The French writer Dominique Fernandez, in the psychobiography of Sergei Eisenstein posits that the Oedipal conflict is crucial for any avant-garde and any revolution (Fernandez, 1975), as both are said to suppose revolt against the father, and they both yearn towards shaking and refusing the ‘old’: social order, traditions, cultural beliefs, and modes of expression by replacing it with the ‘new’. There is a certain correlation when the temporal coincidence of both kinds of revolts happens, and in the Soviet revolution’s context the rebellion against the political and artistic Symbolic Father was not indeed accidental.

In the Soviet context, an avant-garde movement and revolution occurred at the same time, suggesting simultaneous rebellion against both the political and artistic Name-of-the-Fathers governing the symbolic order. A new rule, new symbolic order had to be established which would have broken all the ties with the old corrupted one, oppressing peasants and workers. In the newly born Proletarian State of Workers and Peasants kino, the cinema became the revolution’s symbol: it was considered as the main branch of art, according to Lenin (Lunacharsky, 1925/1994), as it was supposed to legitimize the revolution and the new Soviet system and life in the eyes of vast illiterate population. Kino was also a newly born art, the least corrupted by bourgeois and aristocratic aesthetics and values; hence it was a perfect means of revolutionary self-expression in this sense. Considering that young Georgian filmmakers belonging to artistically and politically revolutionary group Lef mentioned the pre-revolutionary directors who pursued filming melodramas in traditional style, against which they wanted to rebel as “fathers” (Amirejibi, 1990), only
supports the above mentioned Fernandez's argument. In this article I intend to examine three Soviet silent films set in 1905 revolutionary context in the light of this social- psychological framework that is oedipal rebellion against symbolic father translated into revolt against tsar and creation of rebelled sons' new order. Given that the revolutionary circles were highly conscious of women's subjugation under the tsarist rule and their subsequent liberalization and emancipation was also on their "to do" list, I argue that these films illustrate the strengthening of women's emancipator politics. These films are Arsena Jorjiashvili, first Georgian Soviet film, directed by Ivane Perestiani, one of those referred as “father” by young filmmakers, Vsevold Pudovkin's Mother - an exemplary classic of Soviet film avant-garde, and Zakaria Berishvili's Prison Cell 79. The choice of these particular films is not accidental; decision was made for certain of their similarities and their differences. First of all, as I already mentioned they all share the same topical focus on workers' clandestine revolutionary activities in 1905, and are based on real events, (while Arsena Jorjiashvili and Cell 79 depict or incorporate real events from Georgia's revolutionary past, Mother was based on Maxim Gorky’s novel of the same title, which on its turn depended on actual facts that took place at the Krasnoe Sormovo plant in Nizhny Novgorod). A second (and more crucial) criterion for choosing these films is that the familial relationships play important roles in the plot developments and consequently scenarios also insist strongly on psychoanalytical reading. Hence besides the overall generalization that Oedipus has crucial importance for avant-garde and revolution, as revolution (political or avant-gardist) is sons’ revolt against fathers, selected films all emphasize family relations to different degrees: it is less sensible in Arsena Jorjiashvili, and strongly accentuated in Mother and Prison Cell 79. And thirdly their production dates (Arsena Jorjiashvili was the first Georgian film issued in 1921 right after Georgia’s sovietization, Pudovkin's Mother was produced in 1926, Prison Cell 79 was shot in 1929 and issued in movie theaters in 1930) are also important to take into account in order to examine the strengthening and empowering female characters. Considering these three factors I argue that these three films create and represent a certain evolutionary chain in terms of women's representation and her place in oedipal (read revolutionary) drama. Although mother figure is present in each of these films, there are important differences in the mother-images, which I argue is the reflection of women's emancipation discourse. In Arsena Jorjiashvili, she appears as a mere decoration and is completely passive. In Mother she gains political awareness being a subject to an oedipal reading with its stress on father-son opposition and mother-child bond in the context of revolution, hence offering a reading of the family drama as a story of the revolution itself. And the end of the decade- in Prison Cell 79 mother turns into an embodiment of the great revolution itself, as the film plot describes the
successful resolution of the complex and the revenge of the rejected mother. Moreover all these films were very popular and widely screened: *Arsena Jorjiashvili* had a huge success across the Union and was running in different republics’ movie theaters throughout twenties, Russian workers even sent a red flag to Ivane Perestiani to express their appreciation; *Mother* bought international fame to Soviet cinema, and *Prison Cell 79* was considered as one of transitional films in Georgia’s State Cinema Production’s work (Shatov, 1930).

