eISSN 2783-6843 | ISSN 1392-0316 | 10.37522/aaav.118.2025.315

Confluence in *Four White Shirts*: Escaping Tensions

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This article explores the Soviet-era Latvian film *Four White Shirts* (*Četri balti krekli*, 1967, director Rolands Kalniņš) as a cinematic response to the ideological tension between artistic freedom and state-imposed labour. In the Soviet Union of the 1960s, artists were required to work within state structures, which limited independent creative expression. Analyzing the film through the lens of *confluence*—a metaphor for the merging of artistic intent, censorship, and institutional influence—this study argues that the film creates symbolic spaces of escape through its genre hybridity and spatial construction. Although banned upon completion, the film was not destroyed; it was screened in 1987 and later gained international recognition as it was featured in 2018 in the Cannes Classics programme. The film's belated recognition underscores its lasting cultural significance and reflects broader dynamics of resistance, memory, and legitimacy in Soviet and post-Soviet art.

Keywords: Latvian Soviet film, tension between paid labour, censorship, state funded art, art creation.

This case study is situated in a unique historical and geographical context—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), hereafter referred to as the Soviet Union. This context is particularly distinctive with regard to the relationship between art and labour, understood as paid employment. In the Soviet Union—of which Latvia was a part at the time—the state functioned as the sole employer and official art dealer. Established in Russia following the First World War, the Soviet state declared itself a dictatorship of the proletariat, specifically the industrial working class.

With official unemployment figures reportedly between 1% and 2%, the Soviet Union operated as a planned economy in which all professional roles, including those in the arts, were state-employed.[1] Artists were organized in creative unions financed and supervised by the Communist Party.[2] They were obliged to fulfil state commissions under threat of prosecution under anti-parasite laws that criminalized unemployment. These laws served both to suppress private enterprise and to enforce ideological conformity among artists. In her analysis of Latvian life in the Soviet system, Latvian historian Daina Bleiere writes that factual labour—that is, work in favour of society—was the only socially acceptable means of living in the Soviet Union, with a few exemptions of high-ranking academics, the sick, and young and elderly people.[3]

Simultaneously, artists were organized into state-controlled trade unions and incentivized through awards, honorary titles, and potential membership in the Communist Party of their respective Soviet republics.[4] This created a complex tension between labour, understood as a paid professional activity potentially disconnected from personal creative vision, and art as a form of individual expression, free from economic motivation. Although the Soviet system claimed to eliminate this tension by assigning economic responsibility to the state, it persisted within the internal lives of individual artists.

This article argues that the placement of this tension—between labour and artistic expression—within the internal world created an

1 Solomon M. Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union* (Presager, 1952).

2 David K. Willis, *Klass: How Russians Really Live* (St Martin's Press, 1985).

3 Daina Bleiere, *Eiropa ārpus Eiropas...Dzīve Latvijas PSR* (LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2012; 2nd ed., 2015), 83–4.

4 For more on awards for workers in the Latvian case, see Bleiere, *Eiropa ārpus Eiropas*, 83.

additional imaginary space in the represented world of *Four White Shirts*. A similar interpretation emerges when analyzing the representing world of this film, namely the 1960s Soviet Latvia, through the geographical term "confluence." This term allows to capture different experiences and ideas of the authors (as participants in creative production—the playwright, director, and protagonist) as they converge to create a new work of art, including text, film, and music. These are seen as flows—dynamic processes rather than static objects—of labour, art, individual expression, and state ideology merging into a single channel of meaning, serving as a metaphor for artistic creation. Borrowed from geography, where confluence describes the merging of two or more watercourses into a single channel, this term, when applied to cultural texts such as a fiction film, provides a perspective that acknowledges the multiplicity of influences shaping what we read, see, and hear in the work.

My study lies in two neighbouring, but not coinciding, areas: the film analyzed here belongs to the group of films that represent the distinction between the inner and outer worlds of the protagonist. Research in this area deals not only with representations of protagonists' inner worlds but also situates these representations within broader film and historical contexts (see Masha Shpolberg (2017); Lida Oukaderova (2017)). A number of Soviet films are devoted to showing the inner and outer worlds of protagonists and the conflicts between them.[5] The inner world encompasses ideas, beliefs, values, and desires—that is, non-physical mental objects—while the outer world includes material conditions, behaviour, expressions, and social interactions. One of the early instances in Soviet cinema depicting and recognizing the parallel existence of the inner and outer worlds is *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957, directed by Michail Kalatozov). Film researcher Masha Shpolberg writes in her insightful analysis on the work of Michail Kalatozov and Sergej Urusevsky: "Their genius lies in the film's daring yet judicious oscillation between objective and subjective camera."[6] Shots of

5 Other instances include: *War and Peace* (dir. Sergei Bondarchuk, 1965); *Walking the Streets of Moscow* (dir. Geogiy Daneliya, 1964); *July Rain* (dir. Marlen Khutsiev, 1967); and *Two in Love* (dir. Mikhail Bogin, 1965).

6 Masha Shpolberg, "Humanising the Soviet Subject: Letiat zhuravli (The Cranes Are Flying)," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 85 (2017), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2017/soviet-cinema/the-cranes-are-flying-soviet-cinema/.

1. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, RKM 15749

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus

film protagonists in vulnerable positions of death and extreme violence are exemplary of subjective and objective perspectives coexisting simultaneously on the screen. The idea of two different spaces—the inner and outer worlds—(re)presented on screen is also conveyed in the Soviet Latvian film *Four White Shirts* (*Četri balti krekli*, 1967, directed by Rolands Kalniņš). My case study is rooted in the intellectual tradition of Latvian and Soviet Latvian film analysis. This tradition has been shaped by the works of Inga Pērkone, Kristīne Matiša, and Zane Balčus, and is further informed by the contributions of Latvian historians Vita Zelče and Andrejs Plakans. Their research on Soviet Latvian films is grounded in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, and contextual reconstruction. Pērkone encapsulates this approach by emphasizing that the historical period holds greater significance in shaping meaning than the author's intent.[7]

7 Inga Pērkone, *Es varu tikai mīlēt... sievietes tēls Latvijas filmās* (Neputns, 2008), 120.

The theme of this case study is the tension between art and labour in the Soviet era, as it was both experienced and portrayed in the fictional film *Four White Shirts*. This film demonstrates the impact of the authors' experiences and Soviet censorship, ultimately uniting these influences in a single channel—metaphorically speaking—through the concept of confluence.

In analyzing the 1967 fiction film *Four White Shirts*, written by Gunārs Priede, directed by Rolands Kalniņš, and produced at the Riga Film Studio within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, we can identify at least four key flows contributing to its creation as a new "channel": the flow of the director, the flow of the scriptwriter, the flow of censorship, and the final flow of the film as presented on screen. The common denominator for analyzing these diverse aspects of film production is the relationship between art and labour. The film's protagonist, Cezars (Jūlijs) Kalniņš, is an amateur poet and composer who works as a telephone installer and writes songs for his pop band, Optimists, formed at a culture house. The manager of the band and composer of the songs performed by the band is Tralmaks. Bella, Cezars's girlfriend, also sings with the band and makes announcements for it on stage. Anita Sondore, an inspector of culture houses, writes a letter criticizing the band's songs, initiating the censorship process and prompting a collective review of the band's work. Cezars and Anita meet by chance at a party, where they discuss the songs, criticism, and creativity. Eventually, Cezars manages to convince Anita of his artistic talent. Meanwhile, the band, led by Tralmaks and the head of the culture house, decides to conform to the censorial pressures initiated by Anita.

