2].

One of the first radio stations was built on New Holland Island in S-Pb. As such, from this radio station the message announcing the victory of the Revolution was broadcast. It was the radio-telegraph. Lenin addressed the whole world, but only the military fleet had the technical opportunity of receiving such a signal at that time. This may be one of the reasons why the iconography of the October revolution contains so many revolutionaries-sailors portrayed as the most receptive audience of this medium, as well as of the message. What is certain is that, starting with that broadcast, radio became a powerful resource for the revolutionary imagination, though not always accessible technically or univocally interpretable. Later, in a letter Lenin would call radio “a paperless newspaper without distances[3]”.

Such a definition of medium appears to be central. If bourgeois governments are still spilling “streams of lies” (which requires ink), then the Soviet Republic “throws into space the response of the workers and peasants[4]”. In such a way, radio already helps not only to overcome the information blockade but also state borders, as easily as the world communist revolution, which had promised to eliminate these borders. Revolutionary *media is the message* as such.

Which technologies are preferred and which are disliked by certain ideologies and regimes? For example, the esoteric and anthroposophe Rudolf Steiner referred to the gramophone as the devil's instrument. In contrast, Soviet propaganda considered gramophone recordings broadcast on the radio as a means of enlightenment and a tool for fighting against religious prejudices[5]. This connection between sound and supernatural is significant.

On another occasion, Edison invented sound recording after his wife passed away. While she was alive, he conducted numerous experiments with this technology and even asked her to say something so that her voice could be recorded. One of her witty phrases was “Today's Mary speaks to tomorrow's Thomas (or, from your perspective, yesterday's Mary speaks to today's Thomas). I wonder what else you can do with it.” In the first comments on the new technology, her husband will specify: “Phonographic

books, which will speak to blind people […] a registry […] the last words of dying persons[6].”

If we go back to revolutionary Russia, the primary role of radio was seen as replacing church preaching, essentially mimicking the same medium — verbal voice exposure — in a different context. Loudspeakers were frequently installed in churches that had been converted into clubs and reading rooms. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the population often displayed a magical, almost sacred attitude towards this technical novelty that disseminated authoritative discourse.

The literary avant-garde was also fascinated by radio. Morse code initially existed in written form (where a sequence of signals was written on paper and then read in “one glance”). However, soon, operators learned to “catch the meaning on the air,” which meant they could recognise a series of signals by ear. Therefore, the early cultural history of radio appears to oscillate between written and oral speech. It reflects the first futuristic text about radio — Khlebnikov's “The Radio of the Future” (1921):

> Advice on day-to-day matters will alternate with lectures […] The crests of *waves in the sea* of human knowledge will roll across the entire country into each local Radiostation, to be projected that very day as *letters onto the dark pages of enormous books, higher than houses*, that stand in the center of each town, *slowly turning their own pages*. […] These books of the streets will be known as Radio reading walls[7].

By capitalising on the word *Radio* in 1921, Khlebnikov indicates that it already functions as a replacement for the church. Introduced into the public sphere of the new republic, this intermedial object exceeds the role of an institutional interface:

> The Radio of the Future — the central tree of our consciousness […] the least disruption of Radio operations would produce a *mental blackout* over the entire country, a temporary *loss of consciousness*. […] Radio has solved a problem that the church itself was unable to solve (395).

If cessation of the radio's functioning could potentially result in “loss of consciousness”, it means that it is already integrated into the transcendental apparatus of the new social body. In this context, it is already not surprising that the sensory capabilities of radio are anticipated by Khlebnikov long before this device became a technical reality for the masses.

> Every settlement will have listening devices and metallic voices to serve one sense, metallic eyes to serve the other. […] And thus will Radio acquire an even greater power over the minds of the nation (395).

In fact, in 1921 Khlebnikov anticipates what the contemporary philosopher Bernard Stiegler would call *psychopouvoir*: it is radio in the 1920s that he considers the starting point of the new economy of attention and constituting mass audience[8]. Although radio opened up such a promising perspective of "power over the minds of the nation", it operated with economic independence from Soviet central power (which, at the beginning of the 1920s, wasn't highly centralised itself) and sometimes even created a risk of "radio chaos", like in the West[9]. While there were variations worldwide, radio generally intertwined with the state regime (more privately in the US, more state-controlled in France or England, and even supported by the church in Italy). In the USSR, radio fell under the jurisdiction of the *People's Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs*. In particular, these media-institutions were those that needed to be occupied first during the October Revolution. Nevertheless, in the epoch of NEP, there were still some joint-stock companies like *Radioperedacha*, involved in the development of the civil radio broadcasting network.