Historically women have been very actively involved in the revolutionary activities and Russian Revolution was no exception. Alexandra Artilakhva’s book *Georgia’s Proletarian Women in the Fight for Soviet Authority*, and Neli Burdzenidze’s *Political and Massive Work among Georgian Women in 1921-1929* testimony to both, - the involvement of women in clandestine movements and Bolshevik efforts to emancipate women. The aim of the comparative analysis of these films is to explore, how women’s involvement in revolution and their agency was described and transferred through cinematic medium throughout the 20s decade: whereas in *Arsena Jorjiashvili*, mother figure has a mere decorative function, *Mother* illustrates the emancipation and turning of a passive peasant woman into a political agent process, and *Prison Cell 79* centers on a woman, who is an active agent right from the beginning: a revolutionary, and a mother; where revolutionary values and motherhood, - a woman’s sacred duty and evocation, emphasized and worshiped in all patriarchal cultures and overly characteristic to Georgian culture, are in conflict. In my opinion the drastic shift in mother figure’s representation in *Prison Cell 79* does not represent only a concrete director’s different point of view, but is a result of always- present- in the press -criticism of Georgia’s State Cinema Production’s representations and the demand for strong women’s roles on the screen instead of victimized, passive, helpless and sexualized women, which were so characteristic to Georgia’s State Cinema Production in the early and mid-20s.

**Passive Mother: *Arsena Jorjiashvili***

*Arsena Jorjiashvili*, or ‘*The Murder of General Griażnov*’ (as it was named for circulation in the other republics of Soviet Union) is based on real life events from 1905: Arsena Jorjiashvili, a worker from the depot killed General Griażnov, the prominent enemy of the revolutionary movement, fulfilling the decision of the
proletariats who were on strike. A year after the terrorist act, Jorjiashvili was captured and killed in Metekhi prison. He greeted the resolution of the court with dignity. The film shows his life shortly before the general’s murder the hero among the revolutionaries and depicts his engagements in clandestine meetings and activities, as well as in the entourage of his beloved family (mother, sister and a neighbor girl, later I will have a close look at these scenes in the analysis). When the workers’ strike reaches its culmination, General Griaznov opts for taking drastic measures. The revolutionary leaders are arrested. The radical circumstances and growing tensions with officials lead the workers to plan the murder of General Griaznov, and Arsena is selected by sortition to commit the act. In the film scenario Arsena is arrested immediately after the murder, and is shot in the backyard of the Metekhi prison. The concluding title tells the viewer that “the memory of the hero, who sacrificed his life for freedom and well-being of the people, is immortal. The Soviet workers, who have got rid of exploitation a long time ago, will never forget the name of those who died for the freedom of his people.”

The filmmakers began shooting during the Menshevik government (Arsena Jorjiashvili was Menshevik) and finished under Bolsheviks without any impediment (Makharadze, 2014). Originally it was supposed to be the first film of Mensheviks’ project- the cinema epopee which would describe the revolutionary activities and movements in Caucasus, starting from 1905 revolution till the end of Monarchy (Bakradze, 1989). The change of the power did not disturb the filming process and ironically it became very important film for the Bolshevik government, although the film epopee was never realized. In the film certain biographical and historical facts were altered. For example, the historical fact is that Jorjiashvili was hanged, not shot as it is represented in the film. In his memories, the Social-Democrat Grigol Uratadze mentions these distortions and notes that after the annexation of Georgia, Bolsheviks at first misappropriated this famous murder, and later even claimed that Jorjiashvili was also a Bolshevik (Makharadze, 2014).

By the time that Arsena Jorjiashvili was filmed, the social discourse on women’s emancipation was present, largely advocated by first wave Georgian feminists before the revolution, and by the new Bolshevik government itself. It is a historical fact that in this period women were actively taking part in clandestine activities. In the film, women revolutionaries appear, though their roles and function are limited and they appear as a mere decoration: they do not act, do not participate in anything, do not have agency. They just appear on the screen next to male characters. There are two groups of women: Arsena’s family (which includes his mother and sister, and a neighbor girl) and women who we actually see on the screen during one
Revolution as an Oedipal Conflict and Its Representation in Early Soviet Silent Films: Arsena Jorjashvili, (1921) Mother (1926) and Prison Cell 79 (1929)

of the clandestine meetings, including Arsena’s sweetheart. We also see high class women in the general Griaznov’s party scene, which is juxtaposed in parallel montage with arrests conducted by soldiers. But here too, with their flirting and sultry gazes, women only function to connote lust and therefore moral degradation of their class (Fig.1 Fig.2 Fig.3) - a characteristic feature of all Soviet films of that time. It is also true that during arrest a revolutionary woman daringly insults an officer, (Fig. 4) after which she is harshly beaten. Although her expression captured in the frame is all bold and brave, but nevertheless I do not think that this scene illustrates her agency: first, it is just a very short momentary episode, her character does not have any development, and second, this short scene only serves to emphasize the bestiality of tsar’s soldiers, rather than depicting her agency; as when shown with male comrades, she and other women just appear and lack any initiative or boldness. In what follows I will provide a close, detailed analysis of Arsena’s domestic environment and clandestine meeting scenes to illustrate and prove my argument.