The film concludes with Bella's voice announcing the band, completing the narrative full circle, as she did on stage in person at the beginning—returning to where it began. The film's space is constructed from several permeable layers, including musical and theatrical performances, artistic footage, cameos by Latvian artists (for instance, the composer of the film, Imants Kalniņš, can be seen in a sequence as a member of the audience), and near-documentary depictions of non-artistic work. These metaphoric layers—documentary sequences, music videos, and the space of fictional narrative—are permeable. There is no intermission or indication of each different sequence, whether it

be the protagonists' dreams, representations of their memories, or factual footage of a concert or of anonymous people in Riga. The camera—and with it, the audience—can enter all the layers presented within the film.

Encountering Censorship: Disrupted Authorial Flows

The relationship between art and labour is not only represented in the film but also shaped the everyday reality of its authors, screenwriter Gunārs Priede and director Rolands Kalniņš. *Four White Shirts* is based on Priede's theatre play *The Thirteenth*, for which he also wrote four script versions (all preserved at the State Archive of the Latvian Republic). This indicates that the film is not simply a direct adaptation of a literary text. The sheer number of script versions points to the significant labour Priede invested in the project. Priede was the first artist in Latvia to be persecuted with a professional ban. Three years before *The Thirteenth*, in his 1963 play *Miks un Dzilna* (*Miks and Dzilna*), he experienced Soviet censorship as punishment: not only was his play banned, but he was also prohibited from practicing his profession as a playwright for five years.[8] In *The Thirteenth*, Priede reflected on his experience of Soviet censorship.

The film's director, Rolands Kalniņš, had also encountered censorship. One year prior to filming *Four White Shirts*, his film *Akmens un Skembas* (*Stone and Flinders*, 1966) was banned.[9] Both Priede and Kalniņš had entered areas of intense censorial scrutiny. The theme of World War II—a key area for the Soviet system's legitimacy—was problematic in Latvia, where perceptions of these historical events, along with issues like occupations and deportations, clashed with the official Soviet narrative. The bans faced by Priede and Kalniņš were directly related to their texts and films addressing Soviet deportations and the Nazi occupation. *Four White Shirts*, however, was a safer project in terms of theme and genre, as it was presented as a musical comedy. Despite these "safety pins," the film was heavily censored due to its depiction of Soviet censorship, which was shaped by the personal experiences of the filmmakers.

8 Viktors Hausmanis and Benedikts Kalnačs, *Latviešu drama: 20. gadsimta otra puse* (Zinātne, 2006).

9 Ieva Pitruka, "Rolands Kalniņš: 'Esmu vieglprātigs!'" in *Rolanda Kalniņa telpa: Deviņas škautnes viena izcila kinorežisora radošajā darbībā*, ed. Kristine Matīsa and Agnese Zeltiņa (Neputns, 2018), 312.

Priede and Kalniņš infused their personal struggles into the character of Jūlijs Kalniņš, aka Cezars. Priede's notion of double censorial pressure is represented in the relationship between Cezars and the manager of their band, Tralmaks, as well as in the demands of the cultural committee. Priede viewed his play as being attacked by the film director, Kalniņš. As an adapter of his own theatre play, Priede grappled with the issue of media transformation. One of the first writers to gain experience adapting his own work to the film screen himself was Iurii Tynianov, a theorist of film and literature in the early twentieth century. Tynianov published his novel *Poruchik Kizhe* (*Lieutenant Kijé*) in 1928 and wrote the script for the 1934 film adaptation directed by Aleksandr Faintsimmer. He subsequently drew on this filmic experience in his theoretical works on cinema. British literary and film researcher Alastair Renfrew analyzes Tynianov's engagement with the film *Poruchik Kizhe* (USSR 1934) and notes that, in his search for theoretical generalization, Tynianov observed and respected the artistic specificity of literature and film:

> [T]he "laboratory conditions" in which the respective cinematic and literary texts are to be examined must be understood as facilitating not simply the identification of higher theoretical generalization about the forms and functions of film and literature themselves, but also an integrated understanding of how each, inseparably from their relations to one another, articulates with the environment in which it has been produced and with the historical evolution of the mode to which it belongs.[10]

That is, the relations between film and literature are an integral part of their specific modes of articulation. Films and literary texts interact with their environment, artistic tradition, and evolution, where interaction—not competition—with one another contributes to the final outcome both in literature and cinema. Through and alongside his experience of writing screenplays, Tynianov came to appreciate cinema's specific aesthetic and later recognized "the difference of variously constructed signifying material" in film and literature. Renfrew explains this standpoint through Tynianov's

10 Alastair Renfrew, "Against Adaptation: The Strange Case of (Pod)Poruchik Kizhe," in *Border Crossing: Russian Literature into Film*, ed. Alexander Burry and Frederick White (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 183.

2. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, RKM 15737_2, from left to right: Miervaldis Tralmaks (Arnolds Liniņš), Cezars Kalniņš (Jūlijs Kalniņš). Reading Anita's critical letter together with Cezars and Tralmaks, the young director appears as one of the artists, although he is in fact a professional bureaucrat in the house of culture filled with amateurs

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus, iš kairės į dešinę: Miervaldis Tralmaks (Arnolds Liniņš), Cezars Kalniņš (Jūlijs Kalniņš)

thoroughgoing semiotic approach.[11] The semiotic approach to the final outcome is also the perspective of metaphorical confluence adopted in this article. Working on *Four White Shirts*, Priede was in a position similar to Tynianov's: both authors were adapters and rewriters of their own work. Whereas Tynianov's cinematic experience led him to reconsider the relationship between cinema and its neighbouring arts, Priede perceived the film as disfiguring his text and its ideas, as argued by leading Latvian film researcher Inga Pērkone.[12] Priede interpreted the relationship between literature and film, exemplified by his conflict with Kalniņš, as a clash between two authors rather than as a mode of articulation. He saw the author's will

11 Renfrew, "Against Adaptation," 81.

12 Inga Pērkone, "Cenzūra?" in *Inscenējumu realitāte: Latvijas aktierkino vēsture*, ed. Inga Pērkone and Kristīne Matīsa (Mansards, 2011), 104–5.

as the main determinant of the future text. For Priede, the film was a different, estranged text, disconnected from him as author.

A key issue for Kalniņš in adapting Priede's play was the portrayal of Cezars as an amateur poet. As a self-taught filmmaker, Kalniņš paid particular attention to Cezars's self-doubt and his need to legitimize his artistic expression. Kalniņš, like Cezars, faced self-doubt in his own filmmaking journey. In his letter to his wife from 1962, Kalniņš expressed a wish to interrupt his own self-criticism, having already worked at the Riga Film Studio for fifteen years.[13] Pitruka writes that the well-intentioned head of the Riga Film Studio, Fridens Korolkevičs, was particularly angry when Kalniņš rejected all corrections suggested by the studio's art council.[14] Kalniņš's unwillingness to abandon his ideas under censorial pressure is similar to Cezars's rejection of changes suggested by censors and the band manager, as well as his withdrawal from the discussion.

In the theatre play *The Thirteenth*, the conflict begins when Cezars, a poet, meets Anita Sondore, a member of the cultural committee. Anita criticizes Cezars's pop songs, accusing them of being frivolous and politically suspect. While the play centres on the conflict between the artist and the critic, Priede's original concept, developed for the theatre, was expanded and altered in the film. In *Four White Shirts*, the tension between art and labour is central, with censorship represented but not explicitly mentioned. Cezars's poems, which become songs with music by Tralmaks, become the subject of censorial scrutiny. In this context, the state, as the employer of artists in the USSR, demands that art produced by its workers conform to its ideological, aesthetic, and ethical standards. Cezars struggles between fulfilling the demands of his employer (labour) and pursuing his artistic vision (art). The film offers a resolution by introducing a new space—the "inner world" of the protagonist—where the tension between art and labour is explored and resolved. The resolution lies in dividing the inner and outer worlds of the artist: Cezars's dreams and imagination exist in his internal world, while interactions with institutions and censorship remain in the outer world, unable to access the inner core of Cezars.