Even more interesting is that radio was invested not only by the enterprising initiative of this company but also by the inventive attitude of radio-club members and individual radio amateurs. And finally, for some already purely technological reasons, radio was a medium to which censorship adapted with difficulty — since it had been designed for *printed matter*. Less than half of broadcast time was devoted to text; it also included music, and even the human voice could potentially carry a lot of ambiguity — at least until the 1930s when all texts read on the radio became subject to mandatory previews. This can be seen not so much as political but first and foremost as a form of *media censorship*. As the resolution of the Central Committee testifies in 1927: "It is necessary to take measures to protect the microphones from unauthorized access[10]." We can even call this a termidor of printed matter over free sound distribution. Starting in the mid-1930s, a special publication, Radio Worker, was introduced to simplify transmission and control of information. In this publication, 90% of all spoken texts for local broadcasting were printed in advance.

In a reversal of the feedback loop described by Khlebnikov (" to be projected that very day as letters onto the dark pages of enormous books"), the radio word is more likely to turn into print the day before. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, who was responsible for cultural and educational matters, emphasised this boundary (which can be considered as mysterious as the famous Wittgensteinian formula): "Often what may be allowed to be pronounced elsewhere should be prohibited from radio transmission[11]."

This could be compared to the familiar contemporary phenomenon: someone reacts to comments on social networks in a way that he or she wouldn't in person. On the contrary, radio was to function as a social network but was shielded from certain types of speeches or appeals. Conversely, those speeches associated with radio as a medium were never actually pronounced on it. Just as we lack film footage of the capture of the Winter Palace (which exists only in reenactment by Evreinov and later staging by Eisenstein)[12], despite the abundance of iconography related to "Ilyich and the Radio," Lenin never spoke live on the radio because he passed away before the proper technical

capability for live voice broadcasting became available.

Does this mean that the Revolution was fake news or that all these images are false? No, but it requires some technical precisions. In October, Lenin used the radio-telegraph, which means he transmitted some text or even less — a message encoded in Morse code. In later photos, we may observe not broadcasting but the *recording* of his voice by a phonograph, which was then distributed. In this case, Edison's law applied: yesterday's Lenin spoke with tomorrow's Soviet citizens. And, of course, he eagerly anticipated the technical possibility of live broadcasting, much like Khlebnikov: “We may (for)see in our technology the possibility of transmitting *live human speech* over a wireless radio communication[13].”

In 1924, Lenin passed away, but his speech was kept “alive more than anyone else's” because it was *recorded*. While Lenin was still alive, Gustav Klutsis designed several sketches for the installation series “Radio Orator Lenin”[14] (Doc. 1). However, at that time, only a recording of his voice could be transmitted. The orator spoke in the past to his audience, addressing questions like “What is Soviet power?”[15] (Doc. 2) Nevertheless, the lack of technical capabilities never hindered the imagination of the speakers themselves and often even enhanced the impact of their words.

During the recording of his voice, Lenin had to use the phonograph. Perhaps not least it was the imperfection of the recording techniques that required the cultivating of rhetorical ones, precisely those *techniques* or *s* of his speech that were commemorated by formalists. The first issue of LEF in 1924 bore the title “Language of Lenin” and consisted of the analyses of, Tynianov, Eikhenbaum, and Jakubinsky, devoted to different aspects of Lenin’s language[16].

We know formalists contributed to the study of poetic language starting from the manifesto *Art as technique/device*, published the same year as Lenin's oral discussion of Soviet power[17]. This quite rare formalist analysis specified non-artistic language[18] and, even rarer, this famous title is understood literally — art as a translation of its technological condition. So, according to some media-archeological investigations, rhyme was invented as a formal device and, at the same time, as the technical consequence of the acoustics of theatre rooms, just as the length of theatre pieces was determined by the burning time of candles[19].

Consequently, this application of the formalist theory to a corpus of speeches by a political leader could be due to the rare case of coincidence of *technique (device) as a metaphor* for the rhetorical persuasion method (or literary invention in more obvious cases) and *real media technical devices*, such as the phonograph, which obliged Lenin not only to step closer physically but also to adapt rhetorically to it.

