

Title: Mayakovsky's Poetry of Commerce

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Mayakovsky brought his poetry to the masses through his advertisements for Soviet-made products. The poet's commercial jingles decorated Moscow, entered every household through texts on cigarette cases, candy wrappers, tea boxes, and inserts for all sorts of packaging. Mayakovsky himself assigned great poetic significance to his advertising work, referring in his autobiography to his series of verses "Нигде кроме как в Моссельпроме" as poetry of the highest caliber.

It is not difficult to detect Mayakovsky's signature poetic style in these posters, to argue that his work in the sphere of mass production takes his technical approach to writing poetry (as expressed in "How Verses are Made?") to its logical conclusion. One can also see Mayakovsky's ads for objects of general consumption as part of his larger war on high art. In this paper I explore the potential gain of moving in the opposite direction, namely by analyzing these ads not merely as formal or ideological extensions of his literary works, but rather as texts that bring Mayakovsky's literary persona into sharper relief.

In "Agitation and Advertisement" (57-58), Mayakovsky observes that his political and commercial agitation spring from the same source. Here, I extend this principle to his literary works by focusing on the relationship between the first-person speaker in Mayakovsky's commercial texts and his lyric "I". How does the salesperson of a superior national identity ("Verses about the Soviet Passport") or of a Soviet utopia (e.g., *The Flying Proletariat*) connect with a salesperson of superior galoshes? Similarly, how do we read the tea-drinking enthusiast in his ads for *Чаеуправление* against the suicide-inducing drudgery that tea symbolizes in *About This*, written in the same year? I suggest that the poet's advertisement posters cannot be divorced from his lyric personality, further complicating the idea of Mayakovsky's speaker as monologic.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*, Tom 12.

Moskva: Khud. lit, 1959.