

Title: After Realism: Documentary Affect in the Literature of Fact of Sergei Tret'iakov and the Factographers of the 1920s, and Beyond

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Abstract:

Russian documentary drama is “new” in the ways that it has significantly rebelled against the conventions of theatre. Instead of an illusion of realism—as practiced since the inception of Konstantin Stanislavsky’s seminal theatre method—there are documents. Instead of mimetic verisimilitude on stage, there is oral testimony and archival fact. It is new in the ways that New Drama has created tools and technologies—the digital voice recordings during field research—that have enabled it to infuse the structure of theatre with new valiances in the twenty-first century: specifically, the role of documenting the afterlife of the Soviet empire and creating narratives of the present. A close look at this Russian docudrama, however, reveals that the docudramatists are motivated by a similar vein of aesthetic inquiry that inspired the Factographers of the 1920s Russian Avant-Garde. With the emergence of newspaper, film and photography, the Factographers ambitiously sought to create a locus of exchange between real-life and literature. New Dramatists borrow writing and rhetorical strategies from the Factographers so that even though the works do not equate to “real life,” they do fend off being shaped by the author’s hand. Most importantly, my book highlights the difference between these artist groups – unlike Literature of Fact, the New Dramatists are actually interested in dramatizing the fact. The “sketch books” and “village correspondences” (“ocherki,” “sel'skie korrespondenty”) by the Factographer Sergei Tret'iakov, for instance, that were supposed to be the source of genuine peasant speech, were never popular. The Factographers’ LEF newspaper stories were never a hit. But New Drama plays have been extremely successful because they use emotions in order to make a performance effective. My presentation shows how New Russian docudrama is precisely the new affectivity of the old genre of literature of fact.