To demonstrate this connection, we can examine the cover with the same title, “Language of Lenin” by Alexey Krychenukh (Doc. 3)[20]. Here language or — in an even more formalist subtitle — “techniques/devices of Lenin’s speech” is understood as directly linked to technology, illustrated on the cover, though it’s not clear whether it’s

the gramophone or the radio. While praising Lenin's verbal inventiveness, Krychenukh writes:

> It is highly probable that many of these words were not “invented” by Lenin. But once he heard them, he consolidated them, formalized them, and willy-nilly we will associate them with the name of Lenin, consider them the author. And do most of the “word-makers” invent the words themselves, introducing them into their speech? No, they serve as guides, mediators of the language element, the nameless author of which is the mass[21].

Most of these ideas were not “invented” by Krychenukh. However, once he heard them from the formalists, he consolidated and formalised them. Consequently, we will associate them with Krychenukh's name, which began appearing in later editions in 1927 and 1928 (Doc. 4). So, let's consider him the author in this context.

In this discussion, not only does Lenin appear as one of the futurist poets, but the futurist poet himself (Krychenukh) starts to resemble more a proletarian mediator. After some internal LEF criticism towards the zaum language[22], most futurist poets no longer invent words themselves, but instead serve as guides and mediators of the language of the masses. The technological substrate for this transformation can primarily be attributed to radio.

While content remains relatively consistent (recounting the formalists’ ideas), the title “Lenin's Language” (1925) gradually shifts over successive reprints to “Lenin's Speech” (1927/8) and fluctuates between these two fundamentally different concepts in linguistics. This terminological shift contributes to the fact that, for futurist poets, Lenin's speech contained not only convincing political arguments or rhetorical figures that could be formalised but also something intrinsic to the *word as such*[23]. Such a word was directed not just towards rational comprehension but also towards the ear, especially one that could perceive beyond the semantic dimension[24]. How can we strip words of their meaning? For example, by repeating a word multiple times until it loses its sense, or listening to one’s own recorded voice, finding it sounding rather *estranged*. This is how *estrangement* operates and how it is described in the first collection of articles on the study of poetic language[25]. To achieve this effect, you need to employ the practice of repetition and the technique of recording.

However, as Krychenukh listened to Lenin's recorded speech and discussed its effects, he wasn't deviating from a materialistic interpretation or opposing the commemoration of Lenin[26]. Just the opposite, it was a sort of radical *materialism of the signifier* or even a *media-technical materialism*: the settings of the radio orator on the cover of the first edition indicated the required material-technical base of Lenin’s speech. In the same manner as acoustics bridged the textual to the physical during the recording, the listening linked the symbolic existence of Lenin to the actual situation of listeners. Lenin appeared “more alive than all the living” because his voice was recorded *as such* (and

not only his texts published), and now could be heard and broadcast[27].

The technique of avant-garde recording (phonograph) was linked to the apparatuses of socialist transmission (radio) not only through a feedback loop[28] but also through a shared bibliography of the 1920s, despite how strange it may seem now to see the names of Lenin and Krychenukh on the same cover. The latter could even echo Vertov's idea and say that the phonograph allowed the capture of a reality inaccessible to the human ear, while the All-Union network of radio stations should become a new instrument of communication for the proletarian masses[29]. Let us imagine what the world would have become if Soviet radio had combined Lenin's speeches and futurist poems in its broadcasts — almost as if it were in the repertoire of Khlebnikov's "radio of the future".

However, the feedback loop between the futuristic avant-garde and Bolshevik power goes much further than is generally accepted and has an even more striking example: Vladimir Mayakovsky (Doc. 5).

Sensitive both to the agency of the people's voice and innovative poetry, Mayakovsky had to defend himself both from some less politicised avant-gardists and some proletarian poets who were less avant-garde. The reason for this strange symmetry or resonance could only be the same technical imagery, applicable to both *vox populi* and the phonetic side of language. Both could be recorded and transmitted thanks to the same equipment. Opponents believed that there was a contradiction between the creative ability of hearing anew and the task of giving the "languageless street" the ability to speak[30]. However, Mayakovsky resolved this contradiction precisely through the use of new media.

As Kittler acknowledges, in the 20th century, poets became media specialists. Like any other technology, literary techniques evolved. The technological imagination of the early and pre-revolutionary avant-garde primarily focused on the procedures for recording a signal (with the phonograph). After the revolution, which coincided with the invention of radio, the question arose concerning its transmission. This wasn't just a question of "distribution" because radio retroactively reshaped literary production itself. Mayakovsky illustrates this clearly in an article, published in Novy LEF (Doc. 6), which had just begun to be issued under his editorship.