Arsena’s mother and sister are introduced to the viewer in a domestic environment: the mother is sitting and knitting, while her daughter is cleaning cups. A neighbor runs in and tells them that Arsena is coming home. They meet him with great affection, embrace and kiss. His sister leads him to the table holding his hand, as if
he were a child. While his mother embraces him, the neighbor girl brings dinner, both girls stand next to Arsena and look down on him as he eats, in a very protective and caring manner (Fig.5) The intertitle that follows this scene says: ‘Their only love”. After the dinner Arsena reads extracts from Karl Marx’s work to his sister and the neighbor girl. The girls have very bored and absent expressions on their faces. The neighbor’s gaze is directed towards Arsena, but appearing tired and exhausted, her face conveys disinterest in what Arsena reads, or understands what he is reading. The sister is not looking at her brother; instead her gaze is directed elsewhere. It is pretty clear that she is in an absent minded condition, which contrasts with Arsena’s intensely very theatrical and emotional performance reading text (Fig.6). There is a very sharp contrast between their almost exaggerated excitements while serving dinner to the beloved brother, and their disengagement while listening to him read Marx. The message is very clear: these women are not interested in politics and ideology. They are alienated from Arsena’s aims and interests. When Arsena leaves home, the girls see him off. When he leaves they embrace each other affectionately and happily, feeling proud of him (Fig.7). These women embody attributes that the larger culture traditionally associates with their gender: they are caretakers, and offer affectionate love to the male member of the family – a son and a brother. It is traditional Georgian cultural attitude to prioritize a male child over a female one. The movie depicts Arsena as the mother’s, sister’s and the neighbor girl’s “only love” which somehow precludes the love between the mother and daughter, and/or between daughter and the neighbor girl or any other external love (sexual) interest. Even so, it is significant that the scene concludes with Arsena’s sister and the neighbor girl embracing as the frame fades(Fig. 7 and Fig. 8), suggesting an emotional bond between them, (that might lookalike homoerotic lesbian spectacle, at least for contemporary viewer) but meanwhile their gaze is fixed on leaving Arsena, who has already gone from the frame, suggesting he is the point where their emotions and affections intersect.
As I already noted, women occur to appear during the clandestine meeting, and thus the historical reality of
given a tribute: In the conspiracy apartment there is a secret gathering. On the second plan we see several
workers, actively engaged into conversation. On the first plan there are three women sitting, silently with
absent / bored / sorrowful faces (reading of their facial expressions is a question of interpretation). They are
not taking part into the discussion, no one from the men’s group address to any of them or seem interested in
their opinion and try to engage them into conversation. On the contrary, men’s heads and
expressions/gestures are directed towards each other, creating a closed circle, from which absent faced
women are compositionally excluded (Fig. 9). Women remain in the same position, until Arsena walks to
them and engages in a conversation with them. We learn that one of these women is Arsena’s sweetheart.

In the film we encounter women’s images in each other’s company, together with men, or alone.
Nevertheless, these representations lack authenticity. When they are shown in each other’s company - it is in
a domestic space (Arsena’s mother and sister) and a short sequence also shows them outside in a garden (where Arsena’s sweetheart is talking with her friends). There is a certain contrast within these spaces, the private, domestic space is attributed to women, who do not work or study, and hence they are occupied with household, and the public- the yard of a school, by those who study, and are engaged in clandestine revolutionary movements as well- “emancipated” women, (Arsena’s sweetheart). But their representations when they appear together with men are so isolated and compositionally excluded from men that women still appear without actual agency and have merely decorative function. Even when they are shown alone, they still are shown in relation to absent men: Arsena’s sweetheart and mother both have a bad presentiment, (as intertitle lets us know) hence they are still enclosed in one of the characteristics belonging to the realm of ‘eternal feminine’.