13 Pitruka, "Rolands," 304–6.

14 Ibid.," 312.

Despite the conflict between the playwright and the film director, Priede's idea to include songs in his play led to the development of musical sequences in Kalniņš's film. These sequences created a space of imagination, inspiration, memory, and artistic expression, separate from the narrative. The songs were newly composed by Imants Kalniņš, replacing the original music by Romualds Grīnblats. Pitruka noted that the popularity and wide dissemination of the film's songs, written by Māris Čaklājs and newly composed by Imants Kalniņš, reflected Latvia's desire for freedom. Electric guitars replaced accordions, and the accelerated rhythm transformed the music. The soundtrack abandoned the initial idea of staying together no matter what may come along on a journey,[15] instead expressing doubts and acknowledging failed attempts to cover a lack of solidarity with shared rituals.[16] In the film, Cezars attempts to operate within a Soviet system that claims to champion artistic freedom, yet ultimately finds himself disillusioned with the ideals proclaimed by that system. Priede's original idea—that art must be alive and dynamic—is preserved within the safe confines of the "inner world" in *Four White Shirts*.

Different ways of interacting with the state control are embodied in Cezars's relationships with Miervaldis Tralmaks, Anita Sondore, Bella (her character is referred to only by her nickname), and the cultural committee. As an amateur poet, Cezars justifies his creative doubts by pointing to his lack of formal education in linguistics, a point which also feeds into the conflict over who is permitted to create art. By defining Cezars as an amateur and juxtaposing his professional occupation (telephone installer and restaurateur) with his artistic aspirations, the film suggests that a life without art is not a viable solution. Both Kalniņš and Priede identify with Cezars, and the final song's title, "How Much Do We Know of Each Other?" resonates with the central theme of the film. The camera captures each musician in the band organized by Cezars and Tralmaks individually, as they come to terms with the compromise of cutting their repertoire to meet the demands of the cultural committee. The question of mutual understanding extends beyond the characters on screen to the filmmaker and the viewers. The final

15 This idea is articulated in the song from the theatre play *Ar plostu pa Gauju uz leju* (composer Romualds Grīnblats). This song was not composed anew by Kalniņš and was not included in the film *Four White Shirts*.

16 This idea is articulated in the song from the film *Cik mēs par citu zinām?* (Imants Kalniņš).

scene, with the microphone on a white background, opens the stage to all possibilities, inviting the audience to make meaning of the complex confluence of art, labour, and censorship.

The Flow of Censorship: Shedding Light on What Art Ought to Be

Analysis of the communication between the Main Directorate on Fiction Films by the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR, based in Moscow, and the Committee on Cinematography of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Latvian Socialist Republic uncovers the crucial points of disapproval. Film historian Maria Belodubrovskaya, in investigating the effects of Soviet ideology on film, effectively demonstrated that Soviet cinema was often trying to produce art rather than propaganda.[17] An institutional-historical approach to the document flow concerning film production reveals how Soviet cinema rejected the ideological constraints of the system and navigated its tensions. The sequences filmed in preparation, as well as the completed film, were repeatedly reviewed in Moscow and received so-called "strong recommendations"[18] to make the following changes: firstly, the conflict should be limited in scope; secondly, the music should be changed; and thirdly, critics of artistic performance in the film should not be presented as representatives of state institutions. To understand these demands—which were either ignored or only partly met by the filmmakers—I compare this film to another musical comedy that, unlike *Four White Shirts*, was celebrated in the USSR: *Carnival in Moscow* (*Karnavalnaya Noch*, 1956, directed by Eldar Ryazanov). The plots of both films take place in houses of culture, presenting conflicts between older experts or decision makers and young musicians. Both include sequences of staged performances that are not directly related to the filmic narrative. It is very likely that the script of *Four White Shirts* was influenced by the success of the ten-year older *Carnival in Moscow*.

17 Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan. Filmmaking Under Stalin* (Cornell University Press, 2020).

18 Copy of a letter from the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR and the Main Directorate on Fiction Cinematography, F. F. Belov, to the film crew and the head of the Riga Film Studio, F. I. Korolkevičs, February 2, 1968, RKM 15839.

LIMITING THE CONFLICT IN ITS SCOPE

In *Carnival in Moscow*, the director of the house of culture, Ogurtsov, driven by a sudden urge to check everyone training and performing in the house of culture, is exaggeratedly disapproving of every artistic performance. This activity is presented as comic and ridiculous: while performers (actors, singers, dancers, musicians), react with anger and misbelief, the team surrounding Ogurtsov (the creative director and her assistants) smiles and plays jokes on him. The work of censorship in the film is personalized in a single character, Ogurtsov. Ogurtsov does not enter into any personal conflicts or engage in any discussions while reviewing every artistic exercise in preparation for a New Year's Eve party. His actions are commands, not interactions. His motivation is not only to censor the artistic performances but also to impress a higher-ranking bureaucrat expected to attend the party. In this way, state institution representatives are doubled, allowing the higher-ranking bureaucrat a different censorial judgement and enabling conflicts to be resolved without desacralizing state power. By contrast, the character Anita Sondore in *Four White Shirts* exercises censorship from a personal perspective: her motivation is to support and challenge developments in art. She criticizes the lyrics of Cezars as an art critic, attends a concert of the band incognito, and writes a review addressed to the director of the house of culture and the committee on culture. She is not a part of the bureaucratic machine but appeals to it to advance art as she understands it. In the film, her figure is separated from the censorship exercised by the art committee, represented as faceless bureaucratic machinery.[19] Censorship is no longer a sacred act of the state that helps and guides its people, but a disengaged apparatus following its own unarticulated paths. In *Four White Shirts*, the conflict remains at the level of personal interaction between the artist, Cezars Kalniņš, and the critic, Anita, both of whom are ignored by institutional censorship. Watching and participating in the committee on culture exposes Anita first to the misunderstanding and ignorance of her initial ideas of criticizing young musicians and then to her inability to stop or

19 The art committee session is prepared and doubled in the pantomime sequence of a sketch showing how a smile disappears when facing bureaucracy; similarly, lyrics by Cezars disappear under the censorial pressure of the art committee. Rolands Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, Riga Film Studio, USSR, 1967 (released 1987), 00:54:10.

20 Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, 00:58:09.

3. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, Jāzeps Pīgoznis at his painting

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus, Jāzeps Pīgoznis prie savo paveikslo

change the process.[20] *Carnival in Moscow* limits the role of state institutions in time—it is concerned only with the party night—and in scope, targeting specific performances. In *Four White Shirts*, however, the conflict between Cezars and Anita, as a conflict of art and censorship, outgrows their individual interaction, placing both characters in the position of victims without any visible success in overcoming censorship, even temporarily, as occurs in *Carnival in Moscow*.