Most often, its title is translated as "Broadening of the verbal base", but I would propose a more precise word: *expanding* or even *extension*. This is because in this text, Mayakovsky *expands the language medium* with a technical device — naturally the radio:

> The radio — that is one of the further advances of the word, the slogan, poetry. Poetry has ceased to be that which is only seen by the eyes. The Revolution has given us the audible word, audible poetry[31].

It is no longer just a matter of switching from a graphic signifier to an acoustic one (which still determines Khlebnikov's visionary of radio). What's much more important is the "further advances of the word, the slogan, poetry," and the fact that the acoustic signifier now receives its own medium comparable to the book.

> Author was linked to a reader by means of a book. Readers paid money for books. [...] The Revolution upset this quite simple literary system [...] There appeared poems which no one printed because there was no paper, no one had money for books, but books were sometimes printed on money which had gone out of use. [...] The link to the reader through the book became a vocal link streaming across the stage (260).

So, what does it mean when he says, "the Revolution has given us the audible word" or, in general, "the Revolution has given something"? In fact, as we understand from Mayakovsky's testimony, it's more likely that the Revolution deprived poets of their normal institutional environment and material culture — books, criticism, money. However, this material deficit of paper pushed them to invent something new — to present their poems verbally and even to write "for the voice" or "working from the voice[32]." Therefore, not only the avant-garde poets but all poets in the early Soviet republic were to deal with and rationalise this condition of their work. It was actually Mandelstam who wrote (probably *wrote*): "I never write. I alone in Russia work from the voice while all around the bitch pack writes[33]."

First, the old world — both commercial and material-technical — was completely dismantled by the revolution, and then the new literary technique emerged from the spirit of material deficit, leading to this *expansion* of the verbal base. While literary criticism is already aware of strict political censorship and its effects on literature (perceived mainly as negative), it continues to elaborate the notion of censorship imposed by the material substrate and to investigate whether its constraints are exclusively distorting[34]?

Concurring interpretations might be found — one could argue that Mayakovsky should mainly be read in the context of the Revolution, while another could suggest that he's primarily interesting for his rhythmics and therefore should be read in the context of *literary evolution*[35]. However, if we assume that behind his literary technique, there is a specific material and technical foundation, provoked in its turn by political perturbations, then the gap between these interpretations disappears: literature gains a new technique because the revolution dismantled the old material and technical foundation of literature. If revolution itself could also be technical and, as such, resonate with the political revolution, it could also contribute something to the form of the circulation of words:

> The Revolution has not annulled any of its achievements. It has increased the

> force of its achievements through material and technical forces. The book will not annihilate the tribune. In its time, the book did annihilate the handwritten manuscript. The manuscript is only a beginning of a book. The tribune and the public platform will be carried forward, *expanded*, by the radio (262-3).

So, here, the very important word *expand* appears in a translation that is still not very precise. Mayakovsky speaks about *expansion/extension*, which is usually understood quantitatively — as an increase in capacity and, therefore, audience. However, from our perspective, here, perhaps for the first time in Russian literature, poet is discussing its technical expansion, i.e., the qualitative modification of poetic writing due to the use of new means of transmission.

Mayakovsky predicts a similar revolution to the one that Gutenberg's invention once provided, when voice will be transmitted by radio. Such an "extension of the verbal base" will also be the "extension of man," as Marshall McLuhan would describe it 40 years later[36]. Literally anticipating McLuhan's expressions in the above quote, Mayakovsky outlines a short history and typology of literary carriers and emphasises that "this will not kill that."[37]: "I am not voting against books. But I demand fifteen minutes for the radio. I demand, more loudly than the violinists, the right to the phonograph record" (264).

Demanding his 15 minutes of electromagnetic fame, for a long time Mayakovsky could not hope for his live voice to be broadcast on the radio but only on a phonograph recording[38]. However, by 1927, when this article was published, Mayakovsky found himself in a fundamentally new techno-informational situation. At this point, the poet heard his voice, no longer just recorded but broadcast on the radio to a multi-million audience[39]. Therefore, in the late 1920s, radio expanded the poetic imagination and shaped the writer's unconscious in a manner distinct from the early Soviet and pre-revolutionary avant-garde[40].