Thus, even if we see the involvement of women in clandestine activities, they either are not really interested in it or do not have voice/agency. Arsena’s sisters, regardless their total affection and respect towards him, find it hard to follow when he reads and shares with them Marx’s ideas, they are bored, looking the space or at him with visibly bored and uninterested faces. Even when we see women at the clandestine meeting (including Arsena’s sweetheart) they are also separated: during the discussion there are two groups: the group in the front plan including three women, and the group of the second plan- a closed circle of men who are actively talking with each other. Women are sitting silently; they do not talk or interact, neither with the male closed circle, nor with each other, whereas the men are affectionately discussing something (political). The message of the scene is very clear: women are not interested in politics/they have nothing to say. Even in the scene of revolutionary activities, they serve as a decoration, just to make a statement that they are also there, but they neither participate nor have any agency. Women’s role is embodied in taking care of the main hero, show affection for him, respect, admire and love him (mother, sister, neighbor girl, Arsena’s sweetheart). The figure of the mother is all passive: except for loving and caring for her son, she embodies also the feminine intuition, which her character share with her son’s beloved: they both have foreboding before Arsena goes to kill the general (mother wakes up in the middle of the night). The film demonstrates the oedipal scenario: conflict between father (system/general Griaznov) and son (rebel/revolution/Arsena); mother(women) is left outside of the conflict; she does not take part in it. She is castrated, lacks any interest, is inactive and she cares only for the love of her son, whereas the oedipal conflict takes a different turn in PrisonCell 79.
**Mother-Son Symbiosis against the Father: Mother**

Vsevold Pudovkin’s film, based on Maxim Gorky’s novel of the same title, focuses on mother-son relationship in the revolutionary setting. Gorky’s novel on its own turn was also based on real events that took place at the Krasnoe Sormovo plant in Nizhny Novgorod in which had participated Pavel Zalomov, a leader of a May Day demonstration (Sargeant, 2000). The scenarist Natan Zarkhi also used Pravda’s reports about cavalry troops that were sent against strikers in Tver in 1905 (Sargeant, 2000). As Pudovkin notes himself, in the interview with *Soviet Screen* there was a very little left from the novel itself, stating that ‘theme-is almost always the maximum of what can be taken from a literary work while transforming it into scenario” (Pudovkin, 1926, p. 6). From the novel remain two main protagonists: mother and son. And father, only mentioned in the novel- transformed into a whole character, playing a crucial role (Sargeant, 2000). This ‘resurrection’ of father figure, sharpens more the oedipal conflict. As soviet film scholar Amy Sargeant remarks the father’s role in the film is ‘expanded to serve for a number of purposes, both dramatic and ideological’ (Sargeant, 2000, p.64). In the film, Pavel, the protagonist, is involved in revolutionary activities. His mother is an oppressed housewife, without any civil or/and revolutionary consciousness. Pavel rebels against father, both biological and symbolical. His father is an alcoholic; he beats the mother, allies with counter revolutionary forces (Black Hundred) for a glass of vodka (again according to Amy Sargeant the father character and this scene is used to endorse the official campaign against alcoholism notably articulated by Leon Trotsky, and to promote an idea of new soviet citizen who rejects alcohol) and dies while having a battle with Pavel’s comrade revolutionary. In order to save her son from the gendarmes, mother gives the arms that Pavel is keeping secretly in the house to the officers, who promise that Pavel will not be punished for this. But Pavel is arrested, judged and imprisoned. Mother is once again let down and oppressed by Father’s symbolic order. Contrary to the all passive and weeping revolutionary Arsena’s mother, she becomes an ally of Pavel’s comrades, engages in clandestine activities, and in the end, when her son is shot during the 1st May demonstration, it is her, who picks up the red flag and dies holding with it, when the gendarmes, embodiment of the symbolic order, kill her. In one word she becomes an agent and a subject who makes her own choices. In Pudovkin’s film, there is a usual oedipal conflict between father and son, between old, oppressive father’s symbolic order and the new, better symbolic order offered by the son. Hence here we have mother-son symbiosis against father. In Pudovkin’s film mother becomes politicized, social agent...
through her devoted love for her son, who stands for a new symbolic order, which is to come and substitute, in film scholar Judith Mayne’s words- “the corrupt and outmode order of the father” (Mayne, 1989, p. 104). It is mother-child bond that works for socialist public sphere. Judith Mayne righteously remarks that in Pudovkin’s film motherhood is women’s access to revolutionary consciousness, and this fact consequently suggests that “revolutionary bonds are as natural as the link between mother and son” (Mayne, 1989, p. 106). As we will see later in the case of Berishvili’s film, it is revolutionary ideals that stand above all, and their value is so high, that even motherhood feelings cannot stand against them, if they are in conflict.