CHANGING THE MUSICAL SCORE

In the three reviews preserved in the Riga Film Museum Archive, the music of *Four White Shirts* is evaluated negatively: "most of its songs are not expressive and not memorable."[21] The censors demanded the film's music be changed to include folkloristic motifs. Comparing the music of *Four White Shirts* to that of *Carnival in Moscow*, at least two differences are

21 Copy of a letter from the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR, the Main Directorate on Fiction Cinematography (signed by I. Kokoreva and A. Balihin) to the head of the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, N. N. Karkliņš, with a copy to the head of the Riga Film Studio, F. I. Korolkevičs, January 10, 1968, RKM 15935.

apparent. Firstly, *Four White Shirts* contains no references to Soviet Stalinist musicals, unlike *Carnival in Moscow*; secondly, the soundtrack of *Four White Shirts* is performed by the same musicians, who are narratively related and all actively engaged in music creation and performance, sharing an understanding of musical style throughout the film. In contrast, *Carnival in Moscow* presents a variety of performers bound together by their affiliation with the presented space, disconnected narratively, so there is no particular focus on music. A third point regarding the music in *Four White Shirts* is the inclusion of a musical quote from 1928 *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill that was revived in the late 1950s in the USA by jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong. When the band in *Four White Shirts* performs this composition, referencing both Brecht's original and Armstrong's adaptation, the band manager stops the performance and requests that they play the opening song from Priede's play *The Thirteenth*.[22] In this way, the film signals its independence from Soviet musical conventions, demanding a reproduction of the same censoriously pre-approved content. The reference to music created outside the Soviet system suggests an unnamed possibility of accessing what was censored and prohibited, emphasizing the originality through the musical score.

References to music produced outside the USSR, the rhythm, the lyrics written by Māris Čaklājs, and the score composed by the young composer Imants Kalniņš, who appears in the film among the concert audience, alerted Moscow censors, prompting a demand for translations of the songs from Latvian into Russian.[23] In the Soviet system, the written word—literary texts, scripts, or any other verbalization—was more closely controlled because it was seemingly easier to eliminate ambiguities in text than in the visual. Visual images, as polysemic signs, are open to multiple interpretations. From the perspective of state control over art, the introduction of the script editorial board at the Riga Film Studio in 1962 strengthened censorial control over scripts and, subsequently, over films.[24] Anke Hennig suggests

22 The film character only demands that the band play the song *Ar plostu pa Gauju..*, which was not planned in the script and was not performed in the film, as the scene stops here. Thus, the film audience can only assume that the band follows Tralmaks and returns to their previously Soviet-approved repertoire.

23 Copy of a letter from Belov to Korolkevičs, RKM 15839.

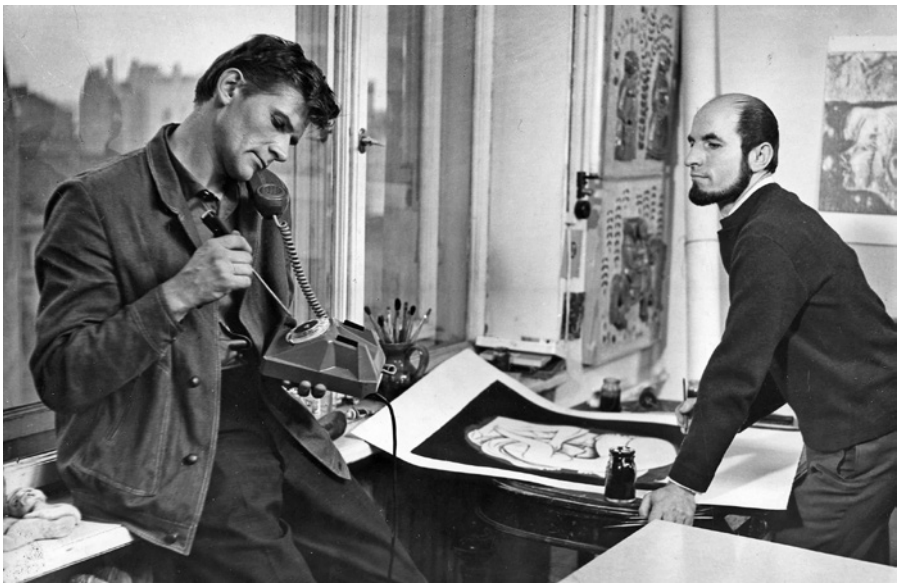
24 Silvija Lice, "Nacionālās skolas pieteikums mākslas kino (1955–1960)," in *Padomju Latvijas Kinomāksla*, ed. Lilija Dzene, Viktors Hausmanis, Silvija Līce, Miks Zvirbulis et al. (Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmija, 1989).

viewing the extensive control over Soviet film scripts as a cultural reaction to the media revolution provoked by the emergence of sound film.[25] The positioning of Soviet ideology in the realm of speech, combined with the hierarchy of arts in Russian culture, which privileged literature, reinforced one another, making the written word a decisive instrument of evaluation and control. Metaphorically, the development of Latvian Soviet film can be compared to the ground-breaking technological development of film in general: although film started "talking" in the 1930s, it started "talking Soviet Latvian" only in the 1950s, when Latvian filmmakers were quietly granted right to use Latvian in films. Along with the development of film production and the cinema industry, the media situation in Latvia in the 1950s resembled that of the USSR in the 1930s; here, too, control over script was a means of mastering and controlling the medium of film. When the Riga Film Studio started to produce Latvian films in the 1950s, employing mostly Latvian directors, the only official tool of oversight became the Russian translation of the literary script. Hennig writes that by establishing the visual image in speech, culture appropriates the polysemy of the visual, replacing fascination with the visual with pathos of establishing meaning.[26] In turn, the scriptwriter appropriates power over speech, which then subjugates the visible. The same is true when music is involved, as in *Four White Shirts*. In this film, music is both a key element of the narrative and functions as another character. Hearing appears as a third dimension of the visible: it is not seen, it is preceded by sound, and it is predetermined by speech act—the script. Hennig analyzes both the script as the basis of film and the literary script as an independent piece of art in the 1930s USSR. She concludes that Stalinism abused the qualities inherent in every individual medium, that is, the medium's own capacities for meaning-making. Stalinism established a whole range of forms that turned transformation from one medium to another into a phenomenon of establishing meaning.[27] Analysis of the censorship review of *Four White Shirts* reveals that this preoccupation with

25 Anke Hennig, "'Und es öffnete sich ein drittes, zusätzliches Ohr': Zum Pathos des Medienwechsels in der sowjetischen Kinodramaturgie der 30-er Jahre," in *Zwischen Anachronismus und Fortschritt. Modernisierungsprozesse und ihre Interferenzen in der russischen und sowjetischen Kultur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Petra Becker, Katrin Mundt, and Dagmar Steinweg (Projektverlag, 2001).

26 Hennig, "Ein drittes Ohr," 243.

27 Ibid., 242.



4. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, RKM 15705, from left to right: Cezars Kalniņš (Uldis Pūcītis), Jāzeps Pīgoznis (as himself)

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus, iš kairės į dešinę: Cezars Kalniņš (Uldis Pūcītis), Jāzeps Pīgoznis (vaidina save)

words remained a determinant in filmic meaning production in the 1960s. The demand for translation of song lyrics shows that it was not the polysemy of the visual that was perceived as a threat, but also the auditory dimension: the sound of music and unfamiliar speech was closely monitored to ensure it conformed to the meaning established by the Soviet system. In the sequence where Cezars repairs a phone in the artist Jāzeps Pīgoznis's atelier, a Polish language lesson is broadcast on the radio.[28] This radio broadcast is not named in the script and thus remains inaccessible for interpretation, unlike song texts in Latvian, which Soviet Russian-speaking censors could examine. Sounds that are not explicitly defined in meaning constitute a dormant cultural and ideological threat. The translation of lyrics into Russian placed their meaning—and the mechanisms of meaning-making—into a strict, predetermined form intended to control the musical score.

28 Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, 00:44:08.

