

Title: Maiakovskii and the Challenge of Appropriating the Advertising Jingle
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The advertisement: a pithy and, if successful, catchy means of persuading a target consumer to purchase a particular brand, it assumes an audience conditioned by complex and opaque systems of production that require marketing, as well as by disengagement from opportunities for counsel within simpler systems of exchange, in villages, for example. As a form intimately tied to the issues of modernity and the new man, the advertisement supplies a natural field of engagement for avant-garde modernists, intellectuals who conceive of themselves as the leading edge of new aesthetic—and social—relations to reality. Unsurprisingly, much of the theoretical critical response to advertising is negative—the form is a reflection of the deformation of the masses. As a result, a tendency to engage advertisements in order to reveal the dehumanizing, anti-intellectual mechanisms driving them characterizes a certain set among the elite. Given the negative inflection of advertising in contemporary literature (such as in Walter Benjamin’s *Einbahnstrasse*), it is curious that Soviet advertisements should have existed, even as a matter of pragmatism. Moreover, advertisements were framed as a potentially progressive medium for communicating with and in the name of the masses in such endeavors as the advertising company of Vladimir Maiakovskii and Aleksandr Rodchenko. The success of their efforts to repurpose advertising is debatable, though, particularly when one takes Maiakovskii’s advertising texts out of the context of the montage-driven graphic arrangement of their posters. Maiakovskii reported that he considered the composition of advertising texts a very serious effort; however, in spite of his poetic investment and his ideologically correct intentions, the final results seem ambivalent. This paper addresses Maiakovskii’s cigarette advertisements, interpreting them as an attempt to recuperate the advertisement, informed by the conceptualization of them as compromised form of “wisdom literature.”

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