There is a ‘gaze tension’ between mother and the symbolic father in Pudovkin’s *Mother*, an artistic device more elaborated and stressed in Berishvili’s *Prison Cell 79* as we will see later. In the Gubernia Court, before Pavel’s trial starts, mother is shown in the courtroom, sitting alone, with closed eyes, all vulnerable and isolated (Fig.10). When she opens the eyes she encounters the gaze of symbolic father: first tsarist emblem, and then gaze of Nikolas II’s statue (Fig.11).

![Fig.10](image.png)  ![Fig.11](image.png)

As Judith Mayne observes some of the dimension of the oedipal conflict have been adapted to socialist ends-the son, from the very beginning of the film, when he stands against his father to defend mother, represents a new order with new rules, first in a narrow, family circle, and later on a global dimension of symbolic order. Whereas the actual father stands for the old, patriarchal, outmoded order, that oppresses women, and later, as he joins the battle against new generation, revolutionaries, that is against his son, he becomes an active agent of the Father’s (Nikolozi II) corrupted oppressive Symbolic order. As Amy Sargeant remarks Pudovkin’s
scenarist, ‘Zarkhi crucially brings together father and son on either side of the factory owners and workers’ Sargeant, 2000, p. 65) - this opposition just intensifies the already existing oedipal conflict between father and son on a wider scale. Obviously the actual father cannot win and dies, indicating to the ultimate death of the symbolic father-he will be replaced by the son, who represents a new symbolic order, where the “mother – child bond serves the socialist public sphere” (Mayne, 1989, p. 104.). To quote Judith Mayne again “However much the film distinguishes between the power of the father and the power of the son, thereby suggesting that the patriarchal order which oppresses the mother would disappear under the socialist regime, it is nonetheless male power which reigns supreme. To be sure, the film creates a utopian vision of male and female unity. But that utopian vision is undone by the fact that such unity can only be a function of such a profoundly oedipal vision of the world, where the possible equality between men and women is circumscribed by the bond between mother and son. Indeed, women are only significant in *Mother* to the extent that they embody nurturing roles” (Mayne, 1989, p. 105). She claims that even other not important female figures, such as a female revolutionary comrade or a lorgnetted woman in the court (who just enjoys the spectacle), do not have their own agency, but only serve as observant mirrors, whereas it is men who are active agents: revolutionaries or reactionaries (Mayne, 1989). Although the mother is the central figure, all her emancipation and revolutionary consciousness growth happens not because she is an independent agent of her own, but because she is a mother, linked to her son. And even after that, as Judith Mayne states “she remains above and beyond all else a mother” (Mayne, 1989, p. 105). In the end, it is her who holds the red flag, facing with terror to the galloping Kazaks, with a firm and terrified gaze (Fig. 12) but still in Pudovkin’s film the “mother is not an independent worker and citizen at the same time that she is a mother. Rather she is a social being only because she is a mother”(Mayne, 1989, p. 105).Thus to conclude in the mid-20s oedipal scenario even if we face to a mother, who acts and engages in revolutionary events, fighting on her son’s side against symbolic father, she still does not possess an agency of her own, or rather her agency does not surpass that of motherhood.
Mother as an Embodiment of Revolution: *Prison Cell 79*

*Prison Cell 79* was filmed in 1929 and issued on screens in March 1930. The premier was accompanied by public discussion in Rosa Luxemburg cinema hall on March 20 (*Komunisti*, March 20, 1930) and from March 31 was distributed in three cinema halls: Soleil, Apollo and Mignon. Due to its success its circulation was prolonged for another week in Apollo and Mignon.

This film, in my opinion a very important accomplishment of Georgian cinematography in many ways, and successful in its own times later was unfairly forgotten (Makharadze, 2014). The scenario, as in the case of *Arsena Jorjiashvili*, was based on real events. In 1907 September 26 almost forty prisoners escaped from Kutaisi prison through a tunnel which was dug from the house standing in front of the prison building. The house was masked as a shop of tights lead by a famous revolutionary, Maro Bochoridze, who was a member of Stalin’s “Boevaia Drujina” (Makharadze, 2014). In the film the name of the protagonist woman is Maro Bochorishvili.

*Prison Cell 79* tells a story of a revolutionary woman from working class. Her husband is killed in a factory due to accident, and instead of helping the shocked woman, who had just bought lunch for him, the supervisor slaps her. Maro, in the fit of passion kills him. Consequently, she is arrested and sent to exile in Siberia. Her orphaned son is adopted by the childless factory owner. Maro is unaware of this fact. When she
returns from the exile years later, she gets involved in revolutionary activities. This time the mission of the revolutionaries is to dig a tunnel to the prison cell 79, where leaders of workers’ strike are imprisoned and will be sentenced to death. Maro accidentally finds out that her son has become a prosecutor and will have a debut on worker’s process. She goes to him and asks him to postpone the trial for a day, so that the revolutionaries had enough time to reach the cell 79. The son at first agrees, but later he changes his mind. Maro kills her own son with a gunshot in the middle of the trial. She is arrested, but the next day prisoners are escaped from the cell 79.