REPRESENTING CRITICS AS PRIVATE PERSONS, NOT AS REPRESENTATIVES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS

The actual conflict of the film lies in the realms of creation and interpretation. Anita Sondore perceives and evaluates Cezars Kalniņš's songs in a manner similar to how Soviet authorities approached cultural texts—including, but not limited to films, plays, lyrics, and music—that is, according to a set of predefined meanings, forms, and requirements. Anita writes a letter to the director of the house of culture, who shares it with the founders of the criticized band, Cezars and Tralmaks. Sharing the letter with the band members is a gesture of trust and shifts the conflict over songs from the institutional to the personal level. Whereas in *Carnival in Moscow* young protagonists could appeal to a higher-ranking bureaucrat than the one threatening them, in *Four White Shirts* all bureaucrats sit at a single table, unapproachable and ignoring both each other and the voices of others.[29] Although the conflict between the poet Cezars (embodying artistic creation) and the critic Anita Sondore (embodying censorship) is not framed as a confrontation between state representatives and artists, the film was banned on the grounds of allegedly misrepresenting state employees. In the sequence depicting bureaucrats at the committee on culture, Cezars leaves the situation not physically, but mentally, by entering his inner world. This represents an imaginary escape an artist may take from the Soviet system—a form of "internal exile".

Facing Censorship: The Inner World as an Escape

The tension between art and labour affected both professional and amateur artists. Cezars struggled with self-doubt as an amateur poet, regretting that he did not study at a faculty of philology or a music academy.[30] The film portrays him as believing that knowledge of all previous developments in music and literature is a prerequisite for success in artistic creation: before the committee on culture session, Cezars speaks of creating "something new, something of our own."[31] In the USSR, the tension between labour and art was addressed by organizing artists into professional unions modelled on trade unions. Writers', architects', and composers' unions were

29 Ibid., 00:58:13.
30 Ibid., 00:55:50.
31 Ibid., 00:55:52.

established in the early 1930s in the USSR, later followed by unions for artists, journalists, and filmmakers. The idea was to guarantee freedom of artistic expression: as long as an artist pursued their career full-time, they could do so financially supported by the state. The national unions of writers and composers, established in Latvia during the first Soviet occupation (1939–1941), resumed their work after the second occupation. These unions allowed total administrative control over the creative intelligentsia, while any work produced outside these structures was considered illegal and, therefore, subversive.[32]

The centralized structure of Soviet institutions was replicated in miniature across every Soviet republic, including Latvia. This process is particularly visible in film production. While the Soviet regime appealed to the concept of national identity by creating "republican" or "ethnic" institutions, this process was presented as a form of liberation in Soviet discourse. Nevertheless, the establishment of Soviet institutions functioned as a form of active colonization, as Oksana Bulgakowa interprets it.[33] The installation of the Soviet cinema system—including facilities for film production and film distribution—outside the Russian Soviet Federative Republic after 1945 was a vehicle of propaganda shaping both the production of films and the self-perception of the filmmakers.[34] Institutional reorganization in film mirrored similar processes in other spheres of artistic expression. For instance, in his emotional report on theatre and music developments in the USSR after 1945, Juri Jelagin writes that the Communist regime managed to subdue Dmitry Shostakovich—one of the most important and original composers of the twentieth century—transforming him into a loyal, average artist serving propaganda.[35] Jelagin extends his evaluation to the regime's impact on fine arts and architecture. As he notes, artists in the USSR were, on one hand, among the most privileged societal groups and suffered no material losses,[36] while on the other, the wellbeing came at a high price: the forfeiture

32 Daina Bleiere, Ilgvars Butulis, Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Antonijs Zunda, et al., *Latvijas vēsture 20. gadsimts* (Jumava, 2005), 381.

33 Oksana Bulgakowa, "Film als Verdrängungsarbeit: der osteuropäischer Film," in *Mythen der Nationen: Völker im Film*, ed. Rainer Rother (Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1998).

34 Bulgakowa, "Film als Verdrängungsarbeit," 202.

35 Juri Jelagin, *Taming of the Arts* (E. P. Dutton & Company, 1951), 208.

36 Jelagin, *Taming of the Arts*, 123.

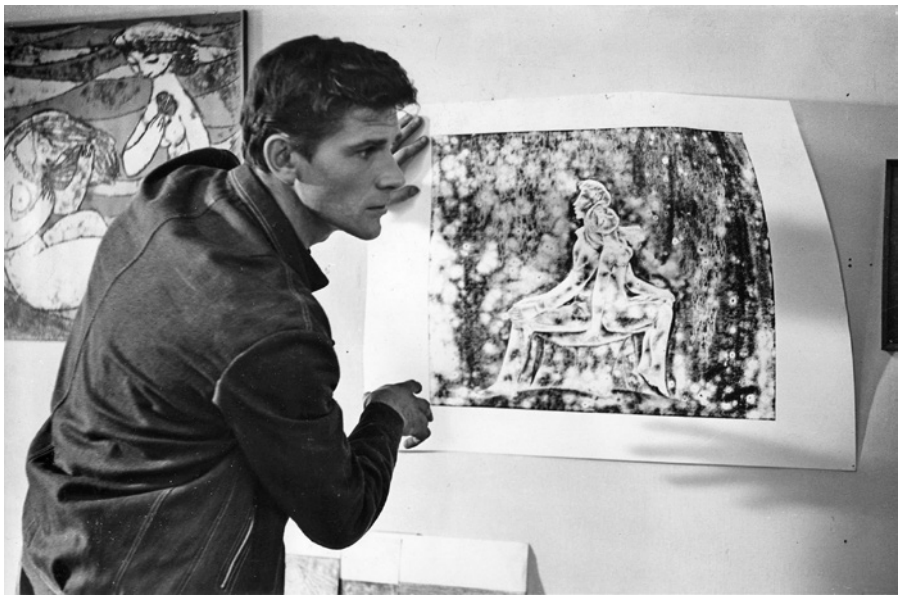
of artistic freedom.[37] Thus, being a professional artist in the USSR meant living with the persistent tension between labour as a paid, state-controlled activity and art as idealized, freely expressed aesthetic pursuit.

The understanding of the inner world as a space to escape censorial control is an approach to Soviet cinematography exercised by American researcher Carlo Celli, who uses the opposition of Soviet culture and internal exile to describe the situation of national cinema in Ukraine.[38] He writes that film director Alexander Dovzhenko accepted the "internal exile" while living and working in the USSR. The opposition of the Soviet as external and the exile as essentially internal (since physical exile was largely unavailable to most artists in the USSR) imposes a traumatic duality on the personality of an artist—or, as Celli puts it, of anyone living under the system. This duality—understood as a binary opposition of external and Soviet versus internal and anti-Soviet limits our view of artists because it does not reflect the exchange between internal and external categories that individuals experience in their lives and creativity, a phenomenon especially evident in cinematography, where creation is collective and creative resources are state-owned. Research that respects these conditions must move beyond binary oppositions. Adopting historian Alexei Yurchak's[39] perspective of the Soviet system is one such attempt to interpret cultural dynamics, escaping the binary framing of "Latvian" versus "Soviet." Yurchak's term "Soviet system" encompasses the multiplicity of experiences in the USSR, including those who remained creative, alive, and productive despite, in opposition to, and in cooperation with Soviet authorities. The question posed in *Four White Shirts* is also the central theme of this volume as I see it: how can an artist survive in a complex environment under the demands of labour productivity and artistic creation? In the 1960s Soviet Union, the demand for ideological conformity compounded the tension between labour and art. The composer and art director in the film, Tralmaks, answers these challenges through conformity with dominant ideology and adaptation to censorship in order to survive and have his work performed. Despite these actual and potential hardships, Cezars continues to create art, writing poems

37 Ibid., 213.

38 Carlo Celli, *National Identity in Global Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 126.

39 Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton University Press, 2006).



5. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, RKM 15723, Cezars (Uldis Pūcītis) in front of artworks

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus, Cezars (Uldis Pūcītis) prie meno kūrinių

and song lyrics. He creates art according to his own ideas and visions and withdraws from the censorial discussions. At the committee on culture, he sits in a disengaged pose, away from the table, observing the session. He listens to non-diegetic music—his own song—which the viewers also hear. As the camera leaves the room and shows Riga cityscape, trains, and streets, the tune continues, joined by the sounds of passing cars. This sequence of shots is visually distinct from the art session sequence and accompanied by a music track that does not belong to the committee sequence. In this way, the film represents a new space: since the music belongs to Cezars, it reflects his inner world. His uninvolved presence suggests that he takes an "internal exile"[40] from the situation, as Carlo Celli observed in his analysis of Soviet film history.

Cezars can enter the additional space of the inner world at any time—while repairing a phone or during the committee on culture session[41]—but these exits are motivated differently. At the committee on culture, Cezars

40 Celli, *National Identity*, 126.

41 Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, 01:00:23

retreats into the "internal exile." Anita does the same: by taking a break in the solitude of her home, she can hear and see Cezars perform.[42] At the beginning of their story, these antagonistic characters both experience the same song as their form of "internal exile," with the pressure of censorship not yet personified. The situation changes when Cezars (the artist) meets Anita Sondore (the critic) in person. The confrontation between art creator and art censor becomes personal. Here, Anita takes an exit into the "internal exile" as she recalls a song by Cezars that she heard at the concert she attended in her role as a critic. In the committee on culture sequence, Cezars drifts away into his "internal exile," with neither images of himself nor Anita appearing. In this moment, his inner world is represented as uninhabited by people. The views of Riga shown during this sequence extend the "internal exile" to the entire city, representing it as an anonymous space.

Cezars's paid labour consists of repairing telephones and installing new phone cables; in this way, he is financially free to pursue his artistic expression. Yet for his creative work—writing song lyrics—other people are necessary: other artists with their own visions and tensions, and the state, because the band founded by Cezars and Tralmaks rehearses and performs in a house of culture. The band is popular: in the film, the musicians worry about performing in front of a TV crew.[43] In this context, the tension between labour and art reappears—the controlling critical gaze of authority does not relent for the young musicians. The sequence of the committee on culture discussing Cezars's songs shifts the focus from an individual conflict between artist and critic to a depiction of collective censorship, where a bronze profile of Lenin on the wall oversees the discussion, symbolically representing the Soviet system as a whole. Here, the poet as an amateur, and thus a virtually illegitimate artist, is subjected to a bureaucratic machine that determines the future of both him and his texts. It is no longer a matter of inner moral authority: the critic does not challenge the poet to develop his talent, but an issue is framed as one of state policy.

42 Ibid., 00:32:42.

43 Ibid., 00:32:42.

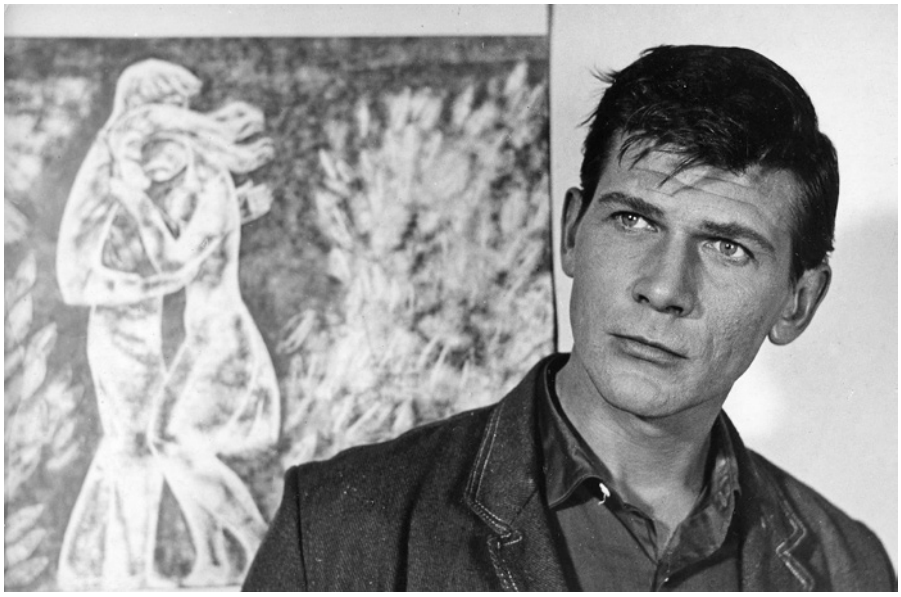
Encountering Art: The Inner World as Free Flow

Rolands Kalniņš invited professional artists to make cameo appearances in his film. Among them was the Soviet-Latvian painter Jāzeps Pīgoznis (1934–2014),[44] who appears as himself in a brief sequence where Cezars questions his own right to create. The inclusion of a professional artist, who had been a member of the Artists' Union since 1964, connects the film's narrative to external reality—not merely as a reference but also thematically. Pīgoznis's appearance highlights the interplay between protagonists, artists, professionals, amateurs, and viewers in the process of art creation and interpretation.

The cameos of real artists, composers, and poets in *Four White Shirts* can be interpreted as representing creatives united by their shared experience of working under the constant scrutiny of nearly total censorship of the Soviet system. In one sequence, while repairing a phone in an artist's atelier (with Jāzeps Pīgoznis appearing as himself), Cezars is emotionally moved by the surrounding artworks and is inspired to create a new song. This portrayal of art and labour in the sequence reflects the film's broader theme, where the confluence of creative inspiration, personal emotion, and professional work is seamlessly intertwined.

To demonstrate how the protagonist's inner space is created—and what and who inhibits it—I will describe the sequence in painter Pīgoznis's atelier as fully as necessary for understanding Cezar's inner space in the film. The sequence opens with a view of the wet rooftops in Riga's Vecrīga, the old city centre. This establishing shot references the realistic world of the film while also indexing the artist's position in the represented world: distant from, and elevated above, everyday life. The camera slowly pans left, revealing that the view is framed by a window, its sill cluttered with brushes, tools, and open containers of paint. This setup highlights the intersection of art and labour: Cezars, holding a screwdriver—his work tool—picks up a whistle, which here functions as an instrument of artistic expression. As he works on the phone in front of a wall adorned with an unframed drawing, Cezars rises, picks up a small wooden flute from the windowsill, and plays a brief tune. The camera shifts focus as he moves back into to the room,

44 One of the film crew members, art director (production designer) Uldis Pauzers, was a classmate of Jāzeps Pīgoznis at the Rīgas Rozentāļa School of Arts in the late 1940s. Jāzeps Pīgoznis, *Peckars. Krāsas. Jaunība.* (Zvaigzne, 2014), 45.



6. Still from *Four white Shirts*, 1967, Latvian Film Museum, RKM 15720, Cezars and a depiction of a couple

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Latvijos kino muziejus, Cezars ir poros atvaizdas

leaving the window behind, symbolizing the ongoing interplay between the mundane labour of his day job and the creative expression emerging within him. He touches several drawings and turns toward the artist, who is mixing colours in front of another drawing pinned to a wall.[45]

The artist slowly moves, then swiftly grabs one brush and then another, making a few strokes on a piece of paper lying on a table. Cezars picks up drawings, sets them down again, and observes the pinned drawings, while the camera alternates between mid-waist, close-up, and extreme close-up perspectives of him. The camera lingers on Cezars's eyes,[46] then shifts to a close-up of a drawing depicting the head of a young woman. The close-up on the protagonist's eyes in this filmic context signals that it is his perspective that defines the following shots. The camera then moves to another drawing pinned to the wall, showing Cezars standing before a depiction of a couple.