Mayakovsky's sensitivity operates simultaneously in two dimensions — political and technical. Such expanded sensitivity also brings about a change in the functioning of literary criticism, shifting it from hermeneutic to media criticism of literature[41]. Mayakovsky derives the characteristics of the previous, purely literary, criticism from the material culture of a paper book:

> Literature is that which is printed in a book and read in a room. […] To do this, one must take the book home, underline and copy out things, and express one's own opinion. […] And where is there a critical approach which can take account of the influence of the direct word on an audience?! (261)

It soon becomes evident that the poet's demands for criticism are quite serious and

technical in nature:

> Literary critics will lose their characteristic traits of dilettantism. The critic will have to know something. He will have to know the laws of radioaudibility; he will have to be able to [...] recognize bad timbre in the voice as a serious literary minus [...] The critic-psychologist must measure the pulse on the podium and the voice on the radio, as well as concern himself with bettering the poets' pedigrees (263).

Friedrich Kittler gives form exactly to this “extended" kind of literary and media criticism and theory, sensitive to mediological aspects (and particularly to acoustic contracts and phantasms) of literary production. I am attempting to apply his method to the Soviet literary tradition, thereby expanding it towards the description of futurist literary techniques, especially those that exist beyond or even after the book, as you may have heard during reading this article.

# Notes

[1] Lenin defines that “Communism is Soviet Power + Electrification of the Whole Country” (Report on the Work of the Council of People's Commissars. 22 December, 1920).

[2] The inventor of the term radio, William Crookes, himself had not yet conducted experiments in wireless telegraphy using electromagnetic waves, but he was a science fiction writer who entertained the idea of non-contact biological communication between human heads and published articles on this topic in journals. Several figures are to be considered as inventors of the radio — from Edison to Marconi and Popov.

[3] To make this “paperless” formula [gazeta bez bumagi i rasstoyanij] appear, first the letter from Bonch-Bruyevich was to be delivered to Lenin personally by one of the members of the People's Commissariat for Posts and Telegraphs and later Lenin's response to be returned in the same manner on paper. Vladimir Lenin, “Letter to Bonch-Bruevich” (5 February 1920), in V. I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenij [Complete Works], v. 51, Moscow, Politizdat, 1967, p. 130 (it was first printed on paper in the journal Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony in 1924, â□□ 23.)

[4] See more about the revolutionary overtones of radio technology: Yuri Murashov, “Jelektrificirovannoe slovo: Radio v sovetskoj literature i kul'ture 1920–30-h godov” [Electrified Word. Radio in Soviet Literature and Culture of the 1920-30s], in *Sovetskaya vlast' i media* [Soviet power and media], Hans Günther & Sabine Hänsgen (Eds.), St. Petersburg, Akademicheskiy proekt, 2006, p. 17-38.

[5] By the beginning of the 1920s, the number of gramophones significantly exceeds the number of radio receivers in circulation, and radio broadcasting will not reach such prevalence until the 1930s to then become an alternative to gramophone recordings.

[6] Edison offered the possible future uses for the phonograph in the *North American Review* in June 1878.

[7] Velimir Khlebnikov, “Radio budushchego” [1921], Krasnaya Nov’, n°8, 1927, p 185-187; Id., “The Radio of the Future”, in Anna Lawton & Herbert Eagle (Eds.) Russian futurism through its manifestoes, 1912-1928, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 392-396. Hereinafter page numbers are given in the text.

[8] "La radio est au cœur du basculement dans l’économie de l’attention, parce que c’est une technologie structurellement *faite* pour la captation de l’attention. [...] C’est aì partir de la radio qu’on constitue des audiences de masse et qu’on construit véritablement une stratégie de contrôle comportemental" (Đernard Stiegler, "L’attention, entre économie restreinte et individuation collective", in *L’Économie de l’attention. Nouvel horizon du capitalisme ?*, Yves Citton (dir.), Paris, La Découverte, 2014, p. 129).

[9] Steaven Lovell*, Russia in the Microphone Age. A History of Soviet Radio, 1919–1970,* Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 30.

[10] The decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) “On the Management of Radio Broadcasting” (January 10, 1927) stated: “Establish mandatory preliminary review by party committees of plans and programs for all radio broadcasts [...] Take measures to ensure the protection of microphones so that every radio transmission occurs only with the knowledge and consent of the responsible leader” (Handbook for Party Workers, Moscow, 1928, vol. VI, part 1, p. 739).

[11] Anna Novikova, “Stanovlenie social'noj maski 'sovetskij chelovek' v radioteatre” [Formation of the social mask "Soviet man" in radio theatre], in Sovetskaya vlast' i media [Le pouvoir soviétique et les médias], p. 97.