*Prison Cell 79* offers a representation of a strong woman and I would say even a representation of unrealistically strong woman, embodied in the figure of Maro, probably inspired by the appeals in the press to create an image of a strong woman and depict a fight for women’s liberation.\(^1\) I would argue that Maro’s liberation is not represented only by her clandestine fight against the tsarist regime, but her liberation is also manifested with her murdering her own son- in a sense she is ‘liberated’ from motherhood for the sake of the revolution’s success. In *Prison Cell 79* there is a different scenario of oedipal conflict: here the son has inscribed himself in the same corrupt and outmode order of the father, he works for this symbolic, and even more: with his social position he is an active agent of the system unlike minor docile bodies—the soldiers, who visibly express their relief when the flee of prisoners is discovered. He has become the system and the symbolic order himself, which is very artistically emphasized visually with his shadow’s play on the portrait of Nikolas II. The act of Maro’s shooting her own long missed son can be translated into the revenge of the rejected (phallic) mother. Even if the motherhood had remained its special place in the soviet order ideologically, *Prison Cell 79* challenges its primary place if it is in conflict with revolution. I see it as a hint of prioritizing revolution and/or social good over family already being in the air, which later will be “physically embodied” into Pavlik Morozov’s story couple of years later\(^2\).

In the film there are other female characters as well, the factory owner’s wife, who is childless (this could be read as an indication of the sterile condition of high classes and bourgeoisie, implying they will not have

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1. For example V. Russo in an article: “Kino to the Nationalities”, published in the 20\(^{th}\) issue of *Soviet screen* on May 15, 1928, claims that the cinemas main challenges depicting lives of different nationalities are the following: liberation from religiousness, process of industrialization, fight for a free woman etc.

2. According the story (dated in 1932) Pavlik Morozov, was a 13-year-old boy, an eager communist and pioneer, who supported Stalin’s collectivization of farms. He denounced his father to the officials for corruption, and later was killed by his family. Even if the truthfulness of the story is not certain, he was an actual person, who was killed, and became largely mythologized in the Soviet Union.
heir and thus indicating that their political existence cannot last), Maro’s neighbor, from who she learns years later about the fate of her son Akaki, and Akaki’s wife. From these women only Maro’s character embodies agency. According the development of the narrative, she becomes a symbolization of more than a woman – she becomes the active force and movement symbolizing the revolution. When she returns from the exile, it is she who gathers the revolutionaries in her apartment. Although later, the tunnel diggers are discussing the possible ways, how to make the newly assigned prosecutor (Akaki) postpone the trial, so that they could have enough time to finish digging, the compositional distribution excludes Maro from the group. Like a clandestine meeting scene in Arsenia Jorjiashvili, men are forming a closed circle, and Maro is standing outside it. But nevertheless, this exclusion is not stressed as men’s circle is shown in one frame, and the next shows Maro listening to their conversation in a head and shoulder shot. That is to say that Maro’s distancing from the group conversation is not accentuated by frames (Fig. 13 Fig. 14). Again unlike the scene from Arsenia Jorjiashvili, where women activists remain isolated, (and visibly uninterested and/or unable to contribute, judging from their facial expressions and total passivity) Maro intervenes into the conversation, claiming that she will deal with the procurer and the revolutionaries make a place for her among them, hence she breaks the closed (men’s) circle and positions herself in the middle of it (Fig. 15 Fig. 16). Besides the visual composition of the shots, intertitle voicing her speech says: “Don’t you trust in me? I have spent all my life on this pursuit” proving once again that Maro is not an accidental participant of revolutionary activities. At these words one revolutionary stands up, holds her and introduces her in the circle while another stands up and makes a place of her. This is not patronization, but rather an acknowledgment that she has deserved her place in the middle of the circle.

Fig. 13                          Fig. 14
The narrative of the film carries on a strong oedipal scenario. As known, a successful resolution of oedipal complex implies to refuse mother, on the expanse of the father’s authority. Thus child just forgets about mother. This scenario is especially strongly articulated in the meeting scene of Maro and Akaki. When Maro goes to her son’s house and meets him, Akaki is sitting at his working table, looking down at papers, and asks her several times what she wants without looking at her. Only when he finally raises his head and sees her grave expression (Fig.18) his facial expression changes as well, but Maro tells him: “I want you to recognize me” and then tells him who she (and he) actually is. First Akaki denies and stand up, but he soon is captivated by Maro’s psychic power and obeys her and sits down. Maro reminds him the night she was arrested, how he cried and tells him about her feelings. Akaki asks her: “So you are my mother?”—this is a moment of recognition of the abjected (m)Other and self at the same time. In the sequence Maro approaches
Akaki, and tells him that she has never humiliated herself infront of anyone, and she is on the knees in front of her son to beg him to postpone the process for one day. Akaki turns his head with condolence to her and agrees. Before leaving Maro asks him for a pass so she could attend the process.