45 Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, 00:45:40.
46 Ibid., 00:46:09.

In the previous sequence, Cezars and Bella had a dispute, and Bella ultimately left alone. While she is absent from this scene, her presence is palpably felt by Cezars through the artwork surrounding him. This echoes David Bordwell's interpretation of a similar cinematic moment, where a portrait of an absent woman becomes crucial to characterizing the protagonist and revealing his emotional connection to her. Bordwell suggests that the depiction of the absent figure—along with the "artist" and "friends of the absent woman"—creates a dynamic of triangulation that informs the audience's understanding of the character's attitudes.[47] This triangular relationship between the absent woman, the artist, and the surrounding artworks creates a meaningful context, portraying the "artist" as an untrustworthy figure, concealing his true connection with the absent woman.

A similar triangulation in *Four White Shirts* emerges between Cezars, the portraits of a girl, and Bella's role in Cezars's inner world. This setup frames Cezars as an emotionally traumatized individual who romanticizes the absent Bella. While this interpretation is easily accessible, shifting the perspective to consider the space in which this sequence occurs offers a different reading. Here, the triangulation of Cezars, the artist Pīgoznis, and the drawings positions the studio as a creative space—a physical and symbolic environment where acts of creation and the characters' emotional states intersect.

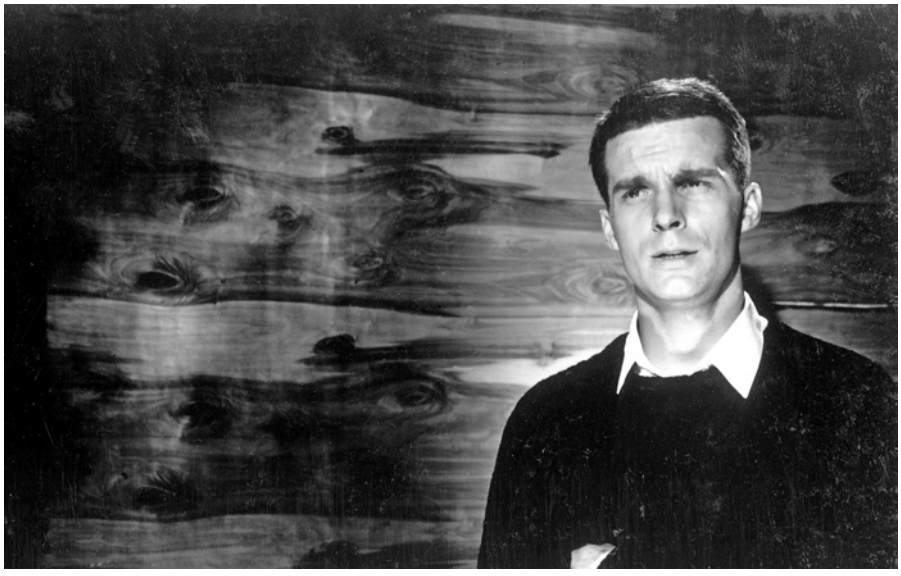
In the following frame, Cezars turns away from one drawing and straightens another, depicting a couple in a close, intimate embrace. He looks at the picture, then away, before picking up a phone. As he does so, an unmotivated melody—first played on a flute and later joined by additional instruments—begins to build. During this moment, the camera lingers on Pigoznis's drawing, subtly acknowledging Bella's absence, which is now replaced by the abstract representation of a female figure in the drawings. Her next appearance is not as a tangible person but as a creation of Cezars's imagination. As he begins composing the song "Vini dejoja vienu vasaru" (They Danced One Summer),[48] which he had started earlier by picking up a whistle from the artist's tools, Bella appears in an unfamiliar, imagined

47 David Bordwell, *Visual Style in Cinema: Vier Kapitel Filmgeschichte* (Verlag der Autoren, 2001), 157.

48 Kalniņš, *Four White Shirts*, 00:47:22.

7. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Riga Film Museum, Bella (Līga Liepiņa) in the musical scene "Viņi dejoja vienu vasaru" ("They Danced One Summer")

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Rygos kino muziejus, Bella (Līga Liepiņa) muzikinėje scenoje „Vini dejoja vienu vasaru" („Jie šoko vieną vasarą")



8. Still from *Four White Shirts*, 1967, Riga Film Museum, Ralfs (Pauls Butkēvičs) singing "Viņi dejoja vienu vasaru"

Kadras iš filmo *Ketveri balti marškiniai*, 1967, Rygos kino muziejus, Ralfs (Pauls Butkēvičs) dainuoja „Vini dejoja vienu vasaru"

space. She sways gently to the rhythm, her hair floating in the air, marking her as both absent and present in Cezars's creative world.

The voice of Pauls Butkēvičs, who plays Ralfs, the singer in Cezars and Tralmaks' band, is heard performing "Vini dejoja vienu vasaru." In the film, this song is audible only to Cezars and the audience: it belongs to his inner world. The walls of the atelier are filled with images of female figures and couples. As the camera alternates between shots of drawings and close-ups of Cezars, the inserted musical sequence of Bella and Ralfs performing together appears as a product of Cezars's imagination. In this subtle way, the film represents the separation of Bella and Cezars from Cezars's perspective.

The musical performance in this sequence is audible only to Cezars and the viewers, but not to Jāzeps Pīgoznis, establishing that it does not belong to the objective reality of the represented world. Both the temporal and spatial dimensions of the song are anchored in Cezars's inner world. I argue that this sequence exemplifies a space of creativity rather than the "internal exile" described by Celli. Unlike internal exile, which functions as a retreat from external pressures, Cezars's inner world is a space of free, unencumbered artistic creation.

The song is performed by Bella and Ralfs, the singer of the band, which is significant: Cezars does not place himself in the imaginary musical world, nor does he envision himself as Bella's romantic partner in this creative space. On the surface, the lyrics describe a fleeting moment of romantic love; however, a closer examination reveals that much of the poem reflects on the lingering effects and aftermath of that love on the lyric hero. One line, in particular, speaks of solitude and the closing of one's eyes as a means of reviving past experiences. This gesture not only pertains to the inner world, memory, and emotional life of the narrator but also serves as a metaphor for art and creativity itself.

As the poem progresses, following the revival of the creative experience, the birds—symbols of the world surrounding the storyteller—cry out, questioning, demanding, and imploring. This can be interpreted as the lyricist's call to continue creating art, breaking free from the confines of the represented reality. In this way, the song becomes a metaphor for the act of

creation: an ongoing, vital process that transcends the limits imposed by external pressures.

"Viņi dejoja vienu vasaru"

Viņi dejoja vienu vasaru…
Un pēc tam?
Un pēc tam — un pēc tam
tagad katrs savam liktenim prasa:
Kam tad bija jābūt «pēc tam»?
Viņi dejoja vienu vasaru…
Un vēl tagad tās spuldzes skrien,
koku galotnēs skaties vai debesīs -
spuldzes skrien, zvaigznes skrien, dienas skrien…
Dienas skrien un sastājas nedēļās,
top ik mēnesis rāmāks arvien.
Un tad pienāk tas laiks, kad vairs nedejo
un kad dienas kā sapītas brien.
Tā jau notiek — pāriet un norimst…
Bet, kad esi palicis viens,
pievēr acis, un atkal kā toreiz -
spuldzes skrien, zvaigznes skrien…
Spuldzes vien…
Tā mēs katrs pa vienai vasarai…
Un pēc tam jau ķīvītes kliedz.
Kliedz kā jautājums, pārmetums, prasījums,
kamēr mūžīgu miegu miedz.