[12] See more about the exhibition Taking of the Winter Palace in Zurich University, which problematised in 2017 this reproduced character of traces https ://dlf.uzh.ch/sites/slavicumpress/2018/03/16/vzjatie-zimnego-julia-steck/

[13] “vidno, chto v nashej tekhnike vpolne osushchestvima vozmozhnost' peredachi na vozmozhno dalekoe rasstoyanie po besprovolochnomu radiosoobshcheniyu zhivoj chelovecheskoj rechi”, V. I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenij [Complete Works], op. cit., v. 45, p. 130 (my translation). The first experimental live voice broadcasting had already taken place in 1919, but throughout nearly all the 1920s gramophone recording dominated the radio.

[14] See more about the technological truth of this art-object: Alexandra Novozhenova,

“Rech' Lenina” [“Lenin’s speech”], in [Translit] #20, 2017, p. 7-19.

[15] In 1919-1921, Lenin recorded 16 speeches. The most well-known and widely published ones, with print runs in the tens of thousands, were “Tretij Kommunisticheskij Internacional” [The Third Communist International], “Obrashhenie k Krasnoj armii” [An Appeal to the Red Army] (in 2 parts), and especially the highly popular “CHto takoe sovetskaya vlast'?” [What Is Soviet Power?], which was considered the most successful in technical terms. See: Nash drug — gramplastinka [Our friend - a gramophone record], Kiev, Muzychna Ukrajina, 1989. p. 209—252.

[16] LEF. â□□ 1 (5). M., L.: State Publishing House, 1924. In this volume, Shklovsky speaks of Lenin as a decanoniser, who uses terms only as a result of the separative work of writing. Tynianov notes the potential for semantic mobility of a word / phrase as a pledge of meaningfulness, citing the change of party name from Social Democrats to Bolsheviks as an example. Jakubinsky emphasises pragmatic aspects, speaking of Lenin's speech behaviour, which firmly and surely achieved its goal. For more on this volume see the chapter: Pavel Arseniev, The Search for the Perfect Language in Soviet Culture in Id. The Literature of Fact and the Project of Literary Positivism in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, Moscow, New Literary Observer, 2023, p. 44-57.

[17] Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Device” [Isskustvo kak priem] (1917), in *Id. Theory of Prose*, Dalkey Archive Press, 1991, p. 1-14. See also (as a version of translation): Victor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*.

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/first/en122/lecturelist-2015-16-2/shklovsky.pdf

[18] The only case we know was undertaken by George Vinokur in application to newspaper language and was published in the LEF the same year (Grigorij Vinokur, “YAzyk nashej gazety” [Language of our newspaper], *LEF*, â□□ 6, 1924, p. 117-140). See our analysis of this remarkable case: Pavel Arsenev, “From Word-making to Word-production: Vinokur, Platonov, and Tretyakov in the Discursive Infrastructure of the Avant-Garde”, *New literary observer,* â□□173, 2022, p. 34-61.

[19] The dramas of Corneille and Racine were limited to the volume of 3.000 Alexandrian verses that can be spoken in the time a wax candle burns. For more details see: Friedrich Kittler, Optical Media. Berlin Lectures 1999, translated by Anthony Enns. Cambridge, Polity press, 2009, p. 87. Rhyme is described as a forced formal consequence of the acoustics of theatre venues in Elena Gonçalves, Gestes, usages scéniques de la voix et du corps et images des chanteuses (Conference at Université de Genève, 8 mai 2018).

[20] Alexei Kruchenyh, YAzyk Lenina, Odinnadcat' priemov Leninskoj rechi [Lenin’s language. Eleven devices of Lenin’s speech], Moskva, Izd-vo Vserossijskogo Soyuza Poetov, 1925.

[21] Alexei Kruchenyh, Priemy Leninskoj rechi. K izucheniyu yazyka Lenina [Devices of Lenin's speech. To the study of Lenin's language], Moskva, Izd-vo Vserossijskogo Soyuza Poetov, 1928, p. 8.

[22] It was again the "LEF linguist": Grigorij Vinokur, "Futuristy—stroiteli yazyka" [Futurists, the language constructors], *LEF,* â□□1, 1923, p. 204-213, and our analysis of this controversy in LEF circles in the chapter: Pavel Arseniev,"The language of our newspaper", Linguistic October and the mechanisation of grammar, in Id. *The Literature of Fact*, p. 58-80.

[23] One of the first futurist manifestos underlined this autotelic character of the word: A. Kruchenyh, V. Hlebnikov, *Slovo kak takovoe* [The Word as Such], Peterburg, EUY, 1913. Alexei Krychenukh, Velimir Khlebnikov, "The Word as Such", in *Russian futurism through its manifestoes, 1912-1928*, p. 57-62.