This dramatic scene (the dramatic effect is accentuated by high contrast between dominant blacks and striking whites) represents allegorically the return of the abjected (m)other, (abjected other here becomes mother)banished by the Law of the Father outside of the symbolic order, to the unconsciousness, which at the same time brings back recognition of the self. The dramatic effect is also stressed by use of parallel montage of Akaki’s wife’s hands playing the piano and their daughter playing in the room, which reoccurs all the time while Maro is telling her story to Akaki. This frequent interplay of the shots emphasizes Akaki’s split between newly discovered mother, his real social class, and his acquired bourgeois life, high position in the society and values. This process of self/abjected other recognition is shadowed by the Law of the Father, embodied first in the statue and later in the portrait of Nikolas II (Fig.19 Fig.20 Fig.21). While using the tsar’s visual representations in the dramatic moments is an explicit quotation from Pudovkin’s Mother court scene, in Berishvili’s film this tension of gaze oppositions is far more intensified and loaded with symbolic meaning. This is exactly the tsar, who appears as Akaki’s father figure and not the actual factory owner who adopted him, because Nikolas II represents everything that Akaki got due to this adoption in the symbolic order: his social class, his values, his wealth, and his family. The unmarked cuts of the statue and the portrait express this surveillance when spectators see Akaki sitting alone in the chair after Maro’s gone.
The tension between Law of the Father and abjected phallic mother continues even to higher degree in the court trial. Akaki did not keep his promise and did not postpone the trial. Symbolic Father has won in Akaki. Obviously he is present there: in the hall (Nikolas II statue is standing there) and in the court hall as well (his immense portrait is hanging on the wall upon the judge’s seat). Bourgeois are coming in and taking a seat. For them it is a mere amusing spectacle. The factory owner and his wife are also there, and while wife smiles looking with lorgnette at other people and greets them (a reference to lorgnetted woman in Pudovkin’s Mother), her husband gives her a remark to stop and behave properly, to which she obeys (this small gesture shows the established gender hierarchy in bourgeois family).

When a gendarme announces “The court (Justice) is coming”, the next shot, following this title shows Maro dressed in black walking in a white street. It is evident that the “court/justice” mentioned in the title (gendarme’s statement) refers to her, because she is the court and justice. This shot is followed by a medium shot of Nikolas II portrait- indicating to the final struggle between symbolic father and forgotten mother is to come. When the prosecutor rises after the reading of the case is finished, his shadow falls on the immense portrait of Nikolas II in a way that the king’s head is replaced by Akaki’s head: this is a very explicit visual metaphor expressing the Father-Son union (Fig.22). Akaki is now intertwined with symbolic father. This shot (unification of Akaki and the tsar by exposing Akaki’s shadow on the portrait) reoccurs several times while
he gives accusatory speech. Everyone in the hall listen him with great satisfaction. Akaki’s shadow on
Nikolas II portrait is contrasted with Maro’s shadow on the white pillars in court hall and later on the wall
(Fig.23) as she enters in and is going ahead towards him. Meeting of their eyes is visualized through shadows:
Maro’s shadow on the wall stops and then camera moves on Akaki’s shadow on the tsar’s portrait. Akaki’s
shadow’s hand stops moving, as he gesticulates during his talk, giving an understanding that he saw the
mother. Next shot shows his face, which is stupefied. He silences. As Maro approaches him the camera
attributes Akaki’s gaze and reveals his psychological perception: Maro is advancing towards him, the court
hall and audience split in two, people’s visualization gets blurred. Only Maro’s figure remains sharp as she
comes in the middle, represented as the embodiment of the Justice itself. (Fig.24) Akaki turns around not to
see Maro, and continues to talk. The court members are confused, they do not understand what’s wrong with
Akaki, but Akaki meanwhile continues his speech and states that he demands the execution of prisoners.
Again, the frame shows his shadow on Nikolas II portrait, which falls down, people jump up terrified. A gun
falls down at Maro’s feet, she has shot her son. The prisoners are taken out; Maro stands steadily, a close up
shows the pierced front of Nikolas II -the bullet that killed Akaki, passed through the tsar’s head as well
(Fig.25). Thus Maro committed double murder: one on actual, and the other on symbolical level: actual
killing of the son equates the symbolic killing of the Father. As people are rushing to exit door in panic, Maro
remains steadily and watches the dead body of her son. Policemen rush and point guns at her, but she does
not move. The frame fades.