They danced one summer...
And then?
And then—and then
each questions their own destiny:
What must come "after"?
They danced one summer...
And still, sparks remain,
In the treetops or skies, wherever one looks,
Light bulbs race, stars race, days race ...
Days line up, one upon another, into weeks,
With every month, one grows calmer.
And then comes the time when no one dances,
when the days wade, restrained.
So it goes—passing, settling into quiet...
But when you're left alone,
Close your eyes, and once again again—
Light bulbs race, stars race…
Only light bulbs...
Thus it is for each of us, for one summer...
And already the lapwings cry.
Shrieking as if questioning, pleading, begging,
Dreaming a never-ending dream.

The musical sequences presenting Cezars's songs in the film appear as "pockets" of time and space in the "fabric" of the filmic narrative, to borrow Bordwell's terminology.[49] These sequences are irrelevant to the plot and

49 Bordwell extends the Roland Barthes's description of narrative texts as a fabric to Hollywood film. David Bordwell, "The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917–60," in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, eds. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (Routledge [1985] 2004), 64.

do not follow the linear progression of the narrative. Instead, they reveal the inner world of the protagonist, adding a second dimension to his portrayal. Cezars is seen searching for new inspiration and for answers to public demands on his lyrics. Each song reflects sounds, events, emotions, and memories that populate the poet's inner world.

Summary: The Importance of Artistic Cooperation

My analysis of the fiction film *Four White Shirts* underscores its depiction of the tension between art and labour, serving as a reflection of broader socio-political realities in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, when the film was made. The film acknowledges this tension while offering a resolution through its construction of time and space. By creating additional temporal and spatial slots that exist independently of the work and artistic spaces within the narrative, the film suggests a subtle yet meaningful escape from the pressures of the state and the artistic organization.

In the sequence set in the artist's atelier, Cezars embodies multiple roles—those of a worker, an art recipient, and an artist. These identities are not presented as distinct functions or sociocultural positions but as interconnected aspects of the same individual, coexisting harmoniously in an additional inner space. This inner world, independent of the physical spaces of the narrative, is free from evaluation, criticism, and censorship. In the Soviet context, where artists were employed and monitored by the state, such a space represents a form of artistic liberation that transcends the boundaries of external control.

When comparing *Four White Shirts* to *Carnival in Moscow*, the difference in spatial construction became evident: in Ryazanov's film, everything is staged and public, with all actions visible to everyone; the characters perform for an external audience. In contrast, the protagonists of Kalniņš's film—Cezars and Anita—retreat into their inner world, engaging in personal, internal activities that are visible only to themselves and the audience. This distinction reflects a subtle yet profound shift: by moving inward, Cezars and Anita occupy a space that is neither public (like a stage

or cultural house) nor private (like a home or conversation), but entirely internal—composed of memories, ideas, and emotions—where art exists free from judgement and censorship. In this way, the inner world becomes a space for artistic creation, both in production or interpretation.

Four White Shirts extends the boundaries of the represented world through the inner lives of its protagonists, presenting both Cezars and Anita as having access to a space distinct from the narrated reality—their inner world). This space functions both as an escape from societal pressures and as a realm for artistic creation and immersive engagement. The musical video sequences in the film act as manifestations of this inner world, allowing the characters to withdraw from the oppressive forces of ideology, societal expectation, and paid labour. These sequences function as a liberation from the external world, creating a sanctuary where artistic expression can flourish unimpeded.

In addition to illustrating the interaction of multiple flows of meaning—those of the scriptwriter, director, and censors—the film also presents the inner world as a dual space: initially an escape from external pressures, and subsequently as a realm of artistic creation. Ultimately, *Four White Shirts* resists a singular interpretation, offering instead a confluence of meanings and inviting viewers to explore multiple layers of experience within the film.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Lina Michelkevičė, Ian Pinchen, Michael Steinhauser, and Martin Lenz for their careful reading of my text. Special thanks are due to Elizabete Gricmane and Didzis Ruicēns for their dedication to preserving Latvian film history in the collection of the Riga Film Museum of the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Received —— 05 01 2025

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Rīgas Kino muzejs, RKM 15839. Copy. Letter from the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR and the Main Directorate on Fiction Cinematography, signed by comrade F. F. Belov, to the film crew and the head of the Riga Film Studio, comrade F. I. Korolkevičs, February 2, 1968. Preserved in the Film Museum Collection, Riga Film Museum of the Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, Latvia. https://www.kinomuzejs.lv/en/krajums/krajuma-apraksts/.

Rīgas Kino muzejs, RKM 15935. Copy. Letter from the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR and the Main Directorate on Fiction Cinematography, signed by I. Kokoreva and A. Balihin, to the head of the Committee on Cinematography at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, N. N. Kārkliņš, with a copy to the head of the Riga Film Studio, F.

I. Korolkevičs, January 10, 1968. Preserved in the Film Museum Collection, Riga Film Museum of the Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, Latvia. https://www.kinomuzejs.lv/en/krajums/krajuma-apraksts/.

Filmography

Rolands Kalniņš, director. *Four White Shirts*. Riga Film Studio, USSR, 1967 (1987), 76 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ9AJtZqznM.

Eldar Ryazanov, director. *Carnival in Moscow*. Mosfilm, USSR, 1956. https://youtu.be/TxrtUnWBCeI?si=J04da0I6PMYFiFvb.

Santrauka

Susiliejimas filme *Ketveri balti marškiniai*: vengiant įtampos

Marija Weste

Reikšminiai žodžiai: latvių sovietinis kinas, įtampa tarp mokamo darbo, cenzūros ir valstybės finansuojamo meno, meninė kūryba, vidinė tremtis.

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas sovietinėje Latvijoje sukurtas filmas *Ketveri balti marškiniai* (*Četri balti krekli*, 1967, rež. Rolandas Kalninis, scenarijaus autorius Gunaras Priedė) kaip kinematografinis atsakas į ideologinę įtampą tarp meninės laisvės ir valstybės primetamo darbo. Tyrimas pradedamas atskleidžiant filmo ir jo kūrėjų – scenaristo ir režisieriaus – istorinį kontekstą. Žvelgiant per „susiliejimo" sąvokos prizmę – ši metafora atspindi meninės intencijos, cenzūros ir institucinių įtakų susikirtimą, straipsnyje teigiama, kad filmas kuria simbolines erdves, leidžiančias išvengti „menas prieš darbą" sukeliamos įtampos ir cenzūros, pasitelkiant hibridinį žanrą ir reprezentuojamos erdvės konstravimą.

Dėstymas suskirstytas į keturias dalis: pirmojoje nagrinėjama, kaip susidūrimai su cenzūra veikė kūrybinį kinematografininkų procesą, antrojoje analizuojama cenzūros reikalavimų įtaka, lyginant filmą *Ketveri balti marškiniai* su rusų sovietine muzikine komedija *Karnavalas Maskvoje* (1956, rež. Eldaras Riazanovas), trečiojoje aptariamas filmo pagrindinis veikėjas – samdomas darbuotojas ir savamokslis poetas – kaip menininkas, bandantis išvengti cenzūros per tam tikrą „vidinę tremtį", o paskutinėje dalyje reflektuojama meninio bendradarbiavimo reikšmė kūrybos procese.