[24] This argument could be reinforced by the fact that by the time Krychenukh started to become so interested in Lenin's language/speech, he had already published books with the titles "500 novyh ostrot i kalamburov Pushkina" [500 new witticisms and puns of Pushkin] (Đ□oscow 1924) and "Zaumnyj jazyk u Sejfullinoj, Vs. Ivanova, Leonova, Babelja, I.Sel'vinskogo, A.Veselogo" [The zaum language of Seyfullina, Vs. Ivanov, Leonov, Babel, I.Selvinsky, A.Veselogo and others] (Đ□., 1925). If not only Krychenukh's contemporaries were already "using" zaum language, and even Pushkin's lyric retrospectively happened to be a zaum poem, the next step of its expansion could only be Lenin's political speeches.

[25] "Often, after looking at a single printed word for a long time and repeating it to ourselves, [we] suddenly notice that the word has taken on a character completely uncharacteristic of its own... By looking at it from a new point of view, we have exposed in it a purely phonetic side." (Lev Jakubinsky, "O zvukah pojeticheskogo jazyka" [On the Sounds of Poetic Language], in *Poetica,* Petrograd, 1919, my translation).

[26] Boris Groys analyses how Soviet avant-gardists tried to keep Lenin eternally alive, and what the revolutionary and the artist had in common: Boris Groys, "Lenin's Image", e-flux, #120, 2021.

[27] Similarly, according to A. Yurchak, all sculptural realisations of Lenin maintain an indexical connection to the leader's body as they are created based on the posthumous mask taken in 1924. See: Alexei Yurchak, "Bodies of Lenin: The Hidden Science of Communist Sovereignty", Representations, Vol. 129, â□□1, 2015, University of California Press, 2015, p. 116-157.

[28] The phonograph "encounters" radio (similar to an umbrella with a sewing machine) in 1921, giving rise to a specific market of speech genres (not to mention songs!). This interaction proves to be more powerful than the connection between radio and telegraph, which only allowed for simple messages about the ongoing revolution and weather forecasts using Morse code.

[29] Dziga Vertov himself advocates the emancipation of workers' listening, and in his silent film “Stride, Soviet!” he uses street megaphones as a focal point of filming. See: Dyiga Vertov, “Radio-glaz” [Radio-eye], in Id. Iz naslediya [From the heritage], Moskva, Ejzenshtejn-centr, 2008. Vol. 2, p. 99.

[30] “languageless (beziazykaia) street” appears as a trop in Mayakovsky s poem “Oblako v shtanah” [A Cloud in Pants] (1918).

[31] Vladimir Mayakovskij, “Rasshirenie slovesnoj bazy” [Expanding of the verbal base], Novyj Lef, â□□ 10, 1927. English translation published in Russian futurism through its manifestoes, 1912-1928, p. 260-264. The pages are provided in the text further on.

[32] Vladimir Mayakovskij, *Dlya golosa* [For the voice], Berlin, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923.

[33] *The Noise of Time. The Prose of Osip Mandelstam, 1891-1938* / translated with Critical Essays by Clarence Brown, San Francisco; North Point Press, 1986, p. 181.

[34] Even the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs (Glavlit), established in 1922, determined which culture was deserving of support simply by allocating the still scarce paper. This “censorship of the support,” combined with intellectual unemployment and tripled book prices (due to high taxes), minimised private publishing. For more information about paper as a scarce medium and the physical operator of expression, see: Katerina Clark, Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 143-161.

[35] Juri Tynjanov, "Promezhutok", in *Pojetika. Istorija literatury. Kino*, Moskva, Nauka, 1977, p.168–195 ; English translation : “Interlude”, in *Permanent Evolution: Selected Essays on Literature, Theory and Film*, translated and edited by Ainsley Morse & Philip Redko, Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2019, p. 188-189. Tynianov even openly interpreted the propagandistic works of Mayakovsky as existing within the regrouping of a genre system or even as a conscious literary strategy: “His ads for Mosselprom, disguised as his contribution to the production effort, are a retreat — for reinforcements. When the canon begins to weigh on a poet, the poet takes his craft and escapes into everyday life” (Juri Tynyanov, “Interlude”, p. 188-189).

[36] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, The MIT Press, 1994.