Fig.22                Fig.23
The semblance with Pudovkin’s film is undeniable: *The Prison Cell 79* draws upon *Mother* as a source of images (not only in the court, but in the prison scenes as well, although transmitting messages by Morse alphabet might have been a pretty common practice for the prisoners (compare Fig. 26 and Fig 27 from *Mother* and *Prison Cell 79* respectively). Nevertheless unlike Pudovkin’s *Mother*, which explores how a woman enclosed in an oppressive patriarchal system transforms into politicized agent through motherhood (Mayne, 1989), in *Prison Cell 79* Maro is a political subject right from the beginning, as she kills the factory supervisor who slaps her. She is sent to a prison in exile, thus again right from the beginning she is already abjected and situated outside of the symbolic order, which is a precondition of her politicization (later testified as she tells to the revolutionaries that she has spent all her life on this pursuit). If *Mother* “takes the relationship between women and revolutionary change as its central subject” (Mayne, 1989, p. 93), *Prison Cell 79* explores the conflict between motherhood and ultimate necessity of revolutionary change, situating the latter and its ideals above the mother-child bond.
The Prison Cell 79:losing sequence opens with prisoners in the cell, who are again in waiting. The head of prison talks to the representatives of the court and announces the emperor’s decision to execute arrested workers by hanging. The graves are being dig forthem in the prison yard. The gendarmes are going to take out the prisoners from the cell 79 but they come out confused. The young gendarmes are smiling at each other (probably hinting on the sympathy towards workers.)again the hanging is pulled out and graves are dug. The head of the prison runs into cell and looks around, it’s all empty. Again hangings, and digging graves, followed the portrait of Nikolas II with a bullet pierce in his head indicating that the grave is dug for his system. The head of the prison steps forward and jumps into the hole, from which the prisoners have escaped. We see the ironsleft by prisoners while escaping. The recurring and repeating scenes of hangings and graves, repeats again the same visual statement that they are dug and built not for prisoners, not for workers, not for Bolsheviks, but for the police and representatives of the symbolic order, and for the whole symbolic order as well.

**Conclusion**

Appealing on Dominique Fernandez’s above mentioned postulate, according which revolution represents an oedipal conflict on a psycho-social level, I examined three Soviet films produced immediately in the same psycho-political context and describing the very same context in the family circle: Arsen Jorjiashvili, Mother, and Prison Cell 79. These films at first glance concentrate and depict a family drama (more or less: less in case of Arsen Jorjiashvili and more in Mother and Prison Cell 79) in the context of 1905 revolution, but I argue that on the other hand, it is the 1905 revolution that is described in terms of family
drama. I argued that the changes and modifications in the oedipal scenario running both on macro, political-social level and on a micro familial level, and transformation and gradual empowerment of mother figure in this sense was reflecting the women’s emancipation discourse present at that time. The progression of the oedipal triangle mother-son-father in the revolutionary setting during 1920s on the example of these three films demonstrates the following: in the beginning it is all about father-son conflict, conflict between old symbolic order and new symbolic order (in case of Arseni Jorjiashvili 1921) where Mother figure stands outside of it, she (mother herself and other female characters) functions as a mere decoration - does not act, does not take charge of anything; it’s all about Father and Son. Pudovkin’s Mother, (1926) concentrates on mother figure, and describes her consciousness emancipation. Here she is actively involved in the conflict: she takes her rebellious son’s side against the father, and in the end it’s even her who appears to be an embodiment of her son’s new symbolic order, while holding a red flag next to Pavel’s dead body and waiting for the ultimate death. But all this is because she is a mother above all, and whatever she is doing, she is doing because of love to her son, as noted above in the analysis. Whereas in the end of the decade, (that is in Prison Cell 79, 1929) the whole scenario of oedipal conflict is changed: it’s not about father-son conflict anymore and the revolution and acting force is no more embodied in the male figure (son). Now, it is the mother who is the embodiment of revolution, and the oppressed, rejected working class. In this case there is no son’s new symbolic order that will substitute the Father’s old one. Mother punishes and castrates the son because he did not rebel against the Father, resolved the oedipal conflict and rejected her. Thus instead of son’s new symbolic order that used to replace that of a father, now the father’s symbolic is substituted by phallic mother’s pre-oedipal phase (and her revenge). In my opinion this drastic change in representation can be considered as an ultimate mark of woman’s emancipation.
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