[37] The key media studies aphorism “This will kill that” uttered by a character in Victor Hugo’s “The Hunchback of Notre-Dame”, when referring to a book that would destroy the “stone book” of cathedral architecture, created century after century by nameless craftsmen (“La presse tuera l’Église [...] L'imprimerie tuera l'architecture”, V. Hugo, Notre-Dame de Paris, Livre V, chap. 2). Later on, it was often used in relation to books themselves. Louise Merzeau, “Ceci ne tuera pas cela”, Les cahiers de médiologie, â□□ 6, 1998, p. 27-39.

[38] The development of Soviet radio allowed for the regular broadcasting of live voices in 1924, as we have already stated.

[39] For the first time, Mayakovsky would declaim his poetry from the studio on 2 May 1925 and more than fifteen times. For this, refer to Tatiana Goriaeva, *Radio Rossii: Politicheskii kontrol' sovetskogo radioveshchaniia v 1920–1930-kh godakh. Dokumentirovannaia istoriia* [Radio Russia: Political Control of Soviet Radio Broadcasting in the 1920s-1930s. Documented History], Moscow, 2000, p. 68.

[40] In at least three poems the poet describes his audience as millions: “v mil'on ushej sluhachej vlezayut slova po antenne!” [into a million ears of listeners, words fly down the aerial!] in “Radio Agitator” [Radio-agitator] (1925) ; “sem' s polovinoj millionov ne zhal'” [no Pity to seven and a half million] in “Without Rudder or Sail” [Bez rulia i bez vitril] (1928) and “My blizki usham millionov” [We are close to the ears of millions] in “Happiness of the Arts” [Shastie isskustv] (1928). When Marinetti lists the media-technique, which influenced the state of mind in 1913, he is not yet mentioning radio, even in the text entitled "Wireless imagination ... ”: “Presque tous ceux qui se servent aujourd’hui du télégraphe, du téléphone, du gramophone, du train, de la bicyclette, de la motocyclette, de l’automobile, du transatlantique, du dirigeable, de l’aéroplane, du cinématographe et du grand quotidien (synthèse de la journée du monde) ne songent pas que tout cela exerce sur notre esprit une influence décisive” [Almost everyone who uses the telegraph, the telephone, the gramophone, the train, the bicycle, the motorcycle, the automobile, the transatlantic, the airship, the aeroplane, the cinematograph and the daily newspaper (the synthesis of the world's day) today doesn't realize that all these have a decisive influence on our minds.], Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, *Imagination sans fils et les mots en liberté. Manifeste futuriste* (1913), https://www.edition-originale.com/fr/litterature/poesie/marinetti-limagination-sans-fils-et-les-mots-en-1913-72380 (my translation)

[41] Brecht also envisions the political possibilities of radio during the existence of the “New LEF”. See: Bertoldt Brekht, Teoriya radio 1927-1932, transl. from German by E. Kaceva & S. Tashkenov, Moscow, Ad marginem, 2018.

# Documents

**Doc. 1** â Gustav Klutsis, Radio orator â4, 1922. Paper, ink, drawing tools. Copyright: State Tretyakov Gallery

**Doc. 2** â What Is Soviet Power? (Lenin's Speeches on Gramophone Records), 1919

https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Đ¤Đ°Đ¹Đ»:Lenin_-_What_Is_Soviet_Power.ogg

**Doc. 3** â Cover of the book “Kruchenyh A. YAzyk Lenina, Odinnadcat' priemov Leninskoj rechi” (M. : Izd-vo Vserossijskogo Soyuza Poetov, 1925) with illustrations by Gustav Klutzes and Valentina Kluging. Public domain, Rusbibliophile, https://www.rusbibliophile.ru/bookprint/?book=kruchenyh-a-yazyk-lenina-odinn

**Doc. 4** â Cover of the book “Kruchenyh A. Priemy Leninskoj rechi. K izucheniyu yazyka Lenina” (M. : Izd-vo Vserossijskogo Soyuza Poetov. 1928) with illustrations by Gustav Klutzes, Public domain, GPIB Electronic library http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/3495-kruchenyh-a-e-priemy-leninskoy-rechi-k-izucheniyu-yazyka-lenina-produktsiya-locale-nil-143-a-m-izd-vseros-soyuza-poetov-1928

**Doc. 5** â Vladimir Mayakovsky reciting his poem “What about you?”, recorded in 1920. Public domain https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXJjE28BmkA

**Doc. 6** â Cover of the magazine Novy LEF, 1927, â10, Public domain, Monoskop https://monoskop.org/LEF#/media/File:Novyi_LEF_10_1927.jpg

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